

# Institutional Ethnography

Newsletter of the International Sociological Association Thematic Group 06

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## From the President...

Here in the foothills of Alberta spring is achingly slow to arrive, but in the last few weeks the grass has turned green, the trees are putting out leaves, and promising shoots are emerging from the soil in my garden beds. Happy days!

For TG06 Institutional Ethnography, exciting days are coming up in July, when we meet in Toronto for the ISA World Congress. The list of institutional ethnography sessions appears on page 4 of this newsletter – it's an intriguing and varied collection, with presenters, discussants and chairs from 16 different countries. I'm looking forward to hearing as many of the presentations as possible.



*First tree blossoms in the garden, photo taken by Liza McCoy*

This Congress we are doing something special to take advantage of the rare occurrence that the ISA is meeting in a city where there is an active network of institutional ethnographers. You will have received the invitation for the July 19 workshop on Doing Institutional Ethnography with/in Community Organizations, followed by a reception. Registration is going well, and we've been asked to livestream the workshop for people who can't attend in person.

This special event is designed to complement our ISA program with a different kind of experience. Not only will we meet away from the ISA conference centre, on the campus of Ryerson University, in a room filled with natural light, but we'll have the opportunity to (1) enjoy an in-depth presentation on one local group's fascinating research, (2) work collaboratively, in some depth, on issues and possibilities of community research, sharing expertise and experience, and (3) meet local researchers who won't be at the ISA meetings. Oh, yes – (4) we'll have a party, with food, drink, a few speeches, and lots of time for socializing and networking: a fitting end to four days of intensive conferencing.

Remember to register by June 15 if you are coming, because we need that information to set up the room and order food.

In the meantime, safe travels to all of you who will be making your way to Toronto in July. I look forward to seeing you again – or meeting you for the first time – and hearing about your work. And to those who can't come to Toronto this year, I wish you a lovely summer or winter (depending on your hemisphere) and hope we'll meet at the Fourth ISA Forum which will take place at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in July 2020.

Liza

## From the Newsletter Editor...

Welcome to the pre-conference issue of the ISA TG06 newsletter!! This issue features the TG06 schedule for the ISA conference that will take place in July in Toronto, Canada. On page 4 you will find a list of the exciting panels and papers that will be given over a 4-day period from Monday July 16 to Thursday July 19. Many thanks go to Paul Luken for assembling the conference program and for making the information available to us!

In this issue, our **Getting to Know our Members** section introduces three TG06 members: Leigha Comer and Matthew Strang, both from Toronto, and Karly Burch from Dunedin, New Zealand. In our **What are you Reading** section, Marie Campbell offers a fascinating account of the book *Future Organizational Design: The Scope of the IT-based Enterprise* by Lars Groth, in which she explores how IE can inform critical analyses of the "forms of organization that evolving IT inspires and enables." Paul Luken's interview begins on p. 9. Paul interviews our president Liza McCoy who describes her engagement with IE and her vision for TGO6. You'll also be interested to hear about Liz Stanley's new book on Dorothy Smith's work called **Dorothy E. Smith, Feminist Sociology & Institutional Ethnography: A Short Introduction**. You can read about it on p. 20. Our **New Publications and Research** section features updates on new work from a number of TGO6 members and highlights the work of our Norwegian colleagues Tone Maia Liodden, Ann Cristin Nilsen, Rebecca Lund, and Guro Wisth Øydgard. Finally, check out our **Awards and Achievements** section for news about Sandra Grant's Outstanding Doctoral Thesis award and Liz Brulé's new faculty appointment!!

As always, I thank Paul Luken and Leigha Comer for their work in making this issue of the newsletter possible.

Please remember that in order for the newsletter to be a continued success we need to hear from you. We want to hear about your ideas for content and we want to share information about your publications, your research, readings that you've done, conferences that are upcoming or that you've attended, career milestones and accomplishments, scholarly events and other matters of interest to your TG06 colleagues. If there's something you'd like to see happen in the newsletter send an email to me with your suggestions. And If you'd like to be featured in our **Getting to Know Our Members** section send us a bio. Don't be shy. This is your newsletter.!!

Eric

## **XIX ISA World Congress of Sociology – TG06 Schedule**

**From Paul Luken – TG06 Program Coordinator**

The schedule for TG06 sessions and presentations for the XIX ISA World Congress of Sociology has changed since the preliminary program came online. Due to the number of non-registrations by the deadline, most sessions were reduced to two or three abstracts. In order to have fuller sessions and a better experience for those attending the sessions, two sessions were cancelled and abstracts were transferred to other sessions. In some cases, session titles and descriptions were also slightly modified. Now there are 46 presentations in 11 sessions and the Business Meeting. As was indicated in the preliminary program, the sessions begin Monday, July 16, at 10:30 and end Thursday, July 19, at 12:20. All sessions will be held in Room 202A, MTCC North Building.

### **Monday, 16 July 2018: 10:30-12:20**

#### **Session Title: Institutional Ethnographies of Global Development: Knowledge, Experience and Ruling Relations**

Co-Chairs: *Marie Campbell*, University of Victoria and *Ann Christin Nilsen*, University of Agder

“Transnational Evaluation Systems as Relations of Ruling: Exploring Knowledge Production through the Everyday Actions of International Development Professionals.” *Emily Springer*, University of Minnesota, USA

“Whose Knowledge Support Development Programs?” *Yukimi Shimoda*, University of Tsukuba, Japan; The University of Western Australia, Australia

“Institutional Ethnography Texts Organizing Maternity Care in Northern Uganda: From Global Goals to Local Practices and Back Again.” *Sarah Rudrum*, Acadia University, Canada

“Community Based Water Management in Rural Chile.” *Adriana Suarez Delucchi*, University of Bristol, United Kingdom

### **Monday, 16 July 2018: 15:30-17:20**

#### **Session Title: The Social Organization of Knowledge**

Chair: *Eric Mykhalovskiy*, York University

Discussant: *Rebecca Lund*, University of Tampere

"Moving: The Transformation of the Organization of Residential Relocation during the 20th Century." *Suzanne Vaughan*, Arizona State University, USA and *Paul Luken*, University of West Georgia, USA

"Explicating the Social Organization of Family Caregivers' Information Work." *Nicole Dalmer*, The University of Western Ontario, Canada

"Ethnography of a 'Neoliberal School': Exploring the Institutional Practices of Charter School Management Organizations (CMOs) in the United States." *Garth Stahl*, University of South Australia, Australia

"Perspectives in and from Institutional Ethnography." *James Reid*, University of Huddersfield, United Kingdom

### **Monday, 16 July 2018: 17:30-19:20**

#### **Session Title: Social Justice, Activism, and Institutional Ethnography**

Chair: *Suzanne Vaughan*, Arizona State University

"Political Activist Ethnography: Considerations for Public Criminology and Sociology." *Samantha McAleese*, Carleton University, Canada

"Constructing Access to Reproductive and Sexual Health Services (RSHS) in Small Urban Settings: An Institutional Ethnographic Approach." *Jeanette Pickett Pierce*, University of Western Ontario, Canada

"Using Institutional Ethnography as a Method of Inquiry for Indigenous Research." *Elizabeth Brulé*, York University, Canada

"Sexual Harassment in Intercollegiate Football Teams in Japan: Ethnography of Female Workers." *Megumi Seki*, Kyoto Koka Women's University, Japan

### **Tuesday, 17 July 2018: 08:30-10:20**

#### **Session Title: IE for People Perceived to Have Cognitive Weaknesses or Psychological Challenges**

Chair: *Kjeld Hogsbro*, Aalborg University

"Ruling Trans Health: Mapping How Clinical Documents Coordinate the Assessment Process for Transition-Related Medicine." *Kinnon Mackinnon* and *Daniel Grace*, University of Toronto, Canada

"Phantoms of Home Care: Medicare Treats Alzheimer's Disease Clients as Deviants." *William Cabin*, Temple University, USA

"'S/He Is Sick': The Discourse of Dementia and Its Influences on Daily Care Practices." *Li-Fang Liang*, Institute of Health and Welfare Policy, National Yang-Ming University, Taiwan

"Managing 'Pupil's Cases'? an Ethnography of Professional and Institutional Tensions in a French High School." *Lila Le Trividic Harrache*, University of Rennes 1 - Arènes - EHESP, France

**Tuesday, 17 July 2018: 10:30-12:20**

**Session Title: In Conversation with Dorothy Smith**

Chair: Marjorie DeVault, Syracuse University

"Transnational Fieldwork: Problems and Possibilities." *Kamini Grahame*, Pennsylvania State University - Harrisburg, USA

"An IE Study of the Social Organization of Journalists' Work Practices." *Colin Hastings*, York University, Canada

"IE As a Political Activist Approach in Chinese Culture." *Frank Wang*, Graduate Institute of Social Work, National Chengchi University, Taiwan

"Exploring Words as People's Practice." *Dorothy Smith*, University of Victoria, Canada

**Tuesday, 17 July 2018: 15:30-17:20**

**Session Title: Institutional Ethnography for Youth and Women: Human Rights in the Americas**

Chair: *Henry Parada*, Ryerson University

"Participatory Institutional Ethnographic Analyses of Youth-Serving Institutions – a Human Rights Perspective." *Naomi Nichols*, McGill University, Canada

"Garantía De Derechos Y Protección a Niños/Niñas Y Adolescentes EN República Dominicana." *Sara Guilamo*, Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra, Dominican Republic

"El Sistema De Protección Infantil En Honduras." *Martha Suazo, Martha Lorena and Kevin Cruz*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras, Honduras

"Mujeres Contaminadas: El "Destrato" En El Trato. El Caso De Villa Inflamable." Laura Ferreno, Universidad Nacional de Avellaneda, Argentina; Universidad de Avellaneda, Argentina

**Tuesday, 17 July 2018: 17:30-19:20**

**Session Title: The Ruling Relations of "Normalcy": Exploring Puzzles of Disability, Illness, and Aging**

Chair: *Marjorie DeVault*, Syracuse University

"Wish to be Normal: ALS/MND Patients' Strategies to Advocate Themselves." *Kentaro Ishijima*, Teikyo University, Japan

"It's Sore and It Bleeds and It Catches on Things': Managing Life and Self-Identity with a Chronic Skin Condition." *Khalid Al-Muhandis*, Royal Holloway, University of London, United Kingdom

"Understanding Health Services for Mothers Living with HIV in Ontario." *Allyson Ion*, McMaster University, Canada

"Institutional Ethnography in Social Work Research in Finland." *Marjo Kuronen*, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

**Tuesday, 17 July 2018: 19:30-20:50**

**TG06 Business Meeting**

**Wednesday, 18 July 2018: 10:30-12:20**

**Session Title: Bodies and Places in Institutional Ethnography**

Chair: *Liza McCoy*, University of Calgary

"French Spaces of Detainment for Juveniles: Securitization and Humanization." *Léo Farcy-Callon*, Université Rennes 2/ESO, France

"Connecting IE to Bodily Affects through Massumi." *Lindsay Kerr*, University of Toronto, Canada, and *Debra Talbot*, University of Sydney, Australia

"Speed, Intelligence and Discipline: Embodied Strategies in Becoming the Market." *Alexander Simpson*, University of Brighton, United Kingdom

"The Embodied Work of Wilderness." *Gary Catano*, Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada

"Living Organ Donation and the Coordination of Living Organ Donor Work." *Matthew Strang*, University of Toronto, Canada

**Wednesday, 18 July 2018: 17:30-19:20**

**Session Title: Institutional Ethnography: Exploring Changes in Public Education**

Chair: *Lois Andre-Bechely*, California State University, Los Angeles

"The Quantification of Education and the Reorganisation of Teachers' Work." *Nerida Spina*, Queensland University of Technology, Australia, and *Barbara Comber*, University of South Australia, Australia

"Silent Voices: 'South Asian' Mothers and Transition to High School." *Rashmee Karnad-Jani*, University of Toronto, Canada

"Fundraising for Toronto, Ontario's Public Schools." *Sue Winton*, York University, Canada

"Occupational Erasure and the Work of Invisible Teaching." *Jan Nespor*, Ohio State University, USA, and *Mari Haneda*, Pennsylvania State University, USA

"Neoliberalism and STEM in Higher Education: An Institutional Ethnography." *Laura Parson*, Auburn University, USA

**Thursday, 19 July 2018: 08:30-10:20**

**Session Title: Responsibilisation, Accountability and Assessment Practices in Systems, Institutions and Homes**

Chair: *Debra Talbot*, University of Sydney, Australia

"The Responsibilisation of Teachers: Defining and Reporting on 'Educational Adjustments' for Students with a Disability." *Jeanine Gallagher* and *Nerida Spina*, Queensland University of Technology, Australia

"Frontline Work in the Crossfire between Conflicting Ruling Relations." *Kjeld Hogsbro*, Aalborg University, Denmark

"Responsibility and Accountability of Parents and Professionals in Judicial Contexts: A Research Study with the Institutional Ethnography Approach." *Morena Tartari*, University of Padova, Italy

"The Making of Self-Reliant Citizens. Profiling Tools in Polish Unemployment Policy." *Karolina Sztandar-Sztanderska* and *Marianna Zielenska*, University of Warsaw, Poland

**Thursday, 19 July 2018: 10:30-12:20**

**Session Title: IE and Other Concepts: Configuring Apparatus for Inquiry**

Chair: *Jeanine Gallagher*, Queensland University of Technology

"A Reflexive Analysis on the Use of Social Spatial Network Games (SSNG) and Pictures for Institutional Ethnography: The Case of Children Living Under Shared Custody Agreements." *Sarah Murru*, University of Louvain, Belgium

"Conceptualizing an Institutional Ethnography Contribution to Education's Use of Improvement Science." *Lois Andre-Bechely*, California State University, Los Angeles, USA

"Teacher Professional Learning, Boss Texts and Everyday Utopia." *Debra Talbot*, University of Sydney, Australia

"Selling Mary Douglas' or 'Admiring Darth Vader': How Theoretical Knowledge is Commercialized in Market Research Projects in Turkey." *Onder Gunes*, Concordia University, Canada

## **Interview with Liza McCoy – by Paul Luken**

In addition to being President of the Thematic Group on Institutional Ethnography, Liza McCoy is an associate professor of sociology at the University of Calgary. There she chiefly teaches courses on sociological theory and advanced qualitative methods. She received her MA and PHD degrees from the University of Toronto's Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, where she was a student of Dorothy Smith. She is renowned for her writing on institutional ethnography, and I consider several of her book chapters to be must reading:

- "Institutional Ethnography and Constructionism." *Handbook of Constructionist Research*, ed. *J.A. Holstein and J.F. Gubrium*. New York: Guilford, 2008.
- "Keeping the Institution in View: Working with Interview Accounts of Everyday Experience." *Institutional Ethnography as Practice*, ed. *Dorothy E. Smith*. AltaMira, 2006.
- "Institutional Ethnography: Using Interviews to Investigate Ruling Relations." (with Marjorie DeVault). *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method*, ed. *J.A. Holstein and J.F. Gubrium*. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, 2002.
- "Activating the Photographic Text." *Knowledge, Experience and Ruling Relations: Studies in the Social Organization of Knowledge*, ed. *M. L. Campbell and A. Manicom* University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1995.

The following is a revised version of a Skype interview we did March 28, 2018.

– Paul Luken

PL: *Could you talk a little bit about how you became involved with institutional ethnography?*

LM: It wasn't called institutional ethnography when I started studying with Dorothy Smith back in 1982, which was when I entered the master's program at OISE [Ontario Institution for Studies in Education]. In those days Dorothy called her approach the study of the social organization of knowledge, and that's what I went to OISE to study with her, because it sounded interesting. I hadn't read any of her work; she wasn't yet famous or even known in the academic world I came from at that time. And it was only due to a fortuitous bit of publicity that I learned of her.

I was doing my undergraduate degree in the United States, in New Jersey. One day, about a year before I graduated, I happened upon a brochure for a graduate program in the Sociology in Education at OISE. The brochure listed each of the faculty members and what their areas were. My eye was caught by this Dorothy E. Smith who did Marxist feminism and social organization of knowledge. Marxism and feminism, that's what I was studying at the time, I was doing a double major in economics and women's studies. I had no idea what the social organization of knowledge was, but it intrigued me. Later, after I had graduated, I was researching graduate schools and I remembered that program up in Canada with that interesting woman named Dorothy Smith. Somehow, I felt that this was the place for me. I drove up for a visit, I applied, and that's how I started working with Dorothy, although it wasn't easy at first. When I took her course on the social organization of knowledge I barely understood what she was saying, although I could tell it was brilliant. It was so different from what I had been studying; just about the only thing I really understood was that the kind of Marxist feminist thinking I had learned was, in her terms, ideological.

PL: *I first came upon your work in the Campbell and Manicom book, Knowledge, Experience and Ruling Relations, your chapter on photographic images and how people were taking up texts. It was a very impressive article to me. Then I also learned that you were doing work on what deans do. A different topic for your thesis. So unlike other institutional ethnographers, you're somebody who has bounced around to different areas, looking at immigration and healthcare and others. What's behind that? So many people focus on one realm and stay with that, but you seem to be more eclectic.*

LM: The flippant answer is "lack of staying power." But no, it goes back to what initially brought me to study with Dorothy: the intriguing idea of taking up the social organization of knowledge as a domain of study and later, doing institutional ethnography as way of exploring embodied and conceptual practices of power in actual settings. That's what links my work on photography and accounting and my more recent work in the area of immigration. I see myself as a specialist in the social organization of knowledge and institutional ethnography, so it's good to have breadth, to have done IE studies in different domains of practice, to have studied quite varied modes of knowledge. This allows me to support student work across a range of topics.

The photography work, that was my master's thesis. After my first course with Dorothy when I didn't understand anything, I felt a bit lost, academically. But then I started doing photography seriously and reading photo theory, and suddenly what I had picked up from my encounter with Dorothy's work came together for me in an exciting way when I could use it to talk about photography.

My PhD thesis, also at OISE, was on cost accounting in the context of restructuring in higher education. I fell into the topic because of two research assistant jobs I had while I was a doctoral student, one with George Smith, who was an important mentor for me. And just as I had enjoyed looking at photography as a type of textual practice, I found myself keen to study institutional texts involving numbers. I figured that I should get experience in examining the three main forms of textual representation: verbal, visual and numeric.

Then Eric Mykhalovskiy invited me to work with him and a group of community-based researchers on an institutional ethnographic study that eventually became a study of the healthwork of people living with HIV/AIDS. That was new ground for me, because I had never studied or researched anything to do with health and medicine. I learned a lot, and it's been tremendously useful in expanding the range of student work I can support. There is a rich vein of research on health care in institutional ethnography, and I've enjoyed contributing to that, although I don't see myself as a specialist.

Back when I was an undergraduate majoring in economics and women's studies, my area of interest was women and work. In recent years I've returned to that interest with a series of studies in the area of immigration, with a focus on the experience of women trying to rebuild professional careers after settling in Canada and the work they do engaging with the services of settlement agencies. This is another research area where there has been a lot of strong work by different institutional ethnographers over the years, such as Roxana Ng and Kamini Maraj Grahame, and I'm glad to contribute my piece. Most recently I've managed to combine this research interest with my interest in photographic representation through my involvement with a team of college and community researchers doing a participatory study of services for women immigrants settling in Central Alberta. The study had a component in which research participants were invited to make photographs to represent aspects of their experience. I've just finished curating an exhibition of some of these photographs combined with excerpts from the women's interviews. This isn't an IE project, but in selecting text to go with the images, I was certainly working from an IE perspective.

*PL: You're well known in the field, and some of your work, your work with Marj DeVault, for example, is often cited, and you're helping people to understand how to do institutional ethnography. Your chapter showing how IE is different from social constructionism is another important piece. So I guess I'm wondering if there is something that is fundamental to IE, like if you are not doing this, then you are not doing institutional ethnography. Something like that. Are there any restrictions on it?*

*LM: Clearly there needs to be ontological, theoretical, and practical integrity within a piece of work. But I'm not super into boundary maintenance. Sometimes I read work that I call "IE lite" or that I wish people would characterize as "influenced" by IE rather than IE. But I privilege the individual scholar over the approach in that I think each of us as a researcher has to come to our own scholarly and political understanding and express that in a way that has integrity, so that we can each do the kind of*

research that speaks to our interests and makes use of our particular strengths. So while I think people who position themselves as institutional ethnographers should have a thorough understanding of the project, I also want people to be able to take up an active position as innovators within IE. Dorothy has described how she developed her approach by combining, in a new way, things she learned from those she has called her preceptors, such as Marx, Garfinkel, and Merleau-Ponty. That work shouldn't stop. We need to keep reading and listening and experimenting with open, critical minds so that we can continue to develop institutional ethnography and the study of the social organization of knowledge.

But you have to make a case for whatever you are doing. From a solid knowledge of institutional ethnography you make an argument and say, here's how this theory from whomever, or this concept, or this way of working is compatible with IE and contributes to the analytic project of IE. And maybe other people make a counter-argument. That is a necessary, ongoing process and all of us can be involved in that. Sometimes we think only certain admired gatekeepers can decide what counts as IE and what doesn't, and the rest should focus on getting it "right." I want to challenge that view. I would like to see a culture of scholarly exchange that welcomes innovation and discusses it both critically and supportively.

*PL: I want to shift the conversation and ask you about the thematic group. I'm certainly delighted that you're the president of it, and I wonder if you have some vision of for it or something that you would like to accomplish in your tenure. Not necessarily that you accomplish alone, but things that other people can be working on as well.*

LM: I am delighted by the growing international scope of IE. And the wider and more far-flung a network, the more important it is to have robust forms of connection and exchange. The ISA thematic group is primarily an institutional vehicle for having a conference every two years; this creates opportunities for people to get together and present their work, to learn from each other and have the kind of scholarly exchange I am talking about. So a main part of our work is to establish a strong presence at every ISA Congress and Forum, to organize an interesting slate of sessions covering a range of IE topics and making space for innovation and debate. The newsletter is also an important vehicle in that regard, because it can keep the conversation going between conferences. And for some people, it will serve as a substitute for conferences, because international travel is very expensive and not everyone can attend every conference. There's a lot the newsletter can do to facilitate useful exchange – but of course, for that to happen, people need to send in information about their latest publications or write short pieces on topics of interest.

What I hope to do as president, together with the advisory board and the executive, is provide the kind of leadership and support that gets the most out of these vehicles for the thematic group membership. We've got ideas, but we'd also like to hear from members. I invite everyone who is at the Toronto Congress to come to the thematic group business meeting scheduled for Tuesday, July 17 at 7:30 pm. I also invite members to share their ideas with me by email.

## Getting to Know Our Members

**Leigha Comer:** I'm a member of the editorial board for the TG06 newsletter, and I'm also a PhD student at York University. My PhD research, which is being supervised by Eric Mykhalovskiy, explores how policy responses to the "opioid epidemic" in Canada affect the everyday lives of people with chronic pain and their ability to access the treatments they need to manage their pain. In doing this work, IE has opened up new possibilities for investigating the everyday/night worlds of people suffering from chronic pain, and how their local realities hook into extended ruling relations that shape their ability to access the treatments they need to manage their pain. I am also interested in the healthwork people engage in to manage their chronic pain, and in particular the biographical work needed to come to terms with the significant life changes that must be made when living with chronic pain. I live in Toronto with my husband Subbiah, our cat Finley, our betta fish CT, and our son George, who was born March 12<sup>th</sup> 2018. George is a sweet, thoughtful little baby. Right now, he's learning how to smile and he's all about patterns. He also loves to read and he insists on holding my books while I'm studying. Who knows, maybe he's a little institutional ethnographer in the making!



**Matthew Strang:** I am currently a Research Associate at the Institute for Better Health, Trillium Health Partners, and completing my Ph.D. (Sociology), at York University, in Toronto, Canada, under the supervision of Eric Mykhalovskiy. My dissertation work is an Institutional Ethnography (IE) on living organ donation. My personal experiences of disrapture as a living organ donor, myself, factor into my research - a common strategy among IE scholars. I am keen to expose with living donors the extent of the work that they do to be donors and what that work is linked to. The work donors do is different than healthwork, as the work a person does to be living organ donors is at the expense of the living organ donor's own acute and potentially long-term health to maintain the health of someone else. I have termed this work, donor work.

My current studies have been informed by activism engaging with communities on and off university campuses to challenge statuses quos and promote change for marginalized people. As a queer activist, academic athlete and artist my work has always reflected my stories and experiences. As a novice filmmaker I explored the theme of queer

marriage in a short film screened at the 2007 Inside Out LGBT Film Festival. My Master's thesis titled *Straight Kits f/or Queer Bodies?: An Inter-textual Study of the Spatialization and Normalization of a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) Soccer League Sport Space*, interrogated how queer sporting bodies negotiate both homonormativity and heteronormativity that contest and confirm neoliberal values of 'sportsmanship/sportspersonship'. Despite wanting to forefront my participants and the nuances of both *what* my participants were doing and *where* they were doing it, my master's ended up being more theory-driven, and I longed for a framework that could attend to this tension. Ultimately, IE as a framework, both a methodology and an epistemology, have helped me to blend my need to engage both theory and practice into my scholarship.

I have been involved with the IE division of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP) since 2013. I look forward to engaging with international scholars in IE, discussing the body and the use of art-based methodologies to get at the different kinds of work different people have to do. This summer will be my first time attending and presenting at ISA, in the Institutional Ethnography TG06 group, and I look forward to meeting you in Toronto.

**Karly Burch:** I am a PhD candidate in sociology currently undergoing examination at the University of Otago's Centre for Sustainability in Dunedin, New Zealand. My research focuses on everyday eating in the Kansai region of Japan in the aftermath of Tokyo Electric Power Company's (TEPCO's) Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant disaster. I became aware of institutional ethnography one year into my PhD research as I was studying Foucault and learning about governmentality and biopolitics. In particular, it was Katherine Teghtsoonian's paper titled "Methods, Discourse, Activism: Comparing Institutional Ethnography and Governmentality" and Marie Campbell and Frances Gregor's book *Mapping Social Relations: A Primer in Institutional Ethnography* that first sparked my interest in IE and the possibility of using it as a method of inquiry in my thesis. I was extremely drawn to IE's commitments to taking seriously historical contingency, the agency of study participants, and the materiality of ruling relations that my study participants were acting and being enacted within. However, because my research deals with radionuclides—unstable materials that are imperceptible to human senses and, thus, require scientific tools and principals to make them knowable—I also borrowed sensibilities from the field of material semiotics (relational materiality) in order to take seriously their materiality. Thus, in my research, I borrowed sensibilities from IE to trace textually-mediated ruling relations my study's forty-three participants are embedded within, and also borrowed sensibilities from the field of material semiotics to attend to the materiality of radionuclides and other humans and more-than-humans that contribute to the enactment of their locally situated realities. While I am aware of cautions against blending these sensibilities, in my particular case both IE and material semiotics provided invaluable insights that allowed me to take seriously both ruling texts and radionuclides. In particular, IE provided the opportunity to highlight



political and ethical questions that sometimes get overlooked in research only borrowing from the field of material semiotics, something that may be of interest to other scholars working in the fields of environmental sociology or the social studies of science and technology (STS).

## What Are You Reading?

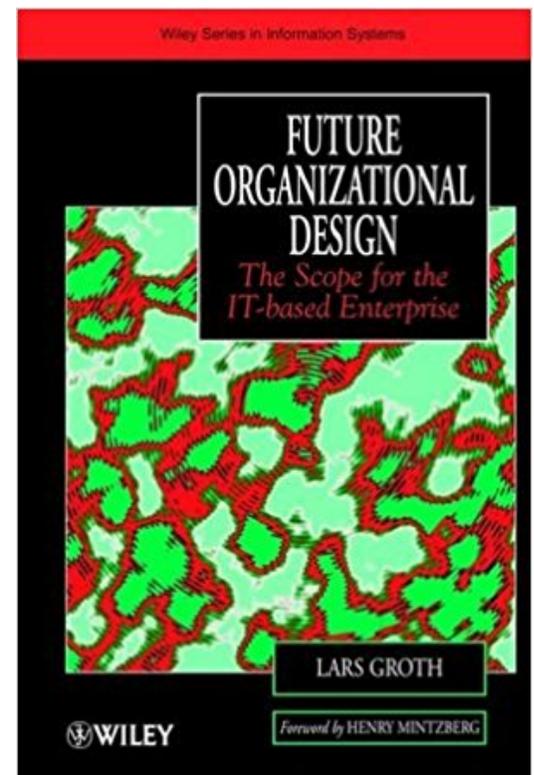
Have you had any good reads lately? Do you want to share your thoughts with fellow TG06 members? We've created a regular space in the TG06 newsletter for members to share their experiences of reading work relevant to institutional ethnography. We envision it as a virtual space for sharing thoughts, responses, critiques and other reactions to published scholarly work of interest to IE scholars internationally. So don't be shy!! We want to hear from you about what you have been reading, what's interesting about it and how it relates to IE as an analytic project.

Help build an exchange of responses to scholarly writing and research among your ISA IE colleagues!! Contact the newsletter editor for more information on contributing to this section of the newsletter.

**Lars Groth. 1999. *Future Organizational Design: The Scope of the IT-based Enterprise*. Chichester, New York, Toronto: John Wiley & Sons.**

### By Marie Campbell

Introduced here is a 1999 textbook on organizational design that, according to a 2002 review in *Acta Sociologica*, offers nothing much that has not been said before. However, to suggest how the book might be useful to institutional ethnographers, I am discussing my reading of it here, conducted in the context of my own research and 'in dialogue with' other researchers whose work I respect. Author Lars Groth, prior to writing the book and after he defended a doctoral dissertation on which the book is based, worked as a consultant to large and diverse organizations in his homeland, Norway. His job was to help executives figure out how their organizations could benefit from investment in information technology. His thesis is that *future* forms of organization will arise, as they have done since the beginning of time, from people's increasing cognitive ability to create tools and rational solutions for overcoming specific human limitations. However Groth sees information technology creating a sea-change in designed organizational achievements. Writing this book offered him the opportunity to figure out the answer to the question he faced as a consultant: "What is the optimal form of organization



that the relevant and currently available technology makes possible?" I read the book in order to learn what it tells me about organizational design *as ruling practice*.

Groth's ideas about 'future organizational design' are, in my view, just about on target with the forms of organization in Canadian institutions such as the healthcare system that my colleague, Janet Rankin, and I (2006, 2017) continue to analyse. The digitalized *integration* of most aspects of a healthcare institution's functions - therapeutic, as well as administrative, including the full range of decisions about policy, personnel, finance and so on - is a current, complex and tantalizing goal. As an institutional ethnographer studying the organization of nurses' work in health care settings where organizational change seems constant, Janet and I puzzle over these transformations and how digitalization is implicated. Reading Groth with such research settings in mind, I recognize the book's ruling standpoint. Locating in Groth's writing the "objectifying androcentrism" (Smith 2004) of the ruling relations gives me pause to consider how we might want to focus our critical examination of the social organization of nurses' work, and I'll return to this point. But beyond that there is much for institutional ethnographers to learn about contemporary ruling from Groth's (organization theory-oriented) account of IT and the forms of organization that evolving IT inspires and enables.

Groth, it seems, is updating organization theory for the digital age (and for designers of IT-oriented organization, including in healthcare). I've summarized his theory as follows: *an organizational design that makes successful use of up-to-date IT begins with a conceptual model of the organization's purposes; it directs, from the top of the organization down, the realization of the necessarily material relationship that must be made (that is, executed, not just conceptualized) between IT and the (new) work organization that the design expresses abstractly. Producing predefined achievements, accountably, then becomes a matter of participants translating design concepts into specific actions, and thereafter transposing those activities back into (matching) abstractions.* As I understand it, the "design" Groth theorizes bears a ruling relation to the work that is constitutive of what actually happens as an electronic (health) information system is put in place. With this ruling conception in mind, an institutional ethnographer's task is to explicate the social relations of a setting's digital organization. Recognizing the importance of different standpoints held by the setting's variously located participants, the ruling practices can be problematized to recover backgrounded and missing or distorted representations of how the work is conducted, what it accomplishes, and for whom.

I want to learn, for instance, if (and how) the kind of theory that Groth writes gets taken up and activated by nurses in the digitally informed healthcare setting. Dorothy Smith's (2014) analytic account of her text-reader conversation offers a method for inquiry into how theory enters a reader's consciousness and rules her thinking. Reading theory is a practice of being dominated by it, Smith argues. In her experience of reading the sociological theory of Anthony Giddens she finds herself subjected to the dominance of his theory, against her will and in spite of divergent and persuasive knowledges. Smith's ethnography of her own text-reader conversation allows her to comprehend, while not being trapped in it, the persuasive logic of Giddens' theory. I have adopted this method to help figure out the power of (reading) an institution's electronic texts. Let's say that Groth's theory is expressed in the design and implementation of an actual system of electronic health records (EHRs) read by nurses as part of their everyday work; and, as is the case in the setting I refer to, aspects of

what happens are observable in ethnographic fieldwork. I propose that nurses who read these EHR texts are reading them not only as instructions but also as theory.

How might the theory that Groth proposes establish for organizational actors, such as our nurse informants, the superiority (over their own knowledge and judgement) of the information circulating in electronic texts? Our ethnographic data suggest that nurses' text-reader conversations not only direct their actions, but persuade them of the correctness and adequacy of these specific actions. We see that, by and large, nurses do accept (the theory) that the desired outcomes are integral to the EHR and its proper execution by them and other practitioners. This belief is dominant in spite of, or it possibly overrides, any concerns that arise or might arise for nurses had they been left to act on their professional judgement. Nurses' expression of such dissonance is fleeting – a faint ripple hardly disturbing the surface of their compliance. But it captures Janet's and my attention and engages our IE-generated analytic knowledge about text-mediated social organization. We are aware that the design, now implemented through the EHR, imposes good reasons to accept that the theory, its realization, and the actuality are congruent; e.g., who could object when everybody in the setting knows that computers do such remarkable, rational, problem-solving things? Yet, following Smith (1990), Janet and I cannot overlook how organized processes of text-mediated knowing alter or exclude experiential knowledge; and that experienced actualities in the setting pose potential challenges to the integrity of the systematized care as Groth's theory communicates it.

The groundwork for Groth's theory appears in his historical account of what inspires the development of organization. He understands a society's advancement being produced by literate knowers whose increasing cognitive capacities enable their development of new methods and tools for organizing. Rationality, Groth insists, is the trait on which such organizational development depends; its superior logic means that rational methods 'naturally' supersede earlier customary and traditional approaches. Sociologist Aneesh Aneesh (2001 367) offers a competing and somewhat more critical view of rationality in the context of his analysis of new digital modes of organization: rationalization or the increased reliance on instrumental reason "implies constituting and ordering the world through the calculability of different phenomena, abstracting from the infinitely complex world a form of knowledge capable of its technical control and exploitation". "Algocratic" is Aneesh's (2009) term for the digitalized coordination through which algorithmically-determined calculations are inserted into the organization of work in settings (such as Janet and I study).

Groth, too, had identified the coordinating effect of digital organization but, important for our purposes, Aneesh's analysis spells out the intervening processes. He describes the "linguistic turn" in computer technology referring to the binary coding (language) that, programmed into information, allows its processing, including use of algorithms (Aneesh, 2001). Programming is technical work that takes place 'between' Groth's conceptual design and the texts of the EHRs that our nurse users of information technologies know how to activate. Informatics processes (largely overlooked in Groth's analysis) generate texts, such as EHRs, that link institutional readers into the algocratic system; reading the text triggers the reader's (competent) response, e.g., a nurse's engagement in a course of action that results in the pre-designated outcome. This suggests to me that programming/ informatics in digital organization is the conceptual equivalent of institutional ethnography's practices of text-mediated knowing in analog systems. In both, people's experiential knowing is being worked up textually and

objectified; the text-mediated knowledge is lifted away from people's own experience and expression of it. These objectifying processes provide the new textual space for ruling ideas to subdue and replace experiential knowing. To reiterate, it is the programming in binary code of people's knowledge that 'mediates' its form for digital use; this rational objectification enables the pre-defined action and promised outcomes.

Smith's reference to "objectifying androcentrism" as a ruling feature of an organization identifies and problematizes the organizational privileging of rational over non-rational knowing. Rationality, Groth explains, first appeared in technologies of writing and keeping records and is now expressed in the digitalization of information. Non-rational thinking, a holdover from oral (non-literate) times, he says, must be actively discouraged in contemporary organizations; "The oral mindset is concrete and person oriented; it correlates with the basic organizational structures (relying on personal authority). The literate mindset is abstract and role oriented... [for use in] a conscious design based on an explicit analysis of the desired outcome and the available means" (1999 176-8). In Groth's view this "represents a decisive break with the past and marks the transition to a new paradigm for the organization of human work" (168). That the privileging of rationality can also create problems, especially in human service organizations, remains largely unappreciated by Groth. On the other hand, Aneesh (2001) recognizes that the mathematization of experience, knowledge, and work can have negative consequences, i.e., "fashion[ing] all life activity on the model of the natural sciences" (367); digital organization, in requiring mathematical representation, objectifies and reconstitutes the "life activity" of human beings. Smith rejects the binary of rationality vs. irrationality, insisting that 'experiential' not be subjugated by 'rational' knowing. All these ideas inform possible inquiries into the construction of the EHRs that nurses read as authoritative and enact, and what algocratic coordination of nursing work means for nursing and for healthcare, more pervasively.

My reading has not produced an objective assessment of the Groth book, but shows something of my critical engagement with it. My reflection on the theory at the heart of today's highly regarded healthcare organization offers food for thought about the research that my colleague and I are commencing. The objectified forms of digitalized action, now such a dominant part of the Canadian healthcare system, are important topics for IE's problematizations. For instance, waiting to be analysed and assessed as actual practices of ruling is the taken for granted notion of 'improvement' that justifies digital programs of healthcare organization and reorganization. IE inquiries might well contest the promises made for the mathematically-based rationality that replaces embodied knowledge and caregiving - the traditional bailiwick of women, Smith (1987) reminds us - with the more exacting digital decision making and action of programs of designed improvement.

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**Liz Stanley. Dorothy E. Smith, Feminist Sociology & Institutional Ethnography: A Short Introduction (Edinburgh: X Press, 2018). Available in paperback and a Kindle edition from Amazon. ISBN 9781973556077**

**By Liza McCoy**



*Liz Stanley, photo taken by Liza McCoy*

Liz Stanley is professor of sociology at the University of Edinburgh who has written on feminist research methodology, historical research, social theory, and more recently the racialising process in South Africa. Her new book (both paperback and an e-book) offers a close and appreciative examination of the writings of Dorothy Smith, considered chronologically in order to trace the trajectory of Smith's thinking. This isn't a book about how to do institutional ethnography (Stanley isn't an institutional ethnographer), nor is it a critical assessment of institutional ethnography as a project of inquiry. Rather, the focus is squarely on Smith's corpus of published work, considered from the near-but-outside perspective of someone who has an extensive knowledge of Smith's work, who shares many of its political and sociological critiques but who has pursued her own path as a feminist

sociologist. Stanley writes in an informal, engaging way. She offers a knowledgeable and thoughtful account of Smith's work, complete with annotated bibliography, which will serve as a useful resource for people who are developing their acquaintance with this body of work. At the same time, Stanley's book also offers food for thought for those who are already familiar with this material and interested in revisiting it in the company of a sympathetic, critical reader.

I caught up with Liz Stanley at the British Sociological Association annual conference in Newcastle, UK, in April 2018, on a cold and rainy day. Liz talked about her long acquaintance with Dorothy Smith's work – and Dorothy herself – and explained how she had noticed that while there was a lot of

methodologically-focused material on how to do institutional ethnography, there was an absence of systematic examination of Smith's analytic and theoretical writings. Her book contributes to filling that gap, by sharing her personal and well-informed reading of Smith's work. In a subsequent email exchange, Liz writes: "Dorothy Smith is one of the great sociologists from the postwar period on, and so her work deserves focusing on in detail to explore her project overall. In particular, I am interested in her different textual analyses and how these display her theoretical and epistemological ideas in detailed practice."

## New Publications and Research

Hastings, C., Comer, L., and Mykhalovskiy, E. (2018). "Review: Didier Fassin (Ed.) (2017). *If Truth Be Told: The Politics of Public Ethnography*." *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 19 (2).

Liodden, T. (2017). *The burdens of discretion. Managing uncertainty in the asylum bureaucracy*. University of Oslo, Norway (PhD).

Nilsen, A.C.E. (2017). *'Making up' concern children. An institutional ethnography of early intervention in Norwegian kindergartens*. University of Agder, Norway (Written in Norwegian, PhD).

Nilsen, A.C.E. (2017). "When texts become action. The institutional circuit of early childhood intervention." *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* 25 (5).

Nilsen, A.C.E. (2016). "In-between discourses: Early intervention and diversity in the Norwegian kindergarten sector." *Journal of Comparative Social Work* 11 (1).

Nilsen, A.C.E., and J. P. Breimo (forthcoming). "Institusjonell Etnografi – en innføring [Institutional Ethnography – An Introduction]." Universitetsforlaget – This book is aimed at students and scholars who are not yet familiar with IE, and who seek information about the methodology in a Nordic language. The book contains translations/interpretations of relevant IE-concepts into Norwegian and has predominantly examples from a Nordic context.

Wisth Øydgard, Guro (2017). "The influence of institutional discourses on the work of informal carers: an institutional ethnography from the perspective of informal carers." *BMC Health Services Research* 17 (1).

### **Epistemic injustice in academia: Class, Race and Gender in feminist knowledge production (2017-2020). Rebecca Lund, Gender Studies, University of Tampere.**

Feminist knowledge production is an example of scholarship that seeks to critique, denaturalize and offer alternatives to existing orders of inequality; particularly responding to what we often know as the effects and processes of capitalism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and how these in turn shape knowledge production practices, norms and conventions. This project seeks to unpack gendered, raced, and classed tensions *within* feminist knowledge production itself, in order to explore how these also

contribute to the reproduction of social inequality. The project sets out to explicate how the historical processes – within which feminist scholarship(s) is embedded – shape epistemic diversity and hierarchies. It asks *what* and *whose* knowledge achieves status as credible, valuable and legitimate, *why* is this so, *how* does it become the subject of ongoing struggles and negotiations and a source of the reproduction of inequality within academia. These issues will be addressed through an analysis of feminist academics' experiences of engaging in knowledge production within the specific historical, social and disciplinary contexts they are constituted. The study will explore the particular relations of ruling that organize the social and the epistemic relations of feminist scholarship; simultaneously creating and restricting opportunities of feminist academics.

In studying and analysing these relations, the study draws on and develops the methodological and conceptual resources of Institutional Ethnography, to explicate the ruling relations of critical knowledge production. An ethnographic frame is used to grasp and attend to the concrete everyday activities involved in feminist knowledge production. In doing so the study focuses on a feminist knowledge production in the Nordic countries, and involves three connected steps: Firstly, life story interviews will unpack how gender, race and class relations enter into the everyday lives of feminist academics and take shape within a specific university setting. Secondly, participant observation will be carried out to explore how feminist academics engage in producing knowledge (teaching, manuscript writing, activism) and how they negotiate and legitimize their commitments and experiences. Thirdly, interviews with academic managers and the collection of documents will be carried out to map the institutional processes and relations of power shaping feminist scholarship and its internal tensions.

This research is a development of my doctoral and postdoctoral work which was an Institutional Ethnography of gender, excellence and higher education reform in the construction of the 'ideal academic.' If interested you may download my thesis from this website: <https://aaltodoc.aalto.fi/handle/123456789/17846>

**Rebecca Lund & Ann Cristin E. Nilsen (eds.). Institutional Ethnography in the Nordics. To be published during 2019 with Routledge.**

Institutional Ethnography (IE) is a methodology of inquiry, associated with the Canadian sociologist Dorothy E. Smith. IE was developed in response to the theoretically driven mainstream sociology which Smith claims is still strongly influenced by positivist ideals and principles (Smith 2005; 2012). In contrast, institutional ethnography begins from a standpoint within local social relations, and sets out to explore how individuals' everyday activities are hooked into translocal and textually mediated ruling relations within an institutional complex. It is the work knowledge of the individual, who is perceived as "knower," that is explored. The purpose is to understand how that work knowledge is shaped in social and ruling relations, in order to see how institutional intentions are made actionable through everyday embodied activities.

Institutional Ethnography, as a school of thought, emerged in North America and has been shaped by scholars from Canada and the USA. It has spread across the world, and is recognized as an important contribution to social science globally, in Australia, South-America, Taiwan, Scandinavia and Europe.

When Institutional Ethnography develops in contexts in which the legacy of social inquiry, as well as the institutional order, have their own distinct characteristics, new methodological issues arise, and the context of debate and justification differs. In the Nordic countries, particularly Norway, Institutional Ethnography has gained considerable recognition over the past decade. A Nordic network of institutional ethnographers was established in 2011 and has been growing since. The network arranges annual meetings and workshops. The Institutional Ethnography-approach connects with and develops the strong legacy of qualitative research in the Nordic region, and is amply suited to addressing questions of social justice, professional development and integrity, and efficiency (to mention some) that face the Nordic welfare system. The Nordic context holds particular characteristics that make the position, use of and debates related to Institutional Ethnography, quite different from North America.

According to Professor of Sociology Karin Widerberg (2015) Institutional Ethnography invites us to put aside our pre-defined theories, concepts and understandings to avoid reproducing what we already know about the world. Our point of entry is people's everyday experiences, from which we work to discover the social, and thereby contribute with new and potentially socially transformative knowledge and insights. As such, we use the approach to delve into and explore topics that are otherwise considered axiomatic, and assumptions that may not be as straightforward and uncontested as they seem at first glance. These emancipatory or transformational allegiances that are inherent in Institutional Ethnography provide an opportunity to respond to the neoliberal cost-benefit ideology that increasingly permeates the research sector in all Western societies, as these struggle to gain competitive advantage in the so-called global knowledge economy. Yet, Institutional Ethnographic research in the Nordic countries, as elsewhere, is faced with the challenge of providing research results that can be adjusted to standardized quality criteria and credential systems of a research sector focused on citability and international relevance. The legacy and current developments of the Nordic welfare states, university reform and contemporary tensions within the research sector, call for a study that can strengthen our understanding of the characteristics and consequences of these development in the Nordics.

## Announcements

### Upcoming Meetings, Conferences, and Workshops

#### **29<sup>th</sup> Nordic Sociological Association (NSA) Conference**

The 29<sup>th</sup> Nordic Sociological Association (NSA) Conference will be held in Aalborg in Denmark on August 8-10. The conference hosts a session entitled *Institutional Ethnography of Welfare Institutions*.

Link to conference website: <http://www.nsa2018.aau.dk/>

The NSA conference will be a meeting point for the Nordic Network on Institutional Ethnography. For information, contact the coordinators May-Linda Magnussen ([mlm@agderforskning.no](mailto:mlm@agderforskning.no)) or Ann Christin Nilsen ([ann.c.nilsen@uia.no](mailto:ann.c.nilsen@uia.no)).

## Society for Socialist Studies Conference

From Colin Hastings (York University):

Devin Clancy (York University) and I are co-organizing a panel at the Society for Socialist Studies Conference at Congress entitled "Activism Against the Academy: Critical Reflections on Activist Ethnographies" on Tuesday May 29 at 10:30am. This session invites contributions from researchers who employ ethnography to advance activist struggles. I am also organizing a panel at SSSP in August on activist ethnography with particular attention to George Smith's Work and Institutional Ethnography Activism. The panel will be held at 8:30am on Friday August 10.

I look forward to sharing findings from my dissertation research at conferences this summer as well. My dissertation is an IE study of the social organization of mainstream news discourse of HIV criminalization in Canada. I explore how the work activities of journalists who produce news reports about HIV criminalization hook into the work of people in other settings (such as criminal law and public health) whose activities produce and reproduce the criminal-legal governance of HIV non-disclosure. I will be presenting on this work at ISA in a session entitled, "In Conversation with Dorothy Smith," at 10:30am on Tuesday July 17 and at SSSP on Saturday August 11 at 2:30pm as part of the New Directions in Institutional Ethnography session.

## Awards and Achievements

### Sandra Grant – QUT Outstanding Doctoral Thesis Award for 2017

The QUT Outstanding Doctoral Thesis Award recognizes the top 5% of doctoral candidates at Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane, Australia. Sandra's PhD work, titled "Kindergarten Teachers' Work and a New Quality Agenda," is an institutional ethnography that examines kindergarten teachers' work during a period of rapid policy changes addressing a new quality improvement agenda. Policy restructures in the early childhood education and care sector (ECEC) heralded the transition to a national Early Years Learning Framework (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009) and a National Quality Framework (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, 2012) for the regulation and management of ECEC services. Set against the backdrop of a changing policy landscape, this qualitative inquiry seeks to understand how everyday aspects of kindergarten teachers' work are talked about, experienced, and undertaken in this policy context.



## **Liz Brulé – New faculty position**

Liz was recently hired in a tenure-track position in Indigenous Gender and Feminist Studies in the Department of Gender Studies at Queen's University beginning July 1st. Liz is completing a PhD in Social Justice Education at OISE and is an award-winning teacher in the Multicultural and Indigenous Studies and Human Rights and Equity Studies programs at York University. She is a bilingual, Franco-Ontarian sociologist of Métis ancestry and a longstanding member of York's Indigenous Council. Liz is also an anti-sexual violence organizer with a particular focus on murdered and missing Indigenous women. In collaboration with Indigenous faculty, students, service providers and Elders, Liz's current work examines Canadian university responses to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action to indigenize the curriculum. Her doctoral research, which has been published in *Studies in Social Justice*, among other venues, is an ethnographic analysis of the ways in which student advocacy work intersects with the changing policies and practices of post-secondary education.

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