

Institutional Ethnography

Newsletter of the International Sociological Association Working Group 06

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From the President

Frank Wang:

2025 will be a new landscape and challenge for WG06. I would like to thank Liza McCoy for her collaborative leadership over the past four years. Starting this year, we welcome a new Board of Directors. The next four years of our executive team will be led by myself as Chair, Rebecca Lund as Vice-President, and Morena Tartari as Secretary/Treasurer. The Board will include LaNysha Adams, Adriana Suárez, Lauren Eastwood, Colin Hastings, and Nerida Spina.

In the past two years, the international IE community has faced the passing of Dorothy E. Smith, as well as retirements of many senior IE scholars. At the ISA conference following the Covid pandemic, participation in oral presentations and attendance was less enthusiastic than before. This means building a community network among mid-career international IE scholars and cultivating the involvement of new generation IE scholars will be the challenges WG06's Board of Directors faces over the next four years.

Beyond internal community challenges, since Trump's inauguration in January, we have also witnessed extreme threats to the world order, including takeovers of Canada, the Panama Canal, Greenland, and Gaza, as well as a retreat from long-term support for countries like Ukraine, Taiwan, and regions such as Europe. The Trump administration has attacked populations such as transgender and non-binary people, Indigenous peoples, racial minorities, women, and disabled individuals. These are the "peoples" Dorothy Smith hoped we would pay attention to when creating IE. In other words, Trump's presidency has made the need for IE to voice the concerns of marginalized groups even more urgent. How the international IE community actively responds to this new global landscape will be a collective challenge we must face.

Despite limitations on in-person international conferences, IE seminars have gradually become an essential platform for daily exchange and learning within the IE community. Janet Rankin, Suzanne Vaughan, and Lauren Eastwood were among the earliest to establish the UK-America online seminar. Subsequently, at the 2023 ISA Melbourne conference's WG06 business meeting, there was a proposal to expand IE seminars in the Asia-Pacific region, similar to those in Europe and America. Special thanks to Janet Rankin and Nerida Spina for initiating the Asia-Pacific time zone seminar, providing opportunities for young scholars eager to learn and exchange ideas. This year, Naomi Nichols and Sara Carpenter from the Research for Social Change Lab at Trent University in Canada launched an IE reading group focused on social change, with over one hundred participants. In June, an IE Research Cluster will also be launched at the Canadian Sociological Association (CSA) by Colin Hastings and Eric Mykhalovskiy. These activities represent the vitality and dynamism within the IE community.

In closing, I'd like to thank the outstanding Program Coordinators, Adriana Suárez and Sarah Murru, who have organized our WG06 sessions for the ISA Forum. Their work has been especially challenging due to restrictions on international conference participation, so their efforts in ensuring the success of the ISA Forum are deeply appreciated. The activities organized by WG06 members—conferences and seminars—are at the core of our network. On behalf of WG06, my hearty gratitude goes to all of you! I look forward to seeing you at the 5th ISA Forum in Rabat, Morocco, in July!

From the Vice-President

Rebecca Lund

We are, as Frank already noted, facing new times in WG06. As a community, we must decide how to move forward and keep this space meaningful, vibrant and active.

The wide range of ways in which IE is interpreted and carried out calls for a community in which we keep alive international debates about its premises and possibilities. These debates are especially important given growing pressures on human rights, democracy, academic freedom, welfare services, and shifts toward right-wing populism across the globe.

I hope to see many of you at the hybrid Business Meeting (or rather, the Community Meeting) held in connection with the ISA conference in Morocco, **Tuesday, 8 July 2025 at 7pm at FSE011.**

In the coming years, I am excited to be working together with Nerida Spina (member of WG06 board) on the Newsletter.

From the Newsletter Editors

Rebecca Lund and Nerida Spina

Welcome to our first 2025 edition of the WG06 Institutional Ethnography Working Group—a space where we can come together to share our news, successes and updates.

Across continents and disciplines—from health and education to defense and beyond—our community continues to flourish, reflecting the diversity, activism and dynamism of our network.

In this issue you will find an entry by Sociologist Dr. Kanlin Hsu who recently translated Dorothy Smith's *Simply Institutional Ethnography: Creating a Sociology for People (2022)* into Chinese. In addition you will find an interview with Lauren Eastwood about the conditions of doing Sociology and IE in Trumps USA. In our Getting to Know You section we put spotlight on the research of Annetta Cayas who has recently completed her PhD

In addition you'll find updates on recent publications, mentoring opportunities, and activities.



We also provide an update on the ISA Forum of Sociology that is coming up in Rabbat, from the WG06 program coordinators, Adriana Suárez Delucchi and Sarah Murru.

Adriana and Sarah are now stepping down from their roles as program coordinators.

We would like to extend an enormous THANK YOU for the incredible amount of work that has been put into making our ISA WG06 conferences a success for so many years.

The newsletter also contains an update on the establishment of a Journal for Institutional Ethnography. The initiators are searching for passionate IERs to join either the Editorial Board, the New Professionals or the Graduate Student Boards.

We expect that the next newsletter will come out in late 2025. Remember: This is your newsletter, and your contributions make it a vibrant and useful vehicle of communication in the international IE network.

As always, we welcome your contributions, feedback, and ideas. This newsletter is as much yours as it is ours: we extend warm encouragement to all WG06 members to share information about your new publications, career milestones, and IE activities in your regions. Over the coming months, we ask you to consider writing a short piece about your research in progress, or some other topic, or volunteering to take part in a "Getting to Know Our Members" interview. If you or any of your students would like to introduce their studies, or a recently completed dissertation, please get in touch!

Rebecca and Nerida

IE Board and Executive (2025-2028)

The nominations committee (Debra Talbot and Liza McCoy) undertook voting for an eight-person slate for the WG06 board and executive.

This new leadership team includes seasoned and early-career IE scholars, working in seven different countries, across four different continents. It includes four people who are served on the previous WG06 Board and Executive and four new people.

The new board and executive are:

President: Frank T.Y. Wang (returning)
Vice-President: Rebecca Waters Boldsen Lund (returning)
Secretary/Treasurer: Morena Tartari (new)

Board Members: LaNysha Adams (returning)
Lauren Eastwood (new)
Colin Hastings (new)
Nerida Spina (new)
Adriana Suárez (returning)



Thank you once again to outgoing board members Liza McCoy, Debra Talbot and Kjeld Høgsbro who have each done so much to support IE and WG06 over many years.

You will continue to be valued members of the IE community!



5th ISA Forum of Sociology in Rabat, Morocco, July 2025: Update from the program coordinators

Adriana Suárez and Sarah Murru

There are 11 WG06 sessions at the ISA Forum in Morocco. A really good innovation this year is that some sessions will be in languages other than English, including French and Spanish. A number of the sessions are being run collaboratively with RC32 (Women, Gender, and Society).

The Business Meeting will be held on **Tuesday, 8 July 2025 at 7pm at FSE011**. Frank Wang will also arrange online access so that everyone is able to engage. Link for online participation will be distributed via the WG06 email list. This will be an important time for us to revitalise WG06 through our active engagement, and through strengthening our connections. Please join if you can.

Thank you to everyone who submitted abstracts, and we wish everyone a positive, fruitful event where new connections are made, and existing connections are fostered.



Translating *Simply Institutional Ethnography* into Chinese

By Dr. Kanlin Hsu, Associate Professor of Sociology, Tunghai University, Taiwan, kanlin@thu.edu.tw



Dr. Kanlin Hsu has recently translated Dorothy Smith's latest book, *Simply Institutional Ethnography: Creating a Sociology for People* (2022), into Chinese. He is the key figure in Taiwanese sociologists who has engaged with IE over the past years. This book will be published in 2025 by Chuliu Book Co. This is the fourth book of IE that has been translated into Chinese. The following is his English-version preface of the book.

Hegel noted that "the owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of dusk" — meaning that any given phase of history can be understood only after the main events have entirely taken place. The publication of *Simply Institutional Ethnography* in 2022 offers

a perspective akin to the owl spreading its wings at dusk, allowing us to revisit the state-of-the-art in institutional ethnography as seen by Dorothy Smith and Alison Griffith, two founders of the approach.

Since I acquired an academic position some twenty years ago, institutional ethnography has been actively introduced into Taiwan's scholarly community. At that time, I also began to learn about institutional ethnography alongside my students through thesis supervision. Two observations were made over the last two decades. First, professionals in population services have been critical of Taiwan's residual welfare model. Institutional ethnography seems to provide insight into questions such as "Why are well-intentioned policies, according to the experiences of frontline professionals, flawed, problematic, and often end poorly for service recipients?" Second, there seems to be a lack of consensus among Taiwan's institutional ethnographers regarding the interpretation and translation of key concepts such as "ruling relations" and "experience of disjuncture." The first observation echoes the authors' discovery in *Simply Institutional Ethnography* that researchers' own life experiences and problems have shaped the direction of their research (p. xiv). The second observation points to a complex situation: intellectually speaking, the translation of foreign theoretical concepts is not only the result of path dependence but also has a path-shaping effect. Key concepts that define the uniqueness of a theoretical approach are like the main stars of a constellation; if we refer to different stars, are we really talking about the same constellation?

Although there are now translations of three classics of institutional ethnography — *Mothering for Schooling* (trans. 2007), *Mapping Social Relations: A Primer in Doing Institutional Ethnography* (trans. 2012), and *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People* (trans. 2023) — as well as a collection of works by Taiwanese institutional ethnographers, *Game of Power in Everyday Life: Institutional Ethnography in Taiwan* (Wang and Liang, 2020), divergent interpretations persist due to a lack of focused discussion among Taiwan's institutional ethnographers.

The publication and translation of *Simply Institutional Ethnography* provide an opportunity to address these divergences. First, although the book is brief, it is neither a primer nor a guide, nor a concise handbook or introduction. The use of "Simply" in the book's title suggests a return to fundamentals and an embrace of simplicity, offering readers a reference for holistically grasping the essence of institutional ethnography. Second, the citations in the book offer a list of essential literature for learning about institutional ethnography, serving as an important resource for curriculum design, research planning, and as an "authoritative" reference text.

The major challenge encountered in translation is that this book is well-structured, yet somewhat atypically written. By "atypically written," I mean that much of the book's content is drawn from the two authors' previously published writings and documentation of their informal exchanges over a considerable period. In conventional academic writing, authors are expected to reorganize material from different sources to reduce redundancy. However, perhaps due to the authors' health conditions—which made extensive revision difficult—or perhaps by deliberate choice, the book presents several sentences that express similar ideas in different ways, with only minimal reorganization for readability, except in the introduction and conclusion. The benefit of this writing style is that repetition leaves less room for misunderstanding. At the same time, however, it poses challenges for both reading and translation. Readers generally expect each sentence to convey a distinct message, so repeated sentences may prompt self-doubt about reading comprehension. In translation, remaining faithful to the original text tends to reduce the fluency of the translated version, while prioritizing fluency leads to greater deviation

from the original. With regard to the scholarly value of the translation, the optimal approach is to maximize readability as long as it does not hinder the reader's ability to cite the work.

The book's "owl spreading its wings at dusk" perspective is shaped by a range of intersecting theoretical concepts cited by the authors to elucidate key principles and ideas of institutional ethnography. These include: Marx and Engels' emphasis on starting from real people and the relations of people's real-life processes as independent forces that overpower them; Michel Foucault's notion of "discourse"; Alexander Luria's "system of verbal generalization"; Hans-Jörg Schmid's "conceptual shells"; and Bob Jessop's "economic imaginary," among others. New interpretations of institutional ethnography and its key concepts emerge through reference to these theoretical frameworks. I have attempted to clarify my own new interpretations in my review, "Imaginary of Institutional Ethnography and Imagined Institutional Ethnography" (see Appendix), which engages with the three translations mentioned above, as well as in the translator's introduction to the book, "Imagining Institutions from Where Real People Stand."

During the process of translating this book, I greatly benefited from the support of Taiwan's institutional ethnographers in reading groups and workshops, as well as from their proofreading of my translation manuscript. They pointed out some errors and offered valuable suggestions to improve readability. Although the final version of the translation was revised based on their feedback, I am solely responsible for any remaining omissions or errors.

The conditions of doing Sociology and IE in Trump's USA:

Lauren Eastwood

Email interview by Rebecca Lund



Rebecca: *The Trump 2.0 administration has swiftly issued restrictions on academic freedom, particularly critical or social activist research, as a key element in rolling back democracy. Could you tell me how you have experienced this at your university and department and how it has affected sociology more broadly in North America?*

Lauren: This is a really good question, and there are SO many ways to answer this. I will focus on what I have been engaged in, just to keep things manageable.

One of the things that has happened is that there have been several Executive Orders (EOs) that have targeted educational institutions (not only higher education, but kindergarten through the 12th grade). These EOs have really deployed the terminology of "indoctrination" related to "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion" (DEI), the big umbrella term for addressing social justice issues related primarily to race, but also to gender, sexuality, social class, etc. in the USA.

A letter, which has come to be known as the "*dear colleagues*" letter, came from the Department of Education - which is both being dismantled by the current administration, and central in ensuring the execution of the executive orders. In this letter, there is a really interesting discursive thing that happens. It first identifies DEI and the academic treatment of systemic inequalities as forms of "indoctrination" AND secondly, as itself being "discriminatory". It later associates that such discrimination is, and will continue to be, "illegal".

This is predicated on an expansive interpretation of a Supreme Court case that found that Harvard (and other institutions of higher ed that receive federal funding) cannot make decisions related to admissions based on race. The Supreme Court did NOT find that it was illegal to teach about systemic racism or to argue that US society is systemically racist. However, in the "*dear colleagues*" letter, and in many of the documents coming out of this administration, there is either an implied illegality of validating the analytical frameworks addressing the systemic nature of inequality OR a vilification of such a framework (e.g. "woke radical left"). This of course becomes a problem for sociology, since the very basis of this discipline is that inequalities are not the result of individual behavior and feelings but instead are systemic and institutionalized in social structures.

This further becomes relevant in light of the fact that the Trump administration has accused several campuses of "antisemitism" (mainly related to pro-Palestine protests) and has required that they make major changes to curriculum, hiring, etc. In a letter from the Trump administration to Harvard University (that they later claimed has been sent by mistake !?) asks for «view point diversity», in other words for conservative views to be mixed in with the "woke" ones. This was the letter to which Harvard has responded with a lawsuit, and which has kicked off a lot of the resistance at the university level to fight back against the fascist and repressive moves by the Trump administration, which include retracting and canceling funding, threatening lawsuits, mobilizing either ICE or some other "law" enforcement to arrest and detain students without any due process. The Department of Education has also issued an online form where students, parents, etc. can "report" instances of indoctrination, or "discrimination"; redefined as teaching about systemic inequalities, which is what we do every day in Sociology.

Rebecca: *How are you and your colleagues mobilising to engage with and resist these restrictions (at your university level and otherwise)?*

Lauren: My colleague, John McMahon in Political Science, and I proposed a resolution for our faculty senate last week. This represents one of the things that has really taken off in the past couple of weeks. The State University of New York faculty senate passed a similar resolution a few days before we debated and passed ours, and we're now working with a whole group of campuses that are fighting back in such a way. One of the things we are debating and investigating is whether to legally challenge the directive for expanding the Supreme Court decision beyond admissions, which has been happening on our campus in terms of removing the language around race from scholarship requirements.

Yesterday I attended a zoom with over 40 people who are trying to put together Mutual Academic Defense Compacts (MADCs). Two weeks ago, there were about 10 people on the zoom. I anticipate

that there will be many more when we have the next meeting. [Here's the UMass tracker for these Compacts.](#)

Rebecca: *How are you using IE as a resource in the work of understanding and resisting?*

Lauren: In addition to the work of mobilising resistance, I have decided to turn my research focus to this unfolding terrain. I plan to use IE to investigate these processes as they are happening and to dive into the Executive Orders, lawsuits, Compacts, resolutions, etc. The analysis I did above of this discourse of "antisemitism" and "indoctrination" and "viewpoint diversity" is the tip of the iceberg, and I think it is important to document this AND to document the resistance. So, I imagine I'll have things to say at future IE-related conferences, but right now I'm very much in the learning curve of trying to wrap my head around all of the areas that are relevant to these processes.

I've had to do a ton of work to find out what is going on on other campuses. It has been an investigative process of tracking people down on Bluesky and following people who have had their grants cut etc.

So, in some ways, IE is giving me a sense of purpose as I'm super overwhelmed by the fact that things are very quickly sliding into authoritarianism and many people are simply not paying attention--or, they voted for Trump and believe that what he is doing is just fine. The erosion of the rule of law is scary and fascinating, and I understand that it is predicated on 40+ years of neoliberalism and transfer of wealth to the top wealthiest people, along with the erosion of faith in public services as those public services have been dismantled or broken over the decades. Coupled with the prevalence of social media and sophisticated misinformation campaigns, this administration has mobilized the racism of disenfranchised white Americans in such a way that makes "anti-woke" a viable vector for further dismantling our education system. I understand all of this to be true, but it has been a really stressful and overwhelming few months watching all of this happening.

Oh! And instead of backing off on discussions of systemic racism (and other inequalities) in my classes, I've doubled down on being explicit that this is the framework that I'm using and this is a legitimate field of study. I've pointed my students to the form that can be used to report their teachers/professors and explained that this is what happens in fascist regimes, where people are made to feel fear that their neighbors or colleagues are watching and could "report" them at any time. The current administration is using anti-DEI as an excuse for cracking down on education, because DEI mobilizes the base. Ultimately the goal is to dismantle education in general in this country; as has been stated by JD Vance, among others. In the end no discipline is safe.

I'm really just starting to think some of this through, since it is all happening so fast—so thank you for the opportunity to put words to my experiences so far.

Rebecca: *I have heard rumours about how this affects the SSSP organisation. Can you tell us more specifically what is happening and its consequences for the IE community in North America?*

Lauren: It is really unfortunate that SSSP will have the double-whammy of being an organization that explicitly addresses the things that are being used against academia AND the fact that it is dangerous

for people to travel to the US right now, particularly if they are critical of the Trump administration. In addition to the fact that it isn't safe to come here, I understand perfectly why Canadians, especially, wouldn't want to come to the US given the fact that our president has repeatedly expressed a desire to make Canada the "51st state"

Right now we're trying to figure out the panels for this summer's meeting as lots of people have (justifiably) withdrawn. The SSSP is having major financial problems, so it isn't feasible to do a hybrid conference given the fact that the conference is already where we are losing money every year and the tech components of a hybrid format are extremely expensive. I am not sure what will happen, but it is also a function of the limited funding that people have to attend conferences, as many organizations have been seeing a big drop in membership. I am not entirely sure what will happen, also, because SSSP works through Divisions and the IE division would come under some scrutiny if we lose too many members. I understand that Colin Hastings and Eric Mykhalovskiy are working on getting IE institutionalized into the Canadian Sociological Association, so that may be where things shift as far as North America is concerned. I love SSSP, so I hope that we're able to maintain a strong space there, but I suppose it remains to be seen how things will shake out.

Getting to Know You: Annetta Cayas

Interviewed over coffee by Nerida Spina



Dr Annetta Cayas has recently completed her PhD at the Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane Australia. Her thesis is titled "Parenting-for-Schooling: An Institutional Ethnography on Parenting Practices in Support of Schooling". It was inspired by the seminal work of Dorothy E. Smith and Alison Griffith: Mothering for schooling.

NS: *Congratulations on completing your PhD this year. What led you to your research?*

AC: Thank you! My research is very much inspired by Alison Griffith and Dorothy Smith's *Mothering for schooling*. As a parent and a teacher, I was really interested in understanding more about the space where schools and families intersect. I could see there were so many tensions between homes and schools, but, very often, these are written from the perspective of school expectations for 'good' parent engagement. How I was experiencing schooling as a parent of school aged children was quite different from what I knew about 'parent engagement' as a teacher. I wanted to explore what

'parenting-for-schooling' looked like in contemporary education systems, and what were the implications for parents and family functioning.

NS: *How did you learn about IE and what attracted you to IE?*

AC: When I came across *Mothering for schooling* during my Masters of Education degree, I remember feeling like a light had been switched on – all of the things I was doing as a mother was a form of work. I could also see how much my work as a mother echoed the ideas about *kitchen table work* that were described by Alison Griffith and Lois Andre-Bechely. That's one of the things I love about IE, is seeing how concerted action isn't just happening within one IE project, it's also the way each project fits together like pieces of a bigger puzzle.

NS: *You have been an active member of the Asia-Pacific IE mentoring group. Can you tell us a little bit about how you learned key IE concepts through your project?*

AC: The mentoring group has been really wonderful, and I feel very fortunate to have learned from Janet Rankin in these sessions – Janet is so gracious with her time and expertise. I found that no matter how challenging some of the IE concepts feel initially, talking through my thinking and listening to others has been incredibly valuable. These seminars with Janet (and Nerida, of course) were a great forum for this.

NS: *What ideas do you have for further research now that you have completed your doctorate?*

AC: My research looked at parenting-for-schooling with middle class families, and showed how school was intensively organising family life and parents' subjectivities around frames of 'good parenting' that were established by school improvement agendas. What my research showed is that existing expectations for parent engagement seems to be 'too much' for many parents and teachers. I'd love to do more IE research in this space, looking at teachers' experiences of parent engagement. I think there are also some important insights to be explored further by researching how parenting-for-schooling works (and doesn't work) for and in diverse families. I'd also really love to explore what children and young people's experiences of parent engagement, as these are voices are often invisible in schools and in most research on 'parent engagement'.

WG06 Mentorship Seminars

The mentorship seminars continue to provide opportunity for discussion and guidance for IE researchers who are at various stages of conducting IE research. There are 2 groups. The EU Asia-Pacific group meets on the third Tuesday of each month at 10 am (GMT+3).

Asia Pacific Group

Nerida Spina and Janet Rankin have facilitated this seminar over the past year; noted IE scholars from have also attended when they are able, and we have had numerous guest presenters. There are 54 members, with attendance ranging from around 6-12 each month. Over recent months, we have been reading Smith and Griffith's *Simply IE* (one chapter per month), which has led to many useful discussions of key IE concepts and how they are used in our various research projects.

Occasional meetings have been booked outside of the seminar time when students and their supervisors request 1:1 consultation with facilitators to brainstorm around their projects.



Thank you Janet!

The Asia-Pacific group offer our sincere thanks to Janet Rankin for her leadership of the group 🌸🌺. We have all learned a great deal from Janet, and are so grateful for the opportunity to have been able to connect while she was working in Qatar. Janet will now head home to Canada so will no longer be a regular mentor of the group.

We are very fortunate to be joined now by Frank Wang as a new senior mentor of the group.

All are welcome, and can email to find out more or to be added to the group:

n.spina@qut.edu.au (Nerida) or aust.ie.network@gmail.com



Advancing Institutional Ethnography: Call for Participation in the Institutional Ethnography Journal (IEJ)

We are continuing to work on the development of the *Institutional Ethnography Journal (IEJ)*, an international, peer-reviewed journal dedicated to advancing research that delves into the connections between institutional structures, power dynamics, and lived experiences. The journal's mission is to foster scholarship in institutional ethnography by examining how institutions shape the everyday lives of individuals and communities, providing a platform for diverse perspectives and critical analyses.

Call for Participation

We invite individuals passionate about institutional ethnography to get involved by joining either the Editorial Board or the New Professionals and Graduate Students Board (see the descriptions of those boards below). If you are interested in shaping the future of this journal, contributing to meaningful scholarship, and connecting with a vibrant community of researchers, please complete the [Expression of Interest Survey](#).

Editorial Board

The IEJ's Editorial Board will comprise scholars, practitioners, and thought leaders with expertise in institutional ethnography and related fields. This board will be responsible for guiding the journal's vision, maintaining rigorous academic standards, overseeing peer reviews, and fostering collaborative scholarship that deepens the understanding of institutional ethnography.

New Professionals and Graduate Students Board

The New Professionals and Graduate Students Board will offer emerging scholars and early-career professionals a unique opportunity to engage with the journal's development, contribute fresh perspectives to ongoing research discussions, and support peer review processes. This board aims to cultivate a collaborative space for networking, mentorship, and skill-building within the field of institutional ethnography.

Please contact Laura Parson, PhD, laura.parson@ndsu.edu for more information.

Regional News

Europe, UK and Ireland

Introductory online workshop on Institutional Ethnography, 10-11 April 2025

Organised by the National Centre for Research Methods, University of Southampton, UK.

Taught by Órla Murray, Liz Ablett, Adriana Suarez-Delucchi, with guest lectures from Medical Education - Dr Grainne Kearney- and Social Work - Dr Courtney Buckler. The workshop aimed at providing attendees with a comprehensive overview of institutional ethnography as an approach and the opportunity for some hands-on work on how to translate students own research ideas and projects into an IE research proposal.

<https://www.ncrm.ac.uk/training/show.php?article=13851>

Institutional Ethnography : Historical Materialism and Sociology, May 7 2025

Organised by sociologist Sergio D'Agata, the forum consisted of five presentations by Chiara Bertone, University of Piemonte; Órla Meadhbh Murray, Northumbria University; Pragya Roy, University of Sheffield; Rebecca Lund, University of Oslo; and Sergio D'Agata, University of Milano-Bicocca. The forum aims to nurture the Marxist roots of IE and Smith's work in the contemporary context in order to build a sociology grounded in a revolutionary theory—namely, a theory of societal transformation. It will be an opportunity to discuss our engagement with IE *and* Marxism, reflecting on theoretical issues as well as their implications for the process of inquiry.

You can see more details about the event here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/institutional-ethnography-historical-materialism-and-sociology-tickets-1258018058879?aff=oddtcreator>

IE conference session at University of Trento, July 2025, abstracts due January 20 2025.

Morena Tartari and Órla M. Murray have organized a session on "Institutional Ethnography: Researching for social change" at the Conference "Ethnography and Qualitative Research" in Trento (Italy), hosted by the University of Trento, July 10-12, 2025. The call for abstracts has now closed, however you can read about the even at this website: <https://erq-conference.soc.unitn.it/>

Nordics

Nordic IE-network gathering 22.-23. May, University of Agder, Kristiansand.

Approximately 15 people from Norway, Denmark and Finland participated. The focus of the meeting was on challenges and different approaches to IE analysis.

PhD course on "Welfare from Below" - Perspectives from Institutional Ethnography, January 2025, Roskilde University, Denmark

Organised by Associate Professor Steen Baagøe

North America

Institutional Ethnography Research Cluster at the Canadian Sociological Association Conference

The first meeting of the group is scheduled for **June 9th, 2025 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM EDT** The meeting will be virtual, and there is no requirement to hold CSA membership.

The newly established Institutional Ethnography Research Cluster aims to advance IE as a sociological approach in Canada and transnationally, and to create opportunities for training, mentorship, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing. The cluster will be a focal point for rigorous, creative IE scholarship that investigates how ruling relations are organized, how they shape people's everyday lives, and how they might be transformed.

The meeting will discuss the CSA Research Cluster structure, planning for next year's conference, and discuss the University of Toronto Press IE Series and Graduate Student Paper Award.

Please reach out to Colin Hastings (c2hastings@uwaterloo.ca) or Eric Mykhalovskiy (ericm@yorku.ca) with any questions.

Workshop, Teaching for Social Problems, SSSP

The Teaching Social Problems Division of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP) is organizing a virtual workshop with the title "Teaching Social Problems for Social Change: A one-day experiential workshop" in the context of the 2025 SSSP Annual Meeting (August 8-11, 2025). The workshop will take place on **Monday 11 August from 9 am to 4.30 pm** (US central time).

Registration details.

To register for the workshop is not necessary being an SSSP member or registering for the SSSP Annual Meeting. You can choose to register **ONLY** for the workshop.

Please register by **July 31** by sending an email directly to SSSP IT specialist: ssspit@utk.edu

More details here: https://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/m/1024/One-Day_Workshops/

This is a workshop for teachers, scholars and activists who are interest to expand knowledge concerning strategies and techniques about teaching social problems in higher education. This workshop is an opportunity for junior and senior scholars, teachers and activists to use sociological imagination to empower students and support them to make a better world.

During the morning, the workshop will host keynote speakers and roundtables; during the afternoon, the workshop will offer some experiential fieldtrips organised in collaboration with local organisations for social justice. Participation cost will be \$30 for employed registrants or \$25 for unemployed/activist/student registrants.

Attendees who are interested in sharing and receiving feedback on a syllabus or a case study or other teaching materials during the small-group discussions should submit these documents to Pattie Thomas (pattie.thomas@csn.edu) and Morena Tartari (morena.tartari@northumbria.ac.uk) **by July 1**

Institutional Ethnography Activist Scholar Open School, April 28-29th 2025, Social Change Lab, Trent University, Ontario



This event was grounded in George Smith's work "Political Activist as Ethnographer" and brought people together from across Canada to listen to experts in the IE field and engage in discussion. The event invited participants to reflect on the ideas and issues discussed not just through thought but also creatively by encouraging them to make art throughout the event, with the afternoon of the second day spent engaging with various forms of creative activity, such as button making, silk screening, and zine making. The Open School also provided students working in and around IE to present some of their research and receive feedback from fellow attendees. This event would not have been possible without support from Trent University's Interdisciplinary Social Research (IDSR) program, the work of our keynote speakers, Dr. Eric Mykhalovskiy, Dr. Colin Hastings, Dr. Viviane Namaste, Dr. Alexander McClelland and Dr. Mitchell McLarnon and the work of the Research for Social Change Lab's director, Dr. Naomi Nichols.

On the first day, participants heard from keynote speakers Dr. Viviane Namaste and Dr. Alexander McClelland and their work on actioning IE in the realm of public health surveillance of HIV. In the afternoon, participants broke out into smaller groups to discuss the theory behind activist scholarship, the ethics of activist research and different kinds of activist methodologies. The group reconvened to hear presentations from students who received feedback from the activist scholars in attendance. To end the day, attendees listened to Dr. Naomi Nichols and Dr. Mitchell McLarnon discuss how research can be used to advance housing justice.





On the second day, participants heard from keynote speakers Dr. Eric Mykhalovskiy and Dr. Colin Hastings reflect on a recorded conversation Dr. Mykhalovskiy had with George Smith as he was beginning his PhD project. After another round of presentations from students, participants spent the rest of the afternoon engaging in creatively reflecting on the ideas. Participants developed a range of artistic pieces, from silk-screened t-shirts to buttons to the creation of zine

New Online Reading Group on Institutional Ethnography

Naomi Nichols and Sara Carpenter at the Research for Social Change Lab will, from January 2025, be hosting an online reading group on Institutional Ethnography. It will take place last Friday every month. People can learn more about the reading group and sign up at the Research for Social Change Lab website.

You can access it here:

<https://www.socialchangelab.ca/>

Just scroll down a bit to get a 'register now' or 'learn more' button.

New Research Projects, Publications, Career Developments

Book and Article Publications

Colin Hasting (2025). *Digital News and HIV Criminalization: The Social Organization of Convergence Journalism*. University of Toronto Press.

Graduations

Annetta Cayas (2025). *Parenting-for-Schooling: An Institutional Ethnography on Parenting Practices in Support of Schooling*. PhD thesis, Queensland University of Technology, Australia.

<https://eprints.qut.edu.au/256577/>

Abstract

Parent engagement has emerged as an education policy that is widely implemented to boost student achievement and promote schooling excellence; however, little is known about how parent engagement policies shape parents' and families' lives. This institutional ethnographic research at one Australian school shows how school goals and policy expectations for parent engagement intensively reorganises parents' time, attention, resources and subjectivities. Effectively, middle-class parents are parenting-for-schooling, with school expectations dominating family life. The research shows how parenting-for-schooling bears implications for children and young people, parents and school staff and raises serious questions about equity, including for whom parent engagement truly works.

Eric Kimathi (2024). *An institutional ethnographic study of the social organisation of integration work in Norwegian ECEC Centers*. PhD thesis. University of Agder, Kristiansand, Norway.

Abstract

It has been pointed out that integrating refugees can be a challenge in liberal democracies. Immigration and integration have been central political topics in Norway for many years. The Norwegian welfare state plays a crucial role in integration processes. Kindergartens are especially central as arenas where refugees often have their first contact with Norwegian culture. The thesis explores the social organization of the work done in Norwegian kindergartens regarding the integration of refugees.

Eric Kimathi has utilized institutional ethnography, and the data material is based on qualitative interviews with kindergarten staff and parents with refugee status. The thesis presents two main arguments that contribute to the field of research. The first is that the discourse around safety in kindergartens becomes institutionalized through interpretations of authoritative texts and social technologies that influence the staff's practical approach to integration. The second argument is that integration as a goal is marked by tensions between different cultural norms, with kindergarten staff holding a definition of integration that is strongly linked to predetermined markers for what is considered "integrated." The thesis also questions whether integration is promoted through relationship building or external pressure. Kimathi ties this to a discussion about whether kindergarten staff experience it as a professional obligation to get refugees to "behave Norwegian," or whether they find it more important to develop a community and mutual understanding with refugee parents in the integration work.

Kate Melino (2025). *An Institutional Ethnography of Community Mental Health Care for Patients facing Structural Barriers*. PhD thesis, University of Alberta, Canada.

Abstract

North America is grappling with escalating mental health crises characterized by rising mental illness prevalence, inequitable access to care, and severe workforce shortages. Recent discourse emphasizes

the need to integrate social and structural determinants of health—such as poverty, violence, houselessness, and discrimination—into health care service design and delivery. Theoretical frameworks such as intersectionality and structural competency help to conceptualize the additive and exacerbating effects of institutionalized forms of discrimination on mental illness and recovery. However, the materiality of structural barriers—the practices that organize and coordinate these realities—remain underexplored.

Using an institutional ethnographic (IE) approach, this dissertation explores the social organization of community mental health care for patients living with serious mental illness inside conditions of poverty, violence, houselessness, and discrimination—the concrete realities that are abstracted into the theoretical structural competency framework. The specific objectives of this work were to: 1) critically examine circulating discourses in mental health as related to conceptualizations of structural competency; 2) empirically describe the work of caring for patients facing structural barriers; 3) and map the social relations of providing mental health care in the community. I examined the everyday work practices of Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioners (PMHNPs) to uncover the ruling relations that govern their work with patients with serious mental illness who live within conditions of poverty, violence, houselessness, and discrimination. Nine PMHNPs from outpatient community mental health clinics in a large California city participated in the study. Data collection included in-depth interviews, clinic observations, and analysis of relevant clinical and organizational texts. Data analysis involved IE techniques of indexing, mapping, and writing accounts.

This dissertation contains a concept analysis of structural competency completed precandidacy, which I included to demonstrate the evolution of my approach to this topic over the course of my doctoral journey (Chapter 2). I also wrote three manuscripts detailing IE findings.

First, I examined how powerful circulating discourses about “access to care” were rhetorically aligned with institutional goals but practically misaligned with the everyday realities faced by PMHNPs and their patients (Chapter 3). Second, I explicated how the institutional emphasis on efficiency and billing, as mediated through the electronic health record (EHR), often organizes PMHNPs to prioritize diagnostic and medication management over addressing the broader social needs of patients (Chapter 4). Third, I used lessons from conducting this dissertation research to offer methodological insights into using IE for novice researchers, and to make the case for using IE to contribute useful qualitative knowledge in service of addressing complex public health issues (Chapter 5).

To improve the support and sustainability of PMHNPs’ work as frontline providers in community mental health care who have expert knowledge of patient wants and needs, practice coordinators and policymakers should consider reforms that integrate the knowledge and experiences of PMHNPs and their patients. Recommendations include: revising billing and reimbursement structures to recognize the full spectrum of care, including non-medical aspects; implementing flexible and contextually sensitive scheduling to accommodate patients with chronic mental illness; allowing for walk-in appointments and non-tech-mediated communication; adopting collaborative care models involving PMHNPs, social workers, and peer advocates to address clinical and social determinants of health; and realigning clinical documentation to meet the holistic needs of patients. Future research should employ institutional ethnography as well as other qualitative and participatory action methods to further explore mental health care practices and evaluate the impact of policy changes, ensuring the voices of affected individuals are prioritized.

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