

## **Dorothy E Smith**

### **A rough sketch for a talk given to sociologists at the University of Victoria, showing how IE differs.**

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I have seven topics. Only the first 5 will be covered when we meet. The last two are intended for students in Garry Gray's Qualitative Methods course:

1. The ontology
2. The Problematic and the ruling relations
3. Texts and the ethnography of ruling
4. Institutional language
5. Major research areas
6. How to learn - experience as dialogue
7. Assembling

1. **The ontology:** The emphasis will be on marking the differences between IE and sociology in a more general sense, not on critique of the latter. Institutional ethnography began with a series of discoveries I made of differences that founded over time a major epistemological, and practical shift and the making of a different sociology that continues to develop as people make institutional ethnographies and innovate. So, to bring into view some key differences, I will describe some of points at which I found myself diverging from the sociology in which I'd been trained.

Somewhere in or around 1970 a student asked me to explain as a sociologist how the process of allocating students to courses and courses to students was so complicated and time-consuming and tiresome. This was, of course, before there were computer technologies to handle that stuff. I had no answer. For some reason I remembered that when I was doing my undergraduate work at the London School of Economics, I had been reading Marx and that somewhere in what he wrote with Engels was their commitment, written in a manuscript not published in their lifetimes and written as a self-critique, to grounding of social science not in imagination, concepts and theory but in actual people, their work and the conditions of their lives.

I went back and reread *The German Ideology* all the way through the Moscow edition, some six or seven hundred pages if I remember correctly - one of those books written largely by Marx as he was developing his thinking in writing. I had resolved to read it just as it was written and not by taking up interpretations by Marxists of my time. Of course, I had no skills in German so there were serious limitations to a literal reading, but I made the rule not to skip, not to suppress mentally what was not fitting to any interpretation I might be developing independently of the actual text of the Moscow edition. Marx's critique of the ideological methods of those they call the German Ideologists also applies to his own earlier work wherein we can find just those methods of going from actual social relations among people to a conceptual framing. For example, in his earlier work we can find him framing a method, of first deriving the concept of alienated labour from the reality of workers' estrangement from the product of their work and then using the concept of estranged alienated labour to learn *how the concept is expressed in real life*.. Here was the moment of his break with his previous practice. Here I could track what his explication of what we later came to call 'ideological circles' in

my own sociological practice..

The ontology, the grounding of a social science I ended up with was a modest departure from that put forward by Marx and Engels: In Marx's critique of the ideological organization of the German 'ideologists' I wrote critique of the sociology in which I'd been trained and which I had taught as it conformed to the production of ideological circles of just those that Marx was rejecting in his own earlier work and had discovered in his critique of the German ideologists.

But that wasn't enough to impel the kind of shift that came to me in the women's movement of the 1970s. With other sociologists in Vancouver, I worked with women's groupings in different parts of the province to use our skills to open up aspects of the organization of different levels of state and other dimensions of ruling to explicate how it related to their projects of change. I came to see that the sociology I had been trained to work in just didn't do it; it didn't take up exploration from where the women were in their lives and what they were actually confronting and trying to get changed. I remember a group of union women at a meeting with them to discuss possible ways we could be useful saying 'the problem with you sociologists, is that you end up studying us.'

We began progressively to find other ways of working that explored relevant aspects of ruling institutions and made them visible to activists. And I learned that the place to start was with people's actual experience of what was going on in their everyday lives and I learned not to impose theoretical interpretations drawn from the discipline I was trained in but to treat these as the beginning of an exploration into relations extending beyond the scope of everyday knowledge. Concepts such as 'social structure' are forgotten and displaced as the emphasis shifts to what can be discovered about how what people are doing is coordinated in such ways as to constitute actual relations considered as sequences of people's actions (we're not talking here about aunts and uncles and brothers and sisters, or boss and worker), A sociological project was opened up that began from people's everyday experience; people became subjects in the sociological project rather than objects and the work of the sociologist/institutional ethnographer was discovering how those aspects of their everyday lives that framed the research problematic were organized by translocal relations.

What also became clear was that a project of discovering how what people were doing was hooked into coordinated action in which others were involved and that it was those interconnections that it was the business of what became later to be called 'institutional ethnography' to discover and explicate. Hence we have to avoid devices, whether conceptual or methodological (such as qualitative methods of coding interview material), that resolve the social (thought of as people's ongoing concerted actions/doings - never as objectified- into properties of individuals. Take Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital for an example of the direction IE does not go in:

“. . . in its fundamental state, [cultural capital] is linked to the body and presupposes embodiment. The accumulation of cultural capital in the embodied state, i.e., in the form of what is called culture, cultivation, *Bildung*, presupposes a process of embodiment, incorporation, which, insofar as it implies a labor of inculcation and assimilation, costs time, time which must be personally invested by the investor. Like the acquisition of a muscular physique, it cannot be done second-hand (so that all effects of delegation are ruled out). “ Pierre Bourdieu, 83 'The forms of capital,' Imre Szeman and Timothy Kaposy ed. *Cultural Theory: An Anthology*, pp. 81-87, Wiley, 2010.

The point here is not to criticize Bourdieu's conception but rather to point to how it differs from a sociology that while it fully recognizes what people do as what they do, is also oriented to how what they do is coordinated with what others do and is interested always in how people's doings become organized in sequential courses of action. For example, and related empirically to Bourdieu's interest in cultural capital in relation to different educational outcomes, Griffith and Smith investigated the work

that women do in relation to the schooling of their children in elementary school and could show something of what that work is and how variations in what mothers have time to and know how to do contributes to the way teachers' work gets done. , They linked their findings up with Ann Manicom's research on how in lower income areas, primary school classrooms have more children who lack some of the basic skills that children in middle-class areas bring to the classroom. Then teachers have to spend more time supplying training that's otherwise done at home and this means less time for the standard curriculum and hence that it's taught at a lower level. No causal implications here. We also learned of the importance for how schools can function of the timing of the school day: late arrivals could mess up the start of classes. In the middle class area, the mothers we talked to were very committed and put careful work into getting their kids to school on time; in the lower income, it was more mixed and that mix showed up in the principal's concern about late arrivals and the difficulties they created for the proper scheduling of required classes. *No deployment of causal logic here. What is being opened up is a work of discovering how a given aspects of people's experience of what they do is hooked up in sequences of people's coordinated work across different institutional settings.*

So here are three points of divergence in Institutional ethnography and what perhaps I could call the mainstream of sociology (which, of course, has many varieties):

- i. Breaking with the centrality of abstract concepts displacing and subsuming accounts of what's actually going on among people
- ii. Moving from making people the objects of study (explaining their behaviour, etc.) to making them the subjects whose everyday experience is an authoritative source for the ethnographer;
- iii. Avoiding conceptual or methodological tracks that individualize or attach what we learn to individuals as properties or attributes.
- iv. Opening up the work of discovering and mapping for people's use how people are active in the objectified (or ruling) relations that exist independently and overpower our lives.

So here's Institutional Ethnography's oversimple 'ontology' - the grounding of our research:

actual people  
+  
what they actual do and/or are doing  
+  
how what they do coordinates with others' doings

Note that what people do includes what they do in language, in thought and in feeling.

**2. The problematic and the ruling relations:** Exploring ruling relations but always from where people experience how they enter into their everyday lives - which may include the experiences, for example, of people working as managers.

As mentioned, IE got going as practices in sociological work with the women's movement in British Columbia. An approach was developed with sought to open up for activists aspects of what we then and still call the ruling relations and how they were put together in ways relevant to the issues being raised for change. Two aspects then to the problematic of IE research:

(a) It starts with something that's a problem for people, maybe even for the researcher. This sociology doesn't require an objectifying procedure that creates an object of study independent of the researcher's interests. The research develops by exploring the relations relevant to issues of concern.

(b) the general problematic then lies at the intersection of what's going on in people's everyday lives and the relations that reach beyond our ordinary knowledge and that cannot be tracked within the scope of our everyday doings.

But 'ruling relations' or 'institutions' - what are we talking about? Janet Rankin's and Marie Campbell's book on *Managing to Nurse* brings into view some of the ruling relations that shape our experience of the moment but which originate elsewhere and elsewhere. Their book opens with a description of nurses' coming on shift at a hospital.

#### Figure 1

It is 7:30 a.m., and outside the hospital, the sky is still dark. Nurses arrive at hospital wards for the day shift, most of them wearing pastel pantsuits and athletic shoes. Each wears a name tag that identifies her or his status as Registered Nurse or Licensed Practical Nurse. On Ward A the day nurses gather at the Nursing Station, check a printout of assignments posted on the wall, pick up paper and pencils, and go into the meeting room behind the desk. Listening to a tape-recorded message, they are getting the 'shift-change report.' One floor below, on Ward B, the change-over routine is slightly different. The newly arrived nurses check a written report left by the night staff, a tick-sheet that summarizes the night-time condition of their patients — their sleep, pain, confusion, incontinence, IV management, and so on — and they make notes, before heading out to begin their work with patients. This is the way an ordinary day begins for these nurses who are taking up their routine tasks as proficient members of a health care team. [Rankin and Campbell 4]

What is described here is pretty much what we might be able to observe if we got up early enough to be present as the morning shift comes on in any hospital in Canada. But looking carefully at the words used in this description, we can recognize a complex of generalizing relations which are implicit in it. Though we may hardly notice, there are words locating such relations, present and taken for granted and yet not visible, that are integral to the description. In Figure 2 of the same passage, they are marked in bold italics.

#### Figure2

It is 7:30 a.m., and outside the *hospital*, the sky is still dark. *Nurses* arrive at *hospital wards* for the *day shift*, most of them wearing pastel pantsuits and athletic shoes. Each wears a name tag that identifies her or his status as *Registered Nurse* or *Licensed Practical Nurse*. On *Ward A* the day nurses gather at the *Nursing Station*, check a printout of *assignments* posted on the wall, pick up paper and pencils, and go into the meeting room behind the desk. Listening to a tape-recorded message, they are getting the '*shift-change report*.' One floor below, on *Ward B*, the *change-over* routine is slightly different. The newly arrived *nurses* check a written report left by the *night staff*, a *tick-sheet* that summarizes the night-time condition of their patients — *their sleep, pain, confusion, incontinence, IV management, and so on* — and they make notes, before heading out to begin their work with patients. This is the way an ordinary day begins for these *nurses* who are taking up their routine tasks as proficient members of a *health care team*. [Rankin and Campbell 4]

The marked words locate the embedding of this daily local practice in relations that are not discoverable or observable in that place, at that time and among those people. A 'hospital,' for example, only exists as such as it is legally defined (probably in British Columbia where Rankin and Campbell made their observations) as a corporation; it has to be certified in some way and as you can tell, we don't know the details. There has also to be some way it's connected with the medical and nursing professions that are built into its existence as such. In Canada, it will be connected up organizationally, managerially and financially with the provincial health care system. You may be able to pick out other terms that hook up in such relations. Categories such as 'Registered Nurse' and 'Licensed Practical Nurse' carry implicit references to other institutional complexes such as colleges or universities with programs of training required for someone to be 'certified' as of this status. There are implications here of job-market relations and of the role of the medical profession in the certification of nurses.

Here at this intersection of people's everyday experience and relations reaching beyond is the problematic organizing Institutional Ethnographic exploration, beginning with people's everyday experiential knowledge, the ethnography moves to explore the relevant aspects of the ruling relations to discover how they're put together so that they enter an organize people's daily as they do. This then can become a focus of making change and what activists have learned both from their practice and for extensions of their knowledge created by IE exploration can then specify not only where change is needed but the implications of different kinds of change.

Thus when gay men were arrested for participating sexually in a gay steambath, George Smith, as gay activist, wasn't satisfied by the view of other gay activists, that the problem was police homophobia. He sought to find out how the police went about representing what the undercover officers could find in the steambath to fit their report to the categories of a law, called then the 'bawdy house' law, enabling thus the charges to be brought. He was not denying homophobia, but held that what was needed by activists was a knowledge of just what they were up against in the legal processes of the city of Toronto. More recently Alison Griffith and Dorothy Smith assembled a collection of papers by various institutional ethnographers that examine just how new managerial practices in the public service in Canada are reorganizing the front-line work of those providing services to people.

The term ruling relations directs ethnographic attention to relations and courses of action that are objectified in that they can't be identified with particular individuals nor can they identify specific concrete objects like tables and bottles of beer or crows flying east to Burnaby Lake when the sun goes down. Textual realities have to be worked up to fit the frames set up in the boss texts of ruling for institutional courses of action to go forward. These are forms of ruling that have developed progressively and increasingly rapidly and comprehensively with the development of technologies that enable words and numbers to appear in texts and hence to be read (seen or heard) at different times, by different people, in different places and detached from any speaker. As institutional language comes into practice a world of realities is brought into being is activated and gets done in real time and in real places by real people, but relies for its existence on the textual technologies. More or this later.

**3. Texts and the ethnography of ruling:** The recognition of replicated and replicable texts as material objects has been foundational to the possibility of extending ethnography into relations of ruling. First the invention of moveable type and the related industrialization of paper production had a progressively radical effect in creating an intellectual world, the bible, history, the novel, independent of oral traditions as well as remarkable historical moments as the appearance of *facts* in legal cases (Shapiro). Writing also advanced; handwritten copying was foundational to the development of

bureaucracy in France after the French Revolution, continued to be of central significance in governance both of the state until increasingly toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century began to be superseded by the invention of modes of industrializing local text production through the use of typewriters and employing women as typists, and the modes of copying of typed texts that enabled the progressive advance of corporate forms of management and the increasing scale of corporations. What is distinctive is the detachment of words as practiced from local speakers and hearers and the capacity they enabled for authority and facticity to appear as objective and courses of institutional action to be carried through without ascription to individual agents or individual motives.

In Institutional Ethnographies texts are not (or should not be) analysed apart from the actual sequences of action they coordinate. Discourse analysis has, of course, made significant achievements but the approach in all its varieties takes up texts as independent of particular settings of production or reading. There's a lot of good work done by institutional ethnographers that takes up texts as they enter into the organizing of people's actual courses of action. Because of the IE problematic most ethnographies connect with relevant texts in some way: Katie Wagner shows how the particularities of small organic farming in British Columbia disappear in the standardized coding procedures involved in certification as an 'organic farm.' Paul Luken and Suzanne Vaughan examine the 1930s US government/business involvement in the public visual imaging of suburban homes associating them with a public discourse linking the stereotypical suburban home to the ideal upbringing of children; Edward Vo Quang investigated how a faculty member went about completing a referral form to accompany a student's application for admission to graduate school and followed that up with an interview with the graduate admissions officer who would read the referral and apply it to the student's application. The latter interpreted the completed categories in radically different ways than had been intended by the writer of the reference. Rankin and Campbell showed how the computer technology managing the occupancy of hospital beds imposed on nurses requirements for freeing up beds called them to do work that was not fully compatible with what was best for patients. The filling in of forms and the entry of data into computers is currently a significant moment in the managerial organization of current Canadian public service.

**4. Institutional language** - the replication of texts in whatever mode detaches the words (and/o numbers) from the local presence of speaker and hearer. What we call the ruling relations are objectified and standardized across local particularities of people, time and place. That moment of textual detachment is integral to the objectification of ruling in relations that cannot be identified with particular individuals, events or settings. An important component is in the evolution of what we'll call institutional language. Here we pick up on institutional language in practice as it coordinates what people do, see, understand, across local particularities of time, place and person.

In the ordinary way in which we refer to objects or people or doings and so on in our everyday, we can direct attention to what we're talking about as something we have in common, a presence, something in our past, something we know we know and so on. Institutional language does not have determinate referents; agents, events, and so on that are identified in institutional texts can't be identified in the same direct way that a child calling on her mother 'Look, mom, a cat, a cat' pointing across the street and the mother turns and looks, and sees the cat and says, 'yes, Bonnie, that's a cat'. Janet Giltrow (1998), studying the language of management studies, found that the nominals characteristic of its style could not be unpacked to locate active and actual happenings. In management discourse, for instance, when she tried unpacking categories of agents, "the agents disappear as definite individuals. The reader cannot even determine whether the categories of agents locate the same or different people or how they may be connected (341)."

Although when people are doing what Alison Griffith has identified as 'institution talk', it may sound as if it's just the same as talking about apples, or the quality of meat in the local grocery, or what's the most convenient route from the bus terminal to my hotel, but there is implicit reference and reliance on a textually-vested ordering of people's doings. When Alison first came up with the phrase 'institution talk' she had been talking to teachers on the York University campus and they referred to 'levels'. It was clear they understood each other but she had no idea then what they were talking about. Later she discovered the 'levels' were as categorizing of students in class based on their performance in the Ontario standardized educational tests implemented by the Educational Quality Assessment Office established in 1996. Notice that you can't actually understand what's being referred to without knowing something about the institutional organization of local doings. The objectifying discourses of the ruling relations do not function descriptively. Their objectified and objectifying organization exists in language practices where reference is made to objects, people, doings, and so on but what is referred to isn't directly identifiable; it comes into being only as people organize their work/doings to realize what can be recognized within the standardizing frame.

Here's an instance that brings this difference into view. A textual conversation took place in public print: in the local newspaper, a professor wrote a personal account of having witnessed police harassing people on the streets in Berkeley, California. Then the city mayor distributed a public document providing an alternative account of the police actions (Darrough 1978; Smith 1990); The professor's story describes seeing a young man being grabbed by a police officer, searched rather roughly and then let go. The mayor's account is very different: "the young man was a juvenile;" he had a record; he was later charged with "being a minor in possession of alcoholic beverages" and was found guilty. We know how to fit the detail of what the professor saw into what is represented as an extended sequence of institutional action. The young man was already known to the police; the rough search presumably found alcoholic beverages on his person; he was not in fact let go but was charged and so on. Here then is a practice of words that subsumes the particularities of what the professor says he saw under the categories of an institutional course of action, locating the observed particularities as moments in that sequence.

Through the use of this language and these references we are at once located in a temporal structure extending beyond the present of the observer, whereby the local events become an instance, a mere moment, in an extended social course of action. To have a record, to be 'known' to the police, for example, is an organizational accomplishment creating a special character for whoever is located in the records of an organization. This is a form of social consciousness which is a property of organization rather than of the meeting of individuals in local historical settings. (Smith 1990).

**5. Some major research areas:** Off hand I can identify three major research areas that have been developed. I don't want to get too hung up on these since most likely, if I took this topic up differently I would end up with a different grouping. But these would all be there.

a. Let's take first the investigations of the social organization of the textual realities that have to be put in place to underpin institutional courses of action. As mentioned above, institutional language or, to use Alison Griffith's term, 'institution talk' has the distinctive property of independence from the particularities of people, events, objects and actions. It has the capacity to generalize across and standardize multiple concretely various actual situations, Unlike the verbal standardizing systems Luria's experimental work brought to light where the word that names an object also organizes and standardizes how it is perceived and, beyond Luria, the production of standardized objects like mugs, buses, and sidewalks that fit the 'verbal standardizing system'. It is a circuit that organizes

our everyday doings. Such circuits aren't engaged in institutional language. As we've seen, a category of agent doesn't identify a definite individual; the tech stacking shelves can't make contractual agreements for Tesco.

Textual representations are built by people whose coordinated work translates actualities of local and particular settings and the doings of particular people at particular times into what will fill the referential categories of the boss texts. While actualities can only be known by people experientially textual representations are accorded the authority of words that are independent of the particularities of subjectivity, that are not only verbal generalizers but are also standardized as 'the same' for different subjects and situations. They constitute realities independent of those who may have been experiencing and acting in the original actuality out of which the textual representation has been constructed. Somehow or other, out there, there's something that is being referred to. Reading linguistic studies, Dorothy encountered the work of Hans-Jörg Schmid (2000) who introduced her to a type of noun that lacks specific content-for example, 'thing,' 'fact,' 'case,' 'reason,' and so on and can be seen as waiting to be filled. He calls them "shells" (Schmid 2000 ..). We might think of the problem Giltrow locates as a general feature of the discourses organizing the ruling relations as that of 'shells' waiting to be filled by referents that can be located as people take them up in local settings, knowing how to translate local actualities into instances or expressions of the categorial shells.

Schmid's treatment of shells and how they are filled is confined to sentence structures or sequences, but his account suggested as analogy in how the categories of the boss texts of institutional discourse are also waiting to be filled with substance extracted from the actualities of people's lives and doings. The fillings are not the original actualities shaped perceptually but they are realities constructed in texts to fit the shells of institutional discourse. There are what we might call 'governing' or 'boss' texts for example theories, laws, procedures, policies, rules and so on that manage how actualities are selectively attended to in constructing textual representations that give concrete substance in the actual situations of people's ongoing work of delivering the everyday reality of the ruling relations. The process is circular. A boss text is set up. Inscription, that is, the work of selecting from actualities to make a textual reality is governed by the relevant boss text. Once an account of an actuality articulated to a given institutional course of action has been produced, it can be interpreted and handled for action within the relevant discourse/institution's scope. It fits the scope of the discourse's/institution's capacity to act. A textual reality has been created. George Smith's investigation - referred to earlier - of how the undercover police report of gay men's sexual activities in a steambath is designed to fit the categories of Ontario 'bawdy house' law is a good example. What he calls a 'mandated course of action' follows: charges are brought; people are arrested, and so on. A course of institutional action is enabled that imposes its own temporal order on the everyday of people's living. Gerald de Montigny's study of 'social work(ing)' brings into view how the language of social work discourse (he uses the concept of ideology) is brought into play in the work of producing a textual representation of a possible case of child neglect in terms that legitimate the removal of the child from home and the later the determination of its future in court.

b. A major innovation has been introduced by Susan Turner who developed procedures for mapping sequences of action in which the work of various positions involved in arriving at a decision on plans for development in a ravine in the municipality of Guelph and the textual mediated coordination of different levels and different moments, enabled her to map the whole sequence of decision-making, including the involvement of local residents, that led to the initiation of the actual development. What is remarkable is how decision-making is uncovered as a sequence of organized action, involving multiple players, making visible, among other things, how different stages levels of government, etc. are coordinated over a period of time, including the crucial decision-making moment of the municipal



council meeting at which the final development plan, resulting from these multiple steps of textually visible are problems in the municipal bylaws relating to the city's capacity to adequately control the environmental effects of development.

c. a third area has been the exploration of how the installation of new forms of public management in the public sector in Canada affects the work and work organization of those at the front-line who deliver services to the public, to people. The study by Rankin and Campbell of how nurses' hospital work has been reorganized with the introduction of new managerial technologies was an important introduction to a more general issue in Canadian public services. provided a remarkably fine and innovative introduction Alison Griffith and Dorothy Smith took up this theme, expanding it to a wider range of institutional settings, in an extended workshop in 2009 in which participants contributed a variety of papers for discussion. Then papers were produced on a range of cases, including, among others, the standardization of non-governmental literacy training organizations practices to conform to internationally recognized prescriptions; of the work of nurses in hospital is reorganized to meet the requirements of standardizing technologies; the introduction of standardized testing for public schools in Ontario and its consequences for the organization of classrooms; the local work implications of introducing new systems of accountability into non-governmental organizations providing services to people with disabilities, and so on. What emerges from these studies is what Griffith and Smith (2014) describe as 'institutional circuit' in which systems of formalized representations are required to render front-line workers 'work accountable within a managerial system. The ethnographies focussed here are concerned with how those responsible for front-line work with people reorganize their work practices as they are subordinated to managerial assessments and accountability.

There are, of course, many institutional ethnographies which don't fit any of these three broad categories. I am, with a colleague Nicola Water, inviting contributions to a collection of papers reporting on the 'g' work that patients do in the contemporary health care system. A basis of this exist in the earlier work of Eric Mykhalovsky and Liza McCoy whose work in revision will be included. No doubt other groupings can be identified, but these will do for now.

**6. How to research?** The overall approach is ethnographic. However those people whose everyday knowledge becomes our resource are not the objects of study nor are their cultural practices as such. Objectivity for the institutional ethnographer does not depend on creating an artificial separation of her/his interests from the investigation. Indeed those interests are a further motive for making sure that the ethnography gets it right; we want to know just how things have gotten put together as they have. We may begin indeed from our own experiences of problems in our lives. Alison Griffith and I undertook the research on which our book *Mothering for Schooling* draws, we had for some while spent time with each other as single parents of boys in elementary school talking about how we were treated as defective parents so that any kind of problem with our kids, no matter what, was automatically ascribed to our defect. Alison's doctoral dissertation then explored how the category single parent came into play in educational administration and in teachers' talk in Toronto. We then took up an investigation of just what was the work that mothers were doing that the school depended upon. Susan Turner in her innovative mapping of the municipal decision-making in the planning and development of housing to be established in a wild ravine close to her home began with her experience of being notified of the proposal and from there of going to council meetings, etc. She cared about the ravine. The work of exploration and discovery motivated by specific interests actually drives the researcher to care about the accuracy and adequacy of her/his data and findings. It matters to get it right and to learn what may actually have application when change is sought.

In what follows, I take up two research practices: interviews/observation and texts.

a.. Interviews or just talk: The institutional ethnographer learns from respondents, those sh/he talks to. There may be formal interviews but sometimes those involved can simply be asked about some aspect of what they do and are active in. In exploring what people do, we have found it useful to work with what we call our 'generous notion of work' that is a concept of work that extends it to what people do that involves time, effort and intention. Take, for example, something like sitting in emergency waiting to be called for treatment; that's work in the generous sense involving management of the body as well as of the mind, let alone of pain that may be being experienced. This concept is not imposed on findings as an interpretation, it is rather a useful orientation of interest that enters into the researcher's dialogue with respondents, guiding them towards becoming concrete about what they know of and in the particulars of their everyday lives. And people do know a great deal, of course, though for the most part they are not used to telling about it in the kind of concrete detail that the ethnographer goes after. Jill Adams developed an ethnography of the process of getting restraining orders for women who are seeking protection from partners who abused them, got the clerical workers who did the intake procedure to describe their work by asking them to imagine they were training her for the job.

What has to be recognized is that interviews and/or observation are always dialogues. The researcher brings interests; among her/his interests as an ethnographer is learning as much as s/he can about how things are getting done so that what is learned can be relied on. This means asking for concrete detail, for examples, for specification. Listening is an art; questions the researcher may have should not interrupt what the respondent is developing in his or her talk. Prompts to say more or simply silence promotes the respondent's telling more and sometimes bringing into view something of which the researcher had been quite unaware.

One of the ordinary and easily invisible problems in our learning conversation with respondents arises when they use what, as mentioned above, Alison Griffith has called 'institution talk'. As has been stressed, institutional language does not have determinate referents; agents, events, and so on that are identified in institutional texts can't be identified in the same direct way that a child calling on her mother to look at a cat across the street. A difficulty can arise for the researcher if s/he's familiar with the processes that are being spoken of using 'institution talk. S/he may find when the recording is listened to or transcribed, that it is useless that it actually lacks the kind of information needed for an ethnography; a lot of generalized terms are used to talk about the world out there, but they are vacuous, empty. What were we talking about? Where is my data? Because the institutional language was familiar and s/he (the researcher) could assume s/he knew what was being talked about, the data was simply not there. Thus when the researcher encounters 'institution talk', it's the time to be alert and to press the respondent to explain, say more, give examples, and so on. The researcher's ignorance is a serious advantage and knowing too much - or thinking you know - already can be a serious problem..

The ethnographer learns as people speak their experiences of what they do. The grounding of the ethnography is always the actual practices of people as they go forward in actual settings and at actual times in coordination with others. The method of inquiry into social relations extending beyond individuals is to learn about someone's actions as a 'moment' in a sequence in which others have been or will be acting. This 'moment' is situated in the ongoing, concerting and coordinating of individuals activities. Here is the social as the discursively constituted object of IE's business. *In any particular ethnographic project, it is to be discovered, not theorized.* The researcher learns from people's own experience of their doings as they tell it or from observation or a combination of the two. Hence for institutional ethnographers those the researcher works with are not the objects of study; we have to *learn* from people about what they do and how they go about it. And we learn from their experience.

'Experience' is a dialogically organized resource grounded in people's everyday life. Although it carries the authority and seems to refer to what has been directly ongoing in someone's consciousness, in practice, if we examine how the term is used, we can see that it always involves the selective organizing of words in how it is spoken or written, even when it is to oneself. It locates a dialogic tracking back in memory to what did go on in someone's consciousness and, unless drawn from a past too far away, it can be indefinitely expanded as the dialogue in which it has arisen asks for more. This capacity of people to draw more from what they have spoken of when they draw on memory has its limitations of course, as memory does, but it is also useful to the ethnographer as s/he encourages respondents to expand on something they have already begun to speak of. Adding to the specifics and detail is also confirmation of the accuracy of what someone has begun to tell you about. The actuality of which you want them to speak is brought further into view as experiential capacities are stimulated to extend and provide concrete detail.

Recorded interviews should be transcribed; it is the nature of conversation of this kind, perhaps of all, that the interviewer's focus limits what is taken in and learned in the course of the interview. Reviewing the transcript will likely bring into view aspects of what the respondent has told that weren't registered by the researcher in the ongoing interview. This may be of special importance when what is learned by reading directs the researcher's attention to something s/he hadn't thought of before or that suggests what might be fruitfully followed up with others involved in the course of action under study.

I find it useful to index transcripts. The emphasis here is that this isn't coding or the imposition of any categories that interpret. It is strictly a procedure like that used in indexing a book that enables subject matter or names to be located. It's handy when later work needs to select aspects of the recorded material in developing the ethnography. I use an electronic data analysis application because it does a good job for me. Caution has to be used in choosing which application to work with since some embed established qualitative approaches such as grounded theory and you don't want your data messed up by methodologies designed for different outcomes (I use MaxQDA).

b. Texts. As mentioned, the incorporation of texts into Institutional Ethnography's ethnographic practice is essential in its move to draw the ruling relations (including contemporary institutions of all kinds as well as corporate forms of organization, discourses, and so on) into ethnographic scope. What is central to this move is (a) attending to those texts as material objects that are replicable, indeed are replicated. Their material character may on paper as print, electronic, recorded sound, photographic images, television, and so on.. Here, however, we take up only printed or electronic texts in words or numbers. A matter of what we know how to do.

In taking on texts in ethnographic research, it is essential to bring them into what people are doing. We've sometimes talked of texts as 'occurring' so that we have the sense that however dead they may be on shelves, in computers, in files etc. they become significant in coordinating people's doings across different sites and times as they are activated. A text should not be analysed apart from the course of action in which it has been or will be activated. While there's much fascinating analysis of texts has been developed in the field known as 'discourse analysis' it simply doesn't apply to institutional ethnographic engagement with texts as they are brought into play. Analysis of an isolated text is possible if it can be situated in a course of action that does not become available for investigation and if the text is written in such a way that analysis can focus on how it is organized and organizes in relation to what has gone before and on how then it will be read. (I did an analysis of a psychologist's report on a mother implicated in a child custody case). But there's no one way of working with texts; most of the time, the easiest and most straightforward is to ask people who are working with a given text and can tell you what they are doing with it and where it goes. Filling in forms, for example, is very general.

Who fills in the form, whether it's on paper or on a computer, has to resolve actualities as they are known to them into categories; the completed form then becomes the textual representation of that actuality as it is taken up next. People can talk about how they went about filling in a form, how they compressed or sorted aspects of their lives to determine which blanks to tick.

That the completed form or report goes somewhere and is read or made use of in electronic applications should be kept in mind even if the practicalities of the research, including its economies of time, monetary costs etc., mean that it cannot be explored. The organized production of textual realities is essential to the activation of institutional courses of action such as, for example, bringing charges against individuals accused of domestic abuse on the basis of police reports that fit state/provincial law. Ellen Pence did extensive investigations of the whole sequence of the course of bringing charges against someone on domestic abuse grounds, from the police call to the domestic abuse situation, through their report to charges, trial, recommendations to the justice responsible for sentencing. Some of what she learned led to consultations with the police in Duluth resulting in a major revision of how domestic abuse calls were taken up that made it possible to avoid isolating a particular incident and have some record of the history of abuse among particular partners.

7. **Developing the ethnography**, that is, the account you have arrived at that responds to the problematic posed at the outset of your study is never complete. I use the metaphor of a large circular magnifying scope over a map of trails centred on the hotel in Vermont where I was staying one winter with my son and daughter-in-law for a winter vacation of cross-country skiing. The trails did not, of course, end with the edge of the magnifying scope. They were present as a potential for further exploration, but the detail was made visible. An institutional ethnography gets built as different parts are brought into the ethnographer's scope. Janent Rankin and Marie Campbell did a study which they called 'managing to nurse' which brings the new managerial order of Canada's health care system into view. In their book they told what they had learned in talking with nurses who had had to find ingenious ways of opening up a bed, for example, by getting a patient out of hospital who in many ways isn't ready to go directed attention to the new managerial technologies being put in place. These shift decisions of this order to a technology which records beds and their uses and the needs of incoming patients and imposes on nurses the requirement that they somehow find ways of bringing local realities in line with the textual realities of management even when it does not seem locally practicable. Their study opens up a region for further exploration, namely how new forms of public management are organizing the health care systems of different provinces in Canada. *One of the things that makes is a valuable model is that the managerial order is brought into view in how the changes in nurses' work in that hospital is described.* This opens the possibility of exploring other trails, taking us further into the relations of ruling.

Building an ethnography on the basis of observation can be very powerful, Michael Corman's study of the work of paramedics in Edmonton is a very fine example (Corman 2017). The big problem with observational work is that it is enormously time-consuming. I haven't addressed the 'how-you-do-it' of observational research here because although I have had some experience (unsuccessful) of observational work, my own preference has been interviewing whether as a formalized engagement or more informally, simply talking to people and asking questions. There are examples also of ethnographies based on the researcher's own experience and in such cases, of course, the time has already been committed though there is the additional work of making notes and perhaps keeping a journal - an informal personal writing with dates added, but it is not a diary and there's no commitment to write everyday.

You do not need a sample of respondents; as each describes say, their work in a given setting (and

remember work in the 'g' sense) including how it coordinates with others' work, you may need to get a range of different experiences in order to find be able to develop an adequate grasp of a given institutional course of action . Ellen Pence, for example, made observations of a range of police responses to domestic abuse calls in order to be able to spell out adequately how the various reports that resulted fed into the process of bringing criminal charge. And the research process, because it is essentially a project of discovery, does not simply produce a body of data then to be analyzed. The research at one point may point to doors that need to be opened that did not become visible until some observations or conversations with respondents - a problem for the ethical review process but very advantageous in terms of the research economy and for how 'analysis' develops in the course of the research process. That follows from undertaking research as a project of discovery.