

New Developments in Ethnomethodology

July 7-9, 2025

PROGRAM

Centre for Criminology and Sociolegal Studies

University of Toronto

Canadiana Gallery, CG 160

14 Queen's Park Crescent West

Toronto, ON M5S 3K9



Centre for Criminology & Sociolegal Studies
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

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Rm CG160

Welcome to the Centre for Criminology and Sociolegal Studies (CrimSL) at the University of Toronto! We are excited to host the fifth meeting of New Developments, and the first time the meeting has been hosted in North America.

The University of Toronto and CrimSL have been home to numerous ethnomethodologists and fellow travellers. Most notably, Dorothy Smith was affiliated with U of T's Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) for most of her career. CrimSL faculty and researchers have included ethnomethodologists Michael Lynch, Gus Brannigan and Clifford Shearing. It was visited by Harold Garfinkel, Aaron Cicourel, John Kitsuse among others in the 1980s. In 1991, Ian Hacking, a frequent and amicable contributor to EM scholarship, was bestowed the rank of University Professor of history and philosophy of science. And our neighbouring institution, York University, was also home to an active EM community through the 1980s and 1990s led by Roy Turner, Peter McHugh and Alan Blum.

New Developments is primarily interested in what comes next for ethnomethodology. Attendees may be interested in reaching out to current faculty and students at OISE, the Institute for History and Philosophy of Science and Technology (IHPST), the School of Cities, or any of the numerous research units based at U of T. There are also several well-known members of the EM community in Toronto and the surrounding area, many of whom are planning to join us for the workshop.

Toronto is an exciting and multicultural international city with a vibrant waterfront, parks, culinary and artistic venues, and the city comes alive in early summer with events and activities. We hope that in addition to the workshop, you find time to explore the city and all it has to offer. If you're interested in suggestions, please feel free to reach out, and we'll be happy to make recommendations.

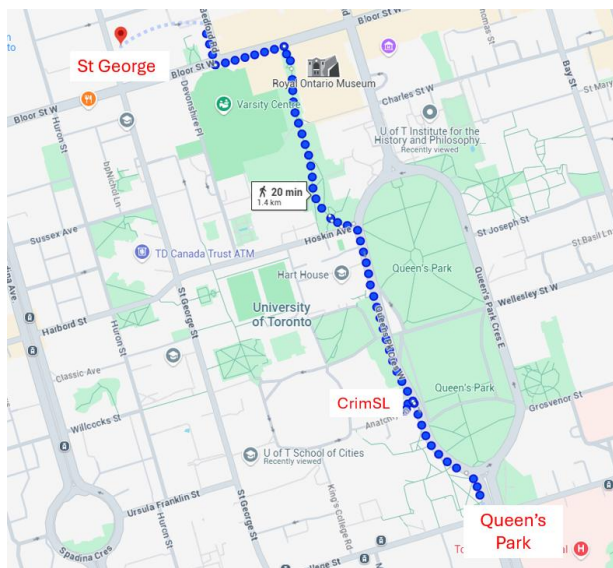
Getting Here:

Toronto, and the university, are easily accessible by air, rail, and ground. Pearson International Airport is located in the city's west end, and is the most likely arrival point for international travellers. Uber, Lyft, and Hopp are all readily available in Toronto and the surrounding areas, and there are [conventional airport taxi services](#). The [Union-Pearson Express Railway](#) takes passengers to the heart of downtown Toronto in 25-minutes and departs Pearson four times per hour. Travellers arriving from closer destinations may choose to fly into Toronto Island Airport, and most airlines operating out of the island offer a complimentary shuttle downtown.

Travellers arriving by rail will arrive at Union Station and can connect from there to the city's transit network

including subways and streetcars. U of T's campus is served by the University branch of subway Line 1, or the Spadina streetcar.

The Canadian Gallery is located at 14 Queen's Park Circle West. It is approximately 350-metres from Queen's Park subway station (use the north west exit), or 1400-metres from St. George Station served by Line 2 (Bloor-Danforth). Those travelling onto campus via taxi can instruct the driver that the Canadian Gallery is located due west of the main public entrance to the Ontario Legislative Assembly at Queen's Park.



Map from the Subway Stations



Canadian Gallery Entrance

Program

Monday, July 7th

9:00am – **Introductory Remarks**

10:00am – **The Craft of Ethnomethodology** (Phil Hutchinson, Manchester Metropolitan University; Francesca Williamson, University of Michigan).

In this interactive one-hour session, we invite participants to reflect on the practical challenges of doing ethnomethodological research—before, during, or after a study. Drawing on themes from the forthcoming volume *The Craft of Ethnomethodology*, the session invites participants to briefly reflect on a moment in one of their own projects and then share and discuss this in small groups. Together we'll examine whether and how the familiar stages of research hold up under EM scrutiny, what gets lost in retrospective accounts, and how we make our research accountable as EM work. The session aims to generate insight, critique, and possibly even new contributors for the book. No presentations—just collaborative exploration of what it means to practise the practice.

11:15am - **Working Out Livingston's Promises** (Robin J. Smith, Cardiff University)

The planning for this talk preceded the publication of Livingston's (2024) "Ethnomethodology's Broken Promise" article. I had originally planned to make a plea for 'mere description' and, in particular, observational studies which do not necessarily rely on video and audio recordings. We seem – taking the IEMCA of 2024 as a sample – to have settled in to something of an orthodoxy in which descriptive 'ethnographic studies' may have been side-lined. I had intended to reflect on some of the troubles with the reliance on video materials, as well as what is lost when we neglect direct participation and observation, and subsequent reports, as modes of inquiry and analysis. In is context, Livingston's article, read through a positive lens, offers a number ways out – new directions, perhaps – for EM. And so, in this paper I will work out some of significances of Livingston's recommendations, as well as their limitations, for workplace studies of the sort I have been conducting in recent years with the police and with a mountain rescue team. In conclusion, I return to that original plea, and make a case for the continued significance of 'real' fieldwork, as well as considering some of the troubles and possibilities of 'training' those setting out to conduct observational studies for themselves.

1:30pm - **Why XAI Cannot Make Do Without EM? Rethinking the Way XAI is Conceived and Designed** (Patricia Jimenez, Paderborn University)

This presentation aims to contribute to the field of Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI). Specifically, it examines what an ethnomethodological ordinary language philosophy inflection might bring to discussions on context and practice of explanations in the design of interactive XAI systems, as an area of current interest to XAI developers (Rohlfing et al. 2021; Booshehri et al 2024). Drawing on the analysis of video materials where different AI systems are explained and materials gathered through a semi-ethnographic project involving "living among" computational scientists working to make XAI more "social", the presentation engages with long-standing debates of the assumptions underpinning AI research and their manifestation in practical work with such systems (Suchman 1987; Button et al. 1995). In addition to providing a conceptual critique of XAI and addressing the commensurability of ethnomethodological insights with XAI technical practices, the presentation works to understand what members do when they explain AI.

2:30pm - Repairing Society, Respecifying Economy: Tool Libraries as 'shop floors' of the Circular Economy
(Shawn Boden, University of Edinburgh)

This presentation introduces data from a long-term project studying the work of Tool Library volunteers to build local infrastructures for circular economies. Tool Libraries are seen as innovative forms of activism which reduce local carbon emissions by maintaining an inventory of borrowable tools. However, this has not always been the perceived purpose of Tool Libraries: the first known Tool Library opened in the US during World War II as a response to wartime scarcity. This research project therefore investigates Tool Library members' situated work to uncover and accomplish new 'public goods' delivered in and as the Tool Library, combining ethnomethodological study of their in vivo activities with archival research of these activities' changes over time. The presentation situates initial data analysis within reflections on Harold Garfinkel's early inspiration for ethnomethodology from accounting to consider the ways funding audits press Tool Library volunteers to routinely reinvent their organisations' local accountabilities.

3:45pm - A Study on the Diversity of Sensory Modes as Resources in Orientation and Mobility Training
(Yasusuke Minami, Seijo University)

In the case of Orientation and Mobility training for persons with visual impairments (PVis), the Orientation and Mobility specialists (OMSs) construct the training based on the PVis' multi-sensorial recognition of objects. In terms of object recognition, there is the case where the OMSs announce in advance that an object is present using its name, and the PVis recognize it. We call this projected recognition. Conversely, there is also the case of retrospective recognition, where the PVis notice an object that has not been announced as being present and recognize it, and the OMSs provide the name of the object afterward. On the other hand, there are cases where the PVis recognize objects in a way that is not available to the OMSs. Echolocation is one typical sensory mode. When PVis use a mode that is not available to the OMSs, such as echolocation, the recognition that is projected may be presented as a possibility and take the form of a test. In retrospective recognition, the PVis notice an object and ask a question about what it is. The OMSs carefully monitor the level of echolocation of the PVis and select landmarks or guidelines to proceed with the training. In this presentation, we compare cases in which PVis apparently use echolocation with the basic cases and argue that the basic order of sequences remains the same.

4:45 – “I told you so!” Longitudinal EMCA of Warnings (Jonas Kramer, Bielefeld University)

One relatively new development in EMCA is the emergence of longitudinal CA (see Deppermann and Pekarek-Doehler 2021). It focuses on explaining the change of practices over time. Due to this focus, the emerging longitudinal CA struggles with keeping an emic, ethnomethodological perspective on their observed phenomenon. When we as analysts compare different methods over time, it is us, and not members, who categorize them and claim that they share enough similarities to be the same phenomenon. But how can we do justice to the occasioned production of social order when we try to analyze change from an ethnomethodological point of view? Hitzler and Kramer (2024) argued that by focusing on how members bring about change in their lifeworld, instead of focusing on changing practices, a longitudinal EMCA can keep an emic focus and thereby represent members' perspectives. This is what I am about to demonstrate in this paper. I aim to show how members create a “warn-able” in their lifeworld, how the “warn-able” is realized and communicatively shared, how the warned thread fulfills itself and how members handle that trouble. In doing this, I show the members' orientation to a shared transitional order that goes beyond the situation at hand.

Tuesday July 8th

9:00am - Stripping Systemic Racism from Police-led Strip Search Practice: a Case Study in the Reproduction of Colourblind Racism (Monika Lemke, York University)

In recent years, conversations about the reform of the Toronto Police Service's (TPS) strip searches have centered around the desire for quantitative assessments about the extent to which officer decision-making about whether to conduct a search is a site of racialized bias. Following the completion of this study, which found that Black and Indigenous arrestees were disproportionately subjected to strip searches, the TPS maintained that racism can be reformed out of the police practice. I use the case of strip searching's review at the TPS as an opportunity to reflect critically on the affinity that Canada's colourblind racial ideology has with the "quantification" (Merry 2016) of race-based police officer decision-making and its implications for research on race and policing. I trace the formation of the colourblind police oversight and governance to law's colourblind legitimating and regulatory discourse on strip searches, which together form the structure for police-led strip searching to construct and reproduce racial order while obfuscating from the racial interests and outcomes in policing. As I do so, I highlight the way the state's official discourses articulate the familiar tropes of colourblindness, namely that racial difference is natural and value-neutral and racism is a historical or a matter of individual ignorance or bigotry (Bonilla-Silva 2017), which relate to policing's ongoing systemic racism in probabilistic and abstract ways.

10:00am - New Developments in Interactional Research on Race Talk in Institutional Settings (Francesca Williamson, University of Michigan; Natasha Shirkant, University of Colorado, Boulder)

In this presentation, we explore analytic tensions and possibilities for research on race, racialization, and racism in institutional settings. Specifically, we consider how we might surface the 'seen but unnoticed' relationship between race and social interaction through analyzing how mundane, seemingly non-racial talk in an institutional setting plays a role in constituting the setting as racialized. In our forthcoming book, *Race Talk in Institutional Settings: A Language and Social Interaction Perspective*, we consider various approaches to studying race-in-use, or how people make race-related knowledge relevant during interaction in ways that accomplishes interactional and institutional aims. In doing so, we create a legible path for studying race, racialization, and racism through a language and social interaction (LSI) perspective, which we refer to throughout this book as a race talk approach. We also illustrate how an LSI perspective adds to or complicates race-related studies and co-exists and, at times, stands in tension with various approaches to researching racial phenomena in institutional settings. In our talk we will outline our race talk approach and discuss key tensions related to (1) participants' orientations/members' phenomena, (2) observability/witnessability of racial phenomenon, (3) warranting claims about racial phenomena, (5) questions about 'critical' perspectives, (6) settings for research on race-in-use, and (7) the epistemic politics of research on race/ism. Overall, in our presentation, we invite curiosity and dialogue about how to advance interactional research on race, racialization, and racism.

11:15am - Police Discretion as Interactional Work: Categorization in Police-Citizen Talk in Japan (Satoshi Imai, University of the Ryukyus)

This paper explores how discretion is accomplished through interaction, focusing on categorization practices in police-citizen negotiations during "voluntary accompaniment" (nin-i dōkō) at a Japanese koban

(community police station). Drawing on ethnomethodology and membership categorization analysis, I examine a rare case in which police-citizen interactions were audio-recorded during a prolonged negotiation. The analysis identifies three key interactional practices that organize discretion: (1) category-based complaints invoking moral and procedural discrepancies, (2) strategic ascriptions and disavowals of membership categories (e.g., “officer,” “suspect,” “victim”), and (3) proposals framed as beneficial, using “for-your-good” devices that tie category affiliation to institutional outcomes. These practices show how both police officers and citizens mobilize social categories to negotiate authority, cooperation, and legitimacy in situ. While officers refrain from overt coercion, their proposals generate cumulative pressure by appealing to identities that the citizen wishes to claim—particularly that of the “victim.” However, once transferred to the police station, the promised categorization was reversed, revealing a discontinuity between institutional representations and actual treatment. This study contributes to the literature on street-level bureaucracy by demonstrating how discretion is interactionally achieved and sustained. Rather than being a matter of individual decision-making alone, discretion is shown to be deeply embedded in the real-time negotiation of identities, responsibilities, and institutional relevance.

1:30pm - Practices of Language Adoption and Changes in Member Competence (Marian Sloboda, Charles University)

I would like to discuss the possibilities of ethnomethodological study of long-term changes in members' competence. In former Czechoslovakia, pizza and the first pizzerias appeared after the fall of communism in 1989, but today, elements of Italian cuisine are widely known in Czech society. Something similar seems to be happening right now with Vietnamese language and food culture. As a frequent guest of Vietnamese restaurants, I have been noticing that within the usual practices of ordering, paying, etc., there also are sequences in which the staff, often upon request, “teach” customers the names of dishes and instruct how to eat and drink. As far as language is concerned, what is going on here is not the highly normative “language learning” as in school or “language acquisition” as in children, but a phenomenon of a different type that some sociolinguists call “language adoption”. The manifestations of Vietnamese knowledge in my data (recordings and field notes) sometimes help categorize the knower as “well-traveled”, “cosmopolitan”, “husband of a Vietnamese” etc., but often simply as an ordinary guest. It seems as if the same is happening with bits of Vietnamese language and culture as with Italian thirty years ago. My question is how language-and-culture adoption emerge, or else: how practices result in such a society-wide change, in yet other words: how a minority's culture becomes part of the majority's. Goodwin's (2018) concept of co-operative action seems to provide a solution, but I am not sure and hope to find answers at the workshop.

2:30pm - Distributed Culpability in Trials of Police Officers (Carmen Nave, University of Waterloo)

In trials of police officers charged in relation to on-duty shootings, systemic issues in policing are often presented by defence as a strategy for distributing blame and lessening the culpability of an individual officer. In this presentation, I explore 2 cases in which systemic problems were used to explain and excuse officer behavior: in the trials of Ray Tensing defence portrays him as low in the police hierarchy, carrying out policy in a neutral and appropriate way while simultaneously making implicit references to the fact that the chief had stepped down during a review of leadership after the shooting. In the trial of Philip Brailsford, the prosecution and defence both emphasized personal responsibility, but the defence situated that responsibility within the context of group action and team leadership. They were thus able to suggest that Brailsford was individually responsible only in terms of his response to the situation—a situation that included the escalation of tension caused by his Sergeant. I argue that not only are systemic problems

difficult to account for critically in trials, but that common-sense understandings of group responsibility mean that lawyers are able to situate their clients within a dysfunctional system as a way of shifting responsibility away from the individual's actions and toward a distributed culpability. This distributed culpability is recognizable to jurors as limiting or eliminating individual responsibility, but is not legible to the court and therefore court cases can produce results where an acquittal according to the strict legal interpretation of the case does not satisfy the moral interpretation that something has gone wrong.

3:45pm - From Persons to Practices: Resisting Analytical Individualization (Jakub Mlynar, HES-SO Valais-Wallis University)

Ethnomethodological and conversation analytic (EM/CA) studies are often grounded in “analytical individualization”, attributing social actions to persons or individuals. This paper suggests a shift, drawing on a radical understanding of the notion of “member” to focus on how concrete “persons” and unified “individuals” are constituted in and for social situations, rather than assuming them a priori as analytical resources. The “individuality” of “participants” matters analytically when it demonstrably matters to the situation’s “staff”. By orienting to the practical ways in which individuals/persons are recognized and maintained as social objects, the paper challenges the focus on individual participants and their interactions as the loci of social activities. The notion of “membership” is not tied to a person but consists of competent practices — doings, not the doers, are at the center. I will discuss implications and challenges related to the appropriation of these foundational principles of EM/CA for empirical studies of actual social phenomena. Although the notion of individuality as an interactional achievement and the notion of membership as an alternative to the common-sense idea of personality are firmly grounded in classic EM literature, they seem to be marginalized or neglected in recent work. This may be encouraged by the established practices of describing human conduct, such as attributing utterances to speakers. Other terms also support analytical individualization: e.g., the notion of “inter-action”, like “inter-subjectivity”, presupposes distinguishable individual actors and subjects. My aim is to suggest a critical reconsideration of some of these axioms and discuss their analytical consequences.

4:45pm – The Shape of Ethno to Come: A Discussion (Michael Mair, Liverpool University)

We are in the planning stages of creating a research centre for Ethnomethodology. In this session, we will discuss what such a centre may try to achieve, how it would try to achieve that, and what kinds of resources and activities would be beneficial to graduate students, early career researchers, and mid-career faculty.

Wednesday, July 9th

9:00am – Alternative Academic Pathways and Industry Research – a panel on alternative career tracks for ethnomethodologists (Jacki O’Neil, Microsoft Research Africa; Mike Clarke, Shopify; Erik Vinkhuyzen, Alliance Innovation Laboratory)

11:00am – Replies (Mike Lynch, Cornell University; Peter Eglin, Wilfrid Laurier University)

12:30pm – Concluding Remarks

**** Boxed Lunch Provided ****

	Monday, July 7 th	Tuesday, July 8 th	Wednesday, July 9 th
9:00am	Introductory Remarks	Stripping Systemic Racism from Police-led Strip Search Practice Monika Lemke	Alternative Academic Pathways and Industry Research Jacki O’Neil, Mike Clarke, & Erik Vinkhuyzen
10:00am	The Craft of Ethnomethodology Phil Hutchinson & Francesca Williamson	New Developments in Interactional Research on Race Talk in Institutional Settings Francesca Williamson & Natasha Shirkant	
11:00am	Intermission		
11:15am	Working Out Livingston’s Promises Robin J. Smith	Police Discretion as Interactional Work Satoshi Imai	Replies Michael Lynch & Peter Eglin
12:15pm	Lunch		Concluding Remarks
1:30pm	Why XAI Cannot Make Do Without EM Patricia Jimenez	Practices of Language Adoption and Changes in Member Competence Marian Sloboda	
2:30pm	Repairing Society, Respecifying Economy Shawn Boden	Stuck in the Screen Carmen Nave	
3:30pm	Intermission		
3:45pm	A Study on the Diversity of Sensory Modes as Resources in Orientation and Mobility Training Yasusuke Minami	From Persons to Practices Jakub Mlynar	
4:45pm	“I told you so!” Longitudinal EMCA of Warnings Jonas Kramer	The Shape of Ethno to Come: A Discussion Michael Mair	
6:30pm	Dinner (Sneaky Dee’s)	Dinner (Canoe)	

