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## Book Review

# Karpiak, Kevin G. and William Garriott, eds. 2018. *The Anthropology of Police*. London & New York: Routledge.

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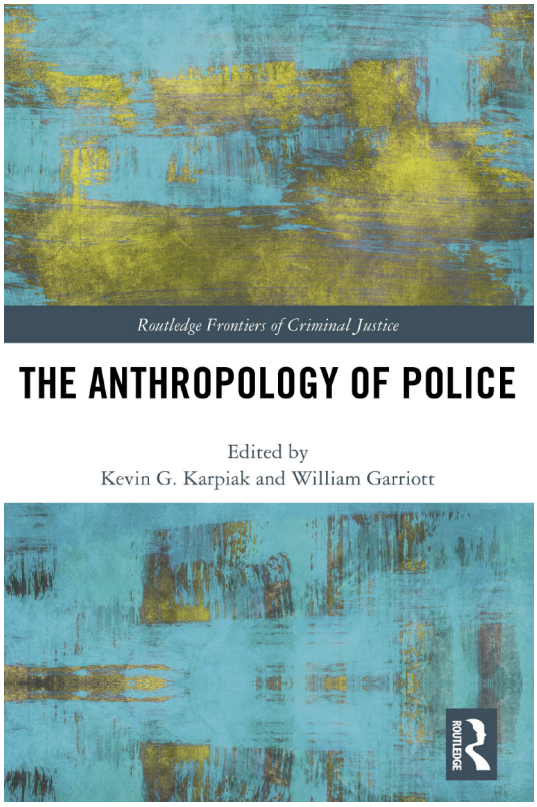


Hostile encounters between citizens and police officers regularly make news headlines across the globe. One does not need to look far to bear witness to the use of (excessive) force by police officers. These encounters raise questions pertaining to the role and nature of contemporary policing and the role of the state at large. What do we want and expect from (good) police officers? How can we minimize their use of force? And how can we ensure that police forces are accountable and equally serve all citizens?

Over the past decade, such questions have increasingly been raised and answered by anthropologists. Criminologists and sociologists have largely dominated scholarship on policing, while anthropologists were rare tourists to this terrain, somewhat accidently stumbling upon an unknown territory. Yet, anthropologists have been increasingly situating the police as an explicit object of their inquiry. This is reflected in the emergence of insightful and beautifully written monographs, including the likes of Didier Fassin (2012), Julia Hornberger (2011), Beatrice Jauregui (2016), and Graham Denyer Willis (2015), to name but a few (see also Beek et al. 2017; Garriot 2013; Fassin 2017). These ethnographic accounts, along with a range of other critical publications that can-

not all be mentioned here, have resulted in a growing sub-discipline labelled as the 'anthropology of police.' The edited collection, *The Anthropology of Police*, by Kevin G. Karpiak and William Garriott is a welcomed addition to this surging anthropological focus on the police. As highlighted by the editors, the anthropology of police 'remains an emergent enterprise' (p. 4) and this assortment provides thought-provoking and meaningful contributions that force us to think further about what dimensions of police work demand more meticulous consideration, and which benefit from anthropological insights.

This volume is divided into three distinct parts, each addressing a tension that emerges from the human dimensions of contemporary policing. The first part – *Legacies and Lessons* – is of a more conceptual and sketches how an anthropology of the police can provide further avenues for conceptual sophistication and juncture. This includes the contribution by Peter K. Manning on the (possible) intersections of police studies and anthropology; an analysis of the concept of 'police culture' by Jefferey T. Martin; a reflection on the (absent) role of the medical police in the United States by Matthew Wolf-Meyer; and two chapters that specifically address the benefits of anthropological work, namely Jennie M. Simpson's chapter on how anthropological knowledge is put into practice and Avram Bornstein's convincing claim that police officers can benefit from the critical thinking resulting from anthropological fieldwork.

The second part – *Publics and Relations* – analyzes the relationship between the 'public' and the 'police' and contains more empirically-based pieces that tease out some of the most critical and problematic dimensions of everyday police work. This includes Katherine Verdery's reflexive account of analyzing her own Romanian police file from the 1970s and 80s; Yağmur Nuhrat's analysis on the relationship between the Turkish police and football fans in Istanbul; Erika Robb Larkins' critique on the public-private policing divide based on her extensive research in Brazil; and Paul Mutsaers and Tom van Nuenen's chapter on the various public reactions to the death of Mitch Henriquez in the Netherlands.

The third part – *Espirit de Corps* – aims to convey some of the different attributes that make up the police and highlights some of the moral issues that define contemporary policing. This includes Didier Fassin's chapter on the punitive tenet of certain French police units, Laurence Ralph's piece on police torture of suspects in Chicago, and Heath Cabot's analysis of the idea of the 'good police officer' in Greece.

Each part has a different emphasis, and yet they are tied together by two key issues. The first is the multiplicity of methods that are used by the various contributors. This collection contains beautiful vignettes drawn from extensive ethnographic fieldwork, such as Matthew Wolf-Meyer's encounter with his neighbor's septic tank strategy (chapter four) and Yagmur Nuhrat's (chapter eight) experience with a protest in one of Istanbul's busiest streets, but also attests to the in-depth analyses that can be yielded from longitudinal fieldwork in a particular place, such as Erika Robb Larkins' comprehensive analysis of policing in Brazil. We also see

how various other methods indicate that anthropology is not only about ethnography, but also about the 'kinds of questions posed' (p. 104). This includes the archival work done by Katharine Verdery (chapter 7), the media analysis conducted by Paul Mutsaers and Tom van Nuenen (chapter ten), and the analysis of legal case files by Lawrence Ralph (chapter twelve).

The second, and perhaps most enlightening and encompassing dimension of this volume is the attention paid to the role of violence in each contribution, outlining the centrality of violence to everyday police work, both empirically and conceptually. Jeffrey T. Martin's (chapter three) discussion on structural and direct violence, wherein he defines police culture as 'a process through which structural violence is translated into overt, tangible form' (p. 34), provides a more conceptual analysis of violence, while Yağmur Nuhrat (chapter eight) portrays how violence becomes inscribed in the bodies and subjectivities of those who experience police violence. Some chapters focus explicitly on the use of physical violence by police officers, such as Laurence Ralph's (chapter twelve) analysis of torture inflicted by Chicago police officers, while Didier Fassin (chapter eleven) and Heath Cabot (chapter thirteen) theorize the moral dimensions of police deviance and what is understood with effective and 'good' policing. Taken together, this edited volume evocatively demonstrates the problematic reality that violence is a dominant part of contemporary policing across field sites, from New York City to Istanbul to Romanian archives. In doing so, the volume succeeds at 'putting "the human" question at the forefront of an inquiry into policing', which is, as the editors contend, 'one of the strongest threads connecting the chapters in this volume' (p. 7).

This edited collection is an essential reading for anyone doing research on the police, particularly in anthropology, and can excellently serve as compulsory reading material for courses that deal with policing and security more broadly. Yet, simultaneously, I also question whether the editors have accomplished what they set out to achieve, namely 'to explore a deceptively simple question: what are the potential contributions of anthropology to the study of police?' (p. 1).

As the editors state, this question comprises two more complicated ones – namely, what is distinctive about anthropology and what is understood with 'the police'? A potential way in which this could have been done is to focus more on what is *not* anthropology and what is *not* police. Although Peter K. Manning's chapter (chapter one) eloquently outlines how an anthropology of police is much-needed, the volume would have benefited from a more thorough engagement with insights of scholars from other disciplines, such as criminology and political science. As highlighted by Sausdal in his critique on this volume: 'Another problem with the anthology is its lack of engagement with sociological and criminological work on policing' (Sausdal 2019, 615). I concur and find it to be a shame that most of the contributors do not connect more intensely with insightful perspectives from other disciplinary thinkers.

Similarly, in order to uncover what the police is, it would have been useful to shed more light on the ways in which the police differentiate themselves from actors

that so closely resemble them. This would have been an easy task: one of the key debates within the policing literature of the past two decades across various discipline is the pluralization and globalization of policing: policing is not just an engagement of the police, but it is performed by a variety of actors across the globe, ranging from gangs to vigilante groups to private security companies. Various conceptual frameworks have been established to analyze this pluralization, such as the security network (Dupont 2004), security assemblage (Abrahamsen and Williams 2011), and nodal framework (Shearing and Wood 2003). Yet these frameworks and debates are almost absent from this volume. The exception is Erika Robb Larkins (chapter nine), who explicitly investigates the prominent role that corporatized private security labor plays in 'hospitality security' and how this constitutes a distinct sphere of policing. In order to uncover the anthropology of the police, a more systematic engagement with an anthropology of *policing* would have been productive.

The questions of what is *not* the police and what is *not* anthropology, could have further outlined how the anthropology of police, as a sub-discipline, is so crucial, distinct, and essential in order to understand everyday police work across divergent localities. Despite this shortcoming, this collection will unquestionably act as a primary source of inspiration in the years to come, for myself and others working on policing more generally.

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