Book Review

Rice, Stephen K. & Michael D. Maltz, eds. 2018. *Doing Ethnography in Criminology: Discovery through Fieldwork*, Cham: Springer.

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Criminology is currently undergoing a shift. If some of its classic studies have been solidly anchored in ethnographic inquiry (such as Banton 1964), the method lost ground. Preference was given to quantitative tools and the positivistic preoccupations with objectivity that follow from the discipline's ties with 'evidence-based' policy, on one hand, and from the increase of the public's concern with crime and security over the last half century, on the other. However, in recent times, criminologists have rediscovered ethnography, partly because of important works that have shaped the field of policing studies in anthropology over the last two decades (from Caldeira 2000 to Fassin 2013, among many others), or the success of ethnographies of crime and criminalization (such as Goffmann 2014). This is a welcome shift. Through the in-depth,

complex data that it generates, ethnography produces nuanced, sophisticated, reflexive insights. Knowledge of this kind being more than needed in criminology, this volume is a timely argument for taking ethnography seriously again.

The book continues the editors' preoccupation with reflection on research methods and with the backstage of knowledge production in criminology (Maltz and Rice 2015). It argues for the need of acquiring in depth data while exploring re-

flexively the ways in which the personal, through the researcher's positionality and experience of and in the field, is involved in producing knowledge. The book is mainly addressed to criminologists more versed in quantitative research or mixed methods, and the tone of more than a few chapters strikes as a plaidoyer – at times convincing, but at times also more timid – for criminologists to consider the benefits of ethnographic research. Whereas the editors present the book as 'a bunch of stories that we hope convey the flavors of the ethnographic enterprise', at times the volume does more than that.

Although principally addressed at a public of criminologists as an invitation to 'discover' the data through ethnographic fieldwork, the volume includes a few chapters by exceptionally seasoned ethnographers (Ferrell, Garriott, Manning, Treadwell) that will be of interest to anthropologists already versed in the method, too. At any rate, the volume spans a wide range of diverse topics from police (Armenta, Dabney and Brookman, Garriott, Manning) to school discipline, security, and punishment (Brent, Kupchik), from drug use, trade, or treatment (Bucerus, Copes, Fleisher, Miller, Wakeman), to gun violence and gangs (Panfil, Urbanik), and from prisons (Crewe, Herbert, Sumner, Sexton and Reiter) the criminalized (Farrell, Wallace), terrorists (Hamm), psychopaths (Helfgott), or football hooligans (Treadwell) to courts (Barrett). Anthropologists researching these fields will benefit from the chapters' insights and the ethnographic experiences described and commented.

The collection makes for a compelling text book for criminology students, too. In a context in which ethnography is not really taught to future criminologists, as Fraser argues for the UK (p. 181), the volume fills an important gap in teaching in criminology. Likewise, noting how in leading criminology and criminal justice journals only a small percentage of publications use qualitative methods (Panfil, p. 262), the call for scholars to adopt ethnographic methods in these fields will hopefully be heard. While the volume is presented as an argument for criminologists to consider ethnography as a valuable research method, many chapters extend in more detail into the nuts and bolts of ethnography, synthesizing lessons for future ethnographers in crime-related research. Transversally, the themes approached encompass the research process and issues of access (Barrett, Bucerus, DiPietro), relationships in the field (Crewe, Copes, Miller, Panfil), emotions and affect (Copes, Herbert, Dabney and Brookman, Fleisher, Hamm, Herbert, Wakeman, Urbanik, and Ferrell on 'getting the emotional register right'), knowledge and epistemology (Brent, Crewe, Ferrell, Fleisher, Miller), representation and writing (Armenta, Barrett, Crewe, Fleisher, Panfil), and ethical issues (Dabney and Brookman, Urbanik). A few chapters deal more extensively with the ethnographer's self either in the autoethnographic process (Ferrell, Wakeman) or as a lens through which critical analysis can be produced when one's biases become exposed (Wallace).

It is impossible to summarize all the twenty-eight chapters here, but I will highlight a few points. The vast majority of the chapters draws upon the researchers' per-

sonal experience engaging in ethnography (or what Helfgott calls ‘the spirit of ethnography’ in mixed methods) and have a light, conversational, and pedagogic tone while imparting the lessons learned – often the hard way – in the field. A few chapters chart the trajectory of their authors from a quantitative profile to the progressive embrace of qualitative methods among which ethnography, often battling against prevailing positivistic attitudes in the discipline and against reviewers contemptuous of such subjective knowledge. Such chapters are well placed to convince skeptics in criminology about the usefulness of ethnography, but for an audience of anthropologists they will hardly bring any novelty, except perhaps to document the qualitative shift in criminology. One chapter that stands out as less fitting in the volume is the one by Rengifo, Green, Slocum and Ho, who describe their ‘Systematic Social Observation’ approach grounded in *counting* instances of disorder and social control in a high-incarceration neighborhood, but miss the ethnographic long-term, thick and participant engagement, and the critical analysis (what is ‘disorder’, according to whom?) that would have made the chapter less dissonant.

One of the weaknesses of the book as I see it is the choice of the editors (described as ‘the easy way out’) to present the chapters alphabetically, instead of organizing them according to a distinct logic. Beginners in ethnography – or those interested in adopting it in the future – could be discouraged by the lack of a systematic build up that would prepare them for ethnography in the serious way it deserves. This is a pity especially because otherwise structured, the volume would have surpassed its relatively modest ambition to merely introduce ethnography to criminologists. Such a build up could have started with general issues such as what is – and is not – ethnography, why ethnography instead of quantitative approaches, technical or practical issues in the field (like DiPietro’s ‘rookie mistakes’ or Urbanik’s tale of navigating the bureaucratic hurdles of a research ethics board amidst a gun violence crisis) and the context in which ethnography can(not) be produced adequately in an accelerated academia (Fader, Fraser). It could have then continued with the more complex pieces that address sophisticated angles such as emotions, relations, and the ethnographic self in the field, and which make the bulk of the volume. Then, it could have tackled the process of representing the research participants in ethnographic writing. Ending with the heavy-weight chapters by Ferrell (radically pushing ethnography as a way of living and taking sides politically) and Hamm (in which we learn how ethnography is not fun, or cool, or exciting, and how taxing it can be for the researcher) would have then sparked a serious reflection on whether the researcher is well equipped and willing to ‘try [ethnography] just a little, to see what happens’ (Wakeman, p. 334). After all, like Treadwell puts it in his chapter, ‘ethnography is not for everyone; some won’t like it, and some won’t get it’ (p. 296).

The volume could have benefited from including scholars having worked in non-western contexts, too. All of the authors are either anglophone or based at English-speaking universities; their experience is limited to the USA, the UK, Canada, and only exceptionally Europe (with one chapter on the experiences of American

scholars in Danish prisons by Sumner, Sexton, and Reiter, and the chapter by Canada-based Sandra Bucerius about her earlier research with drug-dealing youth in Germany). The volume's anglocentrism (both in terms of authors, and in terms of fieldwork areas) is one of its weaknesses, all the more puzzling since anthropologists working the world over have used ethnography in fields related to crime and justice and could have provided valuable and complementary insights. Language is not the issue, to be clear: both Caldeira's (2000) and Fassin's (2013) ethnographies are available in English; yet they are not quoted a single time in the volume.

The anglocentrism of the volume also raises questions as to how the discipline of criminology is globally distributed in places of power and coloniality, and to the epistemological implications of such a distribution. But this critique sketches a discussion perhaps out of scope here. Suffice it to say that if one stays with the declared goal of advocating for Western criminologists to take up ethnographic methods in their research and showing the complexity of such an endeavor, the book fulfills its promises. It is to hope that the conversation the editors wanted to ignite in criminology will extend beyond disciplinary walls to include the exemplary yet missing ethnographies of crime and crime control produced by anthropologists.

References

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