Ethno graphy

Ethnographies and/ of violence

Gareth A. Jones
London School of Economics and Political Science, UK

Dennis Rodgers ⓘD
Graduate Institute of International and Development
Studies, Geneva, Switzerland

Abstract
This paper examines ethnography as both a methodological practice and a form of writing, and specifically how ethnography as a textual product may shape and be shaped by the methodological process. We argue that a critical discussion of this relationship is especially important in relation to the ethnography/ethnographies of violence. Examining a range of recent texts, we consider whether different forms of violence necessitate, or have prompted, different styles of ethnographic writing. The paper raises questions about how decisions to adopt particular styles of writing can affect the substance of empirical material, and we reflect on the use of *testimonio*, biography and quasi-novel, as well as issues of anonymity and composite characterisation. Finally, the paper introduces the special issue contributions from five authors, who were invited to contribute reflections on the multiple ways in which their field method has intersected with representation, textually and intellectually.

Keywords
ethnography, violence, representation, style, method

Introduction

The term 'ethnography' has always had multiple connotations, for example referring to a specific research methodology or process, to a particular research ethos

Corresponding author:
Dennis Rodgers, Research Professor, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Case Postale 1672, 1211 Geneva, Switzerland.
Email: dennis.rodgers@graduateinstitute.ch

focused on the search for meaning, or else used to denote the textual product of such research, normally a particular type of book or monograph. Despite this obviously polysemic nature, it is rare to find reflections on the relationship between these different aspects of ethnography. This is arguably particularly true with regard to ethnography as a methodological practice and as a form of writing. Certainly, there are many considerations of the practical and moral issues surrounding ethnography as a method, including for example Horstense Powdermaker's *Stranger and Friend* (1966) or Paul Rabinow's *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco* (1977), to name but two classics of the genre. Similarly, ever since the publication of James Clifford and George Marcus' *Writing Culture* (1986), there has been a steady production of works that examine ethnography as a literary artefact (see also Geertz, 1988; Van Maanen, 2011). Yet few of these actually connect to each other, as David Mosse (2006) highlighted in his 2005 Malinowski Memorial lecture, where he explored how his ethnographic interpretation and representation of a West Gujarat DFID-funded development project could not be conceived in isolation of his ethnographic fieldwork, as the two reflexively shaped each other.

Mosse was particularly concerned with the way that individuals with whom he had interacted during his fieldwork sought to have a say in how he interpreted and represented their actions in his subsequent monograph, *Cultivating Development* (2005), noting how contrarily to the past, when 'the field' and 'the office' had been very separate spaces, these were now increasingly connected. While an important and under-considered issue – but one that will clearly become ever more common in an age of social media[1] – another perhaps even less examined aspect of the relationship between the methodological and representational dimensions of ethnography concerns how the substance of the latter can shape, but also be shaped by, the style of the former. Even if there has been a steady scholarly production about the interpretative nature of ethnography ever since Clifford Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), some of which considers ethnography both as method and as representation (see Lichterman, 2017), the connection has rarely explicitly been articulated as a specific concern.

This paper consequently seeks to explore how ethnography as a textual product may shape and be shaped by the methodological process. We argue that a critical discussion of this relationship is especially important in relation to the ethnography/ethnographies of violence, about which there have been some major controversies in recent years. Specifically, we consider whether different forms of violence have prompted different styles of ethnographic writing, and how the difficulties of conducting fieldwork in conditions of conflict and violence necessitate particular ethnographic strategies, in methodological and representation terms. As we reflect, how researchers engage with 'violent actors' or their victims, the empathies that are engendered in the process of fieldwork, will influence how violence is 'seen' and recorded. We attend also to different approaches to 'style and substance', how decisions to adopt particular styles of writing may affect the presentation and interpretation of empirical material, and how ethnographers have adopted the

use of *testimonio*, biography and the writing of quasi-fiction to facilitate their craft. The paper concludes by reaffirming a need for ethnography to attend to how relations with field method intersects with representation, textually and intellectually, if it is to understand what violence does and what it means in the lives of those who experience it every day, before presenting the papers that make up the special issue and highlighting their contribution to the debate.

Ethnography and violence

Violence is obviously a particular phenomenon, which, as numerous scholars have highlighted, is highly revelatory of basic social processes (Arendt, 1969; Howell and Willis, 1989; Riches, 1986; Rodgers, 2016; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004). It is also a phenomenon that sheds bright light on the particularities of the relationship between ethnography as method and as writing. The methodological nature of ethnography means, as Stephen Lyng (1998) has put it, that it is inevitably a 'dangerous method' when turned to the study of violence. Ethnographers are forced to take on moral and physical risks; indeed, he argues, such research inevitably requires putting oneself in harm's way in both a corporeal and normative sense. This is true whether the ethnographer aims to study a particular group, practice, or context associable with violence. Over the past two and a half decades, there has developed a growing corpus of methodologically reflexive work on the ethnography of violence – e.g. Sluka (1990), Nordstrom and Robben (1995), Ferrell and Hamm (1998), Greenhouse, Mertz, and Warren (2002), Kovats-Bernat (2002), Rodgers (2007), Goldstein (2014), Koonings, Kruijt, and Rodgers (2019), among others. There has been less reflexive thinking about the way that ethnographic research on violence is intimately connected with particular forms of ethnographic representation.[2]

It is worth asking, for example, whether we can write ethnographically about all forms of violence in the same way. Do particular forms of violence bring different qualities and constraints to the task of ethnographic writing? Take the fact that many forms of violence are often spectacularly dramatic in nature. As a result, they naturally call for the ethnographer's attention, sensationally attracting their methodological and theoretical gaze in a way that more mundane social processes might not. As Ben Penglase (2014) has pointed out, however, this can over-determine violence, placing the phenomenon centre-stage to the detriment of other important social processes. One question, therefore, is the purpose of writing about violence as an event at all, noting that violence often presents itself as a paradigmatic example of what Guy Debord (1967) labelled 'spectacle', yet the spectacle is always embedded within a broader context, and our approach to doing so, whether and how to write about dramatic events and whether and how to represent them as ordinary, is unquestionably critical.[3] Having said this, when seen from this perspective, it is perhaps not surprising that most ethnographies of violence tend to explore the phenomenon in a way that portrays it as a negative externality rather than situating it more constitutively in relation to life more generally, for example

seeking to understand violence as part of a broader spectrum of everyday practices. Such circumstances provoke key questions about the relationship between method and representation. For instance, how can an ethnographer write up an account of their research on violence without becoming either highly sensationalistic or completely relativistic? And, how might this representational work contend with violence as a spectacular event in the moment with the long-lasting and less visible traumas that it might imply?

For many researchers, these dilemmas are reconciled by the fact that the decision to adopt ethnography as a practice is not just a methodological choice but a political act, it reflects an alignment with the marginal, the poor, and those for whom violence is not an abstract 'poetic' or discursive field but a material feature of everyday life. The focus on violence is justified as a means of getting to grips with the fact that 'the tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the "state of emergency" ... is not the exception but the rule', as Walter Benjamin (1992 [1968]: 248) famously put it. Yet such a position poses numerous questions. How far should ethnographers adopt an appreciative gaze with regard to perpetrators of violence? Many of the narrative tropes and strategies deployed in writing about violence are clearly based on precipitating a sense of empathy or pity among readers, which is obviously more difficult to do in relation to torturers than their victims, for example. How can ethnographers avoid an *a priori* decision to romanticise violent actors, to over-extend their good traits and humanise their dispositions while obscuring their more brutal actions and less palatable attributes? Conversely, how can we link characters and personalities to actions and outcomes that are less observably positive without demonising them? There seems to be certain types of violence about which it is easier to develop a sympathetic representation or, conversely, a sense of indignation. It might be that a poor, black gang member can and should be depicted as the victim of broader structures of discrimination and exclusion that provoke indignation, but imagining a sympathetic and less essentialising portrait of a rapist or a child molester is more difficult.[4] To a certain extent, this is perhaps due to the fact that the gaze remains resolutely focused on the individual in the case of the latter, while for the former it is grounded in a collective interpretation.

The latter is something that Philippe Bourgois wrestles with in his landmark ethnography *In Search of Respect* (1995), when he recounts the occurrence of gang rape among drug dealers in East Harlem. Over a number of years of ethnographic interaction, he had become accustomed to recollections among his key informants of mugging, theft and fights, often over drug-dealing, and he was also all too aware of the negative effects of the crack that the drug dealers sold in East Harlem and beyond. These he found he could rationalise, and indeed, a central purpose of Bourgois' volume is to highlight the way that interpersonal violence was very much a reflection of structural violence, to challenge the culture of blaming the poor for their poverty and violence. Hearing an account of a gang rape, however, forced him to rethink his relationship with people whom he considered to be 'friends' and also confronted him starkly with the gendered nature of much of

the violence that he was encountering. His social network now consisted of what he realised to be 'veteran rapists', whose everyday accounts of other forms of violence had socialised him into certain assumptions about the phenomenon's normality. The realisation did not undermine his general analysis, but it did prompt Bourgois (1995: 207) to wonder, if he exposed the widespread use of rape in his text, whether 'readers would become too disgusted and angry with the protagonists of the book and deny them a human face'. Partly as a result – and especially when compared to the way that he writes about other acts of violence in the volume – Bourgois adopts a particular tone and authorial position when he writes about gang rape, making clear to the reader his 'disgust' at what 'Primo' and others are telling him, and how they are telling it. In so doing, he skilfully exposes how rape is rationalised among the rapists – women are 'living fucked up', according to Primo who claims that hanging around is tantamount to 'asking for it' and many like it, even though it is admitted that some are forced and beaten – while standing outside such accounts of rape and showing how they support broader forms of oppression such as mainstream notions about 'evil Puerto Ricans' and machismo. At the same time, while clearly setting out the line for his personal disgust, Bourgois also reveals how in private, individual, moments some of his informants expressed remorse at what they had done, thereby humanising them, and partly resolving the representational dilemma that his encounter with the phenomenon of gang rape generated.

The dilemmas of proximity and distance

Bourgois (1995: 18) argues that his particular mode of representation sets out to avoid writing what he terms a 'pornography of violence', by which he means a representation that sensationalises and stigmatises. The issue is clearly not just one of representing violent events and contexts in a morally contextualised and nuanced manner, however. It also relates to how the ethnographer engaged with the violence while in the field. What is at stake here is well illustrated by the recent debates around Alice Goffman's (2014) monograph *On the Run*, which explores how poor and especially black neighbourhoods in the US have become targets for a surveillance and revanchist state, as a result of which, for young black men in particular, life has become a daily round of dodging police, avoiding repeated arrest, beatings, and incarceration. This is not necessarily a new argument, but Goffman brings a rich and lively urgency to her ethnography of '6th street' in Philadelphia that is illustrated with powerful vignettes of underhand tactics by police, prison authorities and hospital workers, and the desperate attempts by some – women in particular – to protect kin and friends from a cycle of crime and violence.

Goffman's ethnography has however been heavily criticised, with claims in particular that the text has sacrificed accuracy for sensationalistic representation of events, with some critics even wondering whether key events were made up or, at best, unverified hearsay (Lewis-Kraus, 2016; Lubet, 2015, 2017). Others have argued that the focus on young black men with extended records of felony

convictions, lives enveloped in the drug trade and violence, and relations with broken homes and absentee fathers, builds on the very stigmatic representations that Goffman claims to challenge (Betts, 2014; Van Maanen and De Rond, 2017). This means that the Philadelphia community that she studied therefore becomes understood through crime, violence and the actions of a repressive state, and little attention is given to other events and processes taking place in the area, or other dimensions to people's lives. The draw of crime and violence are such that they 'take over' the text, and become more prominent on the page than may be the case materially on the ground. The danger, in other words, is that violence as subject constructs how ethnographers understand and convey people's subjectivities; often implicitly, people become defined through their relations to violence and even 'as violent'. Particular groups are especially susceptible to this, young men of colour most obviously, but also particular spaces such as the *barrio*, *favela* or township, and the prison or detention centre.[5]

Another accusation levelled at Goffman is that the attention she affords to crime, violence and 'race' makes her guilty of a 'swaggering adventurism', to quote Lewis-Kraus (2016), or as Betts (2015) puts it, that the 6th Street becomes 'a jungle' full of 'danger and excitement' for a white, privileged, woman. Such critiques are by no means new, especially of ethnographies where violence is a central theme. But they are not always raised consistently. For example, it is striking how much of the censure encountered by Goffman focuses on her gender and ethnicity, especially when compared to criticisms of Bourgois' research.[6] A more universal critique is that any study of violence that deploys ethnographic methods is frequently associated with 'thrill-seeking' (Lee, 1995). The notion of the ethnographer as 'thrill-seeker' highlights well how the critical methodological ambiguities surrounding ethnographic research on violence can spill over into ethnographic representation. This is very clear for example in Lubet's (2015) attack on Goffman, where he rather infamously claimed that because she consciously became involved in the conduct of a potential revenge killing after one of her long-time key informants was killed, this opened her to the possibility of being charged with conspiracy to commit murder. Much of the often highly vitriolic – for academia – debate about this accusation has revolved around whether Goffman's act was a 'momentary aberration' from a lucid and ethical ethnography or followed a belief that she was being ethnographic by not simply following events but being tied in to the emotions associated with them. One of the more judicious interventions was provided by Chancer and Jacobson (2016: 242), who in their search for a more nuanced stance about Goffman's actions, suggest that 'vengeful feelings emerge(d) not haphazardly but from the structural position she, like her informants, found herself in, and she felt bound to chronicle and record them'.

At the same time, however, a critical question concerns whether we engage in particular forms of ethnographic research and writing about violence due to the particular nature of violence itself. Certainly, a case can be made that all ethnographic research that tackles violence faces the methodological dilemma of 'how

close' one should get to the action, and whether even the researcher is aware of just how close they are or should be. As ethnography involves co-presence, the capacity or opportunity to withdraw from activities, especially if being witness to particular actions is relevant to the research itself, can be difficult, even impossible. Indeed, in most cases ethnography requires a conscious intent to seek out people and places likely to be involved in criminal activity and violence. In many instances, therefore, ethnographies and/of violence involve close witness to and knowledge of criminal acts, and possibly even participation in them, to the extent that it can be argued that the ethnographer of violence will inevitably be complicit in violence (see Sluka, 1990; Inciardi et al., 1993; Bourgois, 1995; Rodgers, 2007; Contreras, 2013; Beauchez, 2017). Having said this, whether it is the researchers' role to be involved to this degree is obviously highly debatable.

Certainly, it is interesting to note in this regard that despite the title of his 2008 ethnographic monograph *Gang Leader for a Day*, Sudhir Venkatesh never describes himself as actually participating directly in any form of violence. In particular, he recounts a striking episode where he witnesses a gang beating but actively decides not to intervene, and does not directly confront those involved, although he does subsequently ask questions about the attack (see Venkatesh, 2008: 63–4, 69–71). To a certain extent, though, Venkatesh was fortunate to be able to make this choice; as others have pointed out, this is not always an option, especially in violent circumstances (Pieke, 1995; Rodgers, 2007). At the same time, one reason why Goffman's account jars with many is because, as Dennis Rodgers (2007: 459) has pointed out, the ethnographer 'might be imagined as a victim of violence', but 'not as a potential perpetrator of violence'. This, he argues, is 'linked to a particular moral bias, whereby many social scientists investigating violence often do so with an agenda, looking to find positions from which "to speak and write against violence"' (Nordstrom and Martin, 1992: 3). It is obviously much easier to do this from the perspective of victims rather than victimisers, although some ethnographers have presented a more complicated account of this apparently simple distinction while maintaining a concern with the former (Wolseth, 2011).

While being witness to or knowing about a beating, rape or potential murder might prompt a particular reflection, ethnography should, if not uniquely, suggest that moral standpoints are not binaries between the actions of the good and evil or motives of legitimate and illegitimate violence (Auyero and Berti, 2016; Bourgois, 2002; Porter 2017). Our disgust at rape or child abuse might be straightforward and (quasi-)universally shared, but how do we relate reflexively to 'everyday' forms of violence, the small acts of brutality, that are often times not witnessed, that take place away from view, defying the ethnographer as both participant and observer? How do we weigh up knowing that mothers beat sons to prevent them from joining gangs, or that people in conditions of abjection and poverty are able to survive by selling drugs or using them? While ethnographers, as others, may highlight their identity and draw some limits to possible actions at numerous moments while in the field, this can never be a constant engagement. We may occasionally express a desire to 'stop the car', as it were, or even be advised not to get involved in an event

or leave the scene, but the intersubjectivity of research necessitates some 'going with the flow'. In the field, these questions will be mediated by emotions of excitement, fear, naivety or a will to 'do something', and will never reflect objective or omniscient decision-making.

Indeed, in a more abstract sense, reflexivity is often appreciated after the event. It is then, most likely, that the researcher will analyse their position in the events they have been caught up in and consider the moral, even possibly the legal, context or consequence of what happened.[7] This raises critical issues of temporality that are directly linked to the task of ethnographic writing. Although Gerard Suttles (1976) famously made the point that the process of ethnography tends to provide a fixed narrative arc through which the ethnographic story begins and finishes with the arrival and departure from the field, this is only really true of one aspect of the research, its actual empirical production. The way we think subsequently about this empirical material will shift significantly. For example, while in the field, we may be more or less inhibited in our relation(s) to violence as practice, but once at our desks the same thresholds may be less certain, or rather the frame for reflexivity might shift.[8] An ethnographic account framed in terms of the concept of 'structural violence' for instance poses a very different judgement about drug dealing than one written around the notion of 'inter-personal violence' or 'self-harm', for example and is therefore likely to invoke a different reflexivity to those actions from an author's normative or political standpoint (see Auyero, 2015a).

This is by no means only a theoretical concern, insofar as writing up ethnographic research – and arguably especially that focused on violence – in particular ways can have consequences. One of the major critiques of ethnographers' involvement in the US Army's 'human terrain' system in Iraq and Afghanistan was that it had the potential to actively endanger those that it researched, for example (González, 2008; Forte, 2011). Conversely, sometimes writing ethnographic research can put the ethnographer in danger as a result of what they write about those they studied. Nancy Scheper-Hughes (2000) for example famously described being physically expelled from the village of 'Ballybran' when she returned 20 years after the fieldwork that led to the publication of her 1979 ethnography *Saints, Scholars and Schizophrenics: Mental Illness in Rural Ireland*, because villagers felt betrayed and were unhappy with the way she had portrayed them.[9] Few ethnographers have the reflexive confidence of Scheper-Hughes to write about such negative experiences, however, and we have not been able to find many other documented examples of ethnographers who have suffered violence as a result of their research, although two examples include Robby Roks (2017), who reported suffering physical intimidation by members of the Dutch Crips gang that he studied because they wanted the real names of some of his informants whom they felt had insulted the group's leader,[10] while Myrna Mack, a Guatemalan anthropologist, was killed by a military death squad in 1990 after documenting and denouncing the indiscriminate suffering caused by the Guatemalan army's counterinsurgency operations in the early 1980s (see Oglesby, 1995).[11]

The relationship between style and substance

Beyond the content of the research and its representation, there is also clearly an important relationship between the style of the research and its representation. Take, for example, one of the most important new forms of ethnographic writing to have emerged in the past half century, the '*testimonio*' or testimonial narrative. Formally this is a first-person account, generally intended to bear witness to (and denounce) violence and human rights abuses, although in actual fact the account is more often than not collected by a researcher – frequently an ethnographer – who then writes it up. The most famous example of such a form of ethnographic writing is undoubtedly *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala* (1984), which was written by the Franco-Venezuelan anthropologist Elisabeth Burgos-Debray on the basis of 25 hours of intensive interviewing that she carried out with Menchú during the course of a single week in January 1982. The book subsequently became controversial (see Stoll, 1999; Beverley, 2004), at least partly because of the way that *I, Rigoberta Menchú* was researched and written. Presented as the voice of Menchú, the text was clearly edited and organised by Burgos-Debray in a particular manner, despite the fact that the latter had no ethnographic knowledge about Guatemala. Whether this would have been as controversial had Rigoberta Menchú's life been entwined with something other than genocide is a key question to consider.

Indeed, it is something that comes out clearly in relation to another form of writing that exemplifies the duality of ethnography as method and textual product very well, namely the biography or extended life-history. A great many studies of violence draw from and write through a biographical medium, notably via the use of vignettes or a detailed rendering of a limited number of characters (e.g. Auyero, 2015b; Beauchez, 2017; Bolten, 2012; Enloe, 2010; Goddard, 2018), but in a few cases the near entirety of a text is structured around a single biographical account. A stand-out example is Robert Gay's 2005 volume *Lucia: Testimonies of a Brazilian Drug Dealer's Woman*, which deploys biography as a device to give the text a structure, as we hear through the pages about the life of an individual in thematic and broadly chronological order, and as a means to extend out to wider issues, ranging from police actions in the favela, the motives and operations of the drug trade, to the uses and meanings of violence (see also Rodgers, 2016).[12] In the hands of a skilful ethnographer, the power of biography is its accessibility in two senses, access to the complexity of an individual's account of her life that might otherwise remain obscure, and accessibility of textual style, a pace and tone often lacking when themes are 'voiced' through an author bringing together multiple subjects. This is no easy task but Gay provides a highly nuanced and contextualised account of how Lucia understands her 'decision' to become a '*mulher de bandido*', as well as its wider ramifications and how it reflects broader dynamics.[13]

Another notable example of the biographical genre is Joao Biehl's (2005) *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*, which uses an individual, Catarina, as the centre-point of a wider story of institutional and societal cruelty and

misunderstanding. As with Gay's *Lucia*, Biehl provides a contextualised understanding of an individual's experience of violence – in this case more structural and medical – but it is one that explicitly aims to elicit the reader's empathy in a very direct manner. This raises the question of the extent to which the nature of the individual being focused upon is important. Would *Vita* be as powerful if it focused on those who abandoned, mistreated, and misdiagnosed Catarina? Certainly, it is striking that the ethnographic biographical genre almost never focuses on perpetrators of violence, and when this is the case the violence is often only parenthetically introduced to the text and is not the centre-point (see Beauchez, 2017). Yet as Cynthia Keppley Mahmood (1996: 272) highlights in her (non-biographical) ethnography of Khalistani Sikh militancy, studying victimisers is arguably just as crucial as studying their victims if we are to fully understand violence: 'until it becomes fully normal for scholars to study violence by talking with and being with people who engage in it, the dark myth of [the] evil and irrational [violent] will continue to overwhelm more pragmatic attempts to lucidly grapple with the problem of conflict.'

   A final representational issue to consider concerns the way that style can impact on the substance of the empirical material. A focus on violence often makes it imperative to anonymise those being studied in ways that often go beyond standard ethnographic practices.[14] For example, in his book on street children in the Dominican Republic, *Life on the Malecón*, Jon Wolseth (2014: 18) describes how 'although based on real events, the narratives have been altered in significant ways to protect the identity of the people discussed and to aid the flow of the story. Characters are sometimes composites of a number of kids I met, and narrative time has been compressed, but the tangibility and plausibility of street life has remained.'[15] A logical extension of such a strategy is the writing of 'ethnographic fictions', such as Tobias Hecht's (2006: 8) *After Life*, about homelessness and mental illness in Northeast Brazil, which he claims adopts 'an approach to the study and evocation of social life and the world of the mind that emerges from rigorous observation, makes use of certain conventions of ethnographic fieldwork and writing, but also employs literary devices'.

   Unlike so-called 'anthropological novels' such as Laura Bohannen's – writing under the pseudonym Elenore Smith Bowen - *Return to Laughter* (1964), which charted the research of an anthropologist not altogether dissimilar to her own self among the Tiv of Northern Nigeria, Hecht's 'ethnographic fiction' makes explicit claims to representing ethnographic reality by including the transcripts of Hecht's interviews with Bruna Veríssima, a transvestite homeless adolescent. Hecht (2006: 5) notes how much of what Veríssima told him 'happened to be untrue', highlighting in particular how she frequently invented imaginary characters and life-changing events. At the same time, he also argues that everything she told him was 'plausible', and that her narrative as a result epitomised the experience of homelessness in Northeast Brazil exceptionally well. Rather than attempting to unravel the distortions and render the narrative as a traditional ethnography, Hecht (2006: 6, 8) suggests that the only way he could to do justice to

Veríssima's life was 'to yield to her inventions', and adopt a representational form that similarly 'invents characters, distorts events, and omits information'.

Although a laudable attempt to extend the boundaries of ethnographic representation, and to explore the dual nature of ethnography as both art and science, such endeavours can often be highly challenging. The dilemmas are well illustrated by works such as Carlos Castaneda's 'Don Juan' series of five books, the first of which was *The Teachings of Don Juan* (1968). Although well written, and conveying a flavour of authenticity through use of vernacular as well as detailed description of esoteric experiences, they are generally regarded as fiction, despite being presented as 'real' ethnographies. Certainly, many have found Castaneda's work hugely problematic, with some critics going so far as to suggest that Don Juan probably never existed, and that Castaneda was one of the great intellectual hoaxers of all time (see De Mille, 1976), the content of the books invented and bearing little relation to reality. Perhaps more promising in view of such controversies is the recent trend in ethnographic writing where certain ethnographers have explicitly sought to adopt a more literary style. An important example in this regard is Randol Contreras (2015), who explicitly – and very visibly – draws stylistic inspiration from the work of Junot Diaz, the Dominican American author of the 2008 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007), in his writing.[16]

Lessons for the ethnography/ethnographies of violence

Although violence has long been a central concern for ethnographic research and writing all over the world – see for example Hansen (2001), Hoffman (2011), Jensen (2008), Sauvadet (2006), or Stephenson (2015) – there has arguably been a lack of reflexivity concerning the relation between these distinctive dimensions of the ethnographic endeavour. The reflections we have presented here on the issue are not aimed at identifying a singular, much less a better, way to conduct ethnography about violence. As a transgressive practice which refuses to be confined to particular dispositions and practices, ethnography's engagement with violence will always be highly contingent upon context, serendipity, and the personal politics of ethnographers. Rather, our proposition has been to draw attention to the fact that violence is particularly revealing of how ethnographers approach the field and how they decide to engage with certain acts, their consequences and its subjects, and how material is written up. Reconciling dilemmas about positionality, obligations to subjects, and how to represent people, places and events requires attention to complex questions about how violence is 'seen', how we engage with 'violent actors' and our empathies toward them, and how we judge the veracity or frames adopted by subjects to describe violence, whether in the recent or deeper past.

These questions are obviously relevant to ethnographers generally but are arguably especially clear where violence is prevalent, where it serves to structure everyday life, empower certain social agents and stigmatise others, produce, protect or

destroy discreet economic activities, legitimate political ideologies or state actions, and create or reproduce cultural norms. At the same time, however, we also concur with Bourgois (1995: 14), who argues that in order for ethnography to best fulfil its fundamentally political role, that is to say, to bring difficult subject matter into the public realm, to pose questions about public policy, and to make links between the specificity of situations described in the field with larger, less tangible, structures of power, it needs to deploy a writing style that is direct and unencumbered by jargon and 'discourses on the "poetics" of social interaction' in order to better highlight the mundaneness of violence and of daily struggle. Or as Fassin (2013: 634) has elegantly put it, the 'discreet charm of ethnography' lies in its ability to render 'political and moral implications' through simple depictions of everyday life rather than interpretative abstractions. This is by no means necessarily obvious, however, especially with respect to research on violence, which presents particular demands on the researcher in the field, relations with their subjects, and how this research can be represented on the page.

It is for this reason that the nature of the intersection of ethnography as both methodological practice and a form of writing is urgent to consider, and this special issue aims at offer certain starting points for a sustained debate by bringing together a range of contributions about Latin American and the Caribbean. This region has been the site for a large number of ethnographic studies in recent years, many focusing on the criminal brutality that is widely seen to constitute a hallmark of the continent's 21st-century reality, in stark contrast to the revolutionary violence that was intimately associated with its 20th-century history (see Kruijt and Koonings, 1999). Certainly, quite uniquely, almost every country in the region has been the site for several major ethnographic studies of violence during the past two decades, often produced in conversation with each other. We therefore thought it potentially insightful to draw together for this special issue a group of scholars who have made important contributions to the field with original ethnographic research on violence in Latin America and the Caribbean in recent years. Emanating from different disciplinary 'homes', some new and others more established, both male and female, they have all conducted research with different motivations, adopting a variety of field methods, different writing strategies and styles.

We asked our contributors to consider how their work dealt with the relationship between their methodological approach in the field, the substance of the material, and the representations that they felt able or compelled to draw. Their papers expose a range of different positions when in the field and through the style of analysis in the text. Antony Fontes' contribution, for example, is centred on his personal engagement with a single individual, who claims to have been a perpetrator of extreme violence on behalf of *maras* in Guatemala, but who converts into a victim when he becomes a state witness (or informant). Compatible with the tensions between Andy as victimiser/victim, and the sense of empathy that Fontes appears to dispose towards him, the text is a hybrid of *testimonio* and confession. Fontes offers a critical reflection of the criminal justice system that

fails to protect Andy, as well as revealing his preconceptions and expectations, including his emotional dismay at Andy's naivety. But perhaps most insightfully, Fontes confesses how he cannot in the final analysis distinguish between what is true and what is false in Andy's narrative, and therefore consciously constructs his contribution as a 'hall of mirrors' that ultimately reveals 'how essential shared fantasies and falsehoods are in the production of knowledge about ... as well as in the production of violence itself.'

Confession is also a theme of Jon Wolseth's contribution, although it is much more directly the author who is in some ways confessing or exposing his dilemmas when presented with the claim that a person who was a key informant and friend during fieldwork in the Dominican Republic may have abused young people. Wolseth notes how his ethnographic fieldwork relied on subjects 'letting go' of their emotions through contact with him, a process which relied on intimacy and trust. Yet, this same process was challenged by an account of sexual abuse, apparently suppressed by informants in their previous narratives. The paper outlines how amidst high levels of violence and other conditions on the streets not everything is revealed. The ethnographer as a participant observer is not all-seeing, in part because subjects do not wish, or circumstances do not allow, some traumas to be presented. In writing up one version of events in his book but knowing that there was another, Wolseth faces the dilemmas of how he comes to terms with what he now knows, and considers what ways he now has to 'let go'.

Kate Saunders-Hastings's research took place in a neighbourhood of Guatemala City notorious for the presence of the *Barrio 18* gang. The paper unpacks how residents reflect on the present through accounts of the past, a past in which violence it is claimed was more likely to conform to particular codes or norms, and residents were able to devise coping strategies. Using a notion of nostalgia, Saunders-Hastings reflects on how her writing is reliant on narratives that construct an idea of the present through claims about the past. These claims may or may not have empirical validity, but they also do other work, drawing emotional resonance with ideas of loss. This provokes Saunders-Hastings to question how far she is drawn to understand present social relations of violence through a particular 'idea' of the past due to her own preconceptions and ontological yearnings. While the paper falls short of being auto-ethnography, it nevertheless presents in different ways the dilemmas of writing on contemporary violence against a supposed loss of a better time, highlighting how this can operate simultaneously at the level of a community but also the ethnographer.

Rivke Jaffe's paper is motivated by an ethical, and essentially political, question; namely, whether researchers who have not witnessed violence first hand should write about violent actions attributed to particular people. Jaffe takes Marlon James's 2014 novel *A Brief History of Seven Killings* as her departure point, raising a concern that the book offers a highly sensationalised fictionalisation of real people and events, a representation that is itself a form of 'epistemic violence'. In her work, Jaffe does not doubt the involvement of Jamaica's 'dons' in violent acts but suggests that too many narratives focus on violence to the virtual

exclusion of other issues. Accused of 'romanticising the dons' by deciding not to write directly about their involvement in violence, Jaffe presents the case for 'writing around' violence. In the paper, she argues that by decentring attention away from violence as the meta-narrative her research has opened out a more diverse set of themes and theoretical frameworks, although the absence of violence in her writing also created a number of dilemmas, which she links not only to representation, but traces back to certain methodological choices that she made during the course of her research.

Ben Penglase's paper explores how ethnographic research on violence often focuses on the phenomenon as an event but frequently represents it in ethnographic text as a chronic 'state of emergency'. This, he argues, is particularly paradoxical insofar as even in a *favela* in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in which there are high rates of violence, most days are in fact filled with mundane everyday practices of people getting by that barely merit a mention in a field notebook. Penglase suggests that this paradox is due to the ethnographer being drawn to a representational strategy that elevates the 'abnormal', or exceptional, act of violence without positioning it against the everyday making the latter invisible or unexplained in many accounts. In so doing, the ethnographer is also repositioned in the text as 'close to the action', thereby implicitly claiming to have born witness to situations that they might not actually have seen and may struggle to truly understand.

In terms of the lessons to be drawn from these reflections on the multiple and connected ways in which ethnographic method intersects with ethnographic representation, textually and intellectually, it is striking that none of the authors sought out or indeed recount the direct observation of violent acts during fieldwork, and yet their texts are informed by violence. How, then, did the authors set to address and resolve the tension between field and text? For Jaffe being witness to few acts of violence during her time in the inner-city garrison while focusing her field research on and with dons provoked the self-doubt of being a 'bad ethnographer'. How should she construct ethnography that was true to her field experience, recognise dons and others as 'violent actors', and avoid the temptation to 'write in' violence because readers would expect it to be part of the narrative. The decision to 'write around violence' addresses this tension, and goes some way to resolve it. It was not a perfect decision – it meant doing nothing, for example, with some especially 'gory' accounts of violence – an omission Jaffe justifies with the reminder that her project was about 'don-manship', governance and citizenship, and not violence *per se*. Importantly that decision is supported by warnings from informants who expressed concern that her writing would repeat the sensationalism of other texts, and which portrayed many ordinary lives through a dominant frame of violence.

Penglase's long-term participant observation also produced few actual encounters with violence. Meditating on how he chose to write up his ethnography, Penglase identifies a deliberate decision, prompted by key theoretical drivers, to focus on more 'abnormal' violent events, privileging the 'everyday state of emergency' in Rio's favela. These forms of violence produce 'traces', subjects for

conversation, rumours that circulate, and a temporality. This strategy – to use Penglase's term – shaped the text, providing a narrative structure to the ethnography that would be more difficult, or at least different, had the attention been on the far more numerous 'uneventful days': the effect, 'normal' violence of the everyday defied representation. The paper develops a realisation that a more complete anthropology of violence requires an ethnography that pays attention to 'temporal and affective components of the banal experience of deprivation', the long hours when nothing 'spectacular' happened but when everyday life was immersed nonetheless in the uncertainties of violence. Ultimately, this leads Penglase to propose that understanding exceptional violence – the 'normal abnormal' as he puts it – needs to be set against understanding the banal – the 'abnormal normal', the tensions around police presence, the lack of urban services, conflicts between neighbours, and so forth – and finding ways to construct narratives that reflect both.

At the same time, this is by no means an obvious endeavour, especially when thinking diachronically rather than synchronically, as Fontes' biographical reconstruction of Andy's life illustrates well. In trying to reconcile the different events that Andy tells him about, Fontes is rapidly faced with contradictions, implausibilities, and obvious lies. He details how he initially attempted to smooth these over, to sort out what was true and what was false, but ultimately decided that the only way to do justice to Andy's story is by explicitly articulating these different elements as they were told to him, and weaving a kaleidoscopic narrative that is less preoccupied with distinguishing the 'true' from the 'false', but rather seeks to allow the reader to get to grips with the nature of Andy's reality. As such, playing on the title of his paper, one could say that Fontes offers us a portrait of a gang member that is subjectively 'realistic' without necessarily being objectively 'real'.

Saunders-Hastings address this disjuncture differently in her paper, considering how to represent violence when the ethnographic accounts are imbued with forms of nostalgia. Subjects' memories may warp recollection of events, including depicting the past in certain positive ways as a contrast to a more precarious present. The tension, therefore, is between an ethnography that relies upon and takes seriously people's versions of the past, while recognising these as often vague, contradictory and fantastical that challenges analytical representation. Saunders-Hastings offers a resolution to this tension, namely to consider nostalgias as a resource, to recognise the work that these accounts are doing to construct an idea of the past in people's present-day: how do these claims about 'then' reveal contemporary feelings of insecurity, of moral codes and social cohesion, and of who or what people might not feel safe talking about today unless framed in the past tense? As she points out, this is especially important but also difficult under conditions of violence, where accounts reveal or obscure senses of victimhood, blame and trauma. It is also challenging because the ethnographic material is most usually written up after the researcher leaves the field, and therefore draws on the nostalgia of the researcher for the field.

   In this regard, Wolseth's paper tackles an extreme illustration of the tensions between writing legible ethnography from highly emotional experiences of the field, including the distressing forms of personal and interpersonal violence enacted by and on young people with whom the ethnographer has built some kind of relationship. Ethnography, Wolseth notes, often describes emotion but rarely channels it in the text; ethnography as a psychologically charged field method is converted to an altogether drier, desensitised, textual product. He recounts how this relationship was put under stress by the information that a close colleague, a street educator, had abused young people, his research subjects. Despite his attention to reflexivity, Woselth was unable to deal with the betrayal of trust or find a suitable authorial voice. The solution was to excise the colleague – still referred to as 'X' in the article – from the subsequent ethnography, and which in turn stressed themes such as friendship and bonding, and events that had little to do with X. While clearly relevant to an account of everyday life on the Santo Domingo streets, the ethnography censored abuse, exploitation and betrayal. Wolseth considers what an 'alternative' text might have looked like, one in which the betrayal of trust felt by his research subjects, and himself, was to the fore, and in which he had adopted the 'letting out' of pain practiced by them. To this extent, the tensions between ethnography as field method and as textual product are rendered at their most raw in this paper, as it exposes that while the ethnographer has the power to produce ethnographic meaning this is done under circumstances that require the ethnographer to comes to terms with the uncertainties and trauma of violence in ways that take time to understand.

ORCID iD

Dennis Rodgers http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8957-4796

Notes

1. All the more so considering the way that researchers are under increasing pressure from funders and their universities to demonstrate 'impact' and to communicate research through social media and blog posts, including from the field, something which poses enormous questions about the instantaneity of academic reflection and might put researchers or their subjects at risk of reprisal.
2. At a time where ethical framework and integrity protocols are being tightened and imposed at universities (see Hellman, 2015), it is arguably especially important to consider the issue in view of the fact that ethnographic research and ethnographic writing have traditionally operated within 'black boxes'. While a lot of attention has been paid over the past few years to unpacking the black box of ethics and integrity in relation to ethnographic methods, this has less been the case in relation to ethnographic representation, yet they are clearly fundamentally related, since ethics and integrity are not just associable with the practice of research, but also the way we write and present it. Reflecting on the relationship between the two is one way of ensuring that both can be scrutinised in a coherent, reflexive, and open manner.
3. For example, Fassin (2013) reflects upon his decision to deliberately depict everyday life and policing in the banlieues as 'ordinary', concentrating on the monotony – he particularly noted the extent of police inaction – rather than the violent incidents, the riots and drug trafficking that excited the media and politicians. In a related manner, Pandey (1992: 27) writes about the difficulties of writing about the history of sectarian violence in colonial and postcolonial India, because the phenomenon is generally treated as an 'aberration in the sense that violence is seen as something removed from the general run of Indian history: a distorted form, an exceptional moment, not the "real" history of India at all'.
4. Representation itself of course contributes to, and works within, the moral registers and criminal hierarchies of certain subject labels, including in particular through the choice to use certain colloquial or emic categories which can have significant consequences. Just as media representations of gendered forms of violence often deploy categorisations that identify subjects as 'good' or 'bad' characters or types in ways that can end up legitimating certain forms of violence against women (England, 2018), identifying a subject as a 'gang member', a 'bandido', a 'pandillero', a 'sicario', a 'vigilante', or a 'death-squad member' can have wide-ranging ramifications.
5. This issue arguably also raises questions of whether we should research violence, even if we know violence to be important to the conduct of other processes – how far can we choose to 'see' violence, as it were – and what obligations we feel ourselves under in order to write violence 'in to' or 'out of' the text. As this special issue highlights, there are multiple answers to this, but more generally with regard to the way that particular representations may be used, it is perhaps useful to note that in discussing their use of photography to illustrate their ethnography of homelessness and heroin addiction, *Righteous Dopefiend*, Bourgois and Schonberg (2009: 21) recall Benjamin's contention that it is the way a photograph is inscribed in the text, its context and circulation, that will determine whether it serves as a reactionary journalistic tool or a means to expose social relations.
6. At the same time, it should also be pointed out that the ethnography of violence is clearly highly gendered, both methodologically but also in terms of representation, as the frequently 'hard man' nature of the former leads to masculinised form of writing (and in doing so, arguably obscures or under-emphasises other forms of violence, as Hume, 2009, has pointed out).

7. The debate around *On the Run* has raised questions about Goffman's legal responsibility, as well as that of the university as a (putative) guardian of ethics in research. Despite there being no formal 'privileged client relationship' associated with ethnographic research, the responsibilities of ethnographers aware of criminal activity to authorities or others, including perhaps to families of victims, or to subjects themselves, are rarely openly discussed. Indeed, most ethnographers would likely feel awkward, and even vulnerable, if they were to discuss the legal implications of what they observe or have been told in the field, although it should be noted that Venkatesh (2008: 186) does describe having an exchange with a research subject where he explains that if requested by the police or the justice system to hand over field notes then he will have to do so.

8. This is something that becomes particularly evident in the context of longitudinal research (see Rodgers, 2019).

9. Lareau (2011: 327, 330) similarly writes about the 'anger and hurt' felt by many of the families she wrote about in her study *Unequal Childhoods* (2003), and although she was not threatened in the same way as Scheper-Hughes reports to have been, she clearly felt extremely uncomfortable, to the extent that she draws a comparison with the way that 'Arthur Vidich was hung in effigy after *Small Town in Mass Society* was published', although she 'reluctantly conclude[s] that some of this anger and hurt is the "price of doing business" in writing ethnography and having the research participants read the results' (see also Ellis, 1995).

10. Personal communication with Dennis Rodgers, 23 June 2017.

11. A related but generally under-considered issue concerns the way that research collaborators in the field – assistants, translators, guides, brokers, informants – can be put in danger as a result of their involvement in ethnographic research on violence, even when they are more often than not written out of the subsequent ethnographic text (see e.g. Hoffman and Tarawalley, 2014; Jenkins, 2015; Middleton and Cons, 2014).

12. *Lucia* is particularly notable as it offers a rare gendered analysis of violence, in which a woman is a central rather than peripheral figure to a theme often depicted as masculinised. Lucia claims power through association with the gang, suggesting a choice in 'becoming' the girlfriend of successive drug traffickers, while valuing the opportunities to gain consumer goods and freedom from parental pressure. At the same time, however, Gay also notes the compromises and threats to Lucia, from being shot by one partner to the limited scope for individual autonomy captured by the book's subtitle which classifies Lucia as a 'drug dealer's woman', the possessive pronoun underscoring the gendering of social relations. Nevertheless, the biography provides Gay with opportunities to let the analysis settle in, hence the account of dealer shooting is not a stand-alone event that may seem arbitrary at a rhetorical distance but is given social meaning by Lucia who notes that a powerful '*dono*' (boss) brings prestige and a reputation to the favela as 'strong' in a context where there seems little virtue in being regarded as 'weak'. Rather remarkably, Gay (2015) subsequently wrote a second biographical volume about Bruno, (one of) the drug dealer(s) whose woman Lucia 'was'. Taken together, these two volumes constitute a uniquely gender-balanced ethnographic diptych about the lived experience of drugs and violence in Brazil.

13. Biography presents numerous tensions between ethnography as field method and representation. The intensity of ethnographic work, for example, may provoke an empathy for subjects involved with violence, especially if identified as victims, as well as a temptation to represent their lives as overly coherent and knowable in the text (Goddard, 2018).

14. For example, Jaffe (this issue) notes the concern of an informant for her research to maintain the anonymity of people due to a previously published semi-ethnographic book on Jamaican gangs that had failed to do so resulting, allegedly, in at least one revenge killing.

15. This is probably a common but rarely highlighted feature of many ethnographic texts and shows precisely the translation work conducted by authors once back at 'the desk'. Bourgois and Schonberg (2009: 12–15) provide a rare discussion of how they constructed their text around several thousand pages of fieldnotes that had to be condensed in order to present a readable text, indicating their decisions to conflate characters and events, rework inarticulate speech, abbreviate, and place events in different chronological order from the reality (see also Bourgois, 1995: 341–2, n. 20 and 24).

16. Personal communication with Dennis Rodgers, 7 April 2013.

References

Arendt H (1969) *On Violence*. New York: Harcourt Brace.

Auyero J (2015a) The politics of interpersonal violence in the urban periphery. *Current Anthropology* 56(11): 169–179.

Auyero J (2015b) *Invisible in Austin: Life and Labor in an American City*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Auyero J and Berti MF (2016) *In Harm's Way: The Dynamics of Urban Violence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Beauchez J (2017) 'Gavroche outside': Street capital(ism) and the ethnobiography of a French thug. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. Published online: 19 April 2017. DOI: 10.1177/0891241617702961.

Benjamin W (1992 [1968]) Theses on the philosophy of history. In: Benjamin W, *Illuminations*, trans. Zohn H and ed. Arendt H. London: Fontana Press.

Betts D (2014) The stoop isn't the jungle. *Slate*, 10 July. Available at: http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/jurisprudence/2014/07/alice_goffman_s_on_the_run_she_is_wrong_about_black_urban_life.html.

Beverley J (2004) *Testimonio: On the Politics of Truth*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Biehl J (2005) *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bolten CE (2012) *I Did It to Save My Life: Love and Survival in Sierra Leone*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bourgois P (1995) *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in el Barrio*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourgois P (2002) The violence of moral binaries: Response to Leigh Binford. *Ethnography* 3(2): 221–231.

Bourgois P and Schonberg J (2009) *Righteous Dopefiend*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Castaneda C (1968) *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Chancer L and Jacobson M (2016) From darling to demon: In and beyond Goffman's 'On the Run'. *Sociological Forum* 31(1): 241–248.

Clifford J and Marcus GE (1986) *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Contreras R (2013) *The Stickup Kids: Race, Drugs, Violence, and the American Dream*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Contreras R (2015) Standpoint Purgatorio: Liminal fear and danger in studying the 'black and brown' tension in Los Angeles. In: Auyero J, Bourgois P and Scheper-Hughes N (eds) *Violence at the Urban Margins*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

De Mille R (1976) *Castaneda's Journey: The Power and the Allegory*. Santa Barbara: Capra.

Debord G (1967) *La Société du Spectacle*. Paris: Buchet Chastel.

Diaz J (2007) *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. New York: Penguin.

Ellis C (1995) Emotional and ethical quagmires in returning to the field. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 24(1): 68–98.

England S (2018) *Writing Terror on the Bodies of Women: Media Coverage of Violence against Women in Guatemala*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Enloe C (2010) *Nimo's War, Emma's War: Making Feminist Sense of the Iraq War*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Fassin D (2013) Why ethnography matters: On anthropology and its publics. *Cultural Anthropology* 28(4): 621–646.

Ferrell J and Hamm MS (eds) (1998) *Ethnography at the Edge: Crime, Deviance, and Field Research*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Forte MC (2011) The human terrain system and anthropology: A review of ongoing public debates. *American Anthropologist*. 113(1): 149–153.

Gay R (2005) *Lucia: Testimonies of a Brazilian Drug Dealer's Woman*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Gay R (2015) *Bruno: Conversations with a Brazilian Drug Dealer*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Geertz C (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

Geertz C (1988) *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.

Goddard V (2018) Discomforting ethnography and contentious biographies: The case of Argentina. *Social Anthropology* 26(1): 44–59.

Goffman A (2014) *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Goldstein DM (2014) Qualitative research in dangerous places: Becoming an 'ethnographer' of violence and personal safety, drugs, security and democracy program (DSD). *Working Papers on Research Security no. 1*. Available at: http://webarchive.ssrc.org/working-papers/DSD_ResearchSecurity_01_Goldstein.pdf.

González RJ (2008) Human terrain. *Anthropology Today* 24: 21–26.

Greenhouse CJ, Mertz E and Warren KB (eds) (2002) *Ethnography in Unstable Places: Everyday Lives in Contexts of Dramatic Political Change*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Hansen TB (2001) *Wages of Violence: Naming and Identity in Postcolonial Bombay*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Hecht T (2006) *After Life: An Ethnographic Novel*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Hellman J (2015) New challenges for fieldworkers in Latin American and Caribbean studies. *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 100: 99–110.

Hoffman D (2011) *The War Machines: Young Men and Violence in Sierra Leone and Liberia*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Hoffman D and Tarawalley M Jr (2014) Frontline collaborations: The research relationship in unstable places. *Ethnography* 15(3): 291–310.

Howell S and Willis R (eds) (1989) *Societies at Peace: Anthropological Perspectives*. London: Routledge.

Hume M (2009) Researching the gendered silences of violence in El Salvador. *IDS Bulletin* 40(3): 78–85.

Inciardi JA, Lockwood D and Pottieger AE (1993) *Women and Crack-Cocaine*. London: Macmillan.

Jensen S (2008) *Gangs, Politics and Dignity in Cape Town*. Oxford: James Currey.

Jenkins SA (2015) Assistants, guides, collaborators, friends: The concealed figures of conflict research. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. DOI: 10.1177/08912 41615619993.

Koonings K, Kruijt D and Rodgers D (eds) (2019) *Risky Anthropology*. London: Zed.

Kovats-Bernat JC (2002) Negotiating dangerous fields: Pragmatic strategies for fieldwork amid violence and terror. *American Anthropologist* 104(1): 208–222.

Kruijt D and Koonings K (eds) (1999) *Societies of Fear. The Legacy of Civil War, Violence and Terror in Latin America*. London: Zed Books.

Lareau A (2003) *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lareau A (2011) *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*, 2nd edition with an Update. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lee RM (1995) *Dangerous Fieldwork*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

Lewis-Kraus G (2016) The trials of Alice Goffman. *The New York Times*, 12 January. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/17/magazine/the-trials-of-alice-goffman.html.

Lichterman P (2017) Interpretive reflexivity in ethnography. *Ethnography* 18(1): 35–45.

Lubet S (2015) Ethics on the run. *The New Rambler*, 26 May. Available at: http://newram blerreview.com/book-reviews/law/ethics-on-the-run.

Lubet S (2017) *Interrogating Ethnography: Why Evidence Matters*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lyng S (1998) Dangerous methods: Risk taking and the research process. In: Ferrell J and Hamm MS (eds) *Ethnography at the Edge: Crime, Deviance, and Field Research*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Mahmood CK (1996) *Fighting for Faith and Nation: Dialogues with Sikh Militants*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Menchú R (1984) *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*, ed. Burgos-Debray E. New York: Verso.

Middleton T and Cons J (2014) Coming to terms: Reinserting research assistants into ethnography's past and present. *Ethnography* 15(3): 279–290.

Mosse D (2005) *Cultivating Development: An Ethnography of Aid Policy and Practice*. London: Pluto Press.

Mosse D (2006) Anti-social anthropology? Objectivity, objection, and the ethnography of public policy and professional communities. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 12(4): 935–956.

Nordstrom C and Martin J (1992) The culture of conflict: Field reality and theory. In: Nordstrom C and Martin J (eds) *The Paths to Domination, Resistance, and Terror*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Nordstrom C and Robben ACGM (eds) (1995) *Fieldwork under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Oglesby E (1995) Myrna Mack. In: Nordstrom C and Robben ACGM (eds) *Fieldwork under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Pandey G (1992) In defense of the fragment: Writing about Hindu-Muslim riots in India today. *Representations* 37(1): 27–55.

Penglase RB (2014) *Living with Insecurity in a Brazilian Favela: Urban Violence and Daily Life*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Pieke FN (1995) Witnessing the 1989 Chinese People's Movement. In: Nordstrom C and Robben ACGM (eds) *Fieldwork under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Porter H (2017) *After Rape: Violence, Justice, and Social Harmony in Uganda*. London: International African Institute and Cambridge University Press.

Powdermaker H (1966) *Stranger and Friend: The Way of an Anthropologist*. London: Secker and Warburg.

Rabinow P (1977) *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Riches D (ed.) (1986) *The Anthropology of Violence*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Rodgers D (2007) Joining the gang and becoming a *broder*: The violence of ethnography in contemporary Nicaragua. *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 27 (4): 444–461.

Rodgers D (2016) Critique of urban violence: Bismarckian transformations in contemporary Nicaragua. *Theory, Culture, & Society* 33(7–8): 85–109.

Rodgers D (2019) From 'broder' to 'don': Methodological reflections on longitudinal gang research in Nicaragua. In: Koonings K, Kruijt D and Rodgers D (eds) *Ethnography as Risky Business: Field Research in Violent and Sensitive Contexts*. Lanham: Lexington Books.

Roks R (2017) 'I gave you what you asked for, now I want something in return': Reflections on fieldwork among members of the Dutch Rollin 200 Crips. Paper presented to the 'Longitudinal Ethnography on Violence' workshop, NSCR & University of Amsterdam, 22–23 June.

Sauvadet T (2006) *Le Capital Guerrier: Concurrence et Solidarité entre Jeunes de Cité*. Paris: Armand Colin.

Scheper-Hughes N (2000) Ire in Ireland. *Ethnography* 1(1): 117–140.

Scheper-Hughes N and Bourgois P (eds) (2004) *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Sluka J (1990) Participant observation in violent social contexts. *Human Organization* 49(2): 114–126.

Smith Bowen E (1964) *Return to Laughter: An Anthropological Novel*. New York: Anchor Books.

Stephenson S (2015) *Gangs of Russia: From the Streets to the Corridors of Power*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Stoll D (1999) *Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Suttles GD (1976) Urban ethnography: Situational and normative accounts. *Annual Review of Sociology* 2: 1–18.

Van Maanen J (2011) *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Van Maanen J and De Rond M (2017) The making of a classic ethnography: Notes on Alice Goffman's 'On the Run'. *Academy of Management Review* 42(2): 396–406.

Venkatesh SA (2008) *Gang Leader for a Day: A Rogue Sociologist Takes to the Streets*. New York: Penguin.

Wolseth J (2011) *Jesus and the Gang: Youth Violence and Christianity in Urban Honduras. Tucson*: University of Arizona Press.

Wolseth J (2014) *Life on the Malecón: Children and Youth on the Streets of Santo Domingo*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Author Biographies

Gareth A. Jones is Professor of Urban Geography at the London School of Economics and Political Science, Director of the Latin America and Caribbean Centre, and member of the International Institute on Inequalities. His principal research interests include urban politics, including youth, violence and security, inequalities, land access and spatial exclusion, including through analyses of elites. Jones has conducted fieldwork in Mexico, Brazil, India, South Africa, Ghana, Ecuador, Colombia, and the United States. From 2014-18 he was principal investigator on an ESRC-DfG-NWO grant entitled 'Commodification of Poverty and Violence in the Americas', with Prof. Rivke Jaffe (Amsterdam) and Prof. Eveline Dürr (Ludwig Maximilians, Munich).

Dennis Rodgers is Research Professor in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, Switzerland, and Visiting Professor in International Development Studies at the University of Amsterdam (Netherlands). A social anthropologist by training, his research focuses on issues relating to the dynamics of conflict and violence in cities in Latin America (Nicaragua, Argentina) and South Asia (India). He was recently awarded a European Research Council (ERC) Advanced Grant for a research programme on 'Gangs, Gangsters, and Ganglands: Towards a Global Comparative Ethnography' exploring gang dynamics in Nicaragua, South Africa, and France (2019–23).