

ADRIENNE PINE: *Working Hard, Drinking Hard: On Violence and Survival in Honduras*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

*Working Hard, Drinking Hard: On Violence and Survival in Honduras* is a powerful ethnographic account of daily life in Honduras. One of the poorest countries in the world and touted as one of the most violent countries in the Americas, Honduras is a showcase of neoliberalism and the human struggles that accompany it. Yet little has been written that explains how subjectivities are formed within the neoliberal context, and how life is experienced on a day-to-day basis. As such, Adrienne Pine's ethnography fills a critical gap in the literature on neo-liberalism and globalization, offering an analytical account of how they play themselves out in very personal ways for the poor in Latin America.

Life in Honduras is difficult. Indeed, for most Hondurans every day is a struggle to survive materially and spiritually. And yet, Pine does not paint Hondurans as victims, nor does she suggest that the strategies they employ, working hard and often drinking hard, are puzzling. Instead, Pine's ethnography illustrates the logic of deviance within a neoliberal context. She uses the life experiences of Hondurans to explain the commonsense formation of Honduran identity. Whereas the majority of Hondurans reside in the extreme political and economic margins of the world system, they are entrenched in a culture of meritocracy that advocates the belief that hard work is the cause of success, and lack of ambition and poor values the cause of failure. The poor, according to this "achievement ideology," are to blame for Honduras' ills; if they just did not drink so much, if they were just not so violent, or, if they would just be more industrious, Honduras would not be positioned so low on the global hierarchy of nations. And so the typical argument goes. Pine debunks this myth of meritocracy brilliantly, unveiling the cultural ideologies that mask the real roots of Honduras' poverty and despair. In so doing, she shows us how Hondurans come to understand themselves as Honduran.

Of course, not all Hondurans are poor, and not all are struggling. The elite of Honduras, who have held the reins of political and economic power since colonialism's inception, are central to how "other" Hondurans identify themselves; the poor form their identities in comparison to the wealthy and powerful. Honduran identities are also shaped in comparison to the United States. Honduras, the "original banana republic" of the United States, is now a "remittance republic" of the United States. Moreover, the longstanding colonial and neocolonial relationship between the two countries has manifested itself in a Honduran consumer culture that appropriates US symbols and messages, giving US-consumer goods status and grounds for resentment at the same time. While pro-consumption messages inundate Honduras, most Hondurans cannot

afford to buy the status granting goods. This is yet another cultural-structural mismatch that contributes to the formation of Honduran subjectivities and the pain of daily life. Beyond US consumerism, the government of Honduras has imported “zero-tolerance” crime legislation, framing it within Honduras’ own war on terror. The poor and disenfranchised, those most likely to be members of Honduras’ notorious gangs, are the most common victims of this appropriation, labeled as the cause of Honduras’ problems. Following the achievement ideology, they are deemed worthless and, therefore, literally disposable.

Pine brings us into the lives of gang members, alcoholics, and impoverished maquila workers, using their narratives to show us just how painful life can be. Their lives illustrate how the seductive cultural message that moral failure is at the root of one’s inability to climb out of misery encourages an internalized colonialism. Feelings of fear and anxiety are logical emotional responses to living poor without recourse to a structural analysis of “why?” The lives of the Hondurans that Pine captures in this book teach us that within the context of insecurity where most Hondurans live, Alcoholics’ Anonymous (AA), religion, and violence act as mechanisms of social control, mediating against the resistance and chaos that might otherwise emerge. They also bring comfort and a sense of security to people who are perpetually afraid of life.

Theoretical sophistication and representation are not the only strengths of this book. Another aspect of this ethnography that deserves applause is how well Pine has written herself into the story. This is a reflexive account. Pine uses her own interactions with her research participants to demonstrate the complexity of Honduran identity formation. For example, Pine reveals to us that even among her closest Honduran friends, she was both loved and resented. Indeed Pine effectively argues that even with the most reflexive of intentions it is impossible for an ethnographer, or any researcher for that matter, to shed her race, class, gender, or nationality. These are all part of the story.

Despite all that is commendable about this book, I was disappointed that Pine did not do more to incorporate the influence of migrant remittances, both economic and social, on the lives and identifications of Hondurans in Honduras. Migration structures survival for many, many Honduran families and I am left wondering what role transnational migration has had in reproducing the achievement ideology in Honduras (I would assume this is a major role!) and further validating religion and AA as mechanisms of social control.

In the end, Pine has written a path-breaking book that forms an analytical bridge between the structures of neoliberalism and daily life for the poor who live within its midst. This is a book that would engage graduate and undergraduate students of anthropology, sociology, and international development, as well as contribute to the knowledge base of the most accomplished senior scholars.

Pine's theoretical sophistication and accessible writing style make this a book that is difficult to put down.

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LEIGH A. PAYNE: *Unsettling Accounts: Neither Truth Nor Reconciliation in Confessions of State Violence*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2008.

For a scholar who studies torture in the context of state-sanctioned violence, Leigh Payne sustains great faith in democracy. In fact, the resiliency and resourcefulness of transitional democracies to confront, process, and utilize horrific "confessions" is a major theme in her valuable book. Payne positions her argument squarely between two competing schools of thought: that the full, graphic accounts of evil-doers (in controlled settings, such as South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC]) ultimately lead to healing and reconciliation; and the belief that "too much truth" undermines, even endangers, the return to civility. Payne argues for what she terms "contentious coexistence." Rather than aim for consensus about traumatic past events and criminal actors, Payne believes it is healthier and more realistic for societies to allow different interpretations not only to co-exist, but to openly compete.

She develops this argument by focusing on Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and South Africa, countries that have dealt with their most recent repressions in illustrative ways. Her case studies offer differences as well as similarities, both in the nature of the violent regimes and in subsequent efforts toward remedy. Payne structures her volume according to the terms she has devised to name the nine major elements she finds in perpetrator confessions: Performance, Remorse, Heroi[sm], Sadism, Denial, Silence, Fiction and Lies, Amnesia, and Betrayal. She offers close readings of confessions so graphic of deeds so horrendous that, even for a reviewer who spent many years on primary research into these matters, it can be shocking. Payne is to be commended for her clear thinking, rhetorical composure, and grounded language.

Each chapter focuses on a confession of towering importance in a particular country; that confession is then compared with similar ones from different societies. The approach works well, affording both immersion and breadth. It is also a structural means for supporting the overall argument: the sheer range of personality types, circumstances, and social backgrounds that produce agents of state violence mitigates against a homogeneous societal response to their past crimes and present narratives.