

Ethnography: Telling Practice Stories

KAREN O'REILLY

Abstract

In this essay I argue that the central emerging trend in ethnography is the telling of practice stories, that is narrative (or story-like) accounts that make sense of social phenomena by understanding how people respond to constraints and opportunities but in turn create the cultures, constraints, and opportunities within which others act. Drawing either overtly or implicitly on different versions of what has become known as practice theory, contemporary ethnographers increasingly aspire to unravel the processes involved in the ongoing constitution of social life. This constitution is made up of free will as well as structures that restrict action. The key principles of ethnography, established to challenge preconceptions and to yield complex understandings, remain fundamental to its methodology. This is despite massive social change and the emergence of "new ethnographies" to understand such things as globalization and technological change. These key principles are exactly what are required for the analysis of social life as practice. Ethnography pays attention to people's feeling and emotions, their experiences and their free choices, but also to the wider constraints and opportunities that frame their agency. And they do this always in the context of people's daily lives, cultures, and communities, using the key methods of watching, taking part, sharing in conversations and listening.

Fully descriptive accounts of what constitutes ethnography are now abundant (e.g., Gobo, 2008; Madden, 2010; O'Reilly, 2012a). Nevertheless, in considering the emerging trends in ethnography, it is valuable to retrace its roots as a methodology whose key principles were defined in opposition to existing approaches to understanding "other" societies. Early ethnography was established to challenge preconceptions and to yield complex understandings, and its key principles, forged in this ongoing "war against positivism" (Puddephatt, Shaffir, & KleinKnecht, 2009, p. 4), have been adapted and built on as society has changed. However, they remain fundamental in a literal sense. Malinowski's now-famous chapter in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*

(1922) remains the finest way to remind ourselves of ethnography's beginnings because it is so eloquent, thoughtful, and didactic.¹

For Malinowski, ethnography meant getting in touch with the natives in order to understand their lives from within their meaning worlds: "Every human culture gives its members a definite vision of the world, a definite zest for life" (1922, p. 517). We now understand this in terms of *phenomenological* and *hermeneutic* approaches. He talks of not prejudging our "subjects" and seeking to "treat the beliefs and values of another man (sic) from his point of view" (1922, p. 518); goals not easily achieved where survey or interview questions are predesigned on the basis of what we think we know. This approach has now been elaborated on using the concepts of *interpretivism* and *inductivism*. For Malinowski, ethnography did not involve interviewing someone in a time and place outside of their usual conditions of existence but learning about them by talking with them, living among them, and even taking part in their lives. He felt it was important to come to know the local, to "become familiar with his (sic) customs and beliefs" (1922, p. 7), and to learn how to behave correctly. Ethnographers might now become socialized into a culture, learning its norms and practices, or acquiring the *habitus*. For Malinowski ethnography is no "sporadic plunging into the company of natives" (1922, p. 7); it takes time for both the ethnographer and participant to feel comfortable with each other. Being there when things happen will enable people to talk more easily because they are excited and engaged, and they will reveal disagreements and ambivalences, complex negotiations and solutions (Fetterman, 2010). Doing research in context and obtaining the participants' view over lengthy periods of time remain key principles for ethnography, although we may now recognize the relevance of "immersing our embodied selves within the cultures of interest" (Boellstorff, Nardi, Pearce, & Taylor, 2012, p. 1); and many see participant observation as the defining method, the *sine qua non* of the ethnographer's toolkit.

Malinowski criticized such survey work for ignoring the "intimate touches of native (sic) life" (1922, p. 17) but nevertheless considered it essential to compile systematic survey data to sketch out "the skeleton" of "the tribe." We now avoid the meaning-laden language of natives and tribes, but good ethnographers continue to recognize the importance of collecting information about macro processes and wider structures, about institutions, patterns, and norms as well as about people's feelings, thoughts, and experiences. Nevertheless, as Malinowski again pointed out, not every rule is written

1. This is not to forget the many other authors whose work I could have drawn from, nor to deny that Malinowski's work has been criticized for being ethnocentric, positivist, detached, and unreflective. However, word limits restrict more extensive and subtle treatment.

down nor even entirely understood; hence the need for observation and interpretation as well as asking direct questions. Contemporary ethnography usually involves conversations rather than interviews, and these take place as things occur and in the context of daily life as ethnographers learn when to get people talking, to keep people talking, and when to listen (Madden, 2010, p. 65). Interviews remain important but are interpreted with the understanding that people reconstruct events through memory, crystallizing ways of being by weaving stories and telling folk tales (Fetterman, 2010).

For Malinowski, theory was to act as inspiration, to foreshadow problems and not constrain with preconceived ideas. Now we avoid naive forms of inductivism but use theory to sensitize, discarding concepts that turn out to be meaningless, adapting those that offer some explanation, and developing new ones as research progresses. Contemporary ethnography often also seeks theoretical rather than empirical generalizations (O'Reilly, 2009). Malinowski's approach was *holistic*, not concentrating on the exotic or astonishing but on the trivial, daily, and banal. There was acknowledgment of the interconnectedness of elements of a community life into an imagined coherent whole. This is now perceived as a somewhat limited *functionalist* approach, but ethnographers continue to seek interconnections and linkages within and beyond the single case, in an inclusive rather than exclusive manner, and to examine over time the minutiae of daily life. Contemporary ethnography does not seek some faddish news story, but is, rather, long, arduous, committed, and engaged (Puddephatt, Shaffir, & KleinKnecht, 2009; Scheper-Hughes, 2004).

Finally, Malinowski believed it essential to clearly separate out observations and interpretations in the pursuit of facts. We now acknowledge this is not so easy, and use the concept of *reflexivity* to think through the relationship of the researcher and researched. The reflexive turn has led to a more self-conscious use of the language of participants, who participate in their own cultures as well as in our studies, rather than subjects or informants. Nevertheless, early ethnographers who used this language usually had a respect for the complexity and depth of the cultures they studied (Boellstorff *et al.*, 2012, p. 17), and this is an enduring feature of ethnography (Scheper-Hughes, 2004).

"NEW" ETHNOGRAPHIES

As implied earlier, there have been many developments in ethnography, some that are relevant to qualitative research more broadly conceived, others that are more specific to the methodology of ethnography. Some developments respond to changes in the wider world, such as globalization and global ethnography (e.g., Burawoy *et al.*, 2000), the increased

interconnectedness of the world and mobile, or multisited, ethnography (e.g., Falzon, 2009), the ongoing development of technologies for recording visual data and visual ethnographies (e.g., Pink, 2007), the spread of digital technologies leading to new or different forms of social life and types of community, and digital or virtual ethnographies (e.g., Hine, 2000; Horst & Miller, 2012). But these do not challenge, in any abrupt way, the core principles of ethnography as a methodology; that is as a set of principles guiding practical, methodical choices (O'Reilly, 2012a). Typically, these authors provide texts through which researchers can think through the implications of wider developments for their ethnography, in the context of the founding principles. Indeed, the appeal to traditional ethnography is quite profound in Horst and Miller (2012). As Boellstorff *et al.* (2012, p. 4) argue: "The successful deployment of ethnographic methods in virtual worlds is, for us, a ringing endorsement of their enduring power to illuminate novel dimensions of human experience." As methods and approaches become more innovative, it appears increasingly relevant to remember what ethnography *essentially* is.

Burawoy (2000, p. 1) condemns "the fetish of confinement" in traditional anthropology. Embracing a global and/or historical perspective can challenge notions of communities as pure and bounded, tackle the relationship between local and global power and knowledge, and examine cultures of colonialism (Crang & Cook, 2007). But, as Burawoy acknowledges, ethnography was designed for the small scale and so global ethnography examines the lived experience of globalization, how global forces are felt, experienced, mobilized, or resisted, by spending extended amounts of time combining dwelling with travelling (2000, p. 4). The global is brought back in more theoretically and conceptually than empirically. Using Burawoy's extended case method, ethnographers can extend their observations and theoretical explanations from micro to macro, over time and space, but the first extension remains that of "the observer into the world of the participant" (2000, p. 26).

Employing visual images and technologies in fieldwork informed a challenge to "visual realism," enabling the development of creative and participatory approaches (Pink, 2007); but even where the approach is *uber*-reflexive or influenced by postmodern philosophy, still the goal is a "closer understanding of the worlds that other people live in" (Pink, 2007, p. 24). For Murthy (2008, p. 838), the epistemological remit of digital ethnography remains much the same: 'Ethnography is about telling social stories,' it is just the way stories are told that has changed.' The goal is often still to employ traditional ethnography in new settings, even where the cultures are virtual extended fieldwork examines "cultures through participation that is authentic in that culture's own terms" (Boellstorff *et al.*, 2012, p. 69). Being there remains crucial, "even when that embodiment is in the form of

an avatar" (p. 1). George Marcus (2012, p. xiv) warns that as ethnography becomes more and more popular it runs the risk of dilution; "that is, for the data derived from subjects to lack a rich, critically developed context for interpretation." He is concerned that too heavy a reliance on interviews as elicitation "lack(s) the fabric and shell of the immersive experience of trying to live 'inside'" a culture (2012, p. xiv). He also believes it remains important to impose objectivity on the experience of fieldwork through reflexive observations and the writing of field notes (Marcus, 2012, p. xiv).

Hine noted that virtual worlds are places of interaction and cultural activity, and so the Internet can be studied as both cultural artefact and as culture, but still ethnography tends to take a holistic rather than selective approach. Ethnography, she says, is sustained and involved, "a way of seeing through participants' eyes" (Hine, 2000, p. 21). Similarly, Boellstorff *et al.* (2012, p. 67) believe that "Ethnographic research is fundamentally a holistic project; we seek to understand shared practices, meanings, and social contexts, and the interrelations among them."

Of course, new media and technological advances are so ubiquitous it is difficult for them not to be part of every ethnography, but they do not have to be the single focus. They raise special issues such as whether to "be there" in real time, respecting identities that are virtual, retaining anonymity in photos, transcription of digitally collected interviews and data, and the fact that people do not write in the same way as they speak face to face. But many of these are merely extensions or different facets of similar problems faced by traditional ethnographers. Much of everyday life is mediated, but it is no *more* mediated than previously, just differently (Miller & Horst, 2012).

THE PRACTICE TURN

A far more significant emerging trend in ethnography arises as a result of the culmination of over a hundred years of social science, as what has become known as the practice turn has been embraced by ethnographers. Diverse theorists endeavor to make sense of what Cohen (1989, p. 12) understands as the social processes involved in the ongoing *constitution of social life*, while ethnographers increasingly and imaginatively draw on the emerging perspectives in their empirical work. The impact of practice theory on ethnography takes different forms depending on the author, discipline, or even generation (Postill, 2010, p. 6), but ethnography increasingly recounts *practice stories: narrative explanations that take account of the interaction of structure and agency over time and space*.

Broadly speaking, the practice turn in ethnography (as in social science more widely) recognizes that the tendency to perceive the agency of individual human actors as distinct and separate from social structures is an

untenable residual feature of the historical development of social theory. Early sociologists were keen to point out the *sui generis* existence of social structures in an attempt to forge a new science of society that could treat its subject matter as an object, in a manner that would be positive in its outcomes. In the work of Durkheim, for example, “social facts” such as laws, religion, education, and other more relational aspects such as norms, were depicted as having a force of their own on societies, independently of the individuals and their actions. Similarly, in Marx’s work, socioeconomic forces were considered to work independently to shape human societies. However, this approach has been gradually challenged by a variety of schools of thought we might call “subjectivism,” including symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, phenomenological sociology, social constructionism, and hermeneutics. These approaches emphasized the creative, reflexive and dynamic aspects of social life. They were especially influenced by the set of philosophical ideas known as interpretivism. Interpretivists view human agents as actors who *create* their social worlds rather than simply *react* to their conditions just like objects in the natural world. But these latter approaches tended to overestimate the extent of agency just as the earlier theories tended towards determinism. Having reached something of a consensus, albeit implicit (Stones, 2006), social theorists now seek ways to understand the ongoing interaction of structure and agency. These approaches tend to be known as structuration or practice theories, and draw from a diverse range of theoretical perspectives, some of which I discuss briefly here. Ethnographers, likewise, are increasingly drawing from these theoretical perspectives in order to tell practice stories—analyzing their empirical case studies using practice theory.

Structuration theory is a social theory of practice proposed by Anthony Giddens (1976, 1979, 1984). For Giddens, social life cannot be simply understood phenomenologically, as the outcome of individual actions based on how people think and feel, what they intend, or plan to achieve. Neither is social life solely determined by social structures, in the form of institutions, rules, and resources. Instead, social structures limit what people can and cannot do, and even what they try or wish to do; but agents continue to have some free will, and the very social structures that enable or constrain in some situations are made and remade by individuals in the process of their acting (or their agency). For Giddens, we therefore cannot even think of agency and structure as ontologically distinct; they are a duality—always interdependent and interrelated. Giddens’ structuration theory is more a way of thinking than a set of tools for empirical analysis, which does bring its own difficulties for ethnographers. He is not always clear how structures might be empirically defined as they are so tied up with agency (Stones, 2005) and

his work tends to favor voluntaristic interpretations. Nevertheless, his argument that social life is an ongoing historical process is an important one for ethnographers to learn.

Bourdieu's work (e.g., 1977, 1984, 1985, 1990) is also trying to make sense of social life as something that is made and remade through the everyday, embodied practice of agents, in the context of structural constraints. Instead of the concept of structuration, which could be interpreted as the making of structure, Bourdieu uses a theory of practice. This is a theory of how social life is shaped, not a theory about daily practices divorced from their wider context. For Bourdieu, although individuals do have the capacity for innovation and creativity (1990, p. 13, cited in Postill, 2010, p. 7), the choices made, the desires shared, the tastes expressed, and the actions made, only make sense when understood within the wider historical and structural context. This is because people (as individuals and groups) are always in practical relation to the world and, therefore, practices (what we do), are reasonable (sensible, plausible) adjustments to the future, taking into account what is possible and what is not, rather than, as some social scientists understand them, rational calculations or the product of identifiable plans. Furthermore, to some extent the constraints and opportunities faced by different groups can become so taken for granted that they become internalized as tastes and preferences, embodied as habits and routines, and even what is physically possible. The concept of *habitus* is a central one for the theory of practice, referring to these dispositions, habits, ways of doing things, ways of thinking, and ways of seeing the world that individuals acquire, singly and in groups, as they travel through life (Bourdieu, 1990). *Habitus* (single and plural) are therefore internalized structures, made and remade through the practice of daily life, they constrain what is possible by the fact of their internalization rather than by their externality, as is the case with structures more traditionally conceived. Practice thus includes things done habitually, without reflection, but also innovative, critical actions that lead eventually to social change.

Rob Stones (2005) has developed a stronger version of structuration theory that builds on and develops the work of Giddens, responding to some of his critics. Stones especially proposes the conceptual separation of structures and agency in order that empirical work can proceed with analysis of external structures, internalized structures such as *habitus* and his own conjuncturally specific internal structures, active agency, that takes place within position–practice relations, and outcomes (which can include any of the other aspects). Chan *et al.* (2010) is an excellent example of ethnographic work on childhood obesity that employs Stones' strong structuration theory.

My own approach (O'Reilly, 2012b) combines the work of Rob Stones with further insights from the work of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, where they describe communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) and situated learning

(Lave & Wenger, 1991), and the elaboration of the concept of agency as proposed by Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische (1998). Communities of practice (or cultural communities) are any social group (family, virtual community, work mates, social club, a partnership) that comes together and has to work out how to get on together. They form the social space at the meso level, in-between laws and rules on the one hand, and free choice on the other hand. In communities of practice, individuals learn what are the rules of “the game” and how malleable these may be. It is from people with whom we have contact that we get ideas about how things might be different, and who has the power to change what. Lave and Wenger call this “situated learning.” The work of Emirbayer and Mische is a useful addition to the suite of theories we can use, because they remind us that people are not entirely controlled or predetermined by their habitus. Individuals always have the ability to imagine different ways of living, and different ways of doing things, even if these sometimes seem impossible. It is this distinctive aspect of human agency that gives us the power to (sometimes) change things.

Practice theory is being used by ethnographers in diverse ways. At the theoretical level, we have (among others) Ortner’s (1984) review of theory in anthropology, and her argument that social practices and structures are both historically shaped. At the empirical level, see, for example, the way Peterson (2010) uses Bourdieu’s theory of practice and the concept of habitus, as well as the notion of metaculture, to understand media habits, or what marketing theories call “consumer loyalty,” in New Delhi. As Peterson says, ethnography gives ethnographers the opportunity not only to witness practices but also the practitioners the opportunity to reflect on them. He shows that brand loyalty is not so much about rational actors making choices based on quality and reliability as negotiating, sometimes critically sometimes habitually, the demands of various normative pressures and the urge to enjoy repetition and familiarity.

In media studies the focus on practice has been employed to deal with the tendency to focus either on audiences and consumption and the creation of meaning or on the structures of media production (Couldry, 2010). Couldry notes that an advantage of practice theory is that it views culture as sets of processes, and discourses as systems of meaning that frame and shape what can be said. Couldry (2010, p. 50) believes we can use Bourdieu, alongside perspectives from actor network and discourse, theory, and even Foucault’s work to “explain the underlying determinants of the practices that are available to different agents” (Couldry, 2010, p. 50).

There are thus many approaches being used by ethnographers that are at least implicitly trying to make sense of the interrelationship of structure and agency. Vergunst (2010) uses Lefebvre’s (1991) notion of gestures as learned

and patterned movement to explore ways of walking. Here, we see how the daily rhythms of the street and the practices of those engaged in walking through it “are intertwined with the histories of planning and architecture, but they may have also resisted expectations as much as conforming to them, responding to traditions and repertoires of bodily practice as much as to the structures [of] the city” (2010, p. 377). Here we get the sense of how practices unfold over time, in context, as structures are internalized, embodied, and recreated; as is very much alive in Wacquant’s (2004) ethnography of boxing. As Malinowski himself said (1922, p. 11), “the whole structure of society, [is] embodied in the most elusive of all materials; the human being.”

THE METHODOLOGY: TELLING PRACTICE STORIES

Here, I am not talking (only) about social practices, defined by Postill (2010, p. 1) as: “the embodied sets of activities that humans perform with varying degrees of regularity, competence and flair.” Practices, or the activities of social life, are of course central, but practice stories are more than that, because practice always takes place in material and social contexts, in space and time, in cultural communities and social groups. The emphasis by some social anthropologists on *practices* tends toward the microscopic analysis of daily life, without remedying the problems this has of ignoring or underestimating the role of wider structures, achieved through a more macroscopic lens.

The contemporary goal of much ethnography, then, is to tell practice stories. Practice stories are narrative (story-like) accounts that describe how cultures, behaviors, attitudes, institutions, and other sociological phenomena develop over time as norms, rules, organizational arrangements, and other social structures are acted on and adapted by people as part of their daily lives, in the context of their communities, groups, networks, and families. Practice stories therefore understand the making of the social world as ongoing processes, both shaped by and shaping general patterns, arrangements, rules, norms, and other structures. Ethnography that pays attention to both wider structures and to the thoughts and feelings of agents, within the context of action, is thus an ideal methodology.

“One cannot grasp the most profound logic of the social world unless one becomes immersed in the specificity of an empirical reality, historically situated and dated, but only in order to construct it as an instance . . . in a finite universe of possible configurations” (*Bourdieu, 1993, p. 274, in Peterson, M. 2010, p. 143*).

Methodologically, practice stories involve both conceptualizing and learning about the wider structures that frame the practices of a given community

or group. Here it is essential to employ both macro-level theorizing and broad sweep understanding as well as learning practically about the smaller, locally relevant context. However, abstract-level arguments should always be linked overtly to the analysis of daily life as lived in communities and cultures: “No ‘culture’ can legitimately be ring-fenced from large-scale, political and economic processes because the global is not ‘out there’, intruding annoyingly on the study, but is always ‘in here’, only existing through various localities” (Cragg & Cook, 2007, p. 12).

Practice theory views individuals as at least to some extent knowledgeable (Giddens, 1979); people think about and act on what they understand as given constraints. Empirical research thus respects individuals’ thoughts, ideas, and perspectives through listening, sharing in conversations, and taking part in the discourses of daily life. The practice of daily life also involves some practical consciousness (Giddens, 1979), or acting unreflexively (or even unconsciously) in the context of constraints and opportunities, as Malinowski also recognized. It is essential, therefore, to find ways of studying the practice of daily life and understanding it without relying *solely* on the views of agents. Ethnography does that by being there, by having participant observation as a core method, by becoming immersed in a context and then generating descriptions mediated by social scientific discourse (Giddens, 1976, p. 161). As Fetterman (2010, p. 38) has said, it is only through living and working with people that you begin to notice the “small and large patterns of behaviour that repeat themselves almost endlessly.” The distinction between the emic understandings of the participants and the etic interpretations of the researcher thus remains a useful one, although it is also important to recognize they overlap and inform each other (Boellstorff *et al.*, 2012).

Much ethnography has been about understanding cultures: “Cultures, as shared systems of meaning and practice, shape our hopes and beliefs; our ideas about family, identity and society; our deepest assumptions about being a person in this world” (Boellstorff *et al.*, 2012, p. 1). Cultures are one way of thinking about internalized social structures (such as habitus) as well as cultural communities within which internal structures take shape. Practice stories should reveal the complexity of daily lives (as ethnography does), should try to understand cultural differences, and challenge stereotypes and typifications (as ethnography has always tried to do). Life history and narrative research that examine individuals’ personal stories also offer promising and fruitful approaches for the study of practice. But structures are both internal and external, so agents’ perceptions can never be divorced from structural contexts (as ethnography has long recognized). Even in sensory ethnography (Pink, 2009, p. 15), there is a desire to understand the processes through which “collective or shared culturally

specific knowledge" (as structures) give meaning to sensory experiences yet remain contingent (as actions). Finally, an empirical study informed by a theory of practice will always be temporal. Ethnographers rarely present snapshots of society and gain material through which to understand how social reproduction and continuity, as well as social change, take place over time (and space).

Practice stories pay attention not only to people's feelings and emotions, their experiences and their free choices but also to the wider constraints and opportunities within which they act. More than that, practice stories take account of how these different features of social life interact, and thereby how structures (e.g., social classes) get produced or reproduced. Practice means studying the interaction of structure and agency, so how policies are interpreted, how colonial attitudes are adopted and resisted, what structures are in place as a result of colonialism that make it hard to resist, and so on (for example). Ethnographic methodology has the fundamental principles and flexibility of approach to enable researchers to pursue, theoretically and empirically, this holy grail of social science.

A PRACTICE STORY OF BRITISH MIGRATION

In my book, *International Migration and Social Theory* (O'Reilly, 2012b), I narrated a practice story about British migration to Spain's coastal areas by drawing on ethnographic work I had been undertaking for several years. Here, macro-level theoretical perspectives described the ways in which broad social changes, such as globalization, tourism development, European integration, the network society, and mobility, have increased the likelihood of, and the opportunities for, this kind of leisured and tourism-related migration. I also drew attention to the ways in which these broad changes were enacted in practice, embodied in the new norm of mobility, and have wrought their own cultural changes and impacted on the habitus and the nature of settlement of British in Spain. I examined the role of more proximate structural layers such as policies, tourism practices, retirement, and unemployment, that were revealed through the life stories and practices of the agents, helping us to understand what motivated their move, what they expect from the destination, and how they set about achieving their goals. I noted how, in interviews, the migrants often described their own migration in terms of push and pull factors. It is only when we examine their in-depth stories, as they unravel over time as part of the ethnographic encounter, that migration is revealed as an ongoing process of negotiation. We then see how the structural conditions outlined earlier shape the decision to move: British migrants embrace, internalize and make a practice of the ideas of freedom and mobility, which have been enabled through the development of new

technologies, and provide opportunities for them to deal with the personal difficulties that arise as a result of aging, retirement, and unemployment. By examining practices in context, as they are enacted by agents, we also see how these are mediated by conjuncturally specific internal structures. For example, the migrants adapt their expectations of learning the language when they realize many local Spanish speak to them in English (because they see them as tourists). Applying practice theory to the ethnographic work, I then went on to interpret the nature of their settlement in Spain, and to attempt to explain their low levels of integration in Spanish society. I recalled that their migration was enabled by *relative* wealth and informed by notions of freedom, travel, and escape, and realized (from a critical perspective) that to integrate would damage what they achieve by constantly balancing home and away, here and there, richer and poorer society.

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KAREN O'REILLY SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Karen O'Reilly, Professor of Sociology, Loughborough University has a background in sociology and social anthropology and is a leading expert in ethnographic methods. She is author of *The British on the Costa del Sol* and *Ethnographic Methods* (both with Routledge), *Key Concepts in Ethnography* (Sage) and numerous journal articles in the fields of tourism and migration. Her research in Spain has spanned nearly 15 years and included long-term ethnographic fieldwork, qualitative interviews with groups and individuals, as well as survey methods. She is co-editor of the book *Lifestyle Migration* (Ashgate) and is currently undertaking multimethod research with lifestyle migrants in East Asia. Her research interests are in contemporary migrations (and mobilities) and their implications for sociological “problems” of nation, ethnicity, class, gender, age, community, home, and belonging. More recently she has pioneered the use of practice stories for empirical studies of migration, in her book *International Migration and Social Theory* (Palgrave).

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