

debates about rules versus discretion, or technology versus traditional court decision-making. At times, for instance, Tata elides having any discretion with having *enough* discretion, and assumes that there is room within the everyday social construction of cases to achieve sufficient discretion for judges to achieve justice in hard cases, even within standardised systems. Whether this residual, practical discretion is ‘enough’ – and what ‘enough discretion’ even means – are left as open questions. Contemporary movements towards computerised, algorithmic justice, and the impact of virtual courts conducted by live-link on decision-making and fact creation, for instance, are not really considered in his survey of technological incursions into the traditional court. Still, Tata provides us with a starting point for action, and for prioritising what really matters in sentencing practice, and indeed, he provides a conceptual framework with which to resist the dystopian end points often imagined for the mechanisation of sentencing.

Tata’s book is ultimately a call to arms, an invitation to rethink existing orthodoxies and to broaden the scope of academic writing and thinking about the nature of sentencing. It is written predominantly with academic audiences in mind, and occasionally assumes that the reading is familiar with concepts from social theory and political philosophy. However, it is eminently approachable, and deserves to be widely read.

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Ochoa R, *Intimate Crimes: Kidnapping, Gangs and Trust in Mexico City*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2019, 240 pp. ISBN 978019879846, £80.00 (hardback)

Kidnapping is a pervasive societal insecurity that has emerged as a feature of certain complex global settings; usually those characterised by intersections of inequality, injustice, high-crime, corruption, violent conflict, and more recently, irregular migration flows. However, despite this illicit phenomenon’s traumatic impact on innumerable victims and their relatives, it remains a neglected, and imbalanced topic in terms of academic attention. This can be explained – at least partially – by the application of a somewhat Occidental lens to kidnapping by mainstream research. First, the limited incidence of kidnapping in developed societies has contributed to research neglect. Second, what scholarly focus has been generated by this crime often centres on the abduction of transnationally-mobile Western elites in hostile distant locations. This misrepresents the reality of how

kidnapping is predominantly experienced. In affected contexts – usually less developed and developing countries – it is *local* communities who are most victimised, whose lives are most traumatised, and whose life-patterns are most disrupted by this immobilizing crime phenomenon.

Rolando Ochoa's new monograph provides a much-needed corrective to existing kidnapping research. Its rigorous focus on embedded local dynamics of kidnapping, and those strategies developed for its prevention by Mexico City's elites, emphasises key foundational platforms important for scholarly attention to this illicit practice: necessary contextual awareness; understanding of the complex interaction between *macro* structural forces that entrench this problem and *micro* everyday choices that are shaped by kidnap risk; and, the need for methodological and theoretical innovation to effectively approach this uniquely challenging research topic.

The book's title, *Intimate Crimes*, spotlights a key characteristic of kidnap risk for elites in Mexico City: the so-called 'treason phenomenon' (p. 93). Essentially, the vast majority of kidnappings are facilitated by someone close to the victim, usually a family-member or domestic employee with access to personal information regarding wealth, mobility, lifestyle etc. Whilst elites can access countermeasures that other citizens cannot – contracting private security, living in secure residences, even leveraging their economic and social capital for increased state support – such strategies also reinforce security inequalities, as well as the disconnection between social strata of Mexico City. Further, Mexico's wider societal context of high-crime, massive impunity, embedded corruption and weak rule-of-law fosters embedded lack of trust within everyday interpersonal interactions that extends into the domestic employment setting. The challenge which Ochoa explores in this engaging book is how employers and their employees respectively detect and signal trustworthiness in circumstances where *normal* mechanisms of recruitment, screening and contractual accountability do not apply; in circumstances where the informal economy prevails and where the stakes for contracting an untrustworthy member of staff can prove very high.

It says much about how fear of kidnapping pervades life in Mexico City that Ochoa depicts this criminal insecurity as an elevated, almost normalised, presence within everyday choices and domestic arrangements. Certainly, research focus upon the recruitment and employment practices adopted by elites for their drivers (*chauffeurs* with added responsibilities) and domestic workers is not an obvious entry-point to understand kidnapping in Mexico City. However, Ochoa's work effectively harnesses these household arrangements to spotlight and explain how wider political economic factors, and indeed frailties of weak/selective/underfunded law enforcement, are not merely *kidnap-ogenic*, but shape life inside inside the privileged residences of Mexico City. Productive field selection is underpinned by extensive qualitative research with residents in Miguel Hidalgo, one of the capital city's wealthiest neighbourhoods. This fieldwork itself is further strengthened by compilation of a 'Kidnapping News Report Database'; an effective barometer of media representation and public perception of kidnapping, as

well as a mechanism through which Ochoa could triangulate and verify certain findings. With a research topic that is embedded in the public psyche but also socially taboo, and that is characterised by rumour but also communicated by quite dubious statistics, Ochoa's approach demonstrates useful mechanisms to improve the quality and reliability of kidnapping data. There are other valuable lessons here for future kidnapping scholars in the handling of such issues as securing access, negotiating consent and conducting sensitive research.

The book is comprised of six substantive chapters, introduction, conclusion, and appendices that detail research methods and the Kidnapping News Report Database. Chapter One establishes the conceptual framework of signalling theory which Ochoa skilfully harnesses to unpack strategies for signalling trust in domestic work arrangements. Uncovering the semi-hidden and informal practices embedded within domestic employment in Mexico City, he articulates how desirable employee traits are both tested and conveyed in order to mitigate kidnap risk. Chapter Two provides a highly informative account of Mexico's political economy and how wider structural factors (market liberalization; social inequality; a dysfunctional and under-resourced criminal justice system with an authoritarian legacy) created fertile conditions for problems of crime and violence, not least kidnapping. This chapter presents an engaging guide to understanding the deep-seated problems of crime, justice and insecurity that beset Mexico and will prove very useful to scholars new to this field.

Chapter Three progresses towards tighter focus on kidnapping, in Mexico in general, and in its capital specifically. It charts the emergence of kidnapping as a major concern in political abductions by revolutionaries in the 1960s and 70s, progresses to professional gangs often linked to corrupt senior police figures from the 1970s to the mid-1990s, and ends with their substitution by less organised, younger kidnapping gangs that persists to this day. Chapter Four focuses upon recognisable elite strategies to insulate themselves from kidnap risk – hiring private protection, living in secured residences etc. It highlights how these measures extend the toxic effects of kidnapping through increased social segregation and security inequality in Mexico City. It is noteworthy that whilst this book focusses on *elite* counter-kidnapping, the most significant result of its successful strategies, has been the relocation of kidnap risk to middle/lower-class Mexican citizens. More nuanced elite strategies are considered in Chapter Five. It considers how mechanisms such as personal recommendations and in-group policing by other domestic staff are combined with other screening techniques to detect desirable characteristics and trustworthiness in new employees. Chapter Six provides some balance through the consideration of employee perspectives. For example, for those potential employees coming from the same family as other household staff this may prove an effective signaller of their trustworthiness. At the same time, when employers recruit from the same family unit, additional reassurance is created by locking-in this entire group. Here Ochoa affords insights into informal and implicit transactions of the Mexican domestic workplace. Employers seek enhanced security from risks such as kidnapping by recruiting staff that are

trustworthy. Trusted employees also look to these same employers for a social safety net that the state does not provide. Interdependence, however imbalanced, emerges as a regulatory feature of the informal economy.

This is an excellent book which has wide interdisciplinary relevance. It represents an important contribution towards an emerging criminology of kidnapping and powerfully conveys how this peculiar crime is emblematic of wider societal rifts and structural problems. It articulates how, in countries such as Mexico, normalised everyday insecurity born of kidnapping works its way into the domestic setting. Whilst this monograph focusses on elite counter-kidnapping strategies within a specific neighbourhood of Mexico City, it has wider importance. Not least, it points the way for further ethnographic, contextually-rooted, research into a phenomenon that is pervasive across diverse Southern settings but which is still largely under-examined and under-theorised. There is much about kidnapping in Mexico that is not explored here, not least its diversity of forms and motivations, as well as its complex interaction with other crimes and insecurities – from disappearances and homicides, to the predatory abduction of irregular migrants.¹ However, this book lays no claim to be an encyclopaedic study of kidnapping in Mexico. Rather it blends a macro analysis of Mexico's current political, economic and social conditions with discrete focus on how employer-employee relations in elite households of Mexico City are influenced by kidnap risk. It will prove a very useful guide for future scholarly work on kidnapping but also connects with important wider themes. It speaks to that growing body of work charting how ordinary citizens confronted with impunity and weak, dysfunctional and selective law enforcement are innovating their own mechanisms to pursue security, truth and justice (see, for example: Schwartz-Marin and Cruz-Santiago, 2016). This book will certainly interest scholars of crime, policing, security and the rule of law – particularly those interested in Southern perspectives. However, its contribution extends further, also providing valuable insights into Mexican political economy, signalling theory and precarious domestic work in the informal economy. It deserves a wide readership and will be a valuable resource for future researchers across a range of fields.

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Note

1. For consideration of other kidnapping related research themes, in Mexico and elsewhere, see the workshop proceedings of, 'Global Perspectives on Kidnapping and Crimes of (Im)mobility'. Available from: www.kidnappingworkshop.net.

Reference

Schwartz-Marin E and Cruz-Santiago A (2016) Pure corpses, dangerous citizens: Transgressing the boundaries between experts and mourners in the search for the disappeared in Mexico. *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 83(2): 483–510.

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Adnan Sattar, *Criminal Punishment and Human Rights: Convenient Morality*, Routledge: London, UK, 2019; 270 pp. ISBN: 978-1-138-62579-2, £120 (hbk)

Adnan Sattar's choice of dissertation topic was triggered by his perception of the absence of a meaningful dialogue between penology and penal philosophy on the one hand (with their recent focus on "punishment and society"), and the expanding field of human rights and punishment on the other. While both these areas have generated considerable academic activity in recent decades, in terms of their common discourse Sattar justifiably invokes the metaphor of "ships passing in the night".^{1,2}

Indeed, a shared subject matter between these fields does not seem to have developed organically. The development of human rights regimes in modern times has been identified with the establishment of the United Nations and its institutions towards the end of the Second World War, and their objective of establishing the democratic values associated with the philosophers of the Enlightenment,³ as reformulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the international conventions adopted in the following decades. The relevance of these developments to criminology and penology was hardly evident during those decades and, indeed, human rights terminology was rarely invoked in penological discourse – even in the course of the heated debates of the 1970s pertaining to the objectives of sentencing. During the past 3–4 decades, however, a much greater awareness of these topics has developed.

This enhanced awareness of the relevance of human rights issues to penology may be attributable to two main factors. One factor is without doubt the scale, pace and intensity that have accompanied the development of international human rights norms during this period, some of which have had a direct bearing upon punishment-related issues. Reference may be made here to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (the ICCPR) of 1966, the Convention against Torture of 1984, and the activities of the bodies charged with the implementation of these norms – the Human Rights Committee under the ICCPR, including its General Comments and jurisprudence, and the various sets of