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Participant observation, thinking through making, sociology of knowledge, wanderer, sedentary naiveté

PAP117

Ethnographic research in immigration detention in Belgium: Challenges of gaining access and building trust

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Prison ethnography is now a well-established research tradition/method within criminology. The recent publication of a handbook on prison ethnography testifies to that (Drake, Earle & Sloan, 2015). However, the administrative detention of migrants for immigration purposes has for a long time been a blind spot within this flourishing research tradition. One of the most important reasons for the lack of research inside immigration detention is the difficulty of gaining access to these detention facilities. In the UK, for instance, Mary Bosworth was the first researcher granted permission to conduct overt ethnographic research inside immigration detention (Bosworth, 2012, 2014) while several other researchers still – literally and figuratively – keep hitting the walls. In contrast to other countries, different researchers could gain access to the closed immigration detention centres in Belgium, although considerable challenges and dilemmas are faced throughout the different research phases as well.

As a PhD researcher doing ethnographic research in immigration detention in Belgium, I will, from my experience, reflect on these challenges of gaining access. Attention will be paid to the different stages of the research process, including the dialogue with the ethical commission and the preliminary discussions with the Office of Foreigners' Affairs, responsible for the daily operation of the Belgian immigration detention centres. Moreover, as one of the aims of the research project is to gain insight in staff-detainee interactions and how they are experienced by the respective persons, the choice for a multi-perspective approach, allowing to understand 'the intertwining agency of the variety of actors' in immigration detention (Achermann, 2009: 52), led to several but surmountable challenges in building trust as different 'sides' (Becker, 1967) were taken during the data collection. Several examples of these challenges will be discussed as well.

prison ethnography, immigration detention, gaining access, building trust

PAP120

Girls with a migration background in Italian schools and social services. How pedagogical research can support educational challenges.

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If social inquiry should have a transformative goal on social reality, this is an imperative for critical education research concerning disempowered groups in a specific social context, whose purpose is at the same time exploratory, emancipatory, technical and political (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2011; Mortari 2003).

Among other emerging issues, two complex processes concern Italian pedagogues and practitioners interested in intersectionality (Hill Collins & Bilge 2016; Campani 2010) and gender-based or ethnic differences: the growing multiculturalisation of territories goes hand in hand with a renovate wave of racism and xenophobia (Tramma 2015), while the rise of gender equality fails to reduce the level of sexual discriminations, still alarming (Brambilla 2016).

Beyond the social and political debate around equal opportunities and interculturalism (Okin, 1999), a potentially-at-risk population are young women with a migration background, placed in the midst of this fluctuating situation of gender and ethnic emancipation and discrimination. Day by day, they are called upon the re-affirmation of their