

**Working Hard, Drinking Hard:
On Violence and Survival in Honduras**

Adrienne Pine

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Colonialism, and more recently corporate capitalism and neoliberal policies, have been key forces shaping the structure of labor in Latin America. In *Working Hard, Drinking Hard*, Adrienne Pine examines the impact of these forces on Honduran self-identity. Pine investigates the relationships among violence, alcohol use, and the maquiladora industry to understand how notions of modernity and development reproduce poverty and generate what comes close to a sense of national fatalism. The history of colonialism and neoliberal policies, backed in some cases by internal political institutions dependent on U.S. foreign policies, have generated structural and symbolic forms of violence that promote social inequities and undermine economic advancement, especially among the poor unskilled working masses in Honduras. The symbolic violence in Honduras is founded upon an ideology of achievement that sees those experiencing violence as naturally deserving of violence. Pine seeks to unravel Honduran subjectivities concerning violence and reveal how external political and economic constraints are internalized, reinforced, and resisted everyday in the streets, factories, and homes of poor Hondurans.

Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus as well as the notion of identity as a form of agency espoused by Frederick Cooper and Rogers Brubaker, Pine attempts to understand how Honduran subjectivities are constructed through the processes of consumption and production. Honduran self-perception must be understood in the context of various historical processes, she argues, especially the exploitative structures of the country's early banana industry, the neoliberal policies of the International Monetary Fund, and U.S. political and military intervention over the past three decades. Those historical forces have fostered a Honduran habitus that naturalizes the violent and backward character of poor Hondurans, especially men, and that seeks legitimacy from foreign, particularly U.S., political and economic institutions. Hondurans are constantly reminded of their failure to advance and embrace an ideology of achievement. Through state legislation, the media, the church, and everyday interactions, poor Hondurans are made to feel their expendability. The state and media continuously reiterate the underdevelopment of Honduran society, the expansion of gang activity, and the dangers of street life, which in turn normalizes violence, generates fear, and facilitates state-organized anticrime campaigns. Indeed, Pine investigates the role of gangs, which have increased in Honduras in recent years as modern factories and the service economy marginalized male providers. Gangs allowed men to express their masculinity and provided a network to resist the structural inequities that exist within Honduran society. Drawing on interviews with gang members, Pine shows that gangs filled a vacuum left by the state, which had failed to provide opportunities for young men. The colonialist, corporate, and imperialist legacy of Honduran political and economic structures, combined with the antipoor rhetoric of the modern state and elite-controlled media, has naturalized the violence and inferiority of the poor. In the colonialist mindset, poor Hondurans internalize this inferiority and they have few tools with which to challenge these constructs.

Perhaps the most interesting section of Pine's book is her study of the role of alcohol and violence in Honduran society. For decades, anthropologists have creatively examined

the relationships among alcohol, labor, and identity in Latin America, and they have produced a sizeable body of scholarly literature. Drawing on a wide variety of alcohol studies research, especially the work of Dwight Heath, Pine argues that false perceptions of alcoholism and alcohol abuse contribute to the symbolic and structural violence perpetuated against poor Hondurans. Although comparative statistical evidence on alcohol use shows that Hondurans engage in relatively low levels of drinking and experience relatively little in the way of alcoholism and alcohol-related problems, Hondurans believe alcohol abuse is rampant and one of the key forces inhibiting the social and economic development of Honduran society. As with gang activity and physical violence, Hondurans internalize western perceptions of alcoholism, class distinctions, and racist ideologies to view alcohol drinking as problematic within their country. The perception of problem drinking, especially among the poor, helps to justify state regulation of drinking and the establishment of self-help organizations, such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon. The public nature of drinking among the poor, when compared to the private nature of elite drinking, reinforces stereotypes about the innate inferiority of poor Hondurans and helps the state and business leaders mask social inequities. Support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon also have a stake in perpetuating the perceived alcohol problem in Honduras. Pine creatively investigates the gendered differences between the male-oriented Alcoholics Anonymous and the female-oriented organization Al-Anon. Alcoholics Anonymous promotes the disease concept of alcoholism, which blames the individual for their alcoholism. As a result, the organization reifies notions about the innate shortcomings of the poor and their inability to adopt an ideology of achievement. Pine shows how Al-Anon promotes misleading ideologies that view women as contributing factors in male drinking problems. Yet, despite this rhetoric, women in Honduras embrace Al-Anon as a source for networking and an outlet for community building. The state and factory owners tout the maquiladora industry (which assembles clothing from imported materials) as a solution to the crime, poverty, alcohol abuse, and violence of Honduran society. Yet, behind the clean walls and well-lit factory floors of the maquiladoras lies an ongoing, though more subtle, form of violence driven by the exploitative working conditions of the factories, low wages, and the regimen of factory work on the body.

This book is a must-read for all serious scholars of Latin American history and anthropology. Readers of *Labor* will find its focus on violence and the construction of national identity within the context of globalization and corporate capitalism especially powerful. Moreover, the book should also find a home in alcohol studies research. It is ethnographically rich and theoretically sophisticated. Pine's investigative approach, coupled with compelling personal narratives, reveals powerful insights into the nature of violence and the external forces shaping national identity in Honduras.

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