

# An Exercise in Failure: Punishing “At-Risk” Youth and Families in a South Los Angeles Boot Camp Program

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## Abstract

Juvenile correctional boot camps seek to transform youth labeled “at-risk” into productive members of society. While these military-style programs have been in decline since the early 2000s, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), one of the largest agencies in the country, continues to embrace them as a key disciplinary practice and vestige of the “get tough” era in U.S. juvenile justice reform. Contemporary transformative programs have been linked to Progressive Era juvenile social control, and scholars are beginning to show that, historically, racial exclusion has been a central function. The goals of this research are to interrogate the treatment of boot camp participants by police and demonstrate how racial exclusion remains central to juvenile social control. Drawing on collaborative ethnographic fieldwork, this study shows how police stigmatize Black and Latino parents, adopt the role of disciplinary authority in the family, and infuse formal control processes into domestic life. Youth face stigmatizing encounters through degradation and punitive physical training as part of the camp’s disciplinary regime. This research suggests that youth intervention programs built on liberal ideals are the most recent in a long line of racialized social control systems in the United States that seek to stigmatize and confine youth of color.

## Keywords

child saving, race and juvenile justice, boot camps, color-blind ideology, critical race theory, criminological theories, ethnography

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On a Saturday in late December, police overseeing the boot camp for at-risk youth begin to discuss graduation. Officers continually reinforce that even if youth show up on time, do the exercises, and refrain from back talk, there is no guarantee they will graduate. The youth gather in lines for the last time. Without explanation, officers call names—“Hernandez! Jackson! Torres! Make a new line!”—and this is how graduates and nongraduates are separated. One officer trots the nongraduates over to a corner of the grass where they all “take a knee” and listen. Another makes the graduates chant back to him 3 times in a call and response—“What class is this?!” “2010!”—before dismissing them to their parents, who are just now trickling out of the school doors. As the youth disperse, more than one nongraduate is clearly upset and Ruiz, a lanky 14-year-old Latino boy, appears to be crying. He tries several times to run away but is restrained by first one, then two, and then finally a third officer who throw him to the ground. Continuing to struggle, Ruiz protests his innocence as one of the officers tries to explain why he failed:

“I did everything you asked, and this is what I get for coming dirty on one [drug] test? I’d be cool if they didn’t, but they’re graduating!”

“Focus on what *you* did wrong.” says Officer Gomez.

“Every week they come late, every week they don’t do their homework!”

“This is not about anybody else—*you* fucked up!”

Ruiz continues: “I did every single push-up, I went to school every day, even when my dad didn’t want to drive me. When mom left, when she came back, I listened to her, every word! When I go out, everywhere I go, she knows where I’m at! I’ve changed! Huerta [another student], he’s the same as when he got here!”

Pause. “I fucking hate you, man.”

Gomez: “I don’t care. You’re not ready.”

“Tell me, right now, what’s wrong with me!?”

“The issue is, you need more help. To hell with everybody else, this is about you! It’s not like it’s just my decision. The entire staff agreed that you weren’t ready.” (Roussell, fieldnotes)

The pile of officers on Ruiz and revelation of his failure were performances of a stigmatizing ceremony that lowered his social standing (Garfinkel, 1956). Officer Gomez paints the boy’s outburst as further justification for his failure, while other youth and their families stand and witness his degradation firsthand. In the officer’s eyes, Ruiz will not graduate because he has not demonstrated responsibility for his misbehavior and so has not undergone the personal transformation required. Unmoved by Ruiz’s assertion that his parents have not facilitated his efforts in camp, Officer Gomez sees the boy’s inconsistent attendance record, trouble getting to camp, and his protest not only as childish but also as evidence of his criminal trajectory. These become cause for further punishment (see Bishop & Frazier, 1996). Rather than appreciate any potential difficulties, Gomez recasts Ruiz’ overall performances as a series of individual choices to fail.

“At-risk” youth are those whom police or school officials believe may fail to become economically productive adults due to poor school achievement, economic dependency, mental disability, or criminality (Koball et al., 2011). Physical training (PT) and intimidation are key strategies that officers use to normalize their charges and transform them from at-risk youth to responsible market actors (Cullen, Blevins, Trager, & Gendreau, 2005; Simon, 1995). Critical juvenile justice scholars argue that boot camps are the most recent iteration in a long line of Progressive Era state-building practices that, while well-intentioned, ultimately harm juvenile offenders (see also Menzel, 1973; Tappan, 1946, 1949). Guided by the liberal notion of social improvement, juvenile social control institutions sought to transform “troublesome youth” into productive members of society through militaristic training (Platt, 1977).

This set of arrangements produced a U.S. juvenile justice system organized to build productive capacity in White youth and criminalize youth of color under the guise of caring for their moral and social development (Chávez-García, 2012; Ward, 2012). Systems of racialized control have long restricted the social lives of people of color based on the belief that they threaten White society. These restrictions have taken different forms in different eras, but in the post-Civil Rights era, racial control has assumed a color-blind form. Contemporary White supremacy has increasingly come to rest on the perceived criminality of people of color, particularly Blacks and Latinos (Alexander, 2010; Wacquant, 2001). Delinquent and criminal labeling today reflects historical tropes about the dangers and deficiencies of youth of color, which increases their chances of criminalization (Rios, 2011). From this perspective, we examine the ways boot camp officials frame the deficiencies of so-called at-risk youth and families in camp and identify the historical continuities with Progressive Era social control regimes.

We draw upon critical race and punishment literature to answer these questions, and our data show how boot camp officials frame youth and their families as failures, justifying increased surveillance and punishment. This collaborative ethnography draws on fieldwork at weekend boot camps in one Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) precinct. Below, we discuss the historical and theoretical literature supporting these arguments, explain the setting and research methods of the study, and reproduce and analyze original field research. The final section concludes by calling for the end of juvenile correctional boot camps. We propose that juvenile social control could be rearranged to promote empowerment rather than punishment, but ultimately question whether justice-oriented institutions alone can combat racialized juvenile outcomes. We end by pointing to police-led youth intervention programs as critical sites for criminological examination.

## Theoretical Frameworks

Juvenile correctional boot camps emerged during the 1980s “get tough on crime” era and, like other punitive reforms, have increased the criminalization of at-risk youth. The popularity of boot camps coincided with the punitive turn in juvenile justice during the early 1980s and 1990s when public fear surrounded the emergence of juvenile “superpredators” (Dilulio, 1995). In response to growing calls for public safety, states

retooled juvenile justice from a welfare to a penal system by encouraging courts to impose harsher punishments, such as “blended sentences” and juvenile waivers, both of which involved adult prison terms for chronic or violent juvenile offenders (Bishop, Frazier, & Henretta, 1989; Bishop, Frazier, Lanza-Kaduce, & Winner, 1996; Clayman, 1983; Podkopacz & Feld, 2001; Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). Boot camps, like prisons, the military, schools, and factories, involve physical and mental training to instill self-regulation, rendering subjects governable, exploitable, and complicit in their own subjection (Foucault, 1995). Federal funding guidelines intended the justice system and its partners (including schools and private organizations) to incorporate educational, rehabilitative, and skill-building components into a military-style training regimen (Cullen et al., 2005; Mackenzie, Wilson, & Kider, 2001; Simon, 1995). Camp officials use strenuous PT to “break youth down” and then “build them back up” (Cullen et al., 2005, p. 60), using “intense verbal tactics” (Parent, 2003, p. 2) to coerce compliant behavior. Nationally, these programs have steadily declined since the early 2000s due to their failure to achieve sustained behavioral change<sup>1</sup> and controversial if not brutal treatment of youth participants<sup>2</sup> (Cullen et al., 2005). Just as harsher sanctions failed to reduce recidivism, there appears to be little evidence to support the notion that intensive physical exercise and confrontational programming reduce recidivism and in some cases may increase the likelihood of reoffending (Correia, 1997; Klenowski, Bell, & Dodson, 2010; Mackenzie et al., 2001).

Normalizing and assimilating unparented European immigrant children became a key state-building practice during the Progressive Era as “child-saving” institutions attempted to advance the liberal mission of social improvement<sup>3</sup> through juvenile social control. Guided by the legal principle of *parens patriae*, or the state as parent, when parents were absent or deemed unfit to provide for their children’s moral and social development, child savers sought to care for “troublesome youth” (Elrod & Ryder, 2013; Platt, 1977, p. 10). Early child savers—mostly White wealthy benefactors, social workers, health practitioners, and school and criminal justice officials—wanted to transform the “potentially dangerous classes” into economically productive members of society through militaristic training in rural settings (Platt, 1977; Simon, 1995). Child savers believed that “delinquent, dependent, and neglected children” (Platt, 1977, p. 10) could be transformed and Americanized through reformatory penal education. Juvenile justice became an important mechanism that linked youth with human services and promoted civic-mindedness through punishment. But whereas child-savers helped European immigrant youth (“our children”) to eventually enter U.S. society and “pass,” youth of color (“other peoples’ children”) were increasingly subjected to punitive and dehumanizing state intervention (Feld, 1999, p. 330).

Reinforcing Bonilla-Silva’s (2013) contention that racism has always been a central tenet of liberal thought,<sup>4</sup> counter-histories suggest that while state-building practices normalized Whites, they were specifically designed to marginalize Blacks and Latinos, considering them innately and immutably deficient, regardless of parental presence. Child savers deemed young Blacks inhuman and “retarded” “lost causes” undeserving of formal education (Ward, 2012), while legal documents

referred to Mexican American youth as lazy, criminal, and violent due to their “Aztec heritage” (Chávez-García, 2012; Haney López, 2009). Critical scholars have shown that under the guise of providing “care” informal court and probation processing eschewed due process protections and facilitated the unjust treatment of juveniles who could not advocate for themselves (Tappan, 1946, 1949). Youth of color were excluded from juvenile justice treatment, such as reformatory education, as they were often treated as adults who deserved harsher punishment, whether incarceration or forced servitude (Mennel, 1973). When child savers did take charge, domestic surveillance, cultural degradation, and exploitative labor became state remedies for their deficiencies (Hartman, 1997; Ward, 2012). Because these deficiencies were inherited from the family’s “racial stock” (Chávez-García, 2012, p. 13), “domestic disorder” in the home also came under scrutiny (Hartman, 1997, p. 159). Reformers developed “an elaborate micropenality of everyday life” to train, correct, and punish youth under the assumption that exercising free will would lead directly to transgression (Hartman, 1997, p. 125). The domestic sphere was held “responsible for criminality and a range of other sins, from vanity and consumption of tobacco and liquor to stealing” (Hartman, 1997, p. 159). Convinced of the superiority of White culture and home life, White home visitors began regulating the personal hygiene of youths of color and cleanliness of their family homes (Hartman, 1997; Ramírez, 2010). Progressive Era discipline represented not an end to racial exclusion following the collapse of chattel slavery and conquest of the Southwest, but rather a continuity of the same ideologies that justified the punishment, exclusion, and exploitation of youth of color.

Researchers are beginning to show that historical patterns of dehumanization (Goff, Eberhardt, Williams, & Jackson, 2008; Haslam, 2006; Lareau & Horvat, 1999) and racism remain and are reproduced through “color-blind” processes of criminalization (Alexander, 2010; Gonzalez Van Cleve, 2016; Rios, 2011). Color blindness is a dominant racial ideology that emerged as a response to legal and political constraints enacted in the post-Civil Rights era that justifies the continued oppression of people of color by adopting superficially race-neutral language (Bonilla-Silva, 2002).<sup>5</sup> Dehumanization is a social-cognitive process that occurs in everyday interactions, leading people to believe that some groups, particularly Blacks, are criminal, have ape-like qualities (Goff et al., 2008), or fail to behave in sanctioned ways (Lareau & Horvat, 1999), and these beliefs are accompanied by feelings of contempt and disgust (Haslam, 2006). Criminality has become a master set of code words that refer to people of color in race-neutral ways.<sup>6</sup> “Superpredators,” for example, entered public discourse during the “get tough” era and was commonly used to dehumanize young, urban Black and Latino men, referring to them as impulsive, remorseless, “fatherless,” “Godless,” and violent offenders (Bennett, Dilulio Jr., & Walters, 1996). Young Black men are often viewed as much older than they are and thus guilty and deserving of harsh punishment (Alexander, 2010; Gonzalez Van Cleve, 2016). Gonzalez Van Cleve’s (2016) ethnography examines how Chicago court officials publicly stigmatize Black and Latino defendants using the racially coded term “mopes” in the same way they might use the *n*-word. Mopes are always already guilty, worthy of moral disdain, and a waste of the court’s time. Dehumanizing

defendants justifies court officials' cursory attention to due process and their inclination to maximize punishment.

Similarly, police and school officials today criminalize urban youth with the "at-risk" label. Rios' (2011) ethnography in Oakland, CA, shows how teachers, police, and parents subject at-risk Black and Latino boys to an expanding network of surveillance and control that he calls the "youth control complex" (YCC). Rather than nurturing self-discipline, or supplying absent resources or mentoring, the purpose of the YCC is to mark youth for criminal exclusion:

The discipline imposed on the boys in Oakland did not do much to reform the soul. Instead, it incapacitated them as social subjects; it stripped them of their dignity and humanity by systematically marking them and denying them the ability to function in school, in the labor market, and as law-abiding citizens. The boys did not learn to self-discipline; instead, they resisted, became incapacitated, or both. (2011, p. 88)

Racial exclusion has long been a key function of juvenile social control, yet examinations of the racial dynamics of juvenile correctional boot camps are lacking. We explore three main questions: (1) How do officials frame the deficiencies of camp participants? (2) In what ways does this framing reflect historical racial tropes? (3) How do camp routines conform to historical practices of juvenile social control? With this study, we aim to show how boot camp officials use color-blind deficiency frames to criminalize participants and increase their exposure to punishment.

## Method and Fieldsite

South Los Angeles is an impoverished area undergoing rapid Black-to-Latino transition. The 2010 Census reports that unemployment in the "Lakeside" Division is at about 40% and about 30% of residents live under the poverty line. Historically, a Black community, South LA, has seen a dramatic rise in its Latino population in the past few decades. Labor practices favoring legally precarious immigrants work hand in hand with the removal of Black citizens through the criminal justice system, recasting the neighborhood as increasingly Latino (Costa Vargas, 2006; Hipp, Tita, Gascón, & Roussell, 2010; Roussell, 2015; Valle & Torres, 2000). The population served by Juvenile Impact Program (JIP) is majority Latino with a smattering of Black youth.

This analysis draws on ethnographic observations collected over two 12-week Lakeside boot camp terms in 2008 and 2010. As part of a larger project examining community policing in LA, we first became aware of boot camp by attending police–community meetings. Administrators presented boot camp to parents as an option for youth with behavioral problems. After speaking with these officers and sharing our research strategy, they encouraged us to observe the camp. Minor differences between 2008 and 2010 include changes to personnel and the addition of health screenings for youth in 2010, but the two terms were otherwise similar in their processes, philosophies, and administration.

We attended sessions from orientation to graduation, notebooks in hand. Our university internal review board agreement allowed us to observe the camp and speak with adults (residents, teachers, and officers), but not to interview youth. We obtained verbal consent throughout the course of participant observation. When we engaged adults at the site in conversation, we would identify ourselves as (then) student-researchers and provide them background on the nature of our project. Not all parents and officers were willing to converse with us, but to protect the privacy of the participants included herein, we use pseudonyms in all field notes, including places and landmarks.

Data collection for this study involved collaborative ethnographic techniques: observations and conversations with participants. Together, we recorded our observations in the field. Immediately upon exiting the field, we separately expanded our handwritten jottings into typed field notes describing the session and summarizing the conversations and interactions. We would then exchange our field notes and sometimes cowrite them to ensure as complete a reconstruction of events as possible. We systematically compared our notes to highlight inconsistencies in action and language.<sup>7</sup> When we did identify significant inconsistencies, we would discuss them and determine whether the overall meaning emerging from observations differed. In the vast majority of cases, they did not. Either way, both records stood as finalized data.<sup>8</sup> Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) and May and Pattillo-McCoy (2000) argue that collaborative ethnographies lend validity to ethnographic research in that they offer richer description of the field through simultaneous observation. Inconsistency in observation, while an obvious challenge to validity, highlights the dynamic and unstable nature of social worlds. These authors argue that while “truth” in observation is contingent upon each researcher’s personal and academic background, no one interpretation is objectively truer than another.

Qualitative data analysis software helped to organize notes and coding. Using handwritten notes rather than electronic recording equipment allowed us to attend to nonverbal details while remaining relatively unobtrusive to the flow of camp and making our subjects feel comfortable. Drawing from May and Pattillo-McCoy (2000), we coded our field notes, searching for recurrent and significant themes in an iterative process. From there, we identified key themes and elaborated upon their theoretical significance through a two-stage memoing process. First, we wrote short, preliminary memos highlighting significant themes present in individual excerpts. Second, we wrote longer, more elaborate memos linking relevant memos and codes and fleshing out their theoretical significance. We make no strong statements about generalizability outside of the setting itself. However, these observations were made at a community intervention organized by one of the world’s most prominent police forces, making it an important object of study.

### *Vernon High School*

Lakeside Division’s JIP takes place on the campus of Vernon High School about five blocks from the police station. The main building is a faded red brick, and the

windows are gray, covered in glass reinforced with metal latticework. The grounds are entirely fenced in, the metal bars curving down and facing outward like sharpened shepherd's crooks on the west side. The driveways within the grounds are also fenced in, so parking on campus is difficult. Much of the fencing on the east side is covered in opaque plastic, making it difficult to see what is occurring on the athletics field and the quad.

Boot camp is held in the quad at the center of campus and on the athletic fields. Participants must walk through the building's front entrance. The interior paint is an institutional dark blue-gray applied with uneven attention to detail. The walls are decorated with motivational posters and announcements of college preparatory exams, reminders for seniors to get their photos taken, and congratulations to college matriculators. We first attended in October, so some of the notifications seem a little outdated.

When walking through the building to the quad, benches are the first available sight since large trees obscure the green quad intermittently. The grass is thick and green, and the ground is often wet. Mud holes dot the expansive green spaces, juxtaposed with crisscrossing concrete paths. Bigger concrete spaces interspersed throughout hold tree planters, which, together with the benches, provide vantage points for various boot camp spectators. At various times, these include parents, younger siblings, and friends of participants, as well as officers observing from other jurisdictions and teenaged police trainees known as Youth Explorers who assist in administering camp.

### *Social Organization*

Officers contend that youth are referred to JIP via voluntary parental consent or court agreement; however, we found that additional paths into boot camp also include deferred sentences and school referrals. Occasionally, courts and police outside of LA refer youth, including neighboring Riverside and San Bernardino counties. The youth enrolled in boot camp are approximately 80% Latino, although because of our strictly observational capacity, this is only a guess based on Spanish surnames. Only about a dozen are female. Officers maintain that the youth range in age from 9 to 17; some appear physically to be even younger, and officers admit that few 16- and 17-year-olds attend the program.

Every Saturday for a 3-month period, participants are reminded that crime is the result of a lack of discipline and the program is aimed at showing youth that discipline (Los Angeles Police Foundation, 2016). Before the camp begins on the first day, participants stand around waiting in little knots. As camp wears on, youth begin repositioning themselves. Depending on the week, approximately 45–55 booters line up in four rows. Early on, youth wear mismatched sweats, shorts, and T-shirts, but everyone eventually receives a neon orange or green T-shirt. Booters wearing neon shirts on day 1 have previously attended and are here for another session.

The officers in charge—collectively known as “the cadre”—trickle in just before 8 a.m. Explorers, high school-aged junior officers, arrive before the cadre, but do not take command on their own. They pull up in a blue van from the back of the quad,



wearing their “Explorer Cadre” T-shirts, black military pants, and boots. The Explorers are mainly female and Latina, although there are a few male and Black Explorers as well. Their power over the booters is highly dependent on the presence of police, and they have no discernable interaction with the parents.<sup>9</sup> When a critical mass of Explorers and police arrive, the drill sergeant shouts for the boot camp youth to line up. Officers organize the lines so that the oldest/tallest are at the head—this descends as the line goes on, until the youngest/smallest youth are at the ends.

Each session has a “class leader” and four “squad leaders.” These leaders reinforce the authority of the cadre by relaying commands downward. There is a specific protocol associated with switching from a four-line parade formation to a change locations or run laps. An officer in full voice tells the class leader to “Get them in order!” The class leader, in a ritualized call and response, reinforces the assembled group of what they will do: “Class, we are going to \_\_\_! Is this understood?” “Yes, class leader!” “Squad leaders take charge of your squads!” The squad leaders call for their lines to fall in, turn, and lead them away. The last person in each line shouts “Last person, sir!” as they run off, allowing the next squad leader to begin in the same fashion. This process precedes every change of venue, bookending activities with a performance of hierarchy.

Police have custody of the youth from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Some officers are large and imposing, adopting an aggressive and dominant demeanor toward booters, while remaining polite to spectators. Other officers are impatient and hard to please, hounding booters at every misstep. In either case, their control is absolute—youth complete PT, absorb shouted degradation, and are rolled about in the mud. Lunch is a silent affair, where youth sit in rows consuming meals they have brought with them under the watchful eye of the cadre. Lunchtime misbehavior, depending on the severity, can result in shouting, deferred PT, or simply having food thrown at them by the cadre perched on the surrounding tables. Bathroom visits are similarly regimented: The cadre reform the lines by the bathroom, and the youth proceed to use the facilities two at a time, emerging into new lines perpendicular to the old until the old lines disappear. Those conducting their business are permitted no longer than 2 or 3 min. Bathroom breaks are sometimes used as carrots to inspire performance.

## The Ideology of Failure

Camp officials use failure as an ideological framework to explain and justify how youth and their parents violate dominant cultural norms. Bonilla-Silva’s (2013) work on the reproduction of color-blind ideology discusses two interpretive frameworks that are immediately relevant for thinking through perceptions of failure in camp—abstract liberalism and cultural racism.<sup>10</sup> His analyses show that Whites assume all people have equal opportunities despite historical and contemporary discrimination and that contemporary racial inequality rests on the assumed deficiencies of people of color. Drawing together notions of idleness, parental authority, and cultural deficiency, the camp’s ideology of failure defines the sanctioned behavior, morality, and esthetics in race-neutral ways.

Officials explain that Black and Latino families produce delinquent youth due to their moral failings. Families are seen as ill equipped to manage the rigors of child-rearing due to their inferior cultures, which promote substance abuse, insufficient discipline, and poor choices regarding undocumented migration. Youth thus lack the commitment to bring about personal transformation, and parents lack the resolve to correct their children. Within the camp, the cadre seeks to enhance the moral development of children primarily through public degradation and PT. Officers reserve what they call “extra love”—usually more PT or degrading and violent treatment—for those youth they feel are actively resisting the program or faking personal injury. As moral arbiters, police claim their greatest leverage by entering the family unit itself as its primary disciplinary authority to impose domestic order. Because failure inheres in both the culture and morality of participants, parents are treated akin to their children—teachers focus on regressive modes of correction, stressing race and gender essentialism, while officers encourage physical punishment.

### *Failing Families*

“Cultural racism” is a color-blind frame used to pathologize groups of color for what is perceived as a flawed value system that leads to diminished life opportunities (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). Black and Latino parents, according to police, have failed by being too lenient. Officer Hancock shares this view with Latino parents while promoting boot camp at a community meeting:

Hancock indicates that she doesn't speak Spanish, and that the only word she knows is *disciplina*. She has brought her own translator, Manuela Campos, who runs the Spanish parenting classes at the boot camp.

Through Campos, Hancock introduces herself. She's been involved in juvenile programs for 10 years with LAPD. After doing several other programs, she got the idea for boot camp from another LAPD Division, she says. It's military style on Saturdays at Vernon High School and includes parenting classes. It makes the kids more disciplined and teaches parents how to do better for their kids.

Hancock continues, harping on her perception of “Hispanic parenting.” Hispanics, she says, are easy on their kids until age 11–12, and then they panic—they should have started *disciplina* at age 6. As an aside, Hancock notes that she's not trying to be offensive. (Roussell, field notes)

For Hancock, Latino parents are deficient and require not only retraining in how to parent, but also more external coercion in rearing their children, having demonstrated their inherent weakness as authority figures. This is the role police must play.

Officers assert that parents teach oppositional values, which frustrates police control. One officer explained that Spanish speakers in the United States are pathological for their refusal to assimilate and adopt the English language and because they teach their children to avoid police. Blacks too are assumed to have certain cultural deficiencies that threaten police–community relations. In the excerpt below, Murgia,

Rocco, and other officers explain how Latino immigrants and Blacks are both fearful of police:

Outside the classroom, Murgia admits that the English-speaking group is always different from the non-English speakers, and makes it clear that I ought to know why without him directly saying it. As I display a calculated confusion, he prods me by saying that immigrants are always connecting the police to being arrested and deported. Plus there are “cultural differences”: he then intimates that we both know about the separate problems that African Americans have.

The other officers begin discussing the social dynamics of parenting. The officers discuss three main groups: kids, parents, and police. The kids and police are constitutionally opposed; the swing group is the parents. The officers want the parents to act as extensions of police within their homes, reinforcing police rules, following proper procedure, and always calling police when a problem occurs. This is a problem though, they agree, because Blacks don’t trust the police for historical reasons, and Latinos often don’t trust the police for similar reasons, as well as because of the fear of deportation. The police fear that the boot camp program will backfire if the parents “side with their kids” by comforting them, giving in to them, or employing their own parental agency by using the program as a tool to enhance their authority as a punishment (attendance) or reward (absence). (Roussell, field notes)

The cadre argues that parents are a “swing group” who have only two choices: siding with law enforcement or enabling their children’s continued delinquency. This discussion of the tripartite dynamic of parenting occurs within a racialized framework of cultural differences. Black parents are understood as inherently subpar (Lareau & Horvat, 1999), while Latino parents are both culturally deficient and parent poorly because of their migratory choices, which inherently include indifference toward U.S. law.

This view is not limited to officers. One parenting teacher, Trent Braeden, a disabled White man in his 60s, shares the view that Black and Latino adults are always already failed parents given that they are borne of pathological cultures. Braeden founded the parenting class portion of JIP together with Officers Helen Hancock and Tony Murgia several years prior to this study. His teaching style is conversational and depends strongly on gender essentialism, culturally racist stereotypes, and folksy aphorisms. We probed his philosophy in an interview after boot camp orientation, which is summarized below:

Gascón: So you see cultural differences driving some of the problems we see here?

Braeden: Yes. There are different social constraints regarding the cultures that they live in. Different cultures approach child rearing differently. In the Black culture, all kids get hit. Now, they can’t tell you where that part of their culture comes from, but I can. As slaves, I’ll hit you as my child before the master does, because I won’t kill you [and he

- might]. The result of this is that you can't find a Black child over the age of 4 that hasn't been hit. This just makes the problem worse.
- Braeden (addressing Gascón directly): Hispanic culture is a culture of drinking—you think that might cause problems? There's no choice—"I'm Hispanic, therefore I drink." Does it work? Does it serve the community? No. The whole family gets drunk. Who's watching the kids? The kids are watching them all get drunk!
- Roussell: So is there also a monolithic "White" culture? How does that work?
- Braeden: Of course not! I'm from a Southern German farm culture. When I think of consequences, I "go to the dirt." My son asked me for \$150 to go to a concert.
- Gascón: \$150? That's a lot of money! Was it a KISS concert?
- Braeden: No, this is back in the 1980s. It was Michael Jackson. \$150 for the tickets for him and his friend. I said he could have it, but he'd have to earn it. I roped off a square in the garden and I told him to get all the roots and greenery out of it. The concert was 3 months away, so he'd plenty of time to get it done. It would teach him responsibility, consequences. Well, of course he doesn't do it, but I know that he's not going to get it done. I've bought the tickets, T-shirts, and everything so I give them to his friend and tell him to take them and go with a different friend on one condition—that he wear the T-shirts on Monday and tell everyone about how great the concert was. (Roussell & Gascón, field notes)

Braeden finds that Black and Latino families do not teach life lessons, instead modeling bad behavior and cultivate deviance, while Whites (or at least Bavarian farmers) employ discipline based on life lessons. Whether it's the parents' alcoholism or the harsh corporal punishment they dole out, pathological family culture ensures that delinquency is a foregone conclusion. Braeden's lesson on moral development in this case runs through market participation, which further serves as evidence that poor parents of color are culturally deficient.

*Coopting the Family.* Criminalization is incomplete until parents take part in the labeling process (Rios, 2011). Camp rules stipulate that parents of enrolled children attend classes sponsored by the LA Department of Child and Family Services. One camp official extends this, claiming that it is vitally important that all adult caregivers be involved in parenting classes, no matter their relation. All caregivers can facilitate formal surveillance and control in their children's daily lives through ongoing reportage to police on youth's behavior. But while inserting institutional norms and principles into the family, the cadre must also navigate the fears that Latino and Black parents have regarding increased involvement with the criminal justice system.

Many parents express frustration with their children running away, doing drugs, stealing from them, ditching school, and engaging in other delinquent activities. JIP officials teach parents not only how to maximize their partnership with law enforcement, but are given a set of tools, legal and otherwise, to increase their chances of gaining compliance. Officer Murgia explains what parents can expect over the course of the program:

For the first few weeks, the boot camp is an “intense program,” and some parents “may not like it,” Murgia says, explaining that their kids will be thrown to the ground, pushed against walls, and shouted at. “If you have a problem with that, talk to us. But don’t come running out to save your baby. We’re not gonna hurt them,” Murgia reassures parents. Officers do this to set the tone, establish authority, and show youth who’s boss from the very first day. But, he urges, over the course of the camp those types of encounters will gradually decrease . . .

What’s more, while some kids may be resistant to the idea of participating in boot camp, Murgia advises that if they don’t want to come, parents should “Lie to them. Tell them they’re going to the mall or to grandma’s [house].”

One mother exclaims, “But my son runs away!”

After ascertaining that the boy is only 14, Murgia explains, “This is where you gotta be parents. We only have them for 8 hours on 12 Saturdays. You have them forever.” Turning back to the mother who spoke earlier, he says, “If he runs away, lock him out of the house and call the cops. It’s about letting him know who’s boss. Let him leave and don’t let him back in. Right or wrong?” he asks the group.

“You’re right,” several of the parents say, nodding.

Murgia reiterates, if their kids run away, parents should lock the doors and immediately “do a runaway report.” And as if giving legal advice, he concludes, “That covers you.” (Gascón, field notes)

Parents should keep a log of their child’s behavior, good or bad, over the course of the boot camp so that officers can dole out rewards or punishments accordingly. Such information links families to the larger criminal justice system, including the courts, particularly if youth fail to graduate. Court mandates strengthen officers’ power to formally control youth with the threat of criminal sanctions. Boot camp officials teach parents that the micropenalty of youth’s everyday lives involves: “how to judge, what to condemn, and how to classify, and they supply a set of languages, idioms, and vocabularies with which to do so” (Garland, 1990, p. 252). Officials stress to parents that youths’ involvement in this program should not be a negotiation. Youths’ own behavior landed them in this situation, and police discourage parents from being “enablers.” Instead, they stress that parents should trust police and the courts to enter the family as a concerned caregiver.

Civilian teachers run the parenting classes, but officers interrupt often enough to impact the curriculum. Classes are divided into English and Spanish and range in topic from the causes of delinquency, tips for behavior management, and even childhood sexuality and development. JIP administrators frequently visit the classes to let the

parents engage the officers in charge of their children. Officers offer advice, field questions, and reorient parents as to the role of police within the family. The cadre employs different approaches with Spanish-speaking Latino parents and Black and English-speaking Latino parents. The Spanish group asks many questions, but tends to accept the basis of the program. Their concerns orient mainly around the legal repercussions of involving law enforcement in the parenting process:

We walk into the Spanish language class and Murgia takes over immediately. I remain in the hallway with another officer, while our Explorer escort stands just inside the door. They have anticipated that there will be many questions about the program, particularly since the parents haven't met the organizers yet, and they get many. Murgia tends to begin his answers by shouting as though they are deaf, shaking his head, realizing that he will not be understood directly, and waiting for translation from Campos.

Most of the questions ask for specific advice. One parent, who admits that her son does only what he wants, is told to put her foot down. Another, whose son goes to too many parties, is told to know her son's friends and their parents and find out whether there will be alcohol there, parents in attendance, and members of the opposite sex present. Another is told not to be afraid of her son physically—when she responds affirmatively that there is “a man in the house,” Murgia tells her to tell this man to “knock the kid on his ass.”

This sets off a flurry of panic about the child, who has threatened to dial 911 and report child abuse. Everyone is concerned less with the violence and more about the arrest and possible deportation that such a call might set in motion.

Murgia tries to reassure everyone that since they are parents and obviously in the right, nothing will happen. He partially amends his earlier statement—“Punishment should be age-appropriate and reasonable. You wouldn't hit a 3-year-old, would you? But a smack on the ass for a 14-year-old doesn't work either.”

Several parents pass notes by way of the Explorer, who speaks Spanish. The officers make sure to learn the names of every kid that is discussed to give them “extra love” later based on their parents' complaints. (Roussell, field notes)

Murgia is particularly keen in his desire to dispel fears of immigration enforcement. When speaking with parents, he carves out space between law enforcement and immigration enforcement, articulating the misbehavior of youth as having violated “mommy law” rather than being a significant legal problem. He ignores parents' suspicion of official involvement, framing the issue from a color-blind perspective that emphasizes the deference of the law to the parent-child relationship, rather than the lived experiences of Latino parents.

The English-speaking class primarily is composed of Black parents, but there are a few English-speaking Latino parents who attend as well. The main concern for this group, according to the cadre, is getting them to buy into the program, because the parents are considerably more suspicious of police for historical reasons, rather than deportation fears.

[Drill sergeant] Rocco explains to the group that the goal of boot camp is to frighten the kids but not to hurt them. Parents should not be enablers—the kids must complete the program, rather than have the parents use it as a punishment on their own schedule. Several mothers indicate that their kids came home saying that they had been punched or beaten by the cops. Although their tones reveal some measure of disbelief, they clearly do not consider this out of the realm of possibility. Rocco assures them that he's harsh but not physically abusive unless the kids get really violent, although he continues to refer to his method of youth management as “kicking their ass.” Kids that are really unruly “get a bit of extra love,” he says.

One mother engages in a bit of approach-avoidance with him. First, her kid is her angel, although he curses and disrespects her, and occasionally threatens her physically. Rocco jumps on this, but she backs off, saying that she's only here because she's a little afraid that he'll absorb too much “street.” She characterizes this as a recent swagger to his walk and the fact that he throws up devil horns every now and again in pictures, which she interprets as gang signs. Rocco jumps on this also, immediately proclaiming him, if not a full-fledged gang member, then fast on the road to it. She demurs, but he persists doggedly, proving his contention with the aphorism “if it walks like a duck, and it talks like a duck, then it must be a duck,” to general approval. He goes on to mention his own childhood, where he “got thumped” for disobeying rules, which is why he “wears this badge today.”

Rocco reiterates that they have to back him up, because the one thing all the kids tell him is that their parents never follow through. One mother mentions that she gave her son a “pain pill” after the boot camp last week. Rocco attacks this as “coddling” and dramatically throws up his hands, stating that she is undermining everything they are working for.

Curiously, Rocco also exhorts the class to ignore official procedure for missing child cases. Parents should leave the case open, he says, no matter what the officers on the scene say to do, so that the kid can be an open case in the system and thus easily picked up for truancy or curfew and held with a legal justification. (Roussell, field notes)

In their attempts to retrain Black parents, officers use the specter of gangs to frighten those who already suspect their children of “street” involvement. They frame police authority as the only alternative, an interpretation Rocco encourages by using himself as a successful example. The officers generally reiterate that it is the parents' failure to appropriately punish their children that led to their arrival in camp. Undoing parental failures involves retraining on effective means of correction and learning that physical punishment is necessary to establish control over misbehaving children.

### *Failing Youth*

“Abstract liberalism” is a color-blind frame that rests upon the belief that U.S. society is free of race-specific obstacles—to succeed one has only to choose the correct path (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). Officials explain that Black and Latino youth are double failures, delinquent both because their parents were too lenient and now because they lack the drive to bring about personal transformation.

Officials believe that Black and Latino youth are lazy and do not try hard enough to perform in camp. In other words, youth fail to pursue the one path that might redeem them. One Vernon High teacher, Janet Jefferson, shared this view:

Jefferson: So, I've seen kids that are second-generation American. They tend to be lazier 'cause—we call it the “welfare mentality.” They grew up in a house where no one was pushing them to get a good education. They didn't have a good early education if they grew up in Lakeside . . . I mean it's the attitude of the family. Some families are like, “You need to go to college and you need to get out of here.” And then I have some—I had one student who got a scholarship to UCLA and her dad didn't want her to go. He just didn't want her to go to college and leave the family. A lot of the kids feel pressured to stay at home, so—

Gascón: Ok. She's Latina. Is this the case for other students of color?

Jefferson: She's Latina, yeah. I would say that African American kids tend to be lazier [ . . . ]. They're more likely to have the welfare mentality, but not in all cases.

For boot camp officials, youth exhibit a number of moral deficiencies that explain their failures. Latino parents' migration choices weaken their children's life opportunities. Black youth, on the other hand, are simply “lazier” than other groups and exhibit a “welfare mentality.” Jefferson uses these arguments to explain why some students do not excel and to justify her negative feelings toward students of color.<sup>11</sup> From her perspective, Latino families' failure to value education fosters a lack of ambition in children. Her Black students, on the other hand, simply lack ambition, and the family's role in creating this predisposition is obvious. In the post-Civil Rights Era, politicians have built whole campaigns on the assumption that seeking welfare assistance is evidence of a lack of effort. Using pejorative references to (Black) “welfare queens,” this dominant narrative vilifies urban communities of color (Wacquant, 2009). Deficient choices become an important lens through which camp officials reinforce booters as belonging to a deficient and criminogenic class, as well as the framework that underlies officials' punitive control over youth.

### *Degrading the Youth*

Public degradation ceremonies are public rituals used to address norm violations by destroying a violator's social standing through the expression of moral indignation (Garfinkel, 1956). The conditions for a successful degradation ceremony include: identifying the violator and their actions as social outsiders; using denouncements grounded in local values; and having a denouncer who is a publicly known moral enforcer. Degrading encounters can play out as racial theater in criminal justice settings, where the “local values” being used to denounce perceived offenders reflect historical tropes about people of color, resulting in what Gonzalez Van Cleve (2016) calls “racial degradation ceremonies.” Our observations show that camp officials



routinely denounce youth for having failed to put forth the requisite effort or commitment, which justifies degrading and punitive treatment.

Officers use intense verbal tactics (Parent, 2003, p. 2), standing nose-to-nose with a child and shouting at them where other officials, youth, and parents can bear witness. Denouncements begin during normal camp activities, even on orientation day. Program coordinator Vanessa Tingzon and Officer Emily Dunn take turns lining youth up against the far wall of the community room and commanding them to face forward. Before long Tingzon circles by and snaps, "Get off my wall, please! Thank you!" acclimatizing youth to the degradations that will follow. Every so often JIP staff pass by issuing instructions to remind the youth they are under surveillance: "No talking!" "Uncross your hands!" Every Saturday camp begins with youth lining up in ritual formation, extending their arms to the left and right to maintain equal distance between rows. Officers prowl up and down the rows identifying noncompliance:

Especially in the early morning, PT is often interspersed with individual harassment. Several officers stalk among the kids while they exercise, chastising both individuals and the group. In each squad, the oldest kids are held responsible for the mistakes of the younger, although the younger also must take punishment. A concerted effort is made to quash potential troublemakers. Officer Maria Largo takes one Latina girl (13?) from the main group right from the beginning—the girl is described to me as "not taking it seriously." For the entire first hour, Largo yells herself hoarse at the girl, often in her ear, making her do push-ups in a strategically chosen mud puddle.

Other officers sometimes join in, looming over the prone figure like a copse of trees with the wind screaming through it. The girl is pushed around like a rag doll, performing push-ups that are both halfhearted and physically impeded by an officer's arm or foot. Officer Largo takes special care to make the girl roll over in the mud puddle with her foot repeatedly so she can be as muddy as possible. Other officers point out this continued beratement to me proudly, indicating that the girl will "take it seriously" after this treatment.

The girl's situation becomes a mainstay of the morning's PT, with others intermittently sent to join her and then ordered back to the main group. One recalcitrant boy is sent over to join her because of his mohawk, which is about half an inch longer than his already short hair. The sergeant makes a big deal out of this—it seems as though he had not had this haircut last week, and therefore, the kid must have gotten the haircut solely to disobey boot camp rules. The sergeant shouts to him at one point that he is "not an individual! You are a part of this group!"

Other kids are also pulled out for various reasons. One older Black boy is made to stand facing everyone else as an ongoing humiliation. Officer Lewis removes a tiny Latino boy from the group and stands him on one of the three-foot planters so he can berate him eye-to-eye. (Roussell, field notes)

"PT" is another vehicle through which the cadre degrades youth. Several boot camp administrators impart the camp philosophy to us: The camp begins with harsh physical and emotional tactics, designed to "break down" youth and render them moldable. After this breakdown has been satisfactorily achieved, the focus is on building them

up in ways that the cadre regard as prosocial, with better habits and self-discipline. Routinely denouncing a lack of effort has the effect of creating an environment wherein youth are subjected to total surveillance and control—if effort is permanently in question, everything is punishable. Practically speaking, rather than perfecting and improving physical capability, perpetuating PT due to a lack of effort is a potentially limitless way to fill space in the day:

There is a guest speaker today, a K-9 officer demonstrating the attack capabilities of police dogs, but he is late. The officers confer. To fill this time and allow him to set up, they have the booters sound off and jog across the quad to the back of the high school where the athletics fields are. They are set to running the bleachers, which involves running up a flight of bleacher stairs, crossing over a length of bleacher and then running down again. One set comprises three of these.

The group fares poorly, according to the Officer Lewis. Their lack of running pace results in more bleacher runs. “Teamwork!” is what this is about, he shouts. If they see someone dragging the whole group down, they need to be supportive and tell them to pick it up, go faster. If one person walks, they will do it until they get it right. This is plainly problematic—much like a rush hour traffic jam, there simply isn’t space for the whole pack to move at much faster than a walk or a slow jog. Only the leaders are spatially capable of any speed.

During bleacher run #4, the cadre talk quietly, but audibly (to me) that they should have them do one more run and then take a track lap, after which the K-9 demonstration will be ready. As the youth return, the officers berate them one last time for a lack of effort and send them off for a final lap, although the youth have no way of knowing this. In a way, they do though—their resigned pacing makes it clear that none of them really expected to get away with doing only one set of bleacher runs. Perhaps they conserved their energy, knowing that only one would not satisfy, no matter how fast it was.

After five total repetitions, Rocco has them do a lap around the track, but he cautions them not to walk, or they’ll do it again, a threat that I now know to be false. As the class leader has the squad leaders sound off, Officer Hancock engages directly with the group, cutting him off, and has them follow her personally around the track—“No one goes past me!”—in their four squad lines. After this apparently satisfactory lap, they jog back to the PT field where the K-9 demo is finally ready. (Roussell, field notes)

In addition to filling time, the officer claims that the entire exercise is about “teamwork” and creating a sense of togetherness and so punishment is levied for the collective failure. Yet not only do physical constraints render individual responsibility moot, the cadre is prepared to ignore their effort regardless of the outcome. As Bonilla-Silva (2013) might suggest, the “abstract liberal” framework of individual achievement is applied only when convenient for officers, independent of structural constraints.

PT typically begins with running (“Take a lap!”), especially since some youth are late and running allows them to trickle in without too much disruption. Although the cadre recognize that few youths are of driving age, possess vehicles, or live close enough to walk, they reprimand youth for their tardiness. When parents are unable to

get booters to campus on time, this is recast as the youth's failure—one for which they are punished.<sup>12</sup> Laps around the quad seldom go smoothly. After the booters finish about half of any lap, the cadre might shout that it was a short lap not a long lap or a fast lap not a slow lap. This could result in either more laps or other PT and continued verbal harassment. While it is possible that, for all of the times this occurs, the cadre actually specified which they intended out of our earshot, these mistakes seem too common to be simple repetitive error.

As the group fills out with late arrivals, the drill sergeant transitions to sit-ups, push-ups, push-up/stand-ups, and other ever-changing combinations. These exercises are not done in predetermined sets, but through an iterative process of counting and switching—"Assume the push-up position!" "Up! Down! One, *sir!*" "Assume the sit-up position!" "Assume the push-up position!"—by which few actual exercises are completed. Instead, the sergeant makes them switch positions without warning, often without having completed a single repetition in the interim. As graceless as these exercises can be, switching positions is an exceptionally awkward, muddy, and humiliating affair. From one angle, this could be a bow to the reality that many of the youths are incapable of performing many reasonable push-ups or sit-ups. If these were primarily about fitness, the cadre might systematically attempt to demonstrate or correct form, but this does not occur, and there is little attempt to build the youths' capacity. Consequently, PT appears to be less about fitness as a primary goal and more about punishment, reinforcing obedience to authority, and not allowing booters' minds to wander through the repetition of exercise.

As the cadre interface with parents, they offer to spend time addressing specific incidents of bad behavior in the home by administering "extra love" in camp. Observations suggest, however, that officers spend additional time denouncing youth for failures based on personal and societal expectations rather than parents' concerns. The cadre reserve extra love for those youth they feel are faking personal injury or unwilling to care for themselves. These are seen as rational and thus deceitful actions that require punishment to convince youth to take a more ethical path.

Officers often question the veracity of injury claims. When they feel youth are faking injury to avoid PT, the cadre charge youth with laziness and a lack of determination. When youth show obvious signs of exhaustion or illness, the cadre, rather than acknowledge the strenuous nature of exercise, blame youth for a lack of preparation. The PT, though perhaps not onerous for athletes, may well be more than other youth have ever performed. One of the sensible exhortations from the cadre is to make sure that the youth get a good breakfast before reporting to boot camp, although this may not be within a child's control. Exercising on an empty stomach could lead them to pass out or become otherwise ill. This is a logical concern, yet the reaction to actual youth who have physical reactions during exercise is filtered through a punitive lens:

Just after I arrive, I turn around to see a Latino boy of around 14 sitting out, surrounded by cops and other officials. I am told that he was pulled out because he was struggling (it is intimated that he passed out). His face looks blank and his breathing seems labored. A

call goes out to find his parents, but they aren't here. One of the officers gets an injury report, telling a lower-ranked officer to fill it out and go find a doctor to sign off on it. Officer Chris Cordoba and Sgt. David Guevara both tell me slightly different stories about drugs.

Guevara tells me that the kid "smoked a blunt last night" and that he's been "experimenting with different drugs," and now he's got "the withdrawals," and his "chest is caving in."

Cordoba confirms, but with conflicting details: "He smoked weed last night. Monday he did some rock cocaine, some powder cocaine, some meth. So he's a real mess." . . .

[As I return from another part of the quad], the next thing that I see of this situation is that they've changed locations from the picnic tables to the planters encircling the quad and one officer is calling out to the Spanish-speaking officers regarding random Latino men, saying "Is that his dad?"

A bit of a crowd gathers as this kid is forcibly restrained onto a gurney. I watch four grown men, police officers and firefighters, force his various limbs into the tie downs. He's not being violent toward his restrainers *per se*—he does not hit them or lash out at them specifically—but he is definitely resisting being tied down. A shout is heard from off the quad: "We got his brother on the phone!"

Cordoba tells me later that because the youth "made a complaint" to the firefighters (other reports suggest that he said his chest hurt) that they were legally obligated either to do something about it or to get his parents' permission not to treat. Because his legal guardians could not be located, he was forcibly removed from the grounds for observation. He didn't want to get on the gurney, but since they were legally required to care for him, they strapped him down and wheeled him off. (Roussell, field notes)

His actual or exaggerated drug use aside, the cadre were faced with a number of decisions regarding this youth. Rather than treat him as potentially ill and thus deserving of concern and deference, his symptoms are immediately attributed to his drug use and thus his failure to abide by the rules. The cadre refuses to consider that his illness may be an iatrogenic result of the camp's PT regimen.<sup>13</sup> Their concern is legal liability, not personal or medical care. The ultimate medical intervention is violent and coercive, since youths' perspectives regarding their conditions are believed only when they serve as an indictment. Even medical treatment incorporates punishment.

## Conclusion and Implications

Ruiz—the young man discussed in the introduction—is a failure to officers, confirmed as such through his drug use, outbursts, and accusation that the cadre applies graduation standards inconsistently. When the cadre wrestle Ruiz to the ground, his degradation becomes a public spectacle, appropriate for his budding criminality. The sight of officers piling onto the humiliated teenager overdetermines his failure for spectators and underlines his stigmatization and exclusion. It is a racial degradation

ceremony with its roots in dehumanization rather than juvenile economic normalization. In the end, officers prescribe him a higher dosage of degradation.

Coopting the family and performing public degradation ceremonies are normal boot camp practices that reproduce color-blind ideology. Despite the sanitized language, color blindness operates under the same historically racist assumptions embedded in the roots of the liberal state. Our ethnography extends Rios' (2011) work and empirically shows how, as Alexander (2010) argues, race-neutral references to criminality (mostly) replace blatantly racist statements, but the underlying beliefs in racialized deficiency remain. We join Gonzalez Van Cleve (2016) in extending Garfinkel's (1956) thesis to show how degrading encounters not only result from moral authorities stigmatizing outsiders based on local values, but draw values from dominant racial ideologies. The institutional framing of at-risk youth reflects long-standing racial tropes regarding the youths' moral deficiency, lack of requisite effort, poor attitude, and commitment to becoming citizen-subjects. Using both overt (e.g., "Hispanic parenting") and covert (e.g., "welfare mentality") racial codes, camp officials prefigure a criminal master status for boot camp youth and families. Camp officials imagine at-risk youth as potentially dangerous threats to society and mark them as such, proliferating ways for youth to fail and be degraded, while installing police power as a household authority.

Similar to critiques of Foucault (1995), neither Simon (1995) nor Platt (1977) considers the centrality of racism in paternal state action. Consistent with Foucault, they argue that juvenile social control in the Progressive Era developed in furtherance of the liberal mission, promoting individual responsibility in the course of personal transformation through military-style regimes meant to engineer full participation in the U.S. market society. However, as Ward (2012) and Chávez-García (2012) demonstrate, Progressive Era institutions reflected much of the same emphasis on racial exclusion as slave patrols and the Texas Rangers that came before (Hadden, 2003; Mirande, 1987; Williams, 2007). Our fieldwork suggests that the ethos of racial exclusion remains central to paternal state action despite a shift in terminology—punishment, not normalization, seems primary.

Police were gatekeepers to nineteenth-century interagency collaborations, making youth contacts, advising courts, and established networks of care, surveillance, and control (Burton, 2016; Wolcott, 2005). We suggest that the JIP boot camp is a continuation of some of these practices; rather than separating children from families, our work shows how police can also incorporate the family directly into the penal apparatus. Parents become responsabilized to establish a regime of micropenality and domestic order under police authority. Looking at a single site of discipline within the YCC reveals how the boot camp teaches parents to extend carceral space into the home to render movements within it visible and punishable.

We question police reliance on military tactics that treat children like Ruiz as enemies to subdue, rather than young citizens to support, and urge scholars, activists, and practitioners to seek racial justice reforms. We have known for years that boot camps and scared straight-style programs do not reduce recidivism and can instead increase reoffending (Klenowski et al., 2010). Our data show how degradation and

exclusion are key camp outcomes, so we feel that the continuation of juvenile boot camp programs is questionable at best. Feld (1999) states that if juvenile justice institutions wish to reduce juvenile crime, they should take seriously the ideals of child welfare that have never been wholeheartedly embraced, particularly with respect to social–structural and social–ecological determinants. Rios (2011), for example, calls to replace the YCC with a “youth support complex” that understands youth as “at-risk” *from* society and gives them the tools and resources to empower themselves. Productive youth intervention should involve mentors amplifying youths’ time, skills, and available resources, and long-term and meaningful connections to transformational programs outside of the juvenile justice system, and state institutions supporting economic and infrastructural investment in poor communities of color. Bell (1991, 2004) warns us against naïve optimism, however, suggesting not only that racism is here to stay, but also that liberal racial reforms have passed only to the extent that they converged with White interests. Yet he no less encourages those invested in the virtues of racial justice to pursue systemic change. And on this point we agree. Simply discontinuing the use of boot camps cannot mitigate racialized juvenile justice outcomes. To undo these, actors both within and outside the system must continue to pursue educational, legal, and community-based strategies for change.

Our work belongs to a growing body of critical race scholarship empirically examining criminal justice interventions. Analyses of programs operating in poor communities of color must go beyond basic process and impact evaluations. Future research should investigate alternative interventions, which have been growing both in tandem with and apart from the criminal justice system (Chen, Dulani, & Piepznasamarasinha, 2011; Richie, 2012). Although largely unexplored here, our data also speak to the intersectional nature of the proceedings—both in terms of female officers and the youth themselves—as Potter (2015) reminds us. Girls are underrepresented in boot camp and those who attend are held to adult White middle class beauty standards, while the female officers and Explorers are among the most vicious in their treatment of youth. These and related issues should be further explored moving forward. Finally, given the underlying racialized tropes and officers’ different ethnoracial identifications, the extent to which dehumanization is the operative mechanism is an important direction to pursue (Čehajić, Brown, & González, 2009). Given the racialized roots of the criminal justice system (Mirande, 1987; Muhammad, 2010), there should be more critical research on these programs and additional caution warranted when implementing coercive programs said to benefit youth of color.

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## Notes

1. Evaluations show that participation may positively affect youths' attitudes, behavior, and social skills during and immediately after exiting the camp, but do not reduce long-term criminal involvement and may actually increase it. In the worst cases, parents of color express "camp fears" (Aos, Phipps, Barnoski, & Lieb, 2001; Parent, 2003), claiming that officials routinely bully, humiliate, intimidate, and assault participants (Selcraig, 2000).
2. There have been numerous accounts of boot camp abuses in the media. Most recently, a story surfaced out of a boot camp run by the Huntington Park and Southgate police departments in the mountainous region of San Luis Obispo County, California. Three boot camp officials in this case are charged with cruelty, battery, and serious bodily injury for victimizing 10 mostly young Latino/as between the ages of 12 and 16 (Hamilton, 2015).
3. The conventional view is that liberalism emphasizes freedom through the expression of "individualism, universalism, egalitarianism, and meliorism (the idea that people and institutions can be improved)" (Bonilla-Silva, 2013, p. 26), while downplaying racism as a key value.
4. Bonilla-Silva traces the origins of racism back to the birth of liberalism in the sixteenth century and argues that, "modernity, liberalism, and racial exclusion were all part of the same movement" (Bonilla-Silva, 2013, p. 26). Elaborating a global racial order made it possible for Europeans to accumulate property while consigning non-Europeans to slavery and death in the provision and embodiment of such property.
5. Bonilla-Silva (2013) suggests that while people of color may not wholeheartedly believe in color-blind frames, survey data show they do at least reproduce them partially in explaining racial inequalities. Anyone, no matter their race/ethnicity, can use color-blind language to justify and reinforce White Supremacy: "Dominant actors (men, capitalists, whites), by virtue of their centrality in the social system and their superior resources, are able to frame the terrain of debates and influence views of subordinated groups. Therefore [...] a dominant ideology is effective not by establishing ideological uniformity, but by providing the frames to organize difference" (171).
6. Those interested in a more psychometric approach to color blindness should consult the work of Helen Neville and her colleagues (Neville, Gallardo, & Sue, 2016; Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000).
7. We purposefully overlooked minor departures in descriptions of participants and spaces. We privileged action and language instead because we felt these observations were more meaningful for understanding interpersonal interaction. Minor departures also include inconsistencies in translation of speech and dialogue, which we felt had little bearing on the overall meaning of exchanges.

8. While obvious, it should also be noted that in co-authoring this manuscript, we both stand behind the data and interpretations presented, no matter the authorship of the individual field notes.
9. Known by 2010 as “Cadets” due to a proprietary injunction from the Boy Scouts of America over the name, LAPD Youth Explorers are high school students who act as peer role models and junior officers in training. We continue to use the term “Explorer” for reasons of continuity, because “Cadet” introduces categorical confusion. For reasons of differentiation, we refer to “boot camp youth” as such or as “booters” throughout.
10. While Bonilla-Silva (2013) notes that there are four dominant color-blind frames, also including naturalization and minimization, we found that these were far less prominent in the data. But there are nonetheless several examples in which study participants used each of these frames to explain racial phenomena. Bonilla-Silva says that naturalization “allows whites to explain away racial phenomena by suggesting they are natural occurrences” (p. 28). Examples of White study participants naturalizing racial matters include statements such as: “Gangs are by nature primitive organizations” or “[W]hen there’s an identified minority, those kids tend to stick together. It’s like why the animals travel in herds thing.” Both of these are attempts to discuss the ways that racial matters—Black and Latino youths’ gang involvement and racial self-segregation in high school—are natural occurrences. Minimization of racism, on the other hand, “suggests [that] discrimination is no longer a central factor affecting minorities’ life changes” (p. 29). One white officer, for instance, became particularly defensive in response to a question about the challenges of working in a community of color: “Am I a racist white police officer? Or am I a caring, understanding white police officer? [ . . . ] At one point, maybe historically, my family was extremely racist, but I broke that chain somewhere. Who knows?” Another white officer responded to a question about racial conflict in the community by saying, “Everyone wants to throw the race card,” and later refused to explain who “everyone” was. A White teacher explained how she responds when students claim she is being racist: “I don’t make race a big deal in my classroom, and it really shouldn’t be.” These findings, while significant in their own right, were not as common among our study participants as their use of abstract liberalism and cultural racism. For this reason, we have chosen to focus this manuscript on their usage of the latter and former frames.
11. Bonilla-Silva (2013) explains that storytelling is an important mode of communication. Telling stories is one way to represent social structures, events, or situations. Testimonies are a certain kind of story; they are firsthand accounts, wherein the speaker is a central participant or is close to the characters in the story. Stories help speakers make sense of the world in ways that reinforce the status quo without appearing to serve particular interests. Stories narrate a speaker’s beliefs about the social order, reinforce their arguments, and assist them in persuading listeners to see the world as they do.
12. Previous research has shown that judges similarly punish juveniles who lack access to transportation to attend hearings (Bishop & Frazier, 1996).
13. As a reality check, had the youth actually smoked meth or cocaine on the Monday before this camp session (Saturday), the drugs would no longer be in his system. And whatever its other effects, having smoked marijuana the night before is unlikely to have caused these symptoms (Goode, 2012).



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