Editors' Introduction to the Special Issue, "Neoliberal Youth Carceralism and Alternative Visions of Justice"

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In the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US), the most blatant forms of punitiveness toward young people have declined significantly over the last decade. In the UK, the number of youth in custody has dropped by 70% since 2009, although in 2018, there was a 3% uptick (Ministry of Justice 2019). In the US, between the years 2001 and 2015, the number of children in detention fell by 54% (Sentencing Project 2017). This is a positive development—though one not shared equally by all young people. The rate of detention for white youth has dropped at a faster pace in the US than for black youth, increasing by 22% the already substantial racial disparity between black and white children in custody (Sentencing Project 2017). In the UK, a similar trend has emerged: between 2005 and 2017, the percentage of black youth in custody doubled from 12.5 to 25.3%, while the percentage of white youth in custody dropped from 71.9 to 54.6% (Gov.UK 2019).

Still, it appears that recent reforms have dulled some of the sharpest edges of the youth social control system—and that the changes have not been limited solely to reductions in detention rates. Other important shifts have paralleled these decreases: there has been renewed interest in designing and implementing rehabilitative programs for young people (Goshe 2019); community-based interventions with youth continue to proliferate (Gray and Smith 2019); and arguments about how developmental considerations and histories of trauma ought to condition our responses to young people have gained traction with policy-makers in recent years (Cox 2019). These changes are favorable news to most criminologists, as well as to progressive research organizations and activists, because they align with research on youth offending and likely dampen the criminogenic effects of detention. In its stated philosophies and practices, as well as in its size, scope and location, the youth social control system looks quite different from what it did only a few years ago.

We asked the contributors to this special issue to reflect on this changed system. As a collection, many of the articles in this issue examine what appear to be less punitive iterations of youth and juvenile justice practice in the UK and the US. Following the apt

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analogy by Gray and Smith (2019), and in the tradition of critical criminology, many of the articles try to separate changes in the weather from changes in climate by uncovering how seemingly wholesale shifts in the policy and stated practice translate to ground-level experiences. In so doing, this collection continues the critical criminological project of peering into understudied areas and emerging trends in social control, and scrutinizing how new practices may share nearly identical racialized or classed ends with previous modes of control or punishment (e.g., Alexander 2010; Cohen 1985; Cox 2018; Goodman et al. 2017; Platt 2018; Schept 2015). Written by scholars working in Canada, the UK and the US, the contributions use their empirical findings and theoretical insights to sketch a more detailed and elaborate picture of the range of controls over young people in the present moment and to assess how recent shifts in juvenile/youth justice might align or diverge from broader visions of social justice.

The first article in the special issue, by Kaitlyn Selman, Randy Myers and Tim Goddard (2019), describes the rise of shadow carceral innovations, such as curfew violations, fare evasion tickets and loitering infractions that are disproportionately used in the schools and communities of marginalized young people in the US. Building on Beckett and Murakawa's (2012: 225) analysis of how alternatives to criminal punishment are effectively civil pathways to incarceration, and as such "increase the state's power to punish," Selman and her co-authors (2019) show that these alternatives to traditional criminal legal authority perform additional work for the carceral state. Experiences with them, as the authors write, "accumulate in the biographical, financial, and legal histories of young people"—producing records that become legible and meaningful across a variety of institutions, including the criminal justice system. The effect? Selman, Myers and Goddard (2019) argue that "non-carceral practices confine poor youth, mainly poor youth of color, to the economic and social margins by creating records of failure, debt and risk that better qualify them for detention and incarceration, while also repelling them from social benefits and foreclosing economic and educational opportunities." As such, shadow carceral measures function as mechanisms for maintaining and legitimating economic, social and justice system inequalities at a point in time where official rates of punishment are decreasing.

In the second article, Alexandra Cox (2019) traces, in her words, the "shifting boundaries between normal and so-called 'deviant' children in the present day, illuminating how these shifts impact our ideas about who is 'truly' dangerous and in need of intervention." Analyzing discourse about young people's offending obtained from progressive policy-oriented sources, she finds that contemporary American constructions of young people in trouble draw from several conflicted and contradictory logics, which undergird juvenile justice reform. The worry is that the primary strands of rhetoric—namely, trauma, brain development and "friendly" custodial care for serious and violent offending—may well redraw the boundaries between normal and deviant, but they do not identify or address the failures of state agencies and institutions (and the adults who design and run them). As Cox (2019) argues, the contradictions and failures are problematic in that they can be exploited to invoke punitive social control over those deemed by the market or by society as undeserving or dangerous, while leaving the dangerous state relatively untouched.

In the third article, Sonya Goshe (2019) shows the degree of "myopia" of the celebrated return of rehabilitation in US juvenile justice. Although the shrinking of detention facilities and the abolition of the juvenile death penalty are positive developments, what treatment ultimately entails is shortsighted in its substance and "goal," Goshe (2019) contends. While lists of empirically proven programs continue to grow, very few of the programs used in juvenile justice facilities address—or acknowledge—the structural sources of delinquency. Instead of broader policy programs that would address the social and economic

roots of youth crime, young people are told to change their thoughts through cognitive behavioral interventions—or they are administered psychotropic medicines—in the face of unchanged social conditions. Moreover, this approach does not provide the space for young people's own understandings of the lives to which they will be returning—or give them room to voice what they believe would be of use to them. While not fully discounting the value of many of the reforms that have taken place, Goshe's article should provide us pause before hailing a "sea change" in US juvenile justice practice—and her thoughts on what a more robust approach to rehabilitation might look like begins to carve a path forward.

Next, Patricia Gray and Roger Smith (2019) examine the proliferation of "out of court" diversion and offense resolution that is supplanting residential placement in the UK. Through their analysis of the (re)emergence of the "diversion impulse" and its core guiding principles of renewed welfarism, therapeutic treatment and diversion delivery to young people, they draw out what youth penalty amounts to "in action" in the neoliberal era. They argue that this new style of diversion appears, at first blush, to be a move away from coercion, but they speculate that it is more likely to be a move toward less overt means of control. Alongside ever-increasing cuts to services and support for system-involved young people, for Gray and Smith (2019), the move toward community-based diversion and offense resolution is emblematic of a shift toward less costly and less overt mechanisms for cultivating conformity and "asserting 'soft' control." While providing a critical account of the "diversionary impulse," Gray and Smith end their article on a more hopeful note and interrogate what the prospects for more meaningful progressive change in fact are and sketch the essential attributes that transformative diversionary interventions would include.

In the fifth article, Keir Irwin-Rogers (2019) shows how drug prohibition, consumer capitalism, inequality and the rise of online social media combine to produce a "toxic trap that is dragging tens of thousands of young people into street-level drug distribution." While official discourses on the youth drug trade in the UK have focused on how young people are coerced into participation by adults, Irwin-Rogers draws our attention to how material need, precarity and an ethic of conspicuous consumption catalyzes young people's involvement in the drug trade and the violence that surrounds it. Rather than seeing these young peoples' involvement as the result of negative peer and adult influence, Irwin-Rogers (2019) urges us to look to the structural roots of these behaviors—and to address those root causes with reforms that give young people access to legitimate and meaningful employment. To that end, Irwin-Rogers (2019) makes the powerful claim that "young people will not stop dealing illicit drugs until they have realistic opportunities to pursue lives that offer genuine meaning, decent levels of income, and levels of status and respect that are comparable to those they can obtain through their involvement in drug distribution."

Heather Mooney and Paul Leighton (2019), in the sixth article, shine much-needed light on the little known and primarily self-governing "private troubled teen industry." Although seldom studied, its workings have important implications for understanding the current terrain of youth social control, and how privatization can create new sites for punishment. Not only do middle-class teens engage in delinquency at similar rates to less privileged young people, these more fortunate youths also experience high rates of anxiety disorders, depression, substance abuse, suicide and somatic symptoms (Mooney and Leighton 2019). While teens from the lower classes become entangled in the justice system, the "unwanted" behaviors of middle-, upper-middle- and upper-class teens often land them in private facilities and institutions. Although involvement in such private facilities spare youth from the formal justice system, private facilities still possess many coercive, punitive and troubling practices. The authors acknowledge, rightly, that class privilege exists, but argue that it does not always erase the structural disadvantages of being a child. In short, Mooney and

Leighton (2019) call on us to “recognize that the intersection of youth and privilege—especially youth, class, and social control—is more uneven and problematic than imagined by a criminology with a stunted awareness of class.”

In the seventh article, Kenneth A. Cruz (2019) investigates the workings of a private for-profit group home for young people with histories of violence. Cruz (2019) shows how the responsibilization of a for-profit, behavioral group home “unintentionally created spaces for [dangerously] irresponsible and harmful practices” to thrive—and did so despite the implementation of a research-supported crisis intervention strategy and regular audits of the practice. Drawing on his time as a staff member at the facility, Cruz (2019) argues that the substandard care he witnessed is legitimized by these technologies that “govern-at-distance.” Cruz’s (2019) article shows how the tools used to steer the workings and gauge the success of state-partnered private facilities creates a veneer of propriety behind which troubling practices can flourish unseen. Ultimately, argues Cruz (2019), the term, “slumcare,” captures the phenomenon whereby substandard interventions for marginalized young people are allowed to persist “behind a façade of effectiveness” and accountability.

In the final article of this special issue, Jerry Flores and Kati Barahona-López (2019) remind us how vital it is to continue to study what happens to young people who find themselves in the “deep end” of the juvenile justice system. In their article, the authors draw on ethnographic research to make sense of the unique ways Latinx girls are assessed psychologically and medicated with pharmaceutical drugs during their time in a US juvenile justice facility. The authors describe how coercion and punishment are “now seeping into the mental health services that our participants receive,” and the role of legal proceedings in these practices. Ultimately what results is what Flores and Barahona-López refer to as *pharmaceutical violence*—in which young women are coerced to take medications that they often do not wish to take but which cause physical and emotional side effects. In addition, the young women experience violence by suffering frequent aggravations and emotional harms, along with further reductions of control that they have over their lives through the (mis)diagnosis and (mis)treatment that “pathologize[] these young women, their families and their communities” (Flores and Barahona-López 2019). The authors also explain that young women feel it is necessary to discontinue medications, risking further punishment, to prepare themselves to return to communities where they cannot access the medications on which their bodies have become dependent. Flores and Barahona-López (2019) give us new insights into how pharmaceutical violence takes place and is experienced by young Latinx girls, and their article serves as a potent reminder to continue to scrutinize the services, therapies and treatments that young people, already disempowered by virtue of their status as non-adults, are given after being caught behaving in unwanted ways by adults.

In sum, we hope that this special issue is valuable to researchers and scholars, as well as to activists and advocates, and that it expands our collective understanding of youth in trouble with the law at this particular moment. We are hopeful that youth detention rates will continue to decline, but past and present critical criminological works remind us to examine, both “broadly” and “on the ground,” the problematic, harmful and criminalizing features of youth punishment practices, reformed and otherwise; as the critical criminological cannon reminds us, we must be cautious about any “sea change” in youth social control, especially when such reforms are disconnected from broader movements to address economic inequality and other forms of social injustice. Recent reforms aside, the collection of works in this issue show there is a need to continue fighting for policies and practices that feed into broader struggles for *justice for youth*. We hope that this special issue contributes in some way to such an undertaking.

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