



Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys (New Perspectives in Crime, Deviance, and Law)

By Victor M. Rios

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Victor Rios grew up in the ghetto of Oakland, California in the 1980s and 90s. A former gang member and juvenile delinquent, Rios managed to escape the bleak outcome of many of his friends and earned a PhD at Berkeley and returned to his hometown to study how inner city young Latino and African American boys develop their sense of self in the midst of crime and intense policing. *Punished* examines the difficult lives of these young men, who now face punitive policies in their schools, communities, and a world where they are constantly policed and stigmatized.

Rios followed a group of forty delinquent Black and Latino boys for three years. These boys found themselves in a vicious cycle, caught in a spiral of punishment and incarceration as they were harassed, profiled, watched, and disciplined at young ages, even before they had committed any crimes, eventually leading many of them to fulfill the destiny expected of them. But beyond a fatalistic account of these marginalized young men, Rios finds that the very system that criminalizes them and limits their opportunities, sparks resistance and a raised consciousness that motivates some to transform their lives and become productive citizens. Ultimately, he argues that by understanding the lives of the young men who are criminalized and pipelined through the criminal justice system, we can begin to develop empathic solutions which support these young

men in their development and to eliminate the culture of punishment that has become an overbearing part of their everyday lives.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this compelling sociological narrative, Rios describes the problems facing black and Latino youth as they come of age. A former gang member who went on to earn a Ph.D. at Berkeley, Rios returned to his old Oakland neighborhood to shadow 40 young men as they dealt with poverty, violence, and institutionalized racism. As he recounts their life stories, Rios deftly balances analysis with vivid anecdotes about uninterested educators, struggling parents, police brutality, and gang victimization. From elementary school on, teachers and law enforcement mark these boys as "dangerous" or "difficult," and harshly punish them for petty infractions. Once they accumulate "negative credentials," the young men are subject to increased surveillance—and are consequently more likely to end up in prison. Rios terms this criminalization "the youth control complex," and explains how it systematically deprives boys of their dignity and their ability to succeed at school or in the job market. He examines how the culture of punishment pushes young men into the very criminality that the punishment is meant to deter, and makes a compelling argument that better financed social programs and positive reinforcement could make all the difference. (July)

Review

"Rios provides numerous conceptual innovations, noted below in italics, that should soon find their way into all of our introductory, deviance, and race/ethnicity texts.... A book bristling with insight."-Robert Garot,*American Journal of Sociology*

"This analysis gives great context to the lives of career criminals....Rios' work suggests that people drop out, commit crimes, and adapt themselves to a 'fugitive life' because they are unable to find an institution that grants them the acknowledgment and dignity that they are systematically denied."-*Du Bois Review*

"With *Punished*, Rios joins an expanding cadre of social scientists who lament the directions that juvenile justice has taken in the United States in recent decades. He argues that in an era when the United States has achieved world-record levels of incarceration, of young people as well as adults, the widespread adoption of severe, hastily adopted get-tough-on-crime policies of the 1980s and 1990s has gone hand in hand with the vilification and persecution of black and Latino youths."

-Peter Monaghan,*The Chronicle Review*

"Accessible, engaging and thought provoking, *Punished* presents unique data and compelling analytical insights, opening what should prove to be a fruitful line of research. For this reason and other reasons...this important book is a worthwhile read for anyone within or outside the academy who is looking to understand the punitive turn in American society from the perspective of those who are most heavily policed, punished and criminalized."-*Social Forces*

"This is a well overdue and important contribution to our understanding of urban street youth and gangs. Rios turns the table on traditional gang researchers by showing how the process of criminalization and the youth control complex is biased against young boys of color."-Diego Vigil, author of *The Projects: Gang and Non-Gang Families in East Los Angeles*

"Rios's book is a valuable contribution to the field because it is an interdisciplinary work that addresses fundamental and ongoing concepts of juvenile delinquency and gang participation."-Madeleine

About the Author

Victor M. Rios is Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Users Review

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