



# Latino Criminology: Unfucking Colonial Frameworks in “Latinos and Crime” Scholarship

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## Abstract

To “unfuck” is to correct a situation, or yourself, if necessary, and in a timely manner. There is an enduring need to audit and deconstruct the colonial features of criminological theory and criminal justice practices. To better understand these enduring colonial inheritances, this article offers a forward-looking prospectus on the merits of a Latino criminology and highlights the shared historical and conceptual overlaps between critical criminology and Latino Studies in studying interpersonal harms, racialized social control, and state violence. Compatible with both orthodox and progressive perspectives in criminology and criminal justice scholarship, an emergent and politically reflexive Latino criminology centers the margins by articulating areas of intervention for scholars to improve criminological inquiry and depart—or unfuck ourselves—from the many settler colonial and white supremacist inheritances of our field.

## Introduction

In the United States (US),<sup>1</sup> critical criminology represents a plurality of left-of-center academic communities that study systems of oppression, which include intellectual discourses and belief systems concerning crime and criminality. As my colleagues in this special issue demonstrate, much work remains to be done in auditing and explaining systems of marginalization and inequality both inside and outside academia. In this article, I articulate the merits and limitations of a new scholarly project called “Latino criminology.”<sup>2</sup> Far from a parochial or insular reflection, a Latino criminology offers a research platform with urgent

<sup>1</sup> My claims are tailored to a readership and constituency in the US, although themes and trends in this article are relevant to former colonizer and settler colonial states represented among affluent countries.

<sup>2</sup> There are several reasons for why *Latinx* or *Latina/o/x* might be more appropriate instead of *Latino* (see Torres 2018; see also Nuño-Pérez and Aviles 2019; Ramirez and Blay 2017). I respectfully use the term *Latino* both as an intellectual provocation for the readership of this journal and to best promote the theme of this special issue. I articulate my substantive position on word choice in the penultimate section of this article. To be clear, I have no arguments *against* the use of any of the words that we might use to refer to human beings, including *Latina/o/x*; *Latin@*; *LatinX*; *Latinx*; or even “Hispanic/Latino.” When writing about others, I feel it is important to represent them as they want to be portrayed. But as a blanket term, if “we’re all Latinx, we render gender-identity choices meaningless” (Trujillo-Pagán 2018: 400), just as we

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and translatable applications to addressing interpersonal harms, racialized social control, and state violence. My argument is organized as follows: Part I orients the reader to the historical themes in the development of critical criminology and Latino Studies. Part II provides an accessible critique of criminological theory and criminal justice systems by describing the role of colonialism and coloniality in shaping discourses of knowledge (Diaz 2005; Joseph 2014; Monchalin 2016; Moosavi 2018) and the underlying functions of criminal justice systems. Part III contains the core of my argument for what a prospective Latino criminology offers for interdisciplinary research and praxis, and it is summarized in seven core tenets. Inherent risks, caveats, and limitations of my argument constitute Part IV, which is followed by a brief conclusion.

## Critical Criminology and Latino Studies: A Brief Reintroduction

The political boundaries of criminology and criminal justice (CCJ) research and theory in the US have been contested, and especially so in the 1960s and 1970s (see Barak 2020; Hall and Winlow 2015; Jefferey 1956; Koehler 2015; Michalowski 1996; Schwendinger and Schwendinger 1970). Given the relative homogeneity of academic institutions during this time period, it is understandable that critical criminology's early origins were primarily Marxist and anti-imperialist perspectives on formal social control. This resulted in a nascent but potent "radical criminology" that—similar to critical legal studies—was largely underwhelming in combatting the longstanding critiques of conventional academic Marxism—that it was mostly the domain of economically stable but intellectually curious White<sup>3</sup> men,<sup>4</sup> and either uninterested or ineffective in centering racism and patriarchy as fundamentally integral to class analysis (see Bernard 1981; Quinney 1973; Tushnet 1991).

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Footnote 2 (continued)

render Blackness less visible if we are all "persons of color." For more on the academic use of *Latinx* in Latino Studies, see Torres (2018).

<sup>3</sup> There are both stylistic and political arguments in favor of and in opposition to capitalizing the "w" in "white" (see Coleman 2020; Laws 2020). Both *The New York Times* and the Associated Press, for example, recently updated their style guidelines to capitalize "Black" but not "white," with both entities reasoning that white supremacist groups capitalize the "w" and thus the practice should not be replicated (see Bauder 2020). My own political and stylistic preference is to identify this as a self-serving way of artificially cordoning off where white supremacy exists and where it does not. With the exception of "white supremacy," I capitalize the "W" so as to continue prompting the reflection that Whiteness is not "a common noun or adjective" but a socially configured and contingent thing that does not disappear by virtue of merely capitalizing the "b" in "Black" or implying that white supremacist values only exist in the most explicitly racist organizations (Appiah 2020). An implicit point of this article, after all, is to point out that many of us have been indoctrinated into a white (supremacist) criminology (see Ladner 1973 for a related critique of sociology). Retaining the capitalized "W" makes clear that white supremacy is the toxic default setting in major segments of criminological and academic thought. For me, personally, it would be a form of fetishistic disavowal and self-serving distancing to pretend that using a lowercase "w" is a substantive correction, and there is much to gain from formally naming and interrogating configurations of Whiteness.

<sup>4</sup> Historical materialism and Marxist analysis remain an important analytic tool in various anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggles around the world (see Harris 1988). The critique of Marxism as a White intellectual space is specific to the more superficial forms of conventional academic Marxism in the US. Black and Black feminist intellectuals have and continue to be innovative in class analyses and historical materialism in ways that have been erased or marginalized from the dominant presentations of Marxism (see Allen 1969; Collins 1991; Davies 2016; Davis 1981; Frazier 1962; Nkrumah 1966; Robinson 2000).

Critical criminology has since experienced a steady diversification in both theoretical orientations and substantive areas of focus, resulting in the plethora of critical criminologies that exist today (see Brisman 2019). Notable examples include Black criminology (e.g., Penn 2003; Russell 1992; Unnever et al. 2018), convict criminology (e.g., Ross and Richards 2003, Tietjen 2019), green criminology (e.g., Nurse 2017, White 2011), narrative criminology (e.g., Presser and Sandberg 2019), postcolonial criminology (e.g., Agozino 2003), queer criminology (e.g., Ball 2019), rural criminology (e.g., Donnermeyer 2016), the study of state-organized crime (Chambliss 1989, Ward 2015), and ultra-realism (Hall and Winlow 2015; Winlow and Hall 2019; see also Fisher 2009), among many other criminologies (see Barak 2019).<sup>5</sup> Intersectional criminology has secured increased visibility in the field (Potter 2013; see also Bernard 1981; Burgess-Proctor 2006; Daly 2010; Henne and Troshynski 2013, 2019; Potter 2013; Richie 1996), especially as the social sciences, more broadly, are grappling with how to move away from archaic notions (and measures) of class, gender, and race (see Elias and Feagin 2016).

Global South<sup>6</sup> perspectives have also appeared increasingly in conversation with dominant epistemologies on crime, criminality, and criminalization (see Carrington et al. 2019, 2016; Travers 2019). Some of this scholarship may remind US-based audiences of (a) the structural limits of our enterprise in both describing and explaining CCJ phenomena outside of the US; and (b) the institutional hubris in presuming that our ideas or practices should be exported or shared anywhere else on the planet (see León 2019).<sup>7</sup> Southern criminology is different from “comparative” or “international” criminology (see Bennett 2004; Tonry 2015). Among other contributions, Global South perspectives inform us of CCJ phenomena in other countries, authored by and through the epistemological frameworks of researchers who are of the place described (i.e., either reside in—or are socio-culturally connected to the people of—the locales in question). This relationship between the geographic location of the author and the people and places being studied is similarly important for this article. The proposed Latino criminology is focused primarily on phenomena affecting Latinos in the US and is in conversation with—but distinctive from—comparative or Latin Americanist perspectives.

In contrast to Latino Studies, major components of Latin American Studies were originally the product of US and European-trained scholars who would travel to Latin American settings and publish their work for the target audiences in their home country. Much like “global cop studies” (e.g., comparative criminology, international affairs, international development), major portions of this scholarship contained an implicit imperial gaze in the means and ends of scientific inquiry. The goal was often to understand “the Other” in a manner consistent with some broader civic, economic, or political project of strategic import to the US or another Western European power. Latino Studies, however, is focused

<sup>5</sup> Critical criminology reflects how scholars have confronted gaps, oversights, or institutional hegemonies in the “mainstream.” These criminologies fit that criteria.

<sup>6</sup> The term “Global South” varies in its usage and definition. It has nothing to do with geography or where nation-states exist in relation to the equator, but can be used to differentiate between colonizing and colonized countries, or in various bifurcations of political and economic power (see Carrington et al. 2019).

<sup>7</sup> The notion that the US has something to offer the world in terms of criminal justice “best practices” is curious, unless, of course, we are discretely promoting the robust funding of militarized and racialized social control. We do not necessarily call it that, but instead develop a whole pseudo-science to tinker with ways of seeking public obedience under the pacification project called “procedural justice” or “focused deterrence.”

primarily on Latinos in the present-day US whose identities and human geographies vary significantly along ethnic, political and racial axes.<sup>8</sup>

## Latino Studies

Broadly defined, Latino Studies advances theory and empiricism on Latinos at the local, national, transnational and hemispheric levels, but with an unequivocal centering of Latino community formations in the US. Similar to critical criminology, Latino Studies engages in both inter- and intra-group dialogue and debate as to what our core mandates and collective objectives might be in light of competing thematic, political, and epistemological priorities (see Cabán 2003; Decena 2016; Masud-Piloto 2003; Menjívar 2017; Oboler 2012; Torres 2013, 2015). Some of these open-textured and political debates include remedying the historical erasure of Afro-Latinos from the epistemological center of Latino Studies, the varied enthusiasm for anti-capitalist and anti-colonial scholarship, and the structural fissures between English-speaking, Portuguese-speaking and Spanish-speaking research constituencies.

Partially mirroring the political history of radical criminology, the mere existence of Latino Studies was not pre-determined but created out of resistance to asymmetrical relations of power in specific academic institutions. Student protests and the broader socio-political struggles generated the political capital for Latino Studies to formalize its intellectual presence. These efforts helped counter the hegemonic Eurocentric whitewashing of diverse histories and discourses and generated Chicano/a/x Studies at West Coast institutions, and Puerto Rican Studies at East Coast institutions (see Cabán 2003; Escobar 2018; Fernandez 2018.) The continued existence of Latino Studies should not be taken for granted, considering the various direct attempts to undermine or even explicitly ban parts of this intellectual project and ethnic studies altogether (Bruni 1998; Escobar 2018; HB 2120). This is what I mean when claiming that Latino Studies is a political location: it is less a function of the discipline inscribed on our terminal degree(s) and more of a good faith commitment to navigating divergent and convergent paths of inquiry that better reflect and advance the interests, needs, and ongoing struggles of variously situated Latino identities, subjectivities, and community formations.<sup>9</sup> While some readers may find the conceptual and empirical overlaps intuitive, it is not self-evident that Latino Studies has substantive connections to a plurality of perspectives associated with CCJ scholarship (see Atilés-Osoria 2018; Durán 2011; Scott 2017; Lantigua-Williams 2016; Menjívar and Bejarano 2004; Moosavi 2018; Saldaña-Portillo 2017). By way of example, the Latino

<sup>8</sup> There is an ongoing conversation in Latino Studies about the artificial borders in our intellectual work, which includes the conceptual cordoning off of Latinos in the US from Latinos in Latin America (see Berg and Rodriguez 2013; Decena 2016). Related developments also include bridging the gaps between English-speaking versus the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking Caribbean and Latin American scholarship and activism. These ongoing changes are beyond the scope of the current article. For a primer, see Flores (2019).

<sup>9</sup> There is much to decolonize in the conventional curriculum of US history and Latino history in the US. Indeed, the way that US history is taught and studied in the US needs to undergo more serious and comprehensive integration of the African diaspora and the Arawak, Aztec, Carib, Chibcha, Olmec, Maya, and Taino influences—among countless others—in order to reflect what it means to be Latino, in general, and in the US, in particular.

Studies journal has published special issues that directly intersect with critical criminological phenomena.<sup>10</sup>

For social scientists, Latinos in the US are often discussed as both a coherent and contested demographic group, and thus “accounted for” in virtually all scholarship where race, ethnicity, or country of origin are of some instrumental value. Yet *Latinidad*—like Latino Studies itself—is embedded with contradictions and conflicts stemming from colonialism and white supremacy. As a racial or ethnic indicator, the term, *Latinidad* and (its iterations), is often employed in a way that prioritizes proximity to Whiteness while seeking mutual exclusivity from Blackness. For many, the functional interpretation of Latinos is that they are individuals whose racial-ethnic subjectivities are neither White nor Black, but subject to a fluidity across place, space, and context.<sup>11</sup> Such an approach reflects the historically reified concept of *mestizaje* (or miscegenation), where the notion that we are a “mixed people” implicitly renders Indigenous and Black Latinos as secondary if not invisible at best, and undesirable at worst (see Martinez 2019; Salazar 2019). Indeed, *Latinidad* implicitly entails being “mixed” or “blended” as though the dominant and recessive genes of our varied inputs have yielded some coherent ethnic product, as opposed to a socio-political label that was cultivated as an anti-Black and anti-Indigenous buffer zone that serves white supremacy (see Cahuas 2019). There are other open-textured reflections of what it means for the term, “Latino,” to be used for different purposes, such as country of origin, cultural identity, ethnicity, human geography, skin tone, or racial subjectivity.<sup>12</sup> For example, US Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) and George Zimmerman can be White-only, White Hispanic, and Hispanic/Latino-only in varied databases. *Latinidad* does not surrender coherence because Cuban music icon, Celia Cruz, and US Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX) can both claim it. It requires more analytic competency.

Subjectivities (like racial categories and ethnic affiliations) are not generated randomly or situated in a value-free horizontal plane of difference and diversity. Subjectivities are discussed, framed, and operationalized politically in ways that reflect power asymmetries. These categories are organized and practiced vertically, in hierarchies of power and privilege. To study Latinos in the US is to study these and other machinations of power, which include “colonialism and territorial conquest and displacement, racialization of subject peoples and their economic exploitation, denial of equal citizenship, [along with] practices of resistance and national affirmation” (Cabán 2003: 12). Where critical criminology and

<sup>10</sup> Some of these special issues in *Latino Studies* are titled: Critical Latinx Indigeneities (Volume 15, Issue 2, 2017); Latinos, Militarism, and Militarization (Volume 13, Issue 2, 2015); Mexican (Im)migrant Students and Education: Constructions of and Resistance to “Illegality” (Volume 12, Issue 2, 2014); Race and Blackness in the Latino/a Community (Volume 8, Issue 2, 2010); and Latino/as and the Shifting Meanings of Citizenship Today (Volume 2, Issues 1 and 2, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> As a separate issue beyond the scope of the current article, Brazilian Studies are sometimes treated as distinctive from Latino Studies and Latin American scholarship. For an analysis of anti-Blackness and struggles for liberation in both Los Angeles, California, and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, see Costa Vargas (2010). For an historical primer on the Afro-Atlantic diaspora and Afro-Brazilian history, see Butler (1998), and for a comprehensive resource on resistance and political mobilization of Afro-Brazilian women, see Caldwell (2007).

<sup>12</sup> While Europeans, Indigenous peoples, and Africans all contributed to the phenotypical variety of what *Latinidad* can “look like,” the notion that Latinos are people who have a “mixed heritage” or are of “mixed race” implicitly validates both (a) an antiquated, if not essentialist notion of race, and (b) a racial classification scheme that is anti-Black. Rudimentary notions of *Latinidad* also indirectly uphold the current positioning that light-skinned Latinos enjoy, which includes symbolic and political dividends of the Du Boisian racial wage—or the privileges afforded to light skin that are designed to foster a sense of superiority over equally situated counterparts of darker complexion.

Latino Studies meet most explicitly is on research that integrates legacies of colonialism, to which I now turn.

## Coloniality, Criminology, and Criminal Justice Systems

To “unfuck” is to correct a situation, or yourself if necessary, and in a timely manner (see Bettella 2006). This special issue of *Critical Criminology: An International Journal* represents various arguments for how and why criminology should “unfuck” itself and center marginalized persons and perspectives. To center the margins, we must map them (Crenshaw 1991). To “unfuck” criminology from its colonial inheritances, we must know them. Latino Studies offers various insights into the colonial past and present (see Maldonado-Torres 2007) and, to make coloniality more legible for a broader CCJ audience, I offer an historical primer here.

It is far from a new or novel idea that “national subjects and colonial subjects have been historically constructed as races (or ethnicities, languages, or religions), classes, and styles of manhood and womanhood,” and that capital relies on the hierarchical segmentation of “production and its labor forces on the basis of gender, race, and ethnicity” (Brodkin 2000: 239; see also Chomsky 2018; Maldonado-Torres 2007; Stoler 1989). Orthodox CCJ has obfuscated these interpretive frameworks, and political economy and history are often beyond the purview of conventional CCJ discourse. Instead, criminological research across the Global North continues to be largely consistent with—if not directly supportive of—colonial logics and institutional frameworks that further entrench classed, gendered and racial modes of social control (Grewcock 2018; see also Agozino 2003). This epistemic violence (see Dotson 2011) comes in two simultaneous forms: (a) the proliferation of CCJ scholarship that helps racial capitalist control gain efficiency; and (b) the silencing or de-prioritization of perspectives that articulate how such racialized controls came to exist in the first place (León 2020). Eurocentric racism has been intellectually laundered into seemingly objective claims about “race”—recasting it as something people have that correlates with “disparate outcomes,” as opposed to something that Whites and Europeans used to advance and sustain material and ideological projects (e.g., chattel slavery, segregated and racialized labor, settler colonialism). For example, as Cunneen and Tauri (2019: 362) write,

High rates of victimization, arrests, convictions, and imprisonment, as well as frequent deaths in custody and experiences of racial discrimination by officials, are all features of Indigenous peoples’ experiences with settler-colonial crime control. The disproportionate rate of criminalization and victimization of Indigenous people is relatively well-known (even if inconsistently documented in some settler-colonial states). Where data and research are available, the evidence shows that Indigenous people are over-represented at each stage of the criminal justice system....

Though Cunneen and Tauri (2019) are situated in Australia and New Zealand respectively, there are imperial and colonial links that should be immediately legible to North American readers. Settler colonial states reward settler colonial sciences. Criminology, like many social sciences, aligned with the attempts to justify and legitimize coercive powers of the state. It is important to note, here, that there was nothing self-evident or predetermined about how criminology would “emerge to become a discipline for disciplining and controlling the Other at a time when colonial administrations were imprisoning most regions of

the world” (Agozino 2003: 244; see also Leonard 2016). Specific actors and institutions worked really hard to make this seem like the normal ordering of things. I offer a few brief examples here.

We often teach about the Classical School of criminology (e.g., Beccaria, Bentham, deterrence theory, utilitarianism). This perspective held that all human beings are largely equal in their capacity for free will and utilitarian decision-making, and it was innovative for its time. The Positive (or Positivist) School, however, sought to identify traits that cause or correlate with behavioral outcomes and that are independent from free will (or individual control). The Classical School deterrence model of controlling actions gave way to the positivist or trait-based model of pathologizing actors. Both Cesare Beccaria (a Classical School utilitarian) and Cesare Lombroso (an early positivist) were Italian, but the latter’s orientation would be enshrined into the label of “The Italian School of Criminology.” Italian School and Positivist School became interchangeable and, by the late 1800s, this paradigm would be widely hailed as the foremost body of knowledge concerning the study of crime and criminals (see Olmo 1999; Wolfgang 1961).<sup>13</sup> To this day, the positivist framework provides the dominant intellectual justification for coercive modes of individual and social control, and the pseudo-scientific justification for pathologizing, medicalizing, and controlling particular notions of criminality and deviance.

But why, and to what end? The Positivist School was consistent with a Eurocentric paradigm of cultural, ethnic, Judeo-Christian, and racial supremacy.<sup>14</sup> These ideological orientations did not come about randomly but provided a superficial remedy to structural contradictions concerning agency, economic progress, human rights, and self-actualization. As feudalism gave way to new social and economic relations—and the stratified labor forces therein—the Positivist School enabled the conversion of European racism into ostensibly coherent notions of race. There was nothing accidental about the material projects that these belief systems and knowledge claims supported, which were “[t]he needs of slavery and sustaining the dispossession of indigenous communities by colonial expansion westward” (Simon 2017: 1637). From the age of discovery to the settler colonial project that became the US, virtuous abstractions of political theory existed simultaneously with explicit forms of violence and dispossession. To rationalize this process, racist belief systems—under the intellectual cover of enlightened scientific inquiry (e.g., positivism)—allowed for a more efficient classification of human beings along hierarchies of personhood and privilege. As intellectual lubricant for facilitating systematic violence, criminological thought features prominent in Latin American history.

There are specific events, people, and places that reflect the geographical transfer of Eurocentric criminological ideas to the Americas. In 1885, the Third International Penitentiary Congress was held in Rome, and featured Enrico Ferri, Raffaele Garofolo, and Cesare Lombroso—among other positivist intellectuals (or eugenicists—same thing)<sup>15</sup> (see del

<sup>13</sup> The Classical School still lingers in its applied and iterative forms, with routine activities theory and deterrence theory.

<sup>14</sup> Just as there were competing views and robust disagreements among the major European thinkers of the Enlightenment, we cannot attribute coercion and hegemony to *all* of Western liberal philosophy. But there is a genealogy of hegemonic belief systems that undergirds criminological theory.

<sup>15</sup> I do not wish to denigrate any individual biographical actor, particularly when individuals were reflections (or symptoms) of structural-historical processes. Virtually all European intellectual spaces were imbued with self-serving notions of superiority, whereby sexism, racism, and capital-centric modes of social organization were laundered into concepts of “modernity” and “progress.” As a descriptive fact, it just happens to be the case that these specific individuals facilitated the geographic transfer of white supremacist concepts.

Olmo 1999). Other invitees included Argentinean penal lawyer Norberto Piñero, who proclaimed 2 years later that “[t]he Positivist School will go around the world for humanity’s benefit” (Jimenez de Asua 1957: 1047; see also del Olmo 1999). What would a positivist framework and an Italian penitentiary congress offer for someone like Piñero and the social order in which he existed? Answer: an ideological justification for racialized economic subjugation. del Olmo (1999: 25) highlights how:

The ruling classes [in Latin America] were aware of the increasing gap between the economic efficiency of industrial nations and their own but considered this to be an inevitable consequence of the racial composition of Latin America. The problem had to be attributed to innate characteristics, be they physical or mental. Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer helped to assert this position, giving it a scientific context, but criminal anthropology was more useful since it helped to justify the presence of criminals in those countries. In this respect, Indians and Blacks were considered Latin America’s first criminals, followed by immigrants.

Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, and Peru similarly incorporated these European frameworks of conceptualizing deviance along racial and ethnic axes and then operationalizing them through formal mechanisms of social control (see Aguirre 1998; Aliverti 2017; Carrington et al. 2019). Indeed, evidence for the breadth and depth of positivism’s reach can be found in all kinds of locations. The official flag of Brazil, for example, contains the phrase, “Ordem e Progresso,” and is a symbolic representation of August Comte’s influence in Brazilian political and social theory (see Brown University Center for Digital Scholarship n.d.; The Economist 2018; Nachman 1977).

In the US and around the “developed” world, contemporary positivist criminology remains the dominant paradigm insofar as it purports to discover objective, scientific, and stable causes of crime and criminality—often in a manner that de-prioritizes broader understandings of criminalization and the role of political conflicts, political economy, and state definitions of crime (Chambliss 1975; Young 2011). As a mandate for critical criminologists, we might engage with core concepts of colonialism and interrogate whether terms, such as “post-colonial” or “post-imperial,” function to sanitize but not clarify. Phrased differently, if “liberalism” was the prescriptive theory and “colonialism” was the descriptive practice, we should ask ourselves why the term, “neoliberalism,” is more prevalent in academic discourse than “neocolonialism.”

There is no single explanation for why CCJ research fails to take these phenomena into account, but an important factor is the siloed nature of our labor force. With no “prevailing paradigm to which most [criminologists] subscribe,” our research community is fragmented and siloed in various ways (Brisman et al. 2017: 3; see also DeKeseredy 2011; Dooley 2018). But separate from these intellectual questions and academic histories, what should we make of actually existing criminal justice systems? After all, how academics quibble or approach any given subject matter is different from what happens in the institutions of police, courts, and corrections.

## Neocolonial Justice Systems

The US criminal justice system is part of a broader social control apparatus that has racial capitalist functions (see Wang 2018). At the same time that so much focus has been on criminal justice reforms, “over-incarceration and police violence, which are especially concentrated on people of color, have actually gotten worse” (Simon 2017: 1625; see also



Miller 2010). Racial disparities are not aberrations from an otherwise legitimate system, but the consequences of long-established efforts to subjugate and exclude racialized subjects from the privileges of full personhood (see Mody 2014). Such racialization processes are never random, but operate in symbiotic relationship with material and economic interests (see Allen 2005). Internal colonialism is “a structure of social relations of domination and exploitation among heterogeneous cultural groups within a single state” (Allen 2005 (cited in Mondaca 2017: 37)). A system can be said to possess colonial functions and features on the basis of whether it “racializes relations between colonizers and colonized groups, helps stabilize a market system dominated by those controlling capital, establishes Northern science as the ultimate body of knowledge, and allocates the control of formal and informal systems of social control to those human groups considered as superior” (Carrington et al. 2019: 15 (citing Mondaca 2017)). Is this not our current state?

The framing of the US criminal justice system as a neocolonial enterprise has been made before (see Dobchuk-Land 2017; Raza 2011), but such critiques typically come from *outside* CCJ scholarship. Whether academics use the term “neocolonial” to characterize it this way, actually existing criminal justice systems help maintain a colony in a nation, where the protective functions of state control are reserved for majority White (or White-like) segments of the population for whom the criminal justice system gives some measure of comfort, protection, and legitimate recourse (Hayes 2017). This racialized ordering of safety, however, comes at the cost of vigorously maintained subjugation, restriction, and coercion of internal colonial subjects. Non-citizens, Black communities, and other racialized groups are structurally situated to exist in a state of non-being (see Fanon 1952). Historically oppressed and criminalized subjects exist in “the midst of police scrutiny, economic marginalization, and political disenfranchisement,” while the dominant group enjoys the privileges of feeling protected by the full force of the state (Brewer and Heitzeg 2008: 625; see also Allen 2005).

This observation is consistent with what academics outside of criminology have thoroughly investigated: Western liberalism has over-promised and under-delivered. To be specific, liberalism has been framed as a vehicle for perpetually improving civil society for some, while basing its very material and ideological foundation on the suppression and oppression of others. Institutions of democracy, as they have actually existed, have been based on carceral modes of exclusion and control just as Eurocentric notions of modernity have relied on robust imperial systems of economic, military, and political force (see Agamben 2005; Giddens 1990; Maldonado-Torres 2008). The realpolitik interpretation of modernity, itself, is that “we” are more civilized than “they” are because “we” can kill them more efficiently than “they” can kill us (Midgley 2006: 246). (In which group would you, the reader, place yourself? Is it self-evident that you will always belong to that group?).

CCJ scholarship continues to play a role here, for better or for worse. Racialized state violence and state-corporate harms are not only “systematically ignored, misperceived, non-criminalized, unreported and unrecorded,” but are also increasingly normalized and legitimized into the way things are (Hall and Winlow 2015: 1). Accordingly, it becomes easier to understand why CCJ scholarship that does give serious treatment to crimes of the powerful and state crime is situated as radical and thus underrepresented in the most “visible” and “high impact” sectors of the criminological enterprise (see Bernard 1981; León 2020; Michalowski 2016). To the extent that Latino Studies offers insights into transnational diasporas and legacies of colonialism, we might consider a more direct engagement with this area of scholarship to not only understand US-specific phenomena, but also to problematize our approaches to transnational systems of violence and social control. A

Latino criminology would thus be situated to offer both radical perspectives and practical advancements in how we conceptualize and study criminal justice systems, and how criminological theory can be modernized to actually meet the needs of historically oppressed people.

## Latino Criminology

### Foundations

The Latina/o/x Criminology network (see [www.latcrim.org](http://www.latcrim.org)) is a longstanding collaboration led by Robert Duran, Anthony Peguero, Maria Velez, and over 150 sociologists and criminologists whose work is organized around advancing crime and justice scholarship of and by Latinos in the US. This professional network mentors and advises scholars at various career phases and supports Latina/o/x researchers who might otherwise exist in a professional silo where it is difficult to connect over shared experiences, cultural background, and socio-political identity. Latino representation among all faculty in the US higher education is less than 5% (see De Luca and Escoto 2012; Salina, Jr. et al. 2020), and this community provides an important form of professional support for Latina/o/x scholars within the American Society of Criminology and the American Sociological Association. As a member and beneficiary of the “LatCrim” group, I draw from the existing strengths of this network while offering something new. Whereas “LatCrim” helps Latina/o/x researchers (who study all manner of topics from varied perspectives) navigate the CCJ climate that currently exists, this proposal centers the role of Latino Studies in augmenting criminological research and pedagogy. In addition to the important work that “LatCrim” offers in ensuring we can succeed in our various academic roles, Latino criminology extends this momentum to articulate specific ways that we might push CCJ to devote attention to less prevalent perspectives.

Just because a treatise on “Latino criminology” has not been written previously, there is nevertheless a robust amount of scholarship that speaks to parts of this proposal. Just as there have been various calls for “incorporating Latinos and immigrants into policing research” (Martinez 2007: 57), there have also been compelling responses from sociology and related fields (see Gonzalez Van Cleve and Mayes 2015; Lurigio et al. 2009; Reitzel et al. 2004; Rios 2011; Romero 2006; Vera Sanchez et al. 2015; Weitzer 2014). Yet, major portions of “race and crime” scholarship have underscored how “White” and “Black” subjects are bifurcated along inconsistent and problematic criteria (Brunson and Miller 2006; Hagan et al. 2005; Rios 2011; Romero 2006; Vera Sanchez and Gau 2015). As a result, surprisingly little research exists on how Latino/a/x subjectivities are represented or (re)formulated within the labor forces of these justice systems, especially in policing (Lantigua-Williams 2016; Lopez and Krogstad 2017; Martinez 2007; Weitzer 2014). According to the latest publicly available Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) survey, as of January 2014, 46.2% of nationally surveyed police organizations had zero Black full-time sworn personnel, and 48.2% of surveyed police organizations employed zero Hispanic or Latino full-time sworn personnel (United States Department of Justice 2015). Even in urban and metropolitan communities with significant Spanish-speaking populations and relatively diversified police forces, existing police data do not provide an in-depth account of how Latino subjectivities are formed, experienced, or weaponized in recruitment and retention processes (see Gustafson 2013; Jordan et al. 2009;

Urbina and Alvarez 2015) or in addressing specific crime-related issues involving Latino communities (see Barak et al. 2020).

## Seven Provisional Pillars of Latino Criminology

From description to explanation, our role as criminologists should be to increase understanding of crime, criminality, and criminalization. Some of us also aim to channel our work toward reducing harm and victimization at various scales. In this section, I outline seven general pillars for what a Latino criminology might entail.

### 1. Accuracy and Integrity of Race and Ethnicity Data

Scholars can make intentional decisions in how they communicate about race and ethnicity. Claims about Latinos in the criminal justice system, however, are as robust as the data that are available, and there is significant variation in how Latino subjectivity is operationalized in any given data collection effort. This has resulted in an ecosystem of imperfect measurements that not only influences the quality of knowledge claims produced within academic silos, but the nature of legislative, political, and public policy conflicts—like the politicization of the crime data, more generally (Andreas and Greenhill 2010; León 2019), or the US Census, more specifically (see Alford 2020; Schneider 2019). Criminal justice data are often dichotomized along either Black/White or White/non-White binaries (Covington 1995; Price 2010; Urbina 2007), leaving Latino subjectivities to the continuously evolving racialization projects to which such concepts have always pertained (Hooker 2014). As identified by Henne and Shah (2013) in their examination of White logics in criminological research, there are major segments of our research enterprise that continue to treat nominal categories, like “Hispanic” and “Latino,” through the more intellectually sterile framework of “Add-Variable-and-Stir.” That said, even the scholarship that remains at the “banal [level] of mere demographics” could benefit from better data on Latinos in the criminal justice system (De Genova 2019: 25; see also Lantigua-Williams 2016). Econometrics and the use of the latest quantitative methods are valuable currency in CCJ research, and the skill set among many evidence-based positivists can be used to revisit fundamental questions of measurement and data integrity regarding race and ethnicity, both of which are critical for the empirical components of such a project.

### 2. Revisiting the Utility of CCJ Theories

I hope that criminologists do not interpret this article as an invitation to take our most vanilla and stale theories and slap them onto some iterative way of “accounting for” Latinos. Theory testing is important and we will continue to find evidence to support statistical significance for our orthodox theories, but it is unclear how relevant they are for improving the lives of historically criminalized and subjugated groups. Criminology remains right-of-center in its theoretical canon, considering how the “racial invariance thesis” still exists as a turf war between different orthodox traditions (see Hernandez et al. 2018). At its core, the “racial invariance thesis” problematizes the underlying assumption in most criminological theories, which is that they are race-blind and assume that the theories of crime or criminality are largely the same, irrespective of the race of the actors, people, or places involved, and that “Blackness” is interchangeable with other racial categories. The testing of criminological theories on issues of Latino

identity or other, more nuanced concepts of race and ethnicity, will require that we not only have more defensible data, but also that we demand more from criminological theory (see Scott et al. 2020). What, for example, does routine activities theory offer for understanding the manufactured human rights crisis at the US-Mexico border? What project does social disorganization theory and concepts of “collective efficacy” truly serve—apart from deflecting attention away from current white supremacist policies? What, if anything, does criminological theory really offer for addressing acute and structural violence involving Latino youth gangs when robustly-funded policing models still cannot get a grip on addressing the sources of youth violence and delinquency (see Barak et al. 2020)? Why does institutional anomie theory remain so divorced from racialized state crime (Ward 2015), and why is it that at the time of writing, only one criminological publication (Sohoni and Rorie 2019) plainly and incisively articulates Whiteness itself as a risk factor for committing white-collar and corporate crime? In short, a Latino criminology might challenge us to ask where criminological theory needs to be revamped to actually explain phenomena that disproportionately involve Latinos as victims, criminalized subjects, and parties to interpersonal harms.

### 3. Mentorship and Leadership Among the Academic Labor Force

Academia, like any other profession, is a game. I do not mean this in a flippant, pejorative, or whimsical way. It is a game with rules, conventions, and an understanding of the possible and probable ways of “winning” and “losing” on its central prizes, like tenure, promotion, or contract renewal for the growing rosters of contingent faculty who are critical to the operation of most CCJ programs. As self-described critical criminologists, we can throw rocks at the criminology bus, but we might be doing graduate students and undergraduate students a disservice if we do not prepare them for the game that we have been actively playing, even as some of us try to change, subvert, or resist the nature of the rules. A Latino criminology might thus extend the social and professional capital of groups like the Latina/o/x criminology network and take seriously the importance of fostering dialogue across the various political locations in CCJ scholarship. This might prompt reflections among younger “crits” to reconsider the merits and limitations of dismissing orthodox criminology outright, especially if our senior mentors are often those who managed to finesse their way through the logics and customs of the disciplinary center. In other words, if a Latino criminology is to be of consequence, it must also be legible to those who are in the current positions of academic privilege and prestige, and we should not presume that one’s work must be radical or progressive in order to be allied with such a project (see Nair 2017). It will take sustained and collaborative effort to improve how our field engages with questions of race, ethnicity, and other social indicators of subjecthood and identity formation. This requires a skill set that is rarely taught in any formal way, but that often emerges organically: collaborative leadership.<sup>16</sup>

### 4. Turning to Migration, Mobility, and Transnationalisms

<sup>16</sup> This special issue, along with the programming and activist efforts by criminologists like Dr. Rita Shah, reflect those forms of organic leadership. The editorial boards of our flagship journals (e.g., *Criminology*; *Criminology & Public Policy*) have also evolved, and forward-looking editors (e.g., Dr. Cynthia Lum, Dr. Jody Miller) have exercised leadership to include the rigorous scholarship that also modernizes the mainstream literature (see Panfil 2020; Barak et al. 2020).

Latino Studies is undergoing a slow but steady transformation, including a diversification beyond the historical focus on “the big three” communities of Cubans, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans (Menjívar 2017). The historic demarcations of where Latin American Studies ends and Latino Studies begins are also being further complicated by past and present state crimes and various forms of legal violence (see Menjívar and Abrego 2012), including migration controls and the inter- and intra-national infrastructures that condition how goods, people, and monetary flows move across nation-state boundaries. There are literal and metaphorical circuits of deportation, where a county jail might be the place where the same individual is held more than two times in his/her/their life course as that individual experiences repeated forced removals. Migration and mobility in the broadest sense are just as important to Latino Studies as it should be for criminology. If US criminology is to be relevant in the coming century, it would be prudent to engage with the growing criminological focus on nation-state borders (see Turnbull et al. 2020) and further integrate our research and theories not only to transnational and migratory contexts, but the systematic violence and victimization happening in real time and in the name of nation-state sovereignty (see Blue 2015; Bosworth and Guild 2008).

## 5. Centering State Crime

The history and contemporary reality for many Latinos in the US is a story where state crime features prominently (see Menjívar and Rodríguez 2005). These state crimes, of course, refer to nation-states, not just the diversity of “states” reflected in the US federalist structure. State and municipal governments in Latin American and Caribbean countries, and extrajudicial government enterprises, like the Central Intelligence Agency and state-funded right-wing militias, are also implicated here. Whereas migration narratives are never reducible to one grand theory, the cohorts (or diasporas) of Latinos that have migrated to the US over the past century years are inseparable from machinations of state-corporate crime. The specific cohorts of Argentinians, Colombians, Cubans, Dominicans, Hondurans, Mexicans, Nicaraguans, Puerto Ricans, and Salvadorans did not come about randomly, but as a function of geopolitical conflicts and regional dilemmas to which US foreign policy had some identifiable connection (see Gonzalez 2011).<sup>17</sup> Latino Studies and most scholars who publish in the journal, *Latino Studies*, take very seriously the topic of state crime, but do not necessarily anchor their work in a critical or radical criminological perspective. The time is thus ripe for critical scholars to look both within and beyond the current borders of the US to examine how Latinos have specifically navigated iterative forms of state and state-corporate crime and to do so in a way that avoids the cherry-picked critiques of old school Marxism (e.g., class reductionism).

## 6. Confronting Anti-Blackness and Ditching the Intellectual Vapidity of “Black and Brown”

There are forms of systematic discrimination and oppression that are unequivocally anti-Black in their origins, features, and functions. When the category for “brown” is so varied and multidimensional, “black and brown” can become a term of convenience whenever a non-White but also a non-Black person articulates how an anti-Black system

<sup>17</sup> The ongoing colonial occupation of Puerto Rico (and Hawai‘i) also deserve continued scrutiny (see Gonzalez-Cruz 1998; Lebrón 2012; see also Brower 2016; Brown and Bloom 2009; Das Gupta and Haglund 2015).

shaped his/her/their own experiences. A Latino criminology would thus take care not to replicate the color-blindness of “black and brown” discourse that presumes that whatever systems are anti-Black are just as equally “anti-brown,” or that Latinos are simply “somewhere in the middle” between essentialized notions of race (e.g., somewhere in between fully advantaged Whites and fully-oppressed Blacks.)

## 7. Class Analysis and the Criminal Justice Classroom

Some readers of this journal work at institutions where the criminal justice majors include substantive proportions of Black and Latino students. In my own anecdotal experience, there are working-class Black and Latino students who view the criminal justice system as a viable path to middle-class security and who are not situated the way some critical scholars are to immediately view themselves as aspiring beneficiaries of racialized modes of formal social control (see Cortez 2020). It is thus prudent for any critical scholar to temper ideological purity with the actual needs, perspectives, and positionalities of the students and publics that self-select into wanting to study criminal justice. One possibility could be to study how Black and Latino students experience the criminal justice curricula at a time when Black and Latina/o/x criminal justice professionals are grappling with where they fit in the broader struggle for racial justice. For example, federal agencies, such as immigrations and customs enforcement (ICE) and customs and border patrol (CBP), have comparatively higher levels of Latino/a/x representation among their personnel, with some estimates suggesting that half of the personnel working for the latter agency are Latino (Carroll 2016; Mejia 2018). This, in turn, provides a timely moment to ask to what extent Latinos have been co-opted in a similar process of “locking up our own” (Cortez 2020; see also Butler 2019; Forman Jr. 2016), and whether this is influenced by political economic forces (e.g., absurdly robust criminal justice budgets and economic interests in the crime control industry). Ethnic studies and Latino Studies offer analytic tools that might help inform how various racialized communities perceive criminal justice as a pathway to upward economic mobility.

## Caveats and Limitations

There is a tradition in CCJ where criminologists—usually more advanced in their careers—authoritatively demarcate or propose research agendas and areas of priority for the field.<sup>18</sup> Academia, like any other occupational sector, has its subcultures and hierarchies. In the most privileged sectors, there is a strong incentive for “big ideas” to be associated with specific people. We are socialized to ensure that everything from the title of our books to the words on our individual [FirstNameLastName.com] websites all articulate our “brand” and what our scholarship “illuminates” or “confronts.” One of the risks of proposing a Latino criminology is that the person proposing it inadvertently monopolizes the bandwidth for what these two words might otherwise mean. This is not an insignificant risk.

<sup>18</sup> The most obvious examples are the Presidential Addresses at the American Society of Criminology, which are published in our field’s flagship journal, *Criminology* (see Agnew 2014; Chambliss 1989; Lafree 2007; Laub 2004; Petersilia 1991; Rafter 2010; Rosenfeld 2011).

At the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology in 2019, a panel session was held on the topic of “Building a Black Criminology”—which is also a title of the book authored by some of the panelists (Unnever et al. 2018). This panel drew a packed room of academics and graduate students who ostensibly attended to engage with the increasingly visible Black criminology. Rather than engage with the Black scholars who have advanced this intervention in our criminological thinking, the majority of the time was used for two tenured White men to exchange intellectual pleasantries over whether social disorganization theory had been credited appropriately. Just as a Black criminology should not be overly influenced by the perspectives of two comfortably positioned White men, a Latino criminology should not be excessively impacted by the perspectives of one cisgender, light-skinned, straight-presenting Latino man. With this overarching point in mind, I will outline additional brief but substantive caveats and risks that are inherent to the proposed research platform.

### **The Risks of Further Segmentation**

I am not arguing for further segmentation along existing nominal categories of identity. Using the American Society of Criminology and the American Sociological Association as my reference point, I am agnostic about whether the former should replicate a specific division for Latinos. While the proliferation of such divisions and sections may be cause for celebration, an inadvertent consequence is that they contribute to the further partitioning of intellectual labor that might otherwise occur across disciplinary traditions and not within further sub-divided silos. In other words, a “Division of Latinos and Crime” or a “Division on Latinx Criminologies” would—all things being equal—represent only a nominal accomplishment and, on its own, may not yield anything new or novel in terms of scholarship. Such moves might actually reify or further entrench problematic notions of scholar identity.<sup>19</sup> What is more, a Latino criminology might actually impede abolitionist and emancipatory efforts, especially if this academic community fails to connect with the full range of ideological orientations toward community health and public safety—some of which transcend our current orientations toward “justice” and instead look to more Indigenous and restorative paradigms of rights, ethics, and just deserts (Monchalin 2016; see also Brown and Schept 2017).

### **Me-Search**

There are particular liabilities that come with possessing the subjectivity that is explicitly named in one’s disciplinary subfield. Foremost of these challenges is the “me-search” critique, or how scholarship on one’s own group is liable to be viewed as self-indulgent, politically charged, and/or less objective merely because it contests the default subject or method of inquiry (see Duffin and Childs 2020; Garcia and Vanek Smith 2020). Similar to Peguero (2018), my training as a criminologist has included indoctrination into hegemonic ideas concerning “me-search” (see Ray 2016), or the shallow critique of being too

<sup>19</sup> If you are a woman, and Afro-Latina/o/x, and formerly incarcerated, and a critical criminologist, how can you attend division panels or business meetings that are occurring simultaneously? The divisions may be important but adding a Division on Latino Criminology might further press certain scholars to choose which part of their intellectual and personal selves are most salient at these conferences.

close to the topic of study so as to be credible or objective. I continue to struggle with addressing my own colonized and internalized white supremacist ways of thinking, which has included a deep insecurity of whether I had the emotional strength for having parts of my identity associated with my written scholarship, and the privilege of even having that option in the first place.

Many if not most readers of this journal are keenly aware of how their individual biographies shaped how, when, and why they might identify as critical criminologists. Latino Studies offers additional vocabulary for making such connections. The Ethnic Studies tradition of *testimonio* (or testimony) is a form of biographical truth-telling that originates from Black feminist theory (Collins 1991; see also Gray and Chapple 2017; Reyes and Rodríguez 2012). *Testimonio* is broadly consistent with some of the core tenets of narrative criminology, which validates biographical experiences as useable scholarly data (Crichlow 2017; see also Verde 2017). Because *testimonio* is a discursive framework for bringing a wrong to light, articulating a specific viewpoint, or bearing witness to an under-acknowledged experience (Reyes and Rodríguez 2012), it represents an invitation for critical criminologists to engage with traditions that are marginalized in their home fields but celebrated elsewhere. Peguero (2011, 2018) has shared his *testimonio* as a Latino male criminologist, and part of our commitment to centering the margins involves celebrating (and crediting) how Black feminist scholarship pioneered what it means to “speak truth to power.”

While thorough coverage of epistemic privilege is beyond the scope of this article, virtually all research is “me-search”—because the kinds of questions we think are worth asking cannot be separated from the kind of person we are. We should promote the fact that we write from the bodies we occupy, and not pretend that we are like a fly on the wall that can objectively record or communicate about the world as though we hold objective rubrics. What is more, having more diversity in academia is not just about whether the students see themselves at the front of the podium, but whether we see ourselves in the criminalized subjects that we write about.

### Centering Language and Politics: Latinx? Latina/o/x? Latin@?

As noted at the outset, the term, “Latinx,” an intellectual provocation in its own right, offers a relevant point of departure for reflecting on what it means to center the margins. For Latinos in the US, the proliferation of this term reflects an important victory in linguistically problematizing archaic binaries of gender and sex, giving important visibility to individuals whose identities have been—and continue to be—silenced or marginalized. Similar to Indigenous land acknowledgments at academic conferences, it is one thing to say the right words and another thing to write, organize, or act in a way that addresses historical and structural harms related to gender, patriarchy, and sexuality, as well as heteronormative violence. In the absence of any specific call to action, merely saying the right things risks being critiqued not only as self-serving platitudes, but as superficial cooptation of what being an “ally” could mean (see Trujillo-Pagán 2018).<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Hiring more Afro-Latinos of diverse sex and gender identities in tenure-track positions, recruiting more diverse doctoral students, increasing the recruitment and retention of Latina/o/x students and gender-nonconforming students (and Latina/o/x gender non-conforming students!)—or simply giving more rigorous treatment to how ethnicity, gender and race are operationalized—are all effective ways of being an ally, and take more sustained effort than merely “saying the right words.”



As Trujillo-Pagán (2018: 397) argues, Latinx is a term that an individual might use to communicate about themselves, but slapping on the x for making people, places, or things seem inclusive could actually reproduce a novel form of “genderblind sexism.” Language should increase understanding, not co-opt, conflate, distract from, or otherwise muddle how things actually are. It is for this reason that I eschew using the phrase “black and brown” or “communities of color” to communicate about things that should first be understood as anti-Black. The interest convergence reflected in how Chinese Americans, South and Southeast Asians, light-skinned Colombians, and Whiter-than-Marco-Rubio Cubans use the “person of color” label is beyond the scope of the current article, but relevant insofar as the term “black and brown”—like the term Latinx—can sometimes obfuscate more than it reveals.

My own intellectual bias is to emphasize race and class, but racialized patriarchy and heteronormative violence fundamentally underpin criminal justice institutions. Legitimized forced migrations (i.e., deportations) are, in practice, a “gendered racial removal program” (Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013: 272; see also Gibney 2013). Patriarchy also drives gendered state violence against women (see Menjivar and Walsh 2017) and the simultaneous criminalization and victimization of Black women in particular (Gross 2015, Potter 2013; Richie 1996). But more broadly, criminology remains largely the study of historically disenfranchised (e.g., non-White) men by historically privileged men (e.g., White, upper-middle class, highly educated). I thoroughly support scholarship that effectively uses the words Latinx or Latina/o/x to highlight the many patriarchal and heteronormative forces that shape law, order, and power, in addition to our academic workplaces. But because it is not at the core of my argument, I will not co-opt the term or suggest that I am centering the margins in this way.<sup>21</sup> As a final note on language, I am aware that using the word “unfuck” might prompt some readers to view both the message and the messenger as lacking decorum, but those readers who are concerned with the respectability politics of scholarly writing will presumably not have enjoyed the major points of this article. More relevant to the ethos of articulating structural asymmetries of power, it is worth noting here that the only publications that include the word “fuck” in the title are written by men who are White (see Healy 2017; Peterson 2020). Not everyone is equally situated to put in writing what they feel compelled to share, and it was an exercise in privilege to be the third light-skinned dude to use an expletive in this way. Ultimately, I chose the word to recast my political beefs with major portions of CCJ (“Go F\* yourself and the white supremacist horse you rode on, Criminology!”) into a call to action (“UnF\* yourself and get it together ASAP, Criminology!”).

## Conclusion

The mandate of a Latino criminology is not for any one individual to declare, and the boundaries of its potential aim and scope are for a community of scholars to collaboratively shape over time. I have thus far articulated some avenues for convergence between critical criminology and Latino Studies, while calling for a divergent conceptualization of a future Latino criminology. In terms of praxis, there are important distinctions between (a) the academic study of crime, criminality, and criminalization; and (b) the form and functions

<sup>21</sup> Please see notes 2 and 3 for my position on word choice.

of criminal justice systems. In the latter category, there remains a need to conduct basic research on the fragmented and decentralized systems of police, courts, and corrections, which are racial projects in their own right. This mandate includes improving the measurement and understanding of racial and ethnic subjectivities as they are commonly produced in these institutional settings. But calling this a “Latino criminology” carries risks, as it might inadvertently reify preexisting ways of constructing race and ethnic subjectivities as things to be accounted for and not asymmetrical power relations to be dismantled.

Within some of the major CCJ hubs, critical perspectives on race, ethnicity, and power remain largely marginalized in the sense that scholars of racial capitalist patriarchy have to show, for example, how ostensibly race-blind institutions are racist, instead of conventional scholars having to demonstrate that they are not. If we as criminologists expect the most visible CCJ programs and publication outlets to prioritize such reflexive critiques, we are liable for being naïve, at best, and complicit, at worst. Considering that some of our best graduate programs teach future criminologists how to better advance causal inferences and explain “treatment effects”—and not how to understand and prevent inhumane treatment—there remains a need for a criminological project that will not “lead, be complicit, or provoke blindness in respect to dehumanization and suffering” (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 241).

As critical criminologists, many of us have acted on the realization that there is so much more to our day jobs than some of the drudgery found in our conventional research outlets, some portions of which remain racist and frozen in time (see Henne and Shah 2013). I am not alone in perceiving some of our major conferences to be the equivalent of rearranging chairs on the Titanic. We know that there is so much more work to do in centering the margins, including revisiting how our own works have failed to address the coloniality of our present circumstances. Perhaps, then, one way to carry this energy forward is to collectively engage with Latino Studies and depart, or “unfuck” ourselves, from our many settler colonial and white supremacist inheritances—which is the argument I have attempted here.

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