Criminology and social deviance

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Ethnic monitoring and social control in juvenile care institutions

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In an evaluation of a juvenile-care project sponsored by the Swedish National Board of Institutional Care, ethnicity was identified as an important dimension in treatment, staff practices, and relationships among juveniles. This article aims to analyze descriptions of ethnic monitoring and social control in Swedish juvenile institutions. A juvenile’s ethnicity was highlighted by drawing attention to the staff’s monitoring and social control. Interviews elucidated the victimhood that non-Swedish juveniles portrayed in relation to the staff and/or Swedish juveniles. When juveniles of non-Swedish ethnicity described ethnic monitoring and social control, they generally distanced themselves from staff behavior and portrayed a victim identity. In constructing their identity, juveniles sometimes used their ethnic background rhetorically when describing everyday situations in the institution. The juveniles portrayed a humiliated self through dissociation from the staff and through the descriptions that they were treated differently than Swedish juveniles.