



Journal of
Theoretical & Philosophical Criminology

July, 2014, 6, 129-144

Obscene Reminders: Neoliberalism and the Gang Crisis Narrative

James A. Buccellato, PhD
Senior Lecturer, Political Science
Irvin D. Reid Honors College
Wayne State University

Abstract: Social scientists increasingly recognize the importance of violent non-state actors. Few political theorists, however, have examined the American street gang. My paper addresses this deficit by describing gangs as the obscene remainders of the neoliberal bargain. To begin, I examine how neoliberal discourse registers the street gang as an imaginary signifier. By situating the gang outside the promise of market prosperity, the gang crisis narrative detaches the proliferation of gangs from the cultural, economic, and spatial conditions of global capitalism. I argue this is misguided considering the increase in street gangs correlate to the specific contours of neoliberalism. For example, nations with higher levels of income inequality experience the most problems with gangs. Global capital also undermines the symbolic institutions traditionally responsible for registering well-adjusted citizens. As a result, social actors increasingly seek meaning in identities that circulate outside traditional disciplinary bodies. Furthermore, to compensate for structural exclusion, gang members often overidentify with the cultural signifiers of late capitalism. Overall, the essay urges policy-makers to challenge the gang crisis narrative and reconnect youth crime to the problem of market failure.

Key words: gangs, neoliberalism, symbolic, imaginary

In Europe a criminal is an unhappy man who is struggling for his life against the agents of power, while the people are merely a spectator of the conflict; in America he is looked upon as an enemy of the human race, and the whole mankind is against him. —Alex de Tocqueville

Gangs are the truth. Gangs provide opportunity, protection, belonging, inclusion, brotherhood, help to the underdog, promise for the future. Gangs become the truth to these young people. America is the lie.

—Robert Odom, Executive Director of the Social Development Commission in Milwaukee, WI.

Introduction

This essay examines how political actors (public officials, intellectuals, and media) within the neoliberal state apparatus imagine the American street gang.¹ According to the National Gang Intelligence Center (2011), there are almost 1.4 million street, prison, and outlaw motorcycle gang members in the United States. NGIC estimates that 33,000 gangs operate in total (2011: 9). These figures represent a “660 percent growth in U.S. gang membership” since 1980 (Swift, 2011, p. 12).² Gangs are an increasingly important part of America’s cultural fabric, and as a result, policy makers devote a significant amount of attention to the problem of deviant youth. While criminologists and sociologists frequently examine American gangs, political theory literature on the subject is lacking. This is unfortunate considering the central concern of crime in American political culture. Employing political theory as a method in gang scholarship is important considering current gang policies emerge out of a specific political articulation—neoliberalism. Furthermore, I read the street gang problem in America as symptomatic of the inability to politicize struggles over income inequality and resource distribution.

Drawing upon Žižekian theory, I begin by describing how the neoliberal regime registers the street gang as an imaginary signifier. From the neoliberal point of view, global integration and economic liberalization are the keys to universal prosperity and financial stability. Nevertheless, socioeconomic indicators fail to corroborate this formula. Instead of prosperity and stability, growing sectors of the United States population experience poverty and financial insecurity. As a result, neoliberalism must account for such moments of slippage and discrepancy if it is to maintain its hegemonic position. As flaws in the narrative become apparent, the dominant articulation imagines that external identities are disrupting market performance. I refer to such identities as the *obscene remainders* of the neoliberal bargain.

Next I examine how this political environment produced the gang crisis narrative. I use the term *gang crisis* to describe how the state apparatus frames the street gang as primarily a criminal problem.³ FBI’s National Crime Information Center describes the gang as “a group of three or more persons with a common interest, bond, or activity, characterized by criminal activity” (National Gang Center, 2013, p. 3). The 2011 National Gang Threat Assessment (NGTA) also defines the *gang* as a “criminal organization” (NGIC, 2011, p. 7). The NGTA provides a standard framework for local, state, and federal law enforcement to conceptualize the street gang in America. The gang crisis narrative, however, detaches the American street gang from any political economic context. I use the final sections of the essay to demystify the gang crisis construct and reconnect the gang situation to the cultural, economic, and spatial conditions of global capitalism.

Conceptualizing the Street Gang

The term “street gang” is a contested concept. In terms of the state apparatus, Fredrick Thrasher’s pioneering research on Chicago gangs remains the point of departure for most academic inquiries on the subject. Even Thrasher acknowledged that “No two gangs are just alike” (1927/2013, p. 45). Producing a concise definition of the subject is challenging considering the complexity of gang existence. Here Irving Spergel describes the diffuse nature of gangs: “Gangs, or more precisely the interrelationship of member roles, may be cohesive, loosely knit or bureaucratic, or part of a small or large network across neighborhoods, cities, states, and even countries or they may specialize in different kinds of criminal behavior” (Spergel, 1995, p. 79). Because it is beyond the scope of this inquiry to document the academic debates within gang research, I concentrate on common themes found in contemporary gang scholarship.⁴ For example, today’s American street gangs operate under a different set of economic, political and cultural conditions than pre-1980s gangs. Researchers point out we should examine the current gang environment against an important backdrop—namely the convergence of deindustrialization, globalization, and the expansion of informal economies (Taylor, 1990, p. 21; Hagedorn, 1998, p. 368; Wacquant, 2008, pp. 26-27). To further analyze the importance of these changes, we need to examine the political conditions that facilitate these

The Neoliberal Bargain

Neoliberalism represents the standard form of governmentality under global capitalism. As a political articulation, neoliberals advocate global integration based on the principles of economic liberalization. Specific policy demands call for reductions in social spending, the privatization of public services, deregulation, flexible labor markets, free trade, and tax reductions for higher income earners. At the international level, neoliberalism signifies a transition from nation-state capitalism to globalized capitalism. The difference represents a shift from international trade between nation states to a single global production system. The global network of economic and technological integration pressurizes both international and national economic systems to standardize accordingly. At the domestic level, global standardization requires nation-states adopt liberal economic policies. Freeing the market from governmental interference further integrates accumulation, production, and consumption into a singular global system. Cumulatively known as structural adjustment, policy proposals are rooted in classical liberal economic theories. Liberal economists maintain the market is the most efficient social mechanism for allocating resources (Norber, Tanner, and Sanchez, 2003; Bhagwati, 2007). According to the narrative, social spending, business regulations, unionism, trade tariffs, and progressive taxation siphon resources from the private market. Each layer of governmental interference disrupts the otherwise natural process of market coordination. Market liberals bargain that by implementing structural adjustment policies, nations will lower deficits, increase exports, and correct public sector inefficiencies. Subsequently, the synthesis of world market integration and economic liberalization equates to global prosperity in the neoliberal formula.

Multiple political observers recognize neoliberalism as the hegemonic political formation under global capitalism (Harvey, 2005; Dean 2008; Klein, 2008). During the early 1980s, the Reagan administration in America and Thatcher government in England pushed tax reduction, privatization, deregulation, and free trade as standard policy initiatives. At the international level, the United States and Great Britain influenced global economic bodies to adopt structural adjustment policies. Developing nations had to reduce trade tariffs, cut social spending, and privatize public sectors to qualify for loan packages from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. Neoliberal governance continued after Reagan and Thatcher as subsequent Western leaders remained committed to economic integration based on structural adjustment principles. During the 1990s capital initiated a new round of accumulation by opening up markets, reducing input costs, and privatizing state assets at domestic, regional, and global levels. Examples of regional integration included the European Union constructed in 1993, and North American Free Trade Agreement passed in 1994. The push for global integration gained momentum in 1994 with the creation of the World Trade Organization. Such political developments facilitated the transnationalization of capital as cross-border corporate acquisitions and mergers became the norm.

Obscene Reminders

Today, democratic elites remain committed to market liberalism on a global scale. Nevertheless, socioeconomic indicators do not substantiate the neoliberal bargain. In the United States, experiments in market liberalism have produced thirty years of stagnant social mobility and income inequality. Labor flexibility is a key component of the neoliberal economy, and corporations have used free trade agreements to outsource and off-shore millions of manufacturing, services and tech jobs to low-wage countries (Lach, 2012; Navarro, 2012). Thus far the global economy has produced “a growing supply of poorly paid, semi-skilled or unskilled production jobs” to replace these outsourced positions (Sassen, 1998, p. 46). All of this has an impact on social mobility. Saskia Sassen (1998, p. 46) demonstrates that “Since 1973 only one in two new jobs has been in the middle-income category.” John Quiggin (2010, p. 153) adds that for fully employed male workers, median earnings “have not grown since 1974.” Instead most of the economic gains throughout the neoliberal era have gone to the top 1 percent of income earners (Hacker and Pierson, 2010, p. 14). Americans have also accumulated \$1.5 trillion in consumer debt (Phillips, 2009, p. xviii), while others grapple with food insecurity (Tracy, 2013, p. 96).

Clearly there are discrepancies between the neoliberal bargain and the economic realities of market liberalism. This represents a major inconsistency in the dominant narrative. As Jodi Dean (2009, p. 55) notes, neoliberals contend that under market liberalism: “Everyone benefits, not just some, *all*.” Neoliberal discourse must account for these inconsistencies if it is to maintain its hegemonic position. Because hegemony is a constructivist project, the dominant articulation never totalizes the political. When gaps in the symbolic appear, the hegemonic formation must restore confidence in established belief systems if it is to maintain power. If unaddressed, moments of interruption may fasten themselves to dissident political discourses and undermine the dominant narrative’s privileged position.

One way to address the gap in symbolic consistency is to shift responsibility from the economic structure to an intrusive social identity. According to Žižek (2006, p. 74) the process of displacement requires a form of reification. Instead of confronting the class antagonism at the core of economic instability, we imagine that a specific outgroup embodies social imbalance. There are no other explanations within the symbolic network of liberal capitalism. As a result, class struggle is something unarticulated and part of the Real. In Lacanian theory, the Real is the part of our social psychology that exists beyond representation. Unable to express the actual source of instability, we construct imaginary signifiers to stand-in for fissures in the symbolic. Žižek (1989, p. 127) adds that “what is excluded from the Symbolic . . . returns in the Real as a paranoid construction.” Because the symbolic of liberal capitalism is unable to register economic loss, such paranoid constructions surface in the Imaginary.

To address the crisis in meaning, neoliberals construct imaginary signifiers to represent the “warnings, exceptions, and contingencies” of their otherwise pristine belief system (Dean, 2008, p. 47). As flaws in the narrative become noticeable—in the forms of unemployment and poverty—true believers imagine non-market factors account for gaps in economic prosperity. Once it becomes apparent that millions of Americans continue to mire in poverty and experience economic uncertainty, market liberals look for external factors causing the trouble. The underclass or “undeserving poor” signify a usual suspect (Katz, 2013). Over the last thirty years of neoliberal governance, the underclass is a prominent signifier circulating in America’s political imaginary (Morone, 2003, p. 456; Young, 2007, p. 55; Wacquant, 2008, p. 24).

Read as a political sign, the underclass signifier represents two fundamental characteristics: (1) that market losers are undeserving; and (2) members of the underclass are predisposed to unlawful behavior. In terms of the first characteristic, neoliberal societies evaluate one’s social value based on their performances as income earners and consumers. If there is a high concentration of unemployment and under consumption in a particular community, then that social group lacks “entrepreneurial self-regulation” and is “undeserving of market rewards” (Nonni, 2007, p. 168). It usually follows that the undeserving poor not only lack economic self-discipline, but lack civility and are inclined toward criminal behavior (Young, 2007, p. 62).

Crime is an important component of the underclass signifier and is an essential concern of the neoliberal project (Garland, 2001; Passavant, 2005; Pitts, 2007). Street gangs in particular signify a destabilizing presence. Already understood as transgressing liberal norms, the street gang signifier represents an ideal opportunity for displacing market failure in the public imagination. Dean (2009, pp. 67-68) demonstrates that the criminal identity functions as “the site of displaced anxiety” in the political imaginary. As neoliberal conditions intensify, contemporary subjects experience heightened social anxiety combined with material insecurity. Constructed upon the assumption that the free market is the key to economic independence, the liberal symbolic offers no direction regarding market failure. Accordingly, subjects experience economic deficiencies as symptomatic of some type of external interference—in this case a criminal identity.

America’s Anti-Crime Imaginary

The anti-crime jeremiad is a reoccurring theme in America’s political imaginary (Potter, 1998, pp. 57-64; Morone, 2003, p. 458). Moral crusades against urban street gangs, however, intensified precisely at the moment neoliberals shifted the nation’s economic paradigm. Before examining the liberal regime’s fixation on street gangs, we must contextualize the gang signifier within America’s larger anti-crime imaginary. In addition to changing economic policy, neoliberal discourse transforms how we imagine criminal justice policy. Liberal demands for structural adjustment policies correspond to conservative calls for robust governmental action at the level of criminal justice. Steve Herbert (2001, p. 458) adds that “the simultaneous emergence of get-tough policies on crime and the delegitimation of welfare is no mere coincidence.” For example, the neoliberal project ignited a paradigmatic shift in American political culture. As Paul Passavant (2005) notes, the nation transitioned from a disciplinary society to a “society of control.” The transformation occurred as the state transitioned from a Keynesian political economy to post-Fordism. Based on a combination of union wages and a robust safety net, the Keynesian model sustained the national manufacturing base by stimulating mass consumption. Whereas the Keynesian approach linked the economy to a national politics of solidarity, post-Fordism offers low price inflation in exchange for labor flexibility. Post-Fordism also deemphasizes the importance of national industry and instead privileges the free movement of capital and labor across global markets. This transformation of America’s political economy changes how society views the issue of deviant behavior.

Under the Keynesian framework, disciplinary institutions such as trade unions, schools, political parties, and neighborhood associations are responsible for producing self-regulating subjects. In terms of addressing anti-social behavior, disciplinary societies view deviancy as something correctable with a proper mix

of social and economic attention. Traditional approaches, rooted in a combination of 1890s progressivism and Keynesian theory, focus on increasing investment in public education and expanding economic opportunities as the best ways to normalize deviant and delinquent behaviors. Conservatives within the neoliberal bloc, however, reject the rehabilitative approach to criminology. Right-wing policy-makers alter the debate from a situational analysis to a depiction of criminal behavior as a universal problem. Importantly, Passavant (2005) connects the right-wing turn in criminology to structural changes in America's economy. Instead of maintaining a balance between national industrial production and mass consumption, neoliberal policies accelerated deindustrialization in multiple American cities. Subsequently, low-price inflation trumped manufacturing as the nation's primary economic imperative. By deemphasizing manufacturing (and in the process undermining trade unionism), the new global economy pushed scores of Americans into either underemployment or unemployment. Positioned as inadequate consumers, the excess labor population serves little purpose under the neoliberal transformation. Under these conditions, the disciplinary network of social institutions associated with the Keynesian model become less efficacious. Without an economic function, the obscene remainders must be controlled rather than socialized.

A new wave of conservative social science emerged in the 1980s to explain this way of seeing the underclass (Murray, 1984; Sowell, 1984; Wilson, 1985). For the new right, one cannot examine the underclass properly without appreciating the issue of crime. According to this strand of conservative thought, criminals are at their core pathological and beyond rehabilitation. Most importantly, criminality is not an economic or socialization problem, but a condition of "moral poverty" (Bennett, Dilulio Jr., and Walters, 1996, p. 13). Several themes emerge out of this ideological matrix, including: (1) heightened criminality presents a national crisis, (2) policy-makers should concern themselves with policing deviant behavior rather than addressing preventative measures (3) a combination of welfare entitlement and the counterculture produced the state of moral poverty, (4) policy-makers must take a zero-tolerance approach to fighting crime, and (5) the war on crime is indefinite.

In regard to heightened criminality, conservatives place less emphasis on actual crime rates and instead spotlight the intensity of criminal acts. Though America is not experiencing unprecedented crime rates, leading conservative intellectuals like William Bennett (1996, p. 21) describe American criminality as a "ticking time bomb." As a result, conservatives address crime not as a quantitative problem, but take into account the quality of felonies that occur. James Q. Wilson (1994) writes that America is experiencing "high levels of violence, youthful violence, often occurring as part of urban gang life, produced disproportionately by a large, alienated, and self-destructive underclass." Here Wilson provides an important detail as he points out that "urban gangs" concentrated within the underclass represent a particularly dangerous threat. To make sure his audience appreciates the danger, he imagines the average citizen's view: "But we are terrified by the prospect of innocent people being gunned down at random, without warning and almost without motive, by youngsters who afterward show us the blank, unremorseful faces of seemingly feral, presocial beings" (Wilson, 1994). This is an important critique from the neoliberal worldview because it forecloses on the notion that market failure contributes to anti-social behavior. They also contend the cultural state of moral poverty is so acute criminals are beyond the point of resocialization. Consequently the state should allocate resources toward incarceration and surveillance rather than counseling and job-training.

The new right's view's on crime greatly influenced policy makers in the Reagan, Bush, and Clinton administrations. Accordingly the neoliberal regime takes a zero-tolerance approach in dealing with the criminal underclass. New right intellectuals refer to these exceptionally dangerous criminals as "super-predators" (Bennett, Dilulio Jr, and Walters, 1996, p. 27). The term acts as a master signifier for the predatory street gangs, rapists, and murderers that stir up fear in the public imagination. Super-predators are so pathological that rehabilitation is impossible. Wilson and Richard Herrnstein (1985, p. 299) claim that such "chronic delinquents are strongly disposed to such behavior long before acquiring adolescent peers, as a result of cognitive and personality traits that reflect constitutional predispositions." The existence of such heinous criminals may not be statistically significant, yet the qualitative threat of the super-predator justifies a zero-tolerance approach to criminal justice. Zero-tolerance policies include mandatory minimum sentencing, three strikes and you're out laws, and the public registration of sex offenders. In addition to public policy, zero-tolerance represents an overall mindset in the anti-crime imaginary. For example, Bennett (1996, p. 20) warns citizens that the war against crime and drugs "will not abate anytime soon." As Americans go to war with the super-predator, they should be both uncompromising and prepared to fight as long as it takes.

The Gang Crisis Narrative

If the super-predator acts as a master signifier for general examples of extreme criminality, the street gang represents a specific manifestation of the predatory criminal. Today the urban gang signifier preoccupies

the anti-crime imaginary. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (2014) “gangs are responsible for an average of 48% of violent crime in most jurisdictions and up to 90% in some.” Mass media began circulating the gang as a prominent signifier during the 1980s. Content analysis reveals that gang coverage in newspaper and magazine articles increased 2,500 percent between 1983 and 1999 (McCorkle and Miethe, 2002, p. 84). Media framing of the gang problem during this period differs from prior readings of street gangs. Gangs in the neoliberal era are not the unsupervised peer groups rumbling through the 1950s. Contemporary gangs in the anti-crime imaginary represent well organized and highly armed urban predators. By saturating electronic and print media with such representations, media discourse registers the gang signifier as a significant threat to communities and the nation. Once this captures the public’s imagination, the state mobilizes in response (Zatz, 1987, p. 131). Jenna Cyr (2003, p. 26) points out that 35 states have enacted specialized anti-gang public policies.

As mass media saturate public and personal spaces with images of criminal signifiers, the spectacle of crime overtakes empirical evidence. For example, despite declining crime rates, Americans believe crime is on the rise (Saad, 2011). The gang crisis narrative, thus, syncs well with an overall crime anxious culture. This dynamic correlates to what David Garland (2001, p. 163) refers to as “The Crime Complex.” Garland indicates that crime obsessed cultures feature certain characteristics. For instance, “high crime rates [are] regarded as a normal social fact,” while “emotional investment in crime is widespread and intense” (Garland, 2001, p. 163). Under this cultural framework, the street gang is particularly menacing. Whereas singular predators pose a threat to individual citizens, gangs rip apart the very fabric of civil society. Understandably the narrative heightens anxiety levels for ordinary citizens. Yet it also generates fascination at the level of popular culture as Americans consume copious amounts of gangster themed videogames, television shows, and music. The process is circular as the ubiquity of gangster themed commodities reinforces public perceptions about the national threat. Interestingly, the combination of fear and fascination regarding the gang signifier does not incite moral panic, but instead produces a generalized fear followed by “resignation” (Hall, 2012a, p. 137). In other words, the gang crisis narrative reinforces the culture’s normalized anxiety, while reassuring citizens the state will respond accordingly.

As key actors in the neoliberal state apparatus, policy makers respond with a consistent narrative: American gangs represent a national crisis (U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, 1997). There are three major components to the gang crisis discourse: (1) gangs are linked to a global organized crime-terrorist nexus, (2) gangs are becoming more sophisticated and thus resemble traditional organized crime groups, and (3) draconian measures are required to end the crisis. Overall the discourse positions the gang as an existential threat to liberal democracy. Political institutions add symbolic weight to this description through public declarations. During a House Judiciary Committee (1988, p. 4) hearing on youth gangs, Representative Carlos Moorhead declared that “gang violence is as sure a threat to America as any danger from outside our border. It is even more a threat because we live here today and now under its actual shadow.” The notion of American gangs and global terrorists belonging to a singular criminal nexus is another theme in the gang crisis narrative (U.S. House Committee on International Relations, 2005). David T. Johnson, a counter-narcotics official with the State Department, links drug gangs to a transnational crime threat. Johnson (2010) tells us that “transnational threat networks imperil public trust, and core democratic and market values, especially in the midst of the most serious global economic and financial crisis in decades.” His statement reminds audiences that gangs are hostile to and incompatible with the cornerstones of liberal society: market exchange and rule of law. Furthermore, the narrative signifies that the logic of liberal governmentality is sound. Thus criminal gangs represent the true danger to democracy rather than any structural deficit in the political economy of global capitalism.

Connecting illegal immigration to the gang crisis narrative is an important part of this global context. The U.S. House Committee on International Relations (2005, p. 1) notes that “nearly half of all [gang] members are Hispanic, many of them the children of illegal immigrants.” It is interesting to note that in the very next statement the Chairperson reminds the audience that “Today’s high profile street gangs are a different, more dangerous breed than their predecessors.” During another Congressional hearing on gangs (U.S. House Committee on Criminal Justice, 2006, p. 6), conservative Congresswoman Virginia Foxx stated: “I sympathize with those who desperately wish to live the American dream here on American soil. I understand their desire for liberty, free markets, property rights, and guaranteed freedoms.” In terms of undocumented immigrants, however, North Carolina state representative Dale Folwell (U.S. House Committee on Criminal Justice, 2006, p. 35) makes it clear that “we are facing a war with the illegal immigrants.” The two statements reiterate common themes from the gang crisis narrative. First, Congresswoman Foxx reminds us that liberal capitalism is at the core of America’s righteous political framework. Consequently, obscene reminders, such as illegal immigrants and gangs exist outside the virtuous domain of American capitalism. This analysis forecloses on the possibility

that there is a correlation between anti-social behavior and the socioeconomic inequalities of the market system. Secondly, the follow up statement by Folwell reinforces the notion that America is at war with crime.⁵

Positioning the gang as a highly organized criminal syndicate is the second component of the gang crisis narrative. The National Gang Intelligence Center (2011, p. 9) describes today's gangs as "more adaptable, organized, sophisticated, and opportunistic, exploiting new and advanced technology as a means to recruit, communicate discretely, target their rivals, and perpetuate their criminal activity." The Center (2011, p. 9) also states that gangs are expanding beyond urban areas and are now involved in "white collar crime such as counterfeiting, identity theft, and mortgage fraud." Meanwhile, the Attorney General's office (United States Department of Justice, 2008) claims American street gangs "maintain a strong working relationship" with the Italian mafia. In 2007, the House of Representatives passed *HR 367*, also known as the Gang Elimination Act. Sponsors of the bill inserted the following: "The number of documented members of gangs located in the United States has grown to over 800,000. This number is larger than all but six armies in the world" (110th Congress, 2007). Such descriptions mistakenly conflate urban gangs with either traditional crime families or paramilitary groups. By linking street gangs with global criminal syndicates, law enforcement is able to locate groups like the Salvadorian Mara Salvatrucha as part of a conspiracy of terror. John Hagedorn (2008) argues this is a mischaracterization. While acknowledging gangs play a significant role in the informal economy, Hagedorn (2008, pp. 18-19) indicates that even the most institutionalized gangs bear little resemblance to "godfather-run, centralized, efficient crime syndicates." James Buccellato (2013) adds that in Detroit, "local gangs revolve around a school district or some other neighborhood affiliation." Thus neighborhood gangs emerge as "organic formations rather than the product of some centralized national conspiracy."

Nevertheless, through hyperbolic statements and sensationalistic reporting, law enforcement and media bolster the gang crisis narrative that robust police action is imperative. Hagedorn (2008, p. xxx) cites media headlines purporting links between Mara Salvatrucha and al-Qaeda as an example of an "improbable" yet effective tale that mobilized Congress in the direction of expanding federal police authority. The gang crisis worldview also rationalizes the zero-tolerance zeitgeist of the neoliberal regime. President Bill Clinton, for instance, "declared war on gangs during his 1997 State of the Union Address" (Lane and Meeker, 2003, p. 426). Earlier, Clinton signed into the law the 1994 Omnibus Crime Control Act (OCCA). Among other things, the OCCA curtailed early parole, expanded the death penalty for certain federal crimes, and strengthened mandatory minimum sentencing. The OCCA also increased sentencing for gang related offenses by "up to 10 years."⁶ Such 'tough on crime' measures compliment the neoliberal regime's militarization of law enforcement. Bennett (1996, p. 189) suggests "Law enforcement agencies currently responsible for drug interdiction should be placed under the overall command and control of the military." Together, zero-tolerance legislation and the militarization of law enforcement perpetuate the gang crisis narrative by keeping the population in a normalized state of anxiety.

There is also an intellectual trend in gang research that reinforces the gang crisis narrative. The trend emphasizes the potential threat gangs pose to state sovereignty in today's "postmodern battlespace" (Sullivan, 2001, p. 10). According to Max Manwaring (2005, p. 5), the battlespace "is everywhere and includes everyone." While scholars such as Robert Bunker (1996), John Sullivan, and Manwaring point out this is more of an issue in the developing world, they worry that America's urban street gangs will mutate into politically charged paramilitary groups. Robert Bunker (1996, p. 55) argues the American street gang is the "logical place" from which insurgents would emerge. According to the literature, such paramilitary groups represent third generational gangs. First generational gangs are adolescent delinquents primarily concerned with defending territory, whereas second generational gangs are greatly involved in the illicit economy. The fear is that second generational gangs will adopt politicized mercenary traits. Sullivan (Sullivan, p. 117) worries that a "crossfertilization" between narcoinsurgents and urban street gangs is already taking place in certain American cities. He singles out the Black P. Stone Nation and Vice Lords of Chicago, Mara Salvatrucha in Los Angeles, and Calle Treinta in San Diego as examples of American gangs hired by foreign drug cartels to carry out mercenary operations in the United States (Sullivan, pp. 113-115). Congruent with the gang crisis narrative, the authors situate urban gangs as threatening national security, democratic rule of law, and "free market economies" (Bunker, p. 58; Manwaring, p. 42). As a result, facing down the threat requires "the full human and physical resources of the nation-state" (Manwaring, p. 22).

Overall, cultural representations of gangs along with governmental proclamations about crime elevate the street gang to a signifier that is beyond democratic debate. By presenting the gang member as an organized criminal, the gang crisis forecloses on an examination of the social conditions and economic processes that cultivate this behavior. Instead, the gang crisis represents a type of political spectacle. Murray Edelman writes that inside the spectacle, "Evil people, not social conditions or class inequalities, create social problems" (1988, p. 80). The gang crisis construct is problematic, however, as it avoids a more nuanced

analysis of the relationship between neoliberalism and criminality. By situating the gangster identity outside the normality of liberal society, citizens become preoccupied by the dangers of external identities and have less time to question the normalcy of the existing system. Foreclosing on any political critique of market liberalism, citizens project socioeconomic anxieties onto the obscene remainders of the liberal promise. Under such conditions, it is important for critical theorists to demystify the gang crisis and reveal the deeper problems within the political economy and culture of capitalism.

Demystifying the Gang Problem

Economic Inequality

To challenge the gang crisis narrative, it is important for theorists to reconnect the gang problem to the specific economic and social conditions of neoliberalism. Three factors stand out in this regard: (1) the relationship between the gang phenomenon and economic inequality, (2) declining symbolic efficiency, and (3) the gangster's over-identification with hedonistic capitalism. Beginning with the first factor, nations with higher levels of income inequality experience the most problems with street gangs. As opposed to measuring a nation's economic status by looking at its Gross Domestic Product, the Gini index measures wealth inequality. Higher rankings reveal deeper disparities in income. The United States scores "a Gini ranking of 40.8" and registers the highest level of income inequality in the Global North (Swift, 2011, pp. 32-33). As demonstrated earlier, neoliberals understand income inequality as the natural outcome of a meritocratic system. In their view, economic liberalism universalizes prosperity, so to the extent that market losers exist, it must be their own fault. Such a reading overlooks the relationship between neoliberalism and capital's reorganization of the global economy.

As Sassen (1998, p. xxviii) notes, neoliberal policy favors certain economic actors over others. Contemporary policies deemphasize domestic manufacturing, for example, and instead privilege the finance, information technology, real estate, and service industries. The hypermobility of capital and labor restructures the American economy significantly. While structural adjustment policies strengthen the financial sector, it shifts America's manufacturing base away from urban areas. Multiple researchers identify strong correlations between deindustrialization and stagnant social mobility in American cities (Wilson, 1997, p. 26; Sheldon et al., 2001, p. 4; Sassen, 2007, p. 104). Unsurprisingly the nation's most violent street gangs tend to concentrate around urban centers. Gang researchers find similar conditions across America's urban landscape, including Atlanta, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Detroit, Flint, Memphis, and Milwaukee.⁷ Each urban center was a manufacturing hub, only to experience rising crime rates alongside deindustrialization.

Economic abandonment is a significant form of marginalization. By removing manufacturing jobs the neoliberal economy "cuts off one of the key ways for youth to mainstream themselves out of gang life" (Sassen, 2007, p. 103). Because industrial firms require less intermediate skilled employees, there are fewer opportunities for lower skilled workers to train and advance within a particular employment setting. As marginalized youth find themselves unemployed or underemployed in low-wage service positions, they experience fewer opportunities for economic advancement and social stability. Inaccessibility represents another type of marginalization. Under neoliberal conditions, urban centers often experience an influx in finance and tech jobs. Such positions in the new economy require a significant amount of post-secondary education. Yet, as products of underperforming school districts, at-risk youth often find themselves outside the institutions of higher education. Accordingly, more lucrative careers in the new economy project a type of exclusivity. At-risk youth often experience a type of symbolic detachment regarding high skill careers in the gentrified city. These developments render at-risk youth less likely to acquire the human capital required to navigate the employment networks crucial to middle class mobility.

As citizens experience long term unemployment and symbolic marginalization, the informal economy provides an alternative source for generating income and achieving status. In Detroit, for example, illicit drug organizations have replaced the automotive companies as the city's major employers. The drug trade produces most of the employment opportunities in the informal economy. During the 1980s, Young Boys Incorporated (YBI) "grossed \$7.5 million weekly [and] \$400 million annually" (Taylor, 1990, p. 11). Drug syndicates like YBI hired scores of inner city youth in Detroit to distribute narcotics. Similarly, in Milwaukee during the 1990s, drug organizations "employed more young African American males than did any other sector of the economy" (Hagedorn, 1998, p. 391). Not all drug dealers are gang members, nor is every gang member involved in the drug trade. Nevertheless, a significant number of gang members do participate in the illicit economy. For some members, gang life no longer represents a temporary moment of adolescent rebellion but instead a passport for entry into the underground economy. Meanwhile, as neoliberals defund and delegitimize social programs that benefit at-risk populations, the fragile social infrastructure of the inner city is less able to counter the pull of the underground economy.

Declining Symbolic Efficiency

By using the term social infrastructure, I refer to the neighborhood associations and community organizations that promote social connectedness and civic awareness. Conservatives within the neoliberal bloc trace the nation's crime problems to the countercultural movement in the 1960s. What conservatives overlook, however, is how countercultural values like hyper-individualism sync perfectly with the neoliberal goal of economic reorganization. For example, the cultural attitudes and practices of late capitalism weaken the institutions and social networks traditionally responsible for producing well adjusted citizens.⁸ This is significant considering communities that register lower levels of social capital are less able to protect youth from joining gangs. Declining social capital signifies a larger cultural trend: the breakdown of symbolic efficiency.

Slavoj Žižek (2009, pp. 323-332) introduces the notion of declining symbolic efficiency to describe the lack of fixity and predictability in contemporary meaning. Describing the decline in symbolic efficiency is another way of conceptualizing the cultural conditions of late capitalism. In Lacanian social theory, the symbolic refers to society's network of codes, norms, and customs. In this context, the symbolic anchors our experiences within a specific cultural mapping system. Traditionally, a network of disciplinary institutions holds the symbolic in place. These institutions produce subjects capable of navigating through society's system of rules, prohibitions, and communications. Prior to the neoliberal era, the institutions responsible for this socialization process included the nuclear family, neighborhoods, schools, trade unions, and political parties. For global capital, however, such disciplinary conventions impede the accumulation of profit. As Steve Hall (2008, p. 106) indicates, the "symbolic order of a functioning civilization will insist upon prohibition and repression when necessary, but that is not how capitalist culture functions." The disciplinary prohibitions under Fordism conflict with the primacy of consumerism under late capitalism. To maximize profit under contemporary conditions, Fordism is no longer tenable as capital must produce subjects through processes of *consumption* rather than *production*. A technique for manufacturing the consumer subject is to foster an imaginary connection between agent and the act of consumption. To do so, the spectacle of advertising colonizes social and personal spaces with commodity signs and images. Commercial interests reduce symbolic efficiency by circulating commodified images uninhibited by old disciplinary regulations. The spectacle of advertising encourages subjects to be expressive, sexual, and experimental. Under late capitalism the superego is permissive rather than prohibitive. When the consumer fails to self-actualize in a commercialized identity, the citizen has the democratic right to experiment with other commodified lifestyles. Above all it is imperative that democratic subjects actualize notions of freedom and self-recognition through wealth accumulation and consumption. As a result, capital neutralizes any social institution that interferes with the production and reproduction of individualized consumer identities.

Overall, declining symbolic efficiency produces a number of social-psychological experiences including isolation, anxiety, and a sense of randomness. Loneliness and uncertainty characterize late capitalism as much as interconnectivity and openness describe the current social climate (Olds and Schwartz, 2010; Turkle, 2012). Furthermore, fluctuations in market performance intensify economic anxieties. Jock Young's (2007, p. 71) notion of the "chaos of reward" connects this anxiety to an increasing sense of randomness. In the post-Fordist economy, for example, seniority and loyalty no longer ensure advancement opportunity or employment security. As a result, there are fewer frames of reference for workers to compare different market reward systems. Under such conditions, it becomes urgent for subjects to imagine a sense of belonging and stability. Yet the culture of late capitalism is unable to "provide symbolic identities" (Dean, 2008: 61). Under eroding symbolic efficiency, the disciplinary subject positions of the nuclear family, labor union, political party, school, and religion are less efficacious. Instead, the spectacle of capitalism offers a plethora of digitized realities and commodified lifestyle choices. By identifying with commodity signifiers, consumers imagine a moment of social stabilization, even as traditional symbolic identities (political partisan, neighbor, and proletarian) lose their efficacy.

Desire for self-recognition and social stability under such conditions is particularly acute for marginalized communities. Under Fordism, a symbiotic relationship existed between social capital and political action. Community awareness and political solidarity converged in a type of civic identity. Research demonstrates that up until the 1970s, urban communities, though segregated, still registered high levels of social capital (Taylor, 1990, p. 19; Wilson, 1997, p. 16). Neighborhood associations, parent-teacher partnerships, local businesses, trade unions, and the church generated symbolic efficiency in the inner city. By the 1980s, however, the confluence of countercultural individualism, deindustrialization, and reductions in public investment produced an identity crisis for inner city youth. The breakdown in social infrastructure forced young individuals to seek meaning outside traditional symbolic networks. In this environment, the gang emerged as an alternative form of social solidarity.

Overidentification and the End of Politics

While the search for meaning explains the gang's social function, it is important to note that gang members often overidentify with the cultural ethos of late capitalism. Such values include predatory wealth accumulation and conspicuous consumption. In psychoanalytic theory, overidentification refers to an attitude that dissolves the boundaries between ingroup and outgroup. Identifying with the mainstream values of the hegemonic class is therefore a coping mechanism for marginalized communities. During his field work, Carl Taylor (1990) documented Detroit gang members identifying with the materialistic values of capitalist culture. In the 1980s, Detroit's Young Boys Incorporated (YBI) set the standard by "[w]earing expensive clothing, jewelry, driving high priced cars, and being paid huge amounts of money in cash" (Taylor, 1990, p. 24). By strongly identifying with the ideals of wealth accumulation and conspicuous consumption, YBI earned celebrity status. Soon local street gangs started emulating YBI's ostentatious style.

By overidentifying with conspicuous consumption and wealth accumulation, marginalized communities experience a type of imaginary compensation. For example, whereas the spectacle of consumerism is an integrated universe, society's dominant economic, educational, and political institutions largely exclude America's at-risk communities. Street gangs may not acquire institutional legitimacy, but they can at least identify with the economic goals of capitalist culture. The advertising industry has been exploiting this social dynamic for decades. During the 1970s, the market responded to the counterculture movement by attaching notions of identity to various products. Advertising agencies had already segmented markets based on social categories; countercultural movements, however, inspired commercial interests to market products as pseudo forms of empowerment. Carl Nightingale (1993, p. 144) indicates that market researchers "discovered evidence that the twin burdens of racial humiliation and the agony of poverty in an affluent age influenced young black people's interest in commodities." Beginning in the 1980s, advertising agencies targeted inner-city youth with sophisticated marketing schemes. Athletic shoe companies perfected urban marketing strategies by sponsoring youth athletic leagues and saturating billboards, magazines and television with images of successful minorities wearing corporate logos. Eventually this form of compensatory consumerism merged with gang imagery in the form of gangster rap. Gangster rappers often celebrate a nihilistic form of wealth accumulation. 50 Cent's recording *Get Rich or Die Tryin'* represents one of the most blatant examples.⁹ Hagedorn's (1998, p. 405) field work notes that the most violent gangs were also the most materialistic. The overall message for marginalized communities is clear: one displays power and status by identifying with commercialized images and predatory capitalism.

Right-wing neoliberals criticize the ubiquity of decadent individualism and violent imagery in American culture, but the critique is disingenuous. As Hall (2012a, p. 135) demonstrates, gangs do not challenge "mainstream values," they only challenge "mainstream norms." The prominent values of commodity enjoyment and predatory wealth accumulation often match well with the gang banger's aspirations and notion of self-identity. According to the gang crisis narrative, the problem is that gangs do not accumulate wealth through legally recognized norms. Gang members absorb the capitalist values of competitive individualism, but operate outside symbolic norms and lack institutional legitimacy. Proponents of the gang crisis narrative are therefore upset when deviant youth groups short-circuit their way to the capitalist ideal. Even here the neoliberal critique is insincere though. As noted earlier, the dominant logic of capital undermines any symbolic institution that interferes with the pursuit of profit. The culture of late capitalism sends mixed messages to at-risk communities. Capitalist society places great emphasis on wealth and consumption, without placing the same emphasis on political inclusion and equal opportunity. Accepting mainstream society's goals, while detached from conventional institutions, at-risk communities adopt strategies of *innovation*. According to Robert Merton (1996, p. 139) innovators accept the dominant culture's goals without internalizing the "institutional means" of the ruling class. Gangs fit this profile as *innovation* becomes a common strategy for at-risk youth under conditions of declining symbolic efficiency.

Because the symbolic no longer represents any kind of fixity in meaning, the imaginary takes on greater importance. Under Fordism, marginalized groups often channeled desires for self-recognition and respect through solidarity projects that were class conscious and secular. Today, however, capital constricts the amount of symbolic space required for politically challenging the gang crisis construct. For example, Žižek (2000, p. 223) describes capital as the Real that structures the neoliberal political order. Political opponents may compete freely within the democratic field, yet by structuring the parameters of competition, capital designates what constitutes legitimate political space. Currently, articulations that criticize market fundamentalism fall outside proper political discourse. Subsequently, the neoliberal "arrangement forecloses the possibility of class antagonism evolving into political conflict" (Buccellato, 2012, p. 276). As trade unions and secular leftist movements lose their efficacy, at-risk youth seek meaning through imaginary identities.

Disenchanted youth recognize the exclusivity of neoliberal institutions. Gangs, therefore, represent a realistic opportunity for collective identity formation. Furthermore, by overidentifying with capitalist culture, gangs can offer a perversely democratic path to consumer enjoyment.

There are significant consequences for the lack of political alternatives. Hall (2012a, p. 153) illustrates that “the delinquency and urban violence we see today are largely the results of the exhaustion of the institutionalized social conflict that characterized the era of industrial capitalism.” As post-political existence becomes more palpable, it is even more difficult for at-risk communities to identify Capital as the objective source of economic anxiety. Agitated and anxious, subjects channel their energies in depoliticized ways. As a result, objectless anxiety produces complacency and self-destructiveness. Hall (2012b, p. 160) describes objectless anxiety as “the psychosocial energy source that drives and shapes the tendency of this subject to eschew politics in favor of various permutations of criminal, defensively complacent, and moralistic-punitive modes of existence.” Unable to politicize struggles over income distribution and social mobility, at-risk youth *innovate* by forming collectives that transgress symbolic norms. In some instances, such transgressions may emerge as gestures of protest.¹⁰ Nevertheless, when gangs overidentify with commodity culture they simply open up space for neoliberal reterritorialization. As a result, the ideological apparatus reproduces another grouping of politically sterile youth.

Conclusion

At-risk youth signify the obscene remainders of the neoliberal bargain. Instead of addressing the issue of market failure, the gang crisis narrative detaches the problem of deviant youth from socioeconomic conditions. As a result, incarceration remains the prominent approach to addressing street gangs and crime in general. The Department of Justice (2011, p. 2) reports in 2010 “1 in every 33 adults” was under the supervision of the adult correctional system. Since the 1970s, the prison population has increased “between 4 and 12 percent per year” (Clear, 2008, p. 61). It is well known that at-risk communities are overrepresented in these correctional populations (Parker, 2008, p. 98). Policy-makers should challenge the gang crisis narrative and reconnect the problem of youth crime to market failure. Otherwise there appears no limit to the amount of at-risk youth the state apparatus will incarcerate.

¹ For the term *state apparatus*, I employ Louis Althusser’s standard conceptualization. According to Althusser, there are two components at work: the ideological *state apparatus* and *repressive state apparatus*. The ISA refers to a set of socializing institutions (media, religion, family, political parties). Even though these are diverse institutions, the hegemonic regime bonds them under a common articulation. Althusser (1994, p. 112) writes “what unifies their diversity is precisely this functioning, in so far as the ideology by which they function is always in fact unified, despite its diversity and its contradictions, *beneath the ruling ideology*, which is the ideology of the ‘ruling class.’” The RSA refers to the state’s coercive elements (military, police, and prisons).

² It is beyond the scope of this essay to address the methodological issues surrounding gang measurement. Note, however, that Charles Katz (2003) raises questions about the validity of law enforcement generated gang data.

³ I acknowledge that in certain communities street gangs represent serious safety threats. In terms of the youth demographic, Philip J. Cook and Jon H. Laub (2002, p. 3) demonstrate that even as national crime rates decline, youth violence levels remain “relatively high by historical standards.” Karen Parker (2008, p. 110) also points out the uneven nature of crime decline when factoring in geography, race, and gender. Nevertheless, I maintain that the demonization of delinquent youth within the anti-crime imaginary is unsatisfying in terms of political analysis.

⁴ For more on the historical development of American street gangs and subsequent scholarly debate, see Sánchez-Jankowski (1991, pp. 1-5); Spergel (1995, pp. 3-25); Klein (1997, pp. 50-84); Hagedorn (2007, pp. 13-18).

⁵ Note that such anti-immigrant rhetoric reveals a split in the capitalist bloc between right-wing neoliberals and transnational capitalists advocating the unimpaired flow of labor across borders.

⁶ You may upload the entire piece of legislation at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-103hr3355enr/pdf/BILLS-103hr3355enr.pdf>

⁷ Regarding deindustrialization, I acknowledge that two important factors predate the neoliberal regime. First of all, automation phased out over a million manufacturing jobs during the 1950s and 1960s. Second, during the same time period, dozens of corporations relocated to the suburbs as racial tensions escalated.

⁸ Although C. Wright Mills never used the term “symbolic efficiency,” he nevertheless observed this process as early as the 1950s. Mills wrote, “No Longer is the framework within which a man lives fixated by traditional institutions. Mass communications replace tradition as a framework of life. Being thus afloat, the metropolitan man finds a new anchorage in the spectator sports, the idols of the mass media, and the other machineries of amusement.” He added, “So the leisure sphere—and the machinery of amusement in terms of which it is now organized—becomes the center of character-forming influences of identification models: it is what one man has in common with another; it is a continuous interest” (Mills, 2002, p. 238).

⁹ To examine the convergence of gang life, rap music and nihilistic capitalism, see Shalhoup (2010). Social critics often hold ambivalent attitudes regarding gangster rap. While acknowledging the genre’s nihilistic tendencies, John Hagedorn (2008, pp. 85-111) points out that gangster rap can also express the otherwise undocumented frustration of the underclass. For more on the competing narratives in gangster rap, see: Dyson (2001).

¹⁰ To examine the subversive potential of social criminality, see Buccellato (2012, pp. 271-294).

REFERENCES

- Althusser, L (1994) Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses. In: Žižek, S (Ed) *Mapping Ideology*. London: Verso.
- Bennett, W, Dilulio, J, and Walters J (1996) *Body Count: Moral Poverty and How to Win America’s War against Crime and Drugs*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Buccellato, J (2012) Sign of the Outlaw: Liberal Boundaries, Social Banditry, and the Political Act. *New Political Science*, 34(3): 271-294.
- Buccellato, J (2013) Gangs of Detroit: Examining Youth Violence. *CBS Detroit*. Retrieved at: <http://detroit.cbslocal.com/2013/10/31/gangs-of-detroit-examining-youth-violence/> (accessed February 16, 2014).
- Bunker, R (1996) Street Gangs: Future Paramilitary Groups? *The Police Chief*, 63(6), 54-59.
- Clear, T (2008) The Great Penal Experiment: Lessons for Social Justice. In: Frampton, M et al. (Eds) *After the War on Crime: Race, Democracy, and a New Reconstruction*. New York and London: New York University Press.
- Cook, P and Laub, J (2002) After the Epidemic: Recent Trends in Youth Violence in the United States. *Crime and Justice* 29, 1-37.
- Cyr, J (2003) The Folk Devil Reacts: Gangs and Moral Panic. *Criminal Justice Review* 28(1), 26-46.
- Dean, J (2008) Enjoying Neoliberalism, *Cultural Politics* 4(1): 47-72.
- _____ (2009) *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Dyson, ME (2001) *Holler If You Hear Me*. New York: Basic Civitas Books.

-
- Edelman, M (1988) *Constructing the Political Spectacle*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (2014) *Gangs*. Retrieved at http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/investigate/vc_majorthfts/gangs (accessed May 23, 2014).
- Garland, D (2001) *The Culture of Control*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hacker, J and Pierson, Paul (2010) *Winner-Take-All-Politics*. New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks.
- Hagedorn, J (1988) Gang Violence in the Postindustrial Europe, *Crime and Justice*, 24, 365-419.
- Hagedorn, J (2008) *A World of Gangs: Armed Young Men and Gangsta Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Hall, S (2012a) *Theorizing Crime and Deviance*. London: Sage Publications.
- Hall, S (2012b) Consumer culture and the meaning of the riots in England. In Hall, S and Winlow, S (Eds) *New Directions in Criminological Theory*. New York: Routledge.
- Hall, S, Winlow, S, and Ancrum, C (2008) *Criminal Identities and Consumer Culture: Crime, Exclusion and the New Culture of Narcissism*. Portland: Willan Publishing.
- Harvey, D (2005) *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Herbert, S (2001) Policing the Contemporary City: Fixing Broken Windows or Shoring Up Neoliberalism?, *Theoretical Criminology* 5(4), 445-466.
- Johnson, D (2010) *The Escalating Ties between Middle Eastern Terrorist Groups and Criminal Activity*. Retrieved at <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/rm/135404.htm> (accessed January 13, 2013).
- Katz, Charles (2003) Issues in the Production and Dissemination of Gang Statistics. *Crime and Delinquency* 49(3), pp. 485-516.
- Katz, Michael (2013) How America Abandoned its "Undeserving" Poor. Retrieved at http://www.salon.com/2013/12/21/how_america_abandoned_its_undeserving_poor/ (accessed February 16, 2014).
- Klein, M (1997) *The American Street Gang*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Klein, N (2008) *The Shock Doctrine*. New York: Picador.
- Lach, A (2012) 5 Facts about Overseas Outsourcing. Retrieved at <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/labor/news/2012/07/09/11898/5-facts-about-overseas-outsourcing/> (accessed February 16, 2014).
- Lane, J and Meeker, J (2003) Fear of Gangs and Crime Policy. *Law and Society Review* 37(2), pp. 425-456.
- Manwaring, M (2005) *Street Gangs: the New Urban Insurgency*. Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College Press.
- McCorkle, R and Miethe T (2001) *Panic: The Social Construction of the Street Gang Problem*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.

-
- Merton, R (1996) *On Structure and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mills, CW (2002) *White Collar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Morone, J (2003) *Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Murray, C (1984) *Losing Ground*. New York: Basic Books.
- National Gang Center (2013) *Brief Review of the Federal and State Definitions of the Terms "Gangs," "Gang Crime," and "Gang Member."* Retrieved at <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Content/Documents/Definitions.pdf> (accessed May 23, 2014).
- National Gang Intelligence Center (2011) *National Gang Threat Assessment: Emerging Trends*. Federal Bureau of Investigation, USA.
- Navarro, P (2012) America's Best Jobs Program? Trade Reform with China. Retrieved at www.csmonitor.com/Business/new-economy (accessed January 13, 2013).
- Nightingale, CH (1993) *On the Edge: A History of Poor Black Children and Their American Dreams*. New York: Basic Books.
- Nonni, D (2007) American Neoliberalism, 'Globalization,' and Violence: Reflections from the United States and Southeast Asia. In Friedman, J (ed) *Globalization, the State, and Violence*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc.
- Norberg, J, Tanner, R, and Sanchez, J (2003) *In Defense of Global Capitalism*. Washington D.C.: Cato Institute.
- Olds, J and Schwartz, R (2010) *The Lonely American*, Boston: Beacon Press.
- Passavant, P (2005) The Strong Neoliberal State: Crime, Consumption, Governance, *Theory and Event* 8(3): n/p.
- Parker, K (2008) *Unequal Crime Decline*. New York: NYU Press.
- Phillips K (2009) *Bad Money*. New York Penguin Books.
- Pitts, J (2007) Americanization, the Third Way, and the Racialization of Youth Crime and Disorder. In: Hagedorn, J (Ed) *Gangs in the Global City: Alternative to Traditional Criminology*. Urbana: University of Chicago Press.
- Potter, CB (1998) *War on Crime*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Quiggin, J (2010) *Zombie Economics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Saad, L (2011) Most Americans Believe Crime is Worsening. Available at: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/150464/Americans-Believe-Crime-Worsening.aspx> (accessed February 16, 2014).
- Sánchez-Jankowski, M (1991) *Islands in the Street: Gangs and American Urban Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sassen, S (1998) *Globalization and its Discontents*. New York: The New Press.
- _____ Global City: One Setting for New Types of Gang Work and Political Culture? In: Hagedorn, J (Ed) *Gangs in the Global City: Alternative to Traditional Criminology*. Urbana: University of Chicago Press.

-
- Shalhoup, M (2010) *BMF: The Rise and Fall of Big Meech and the Black Mafia Family*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin.
- Shelden, R, Tracy, S, and Brown, W (2001) *Youth Gangs in American Society*. Stamford: Wadsworth.
- Sowell, T (1984) *Civil Rights: Rhetoric or Reality?* New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc.
- Spergel, I (1997) *Youth Gang Problem*. Cary, NC: Oxford University Press.
- Sullivan, J (2001) Gangs, Hooligans, and Anarchists. In: Arguilla, J and Ronfeldt, D (Eds) *Networks and Netwar: the Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy*. Santa Monica: RAND.
- Swift, R (2011) *Gangs*. Toronto: Greenwood Books.
- Taylor, C (1990) *Dangerous Society*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.
- Tracy, J (2013) Plutocracy, Poverty, and Prosperity. In: Huff, M et al. (eds) *Censored 2014*. New York: Seven Stories Press.
- Thrasher, F (1927/1913) *The Gang*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Turkle, S (2012) *Alone Together*, Philadelphia: Basic Books.
- U.S. Department of Justice (2008) *Attorney General's Report to Congress on the Growth of Violent Street Gangs in Suburban Areas*. Retrieved from <http://www.justice.gov/archive/ndic/pubs27/27612/national.htm#start> (accessed February 18, 2014).
- U.S. Department of Justice (2011) *Correctional Population in the United States, 2010*. Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- U.S. House Committee on Criminal Justice, Drug Police, and Human Resources (2006) *Gangs, Fraud and Sexual Predators: Struggling with the Consequences of Illegal Immigration*. 109th Congress, Second Session.
- U.S. House Committee on International Relations (2005) *Gangs and Crime in Latin America*. 109th Congress, First Session.
- U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary (1988) *Organized Criminal Activity by Youth Gangs*. 100th Congress, Second Session.
- U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary (1997) *Gangs: A National Crisis*. 105th Congress, First Session.
- Wacquant, L (2008) *Urban Outcasts*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Wilson, JQ (1985) *Thinking about Crime*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Wilson, JQ and Herrnstein, R (1985) *Crime and Human Nature*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Wilson, JQ (1994) What to Do About Crime. *Commentary*. Retrieved at <http://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/what-to-do-about-crime/> (accessed January 13, 2013).
- Wilson, WJ (1997) *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Young, J (2007) Globalization and Social Exclusion: The Sociology of Vindictiveness and the Criminology of Transgression. In: Hagedorn, J (ed) *Gangs in the Global City: Alternative to Traditional Criminology*. Urbana: University of Chicago Press.

Zatz, M (1987) Chicano Youth Gangs and Crime: The Creation of a Moral Panic, *Contemporary Crises*, 11(2), 129-158.

Žižek, S (1989) *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London: Verso.

_____ (2006) *How to Read Lacan*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

_____ (2009) *The Ticklish Subject*. London: Verso.

Žižek, S, Butler, J, and Laclau E (2000) *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*. London: Verso.