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## Fight the Dead, Fear the Living: Post-Apocalyptic Narratives of Fear, Governance and Social Control

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**Fight the Dead, Fear the Living:  
Post-Apocalyptic Narratives of Fear, Governance and Social Control**

Samantha Kolpin

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### Abstract

Post-apocalyptic narratives and themes have become increasingly popular in film, television and graphic novels. By imagining a society without the state, post-apocalyptic narratives are able to explore concerns about current forms of governance and social control. The post-apocalyptic narrative is particularly relevant in a post-9/11 society where public concerns about security and governance are prominent. In this study, I examined the potential allegorical function of the zombie narrative found in Robert Kirkman's *The Walking Dead*. Specifically, this project involves an ethnographic content analysis of issues 1-100 of *The Walking Dead* graphic novel series. Analysis focused on the allegorical purposes of the zombie in relation to neoliberal governance, Agamben's state of exception, security and surveillance, and biopower/biopolitics. Utilizing the concept of the 'hall of mirrors', to extend the ambivalence reflected in this study to the general feelings of members of society, this study suggests that the population may struggle with a somewhat complicated and ambiguous relationship with strategies utilized under a neoliberal style of governance.

Fight the Dead, Fear the Living: Post-Apocalyptic Narratives of Fear, Governance and  
Social Control

Chapter 1

*Introduction*

Since 9/11, there have been an increasing number of stories in film, television, and literature that utilize a post-apocalyptic narrative (Markert, 2011; Wallis & Aston, 2011). In general, the narrative structure of post-apocalyptic fiction depicts a world in which government and military systems have largely been exterminated, leaving small groups of survivors to function in a society that is lacking laws or forms of formal social control. One could argue that recurrent themes observed in certain genres of popular culture serve an allegorical function. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines allegory as “the expression by means of symbolic fictional figures and actions of truths or generalizations about human existence” (Allegory, 2013, n.p.). Lowenstein (2005) has argued that genre films, such as horror, are rich in allegory and contain what he refers to as an “allegorical moment” or themes and symbols that embody cultural concerns about historical trauma. For example, Poole (2011) discusses how movies featuring demonic children and issues of reproduction and the womb (*Rosemary’s Baby*, *The Exorcist*) were released in the time period surrounding the U.S. Supreme Court *Roe v. Wade* decision, when anxieties and concerns surrounding women’s reproduction and the right to abortion were at the forefront in society. By imagining a society without formalized government agencies, post-apocalyptic narratives may offer comments on or express concerns about current forms of governance and social control. This trend may be particularly relevant in a post-9/11 society, as concerns of security and governance become more important to citizens under a neoliberal style of government.

Scholars have frequently discussed the allegorical role of zombies in popular culture (Bishop, 2009; Poole, 2011). For example, it has been noted that George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) represented much of the underlying tensions and anxieties surrounding racism and the Vietnam War (Bishop, 2009; Christie, 2011). In post 9/11 culture, there has arguably been a resurgence in the popularity of zombie media. Events such as 9/11, the subsequent enactment of the *Patriots Act* and the more recent Boston Marathon bombing demonstrate a variety of issues concerning terrorism, governance, and security. For example, after the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing incident, security for both events, such as the funeral of Margaret Thatcher, and particular locations, such as the Washington, D.C. subway station were tightened (Dodds, 2013). Security fears have recently been paralleled by concerns about the income gap and marginalization following the 2008 financial crisis, as demonstrated through large scale protests such as Occupy Wall Street. After a year of protest, little was accomplished by the movement (Sorkin, 2012). Despite global concerns about income inequality, the median salary of American CEOs rose to above ten million dollars in 2013 (Sweet, 2014). The fact that these fears and concerns have been largely ignored could help to explain the resurgence in zombie media, as this medium has been used as a mirror to reflect these collective fears and anxieties in the past.

The most recent example of the popularity of the zombie figure in popular culture is *The Walking Dead* franchise. *The Walking Dead*, an ongoing graphic novel series and television show is a recent entry among zombie media representations and has attracted a wide audience. The Season 3 finale of the TV series attracted 12.4 million viewers, ('The Walking Dead' Ratings for Season 3 Finale Sets Series Record, 2013), while the one hundredth issue of the graphic novel series sold 375 000 copies on the day of release (Couch, 2012). Both the graphic

novels and television show depict a post-apocalyptic world in which zombies, referred to as ‘Walkers’ in the novels, have decimated our society. All forms of government and formal social control have disappeared. The story of *The Walking Dead* focuses on the efforts of a small group of survivors to re-build society and protect themselves from the ongoing threats posed not only by zombies but lawless factions of humanity.

The potential allegorical function of various media in popular culture, particularly the zombie narrative found in *The Walking Dead*, has important implications for better understanding how individuals in society feel about matters concerning government, security and surveillance. Although the role of the zombie in popular culture may reflect current cultural anxieties, as suggested by authors such as Poole (2010), it is important to determine whether these narratives legitimize or offer criticisms of the anxieties they are reflecting. For example, Groombridge (2002) has discussed on the use of CCTV cameras in television ‘reality’ shows. Specifically, he used the example of the fictional 2001 novel *Dead Famous* by Ben Elton, which adopts a storyline similar to the reality television series *Big Brother*. In the novel, viewers of the fictionalized televised reality show are able to report a murder to the police because there have been CCTV cameras placed inside the reality show set. This could serve to demonstrate how popular media may service to legitimize certain government practices, including surveillance.

Despite the popularity of the *The Walking Dead* novels, little formal research has been conducted concerning the cultural narratives they reflect. The overall purpose of this study was to conduct an ethnographic content analysis of *The Walking Dead* graphic novels to examine the cultural narratives they present concerning law, governance, and regulation and social control and whether these narratives legitimize or offer subversive criticisms.

## Chapter 2

### *Theoretical Background and Literature Review*

This chapter will consider the theoretical framework and concepts relevant to the study. I will first look at previous research and definitions of neoliberalism. I will then consider biopolitics and governing through fear, particularly focusing on Agamben's *Homo Sacer* and *State of Exception*. I then discuss research on neoliberal crime control, punishment, and securitization. Next, I will discuss how zombies are represented in popular culture. I will discuss the application of cultural criminology and the constructions of crime and justice in popular culture, followed by an overarching summary of zombie narratives.

#### *Neoliberalism*

In researching how government is presented in fictional media, it is necessary to first understand how issues of governance and security have been altered since 9/11. Although neoliberalism has been active in Western culture since the 1970s, concerns surrounding issues of surveillance and security have accelerated since 9/11. Neoliberalism is a form of governance characterized by an increased importance of corporate and private sector culture – a “market society” – wherein individual responsibility, consumerism, rational choice, and private ownership are emphasized (Giroux, 2004). Individuals are stratified based on their abilities to participate in capital accumulation, with a focus on abilities, capabilities, and intelligence (Ren, 2005). Another aspect of neoliberalism, referred to as ‘economic dominance’ by Rosenfeld and Messner (2007), refers to a situation where the functions of non-economic institutions (such as the family and education) become characterized and valued by economic norms.

In Canada, neoliberal policies were first adopted as an alternative method of re-organizing the political landscape of the late 1970s when Canadian corporations lobbied the

government to reduce restrictions on business. This was to allow these corporations to compete with the US and the larger global economy, both of which were quickly moving towards state models that provided tax breaks and incentives to corporations through the cutting of social programs and services (Maki, 2011). Bell (2011) states that neoliberalism focuses on a return to minimal state intervention where the state has been transformed from a provider of public services to a facilitator of market solutions. This increased importance attributed to market needs corresponds with a decreased emphasis on public sector.

Specifically, neoliberal governments pursue policies aimed at deregulating government control of economic interests and increasing the privatization of traditionally public social services. According to Giroux (2004), under neoliberal policies “the rich get tax handouts and corporate relief while the most basic health care services for children, elderly are cut or dramatically reduced” (p. 4). While neoliberal states emphasize deregulation in economic spheres, it is argued that they conversely increase regulations in public spheres to maximize individual opportunities to participate unrestrained in a consumer-based culture. Power is created among a chain of actors, rather than relying on any sort of power imposed by one overarching figure (Garland, 1997). Deukmedjian (2013) argues that neoliberalism reflects free market politics, which allows for the security and freedoms afforded to individuals to relate more to market demands than to the success or failure of any business. According to Giroux (2004), there is a decreased interest in providing social security for the larger population and an increased interest in providing economic security to facilitate those individuals who are rational, free-thinking and willing and able to participate in a market society (Bell, 2011; Giroux, 2004).

Based on these features, many critics have argued that neoliberalism is marked by a commitment to social inequality, which results in a permanent underclass. The focus is on

ensuring a low cost of public services and a market model, leaving little room to provide social security for those in the lower classes of society. People who are unable or unwilling to participate in capital accumulation are seen as deviant. As such, neoliberal policy focuses on policing or regulating these individuals (Brown, 2006; Maki, 2011). Maki (2011) considers the rule of neoliberalism and surveillance techniques for welfare recipients under Ontario Works. In order to justify the use of widespread welfare surveillance during the 1990s, neoliberal policy emphasized that the widespread stereotypes of assumed criminality and fraud amongst welfare recipients demanded a more punitive and regulatory system to monitor potential recipients. Other key arguments included the desire to reduce and control welfare caseloads (and costs) to ensure accountability to taxpayers, and the privatization of social services to create an efficient centralized system that had the potential to offload some of the state's responsibility for the poor onto the private market. Maki (2011) claims that welfare surveillance acts as a direct assault on the poor in the service of a neoliberal state. Surveillance becomes a “calculated practice for managing and manipulating human behaviour” (Henman, 2004, p. 176). The goal with these surveillance techniques is to minimize the number of people on welfare, thereby forcing individuals to participate in the market culture and acquire paid labour employment as a means of survival.

*Governmentality, Biopolitics, and Governing through Fear*

It can be suggested that a neoliberal style of government leads to a particular focus on governmentality, biopolitics/biopower, and governing through fear. Foucault (1998) defines biopower as “the subjugation of bodies and ...control of populations” (pg. 93). According to Foucault, biopower allows the power of the state to enter multiple institutions and social fields as a means of managing and controlling the population (De Larrinage & Doucey, 2008). For

example, Amoore (2006) discusses how the use of biometrics through the US VISIT program (a management program that collects and analyzes biometric data as a means of tracking individuals) demonstrates the extent of government regulatory powers as a means of protecting and ensuring life. Essentially, the concept of biopower refers to the ability to manage the health of the population by determining which individuals are able to access the health resources that greatly contribute to their chances of survival. This is linked to the concept of governmentality, the notion that governmental power is decentralized and spread throughout government institutions. Giroux (2006) describes how biopower works in the United States to render some groups disposable and privilege others within a permanent state of emergency. Similar trends can be seen in Canadian government. Canavan (2011) discusses how census data collected by Statistics Canada can be used to help determine funding models for health agencies, post-secondary academic programs or immigration policies, thereby influencing who could legally enter Canada or gain access to health care and education for Canadian residents. Biopower retains its sovereign power to harm and to kill through the identification, monitoring, and regulations of certain individuals based on bio-information (Canavan, 2011).

As previously discussed, the role of the state under a neoliberal model of governance is to facilitate the financial pursuits of willing and able participants in society through the regulation of the social sphere (Giroux, 2006). The role of government is de-emphasized in the provision of what has been traditionally construed as public services such as education, health, welfare, and security. Giroux described this policy shift as a series of efforts designed to reduce or entirely eliminate the welfare state. To facilitate the activities of those individuals able to participate in a market economy, Giroux (2006) explains that neoliberal states seek to enact regulations designed to control, remove, or make invisible those individuals and/or groups who negatively impact on

the free market. For example, Deukmedjian (2013) explains how crime statistics are used to identify “at risk” populations that are then used to justify the strategic deployment of surveillance practices, resulting in increased social control and management of certain groups in society.

Foucault’s notion of ‘biopolitics’ is evident through governmental ability to facilitate the survival and economic success of some groups, while identifying and regulating at-risk groups who cannot or will not participate in a free market economy. This concept has been studied extensively and has grown to include work by other scholars considering the activities of a neoliberal government using fear as a means of control. Giorgio Agamben (1995, 2005) has written extensively on the role of government power and biopolitics and provides further insight into the role of government in facilitating the activities of the privileged minority in neoliberal states. In *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Agamben (1995) describes the *homo sacer*, or the sacred man, as a representation of the minimum or barest form of life that can be killed by the state. Death camps, refugee camps, and Guantanamo Bay serve as illustrations of *homo sacer* wherein individuals have been stripped of all rights and political standing, resulting in a form of ‘bare life.’ By maintaining the ability to suspend the law, governments are allowed the ability to keep certain lives in suspension as well. Diken (2010) discusses how a refugee is transformed into ‘Homo Sacer’ as a social ‘zombie’ whose symbolic capital (the honour or prestige afforded to an individual) does not count. S/he is placed in a condition of ‘social nakedness’ that is characterized by a lack of social definition, rights and responsibilities. Bare life allows for a *homo sacer* to be placed in the ‘zone of indistinction’ (Diken & Laustsen, 2005, p. 291), which places it somewhere between life afforded to humans and natural life afforded to animals.

The administration of Agamben's 'bare life' has resulted in the concept of the 'state of exception' (2005) in which governments increase social controls and regulations over the population citing heightened tensions of fears regarding defined threats. Agamben argues that within this 'state of exception' some groups become privileged while others are rendered disposable. Giroux (2006) states that Agamben's theories alert the population to the dangers of a government in which the state of emergency becomes the fundamental structure of control over populations. These 'states of exception', as observed in the United States result in the suspension of certain freedoms (e.g., *US Patriot Act*) in what the state defines as necessary for protecting citizens. Hallsworth and Lea (2011) have utilized the concept of the state of exception to demonstrate how governments justify the use of coercive and violent state actions in the name of control and security.

*Neoliberal Crime Control, Punishment and Securitization*

One consequence of the decreased regulation of private sector interests and increased regulation of the public sphere in neoliberal states has been an increasing focus on crime control and securitization. In the context of this study, securitization refers to how a certain element in society is transformed into a matter of security and/or militarization as a means to solve a problem, such as the securitization of schools through metal detectors, pat-downs, and police officers on site. Crime control refers to how a society chooses to dissuade and/or punish criminal behaviour (Gilling, 2010). Simon (2007) discusses how neoliberal governments needed to carve out new roles for themselves after the collapse in the New Deal approach (focusing on relief after the Great Depression) to government. This led to the reframing of social problems, such as school discipline and welfare, as crime problems. In addition, Bell (2011) points to the increased militarization of schools in America through the introduction of surveillance tools, metal

detectors, and the incorporation of criminal justice-based ‘zero-tolerance’ policies as illustrations of this neoliberal approach to crime control. He also discusses the role of the privatization of public space, claiming that the free reign of private businesses has played a role in the shaping of urban crime policies that ensure that any behaviour seen as a possible threat to economic prosperity could be targeted by criminal law. Simon (2007) discusses welfare reform laws and suggests that more stringent conditions have led to the policing of poverty and welfare. He refers to these ‘workfare’ laws as examples of attempts by neoliberal governments to control marginalized populations unwilling or unable to participate in the market economy.

In order to criminalize certain groups, the state needs to legitimize their actions. This can be accomplished by creating normative attachment in its citizens. Van Houdt and Schinkel (2014) use the concept of ‘neoliberal communitarianism’, which focuses on individual responsibility, community, and the implementation of a ‘tough state’. In order for this to be implemented, citizens must display a normative attachment to neoliberal rationality, the values of law and order, risk identification, management, and the maintenance of communication networks between state and non-state actors. Non-actors become necessary in controlling crime at a community level. In order to do so, a strong sense of community values must be instilled in non-state actors. Van Houdt and Schinkel (2014) refer to these participating non-state actors as ‘active individuals’, as they control crime at a local level. Furthermore, O’Malley and Palmer (1996) state that individuals who participate in crime control increase police accountability through learning crime prevention skills. Individuals who rely completely on government for protection and crime control create a heightened level of risk and victimization for themselves. Therefore, communities with active individuals working together to prevent crime are seen as ideal.

An important aspect of neoliberalism and biopolitics is the increased use of statistics and the growing use of risk management as a response to the crime problem. Garland (1997) argues that the increased use of statistics and actuarial reasoning leads to an increased focus on risk management. In other words, statistical knowledge facilitates knowledge of how we conceptualize or understand risk. Surveillance allows for increased identification of certain subgroups, allowing them to be labeled as “high-risk” and subsequently managed through preventative crime measures. Lyon (2007) defines surveillance as the “focused, systematic and routine attention to personal details for purposes of influence, management, protection or direction” (p. 14). One aspect of surveillance that is important to a discussion of neoliberal crime control and securitization is the idea that not all people in a given society are monitored in the same way or for the same reasons according to Lyon (2004) and Haggerty and Ericson (2006). Certain subsets of the population are considered to be in need of more extreme surveillance than others, leading to an increased militarization of certain members in society. Funds and effort are allocated to this cause as means of declaring a ‘political war’ of sorts to ensure that surveillance measures are met. Amoore (2006) discusses the US VISIT program, which uses information technology to allow the US Department of Homeland Security to engage in ‘dataveillance’ to calculate the risk factors of travellers. At the time of writing, Bill C-13 has been proposed in the Canadian House of Commons as a means of combating cyberbullying (Mas, 2014). This bill would also allow Canadian government to obtain information from internet providers concerning customers without a warrant. This bill is presented as a means of safety, but in reality it allows government systems the possibility of “overreaching surveillance powers” (Mas, 2014, n.p.).

Penna and Kirby (2009) identify the use of bio-information, such as genetics or psychiatry, as a means of regulating ‘at risk’ individuals or groups. They cite the *2004 Children*

*Act* (UK) and the *Human Tissue Act* (2004) as examples of regulatory frameworks adopted by the British government that provide for the identification, management, and surveillance of children. The *Human Tissue Act* provided a regulatory framework to govern the use of genetic materials, but exempts police, intelligence agencies, and some commercial research companies from regulations regarding the retention of human tissue samples and their DNA analysis. The increase in the forensic use of bioinformation has led to what Rose (2007) describes as “a new molecular biopolitics of control,” which refers to developments in the US in the 1990s that led to genetically-based explanations of violence, leading to controversial initiatives aimed at identifying ‘at risk’ children with a view to develop pre-emptive intervention strategies. This demonstrates another means of controlling the population through biopolitics; governments are able to access information that can be used to regulate the population from a medical standpoint.

Garland (1997) has described the economic forms of reasoning that underlie neoliberalism as a form of economic rationality. This economic rationality, according to Garland, extends to neoliberal approaches to crime control and punishment. The emergence of neoliberalism coincided with the re-emergence of conservative criminological theories in the 1970s – rational choice theory, routine activities theory – that viewed crime as a normal or routine phenomenon that could be predicted and statistically modelled. Garland argues that the state has increasingly focused on governing criminogenic situations through such mechanisms as increasing public fear of crime and promoting a culture of security and surveillance rather than targeting the individual or group with criminal justice policy. The goal is to ensure that citizens believe and support the authorities in their methods of security and crime control. Lyons (2006) discusses the concept of social sorting, which allows for the discrimination of individuals based on the likelihood of risks associated with them, utilized by the Advanced Passenger

Information/Passenger Name Record Program. This program requires commercial airlines to provide Citizenship and Immigration Canada with passenger and crew information, producing coded categories by which persons can be sorted.

Another aspect of crime control is the production and maintenance of fear. Foucault (1979) saw power as spread across various governmental and social institutions, rather than one overarching sovereign power. According to Foucault, with power spread so diffusely, the production and maintenance of fear becomes crucial to social control. The terror dispositifs (“anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine...or secure the gestures, opinions or discourses of living beings” – Agamben, 2009, p. 14) the government utilizes ensures that citizens are actively participating in the maintenance of these regimes of governance. Due to the fear produced by governmental bodies, members of a society must engage in routines of self-checking and self-regulation to ensure their safety (Debrix & Barder, 2009).

In summary, neoliberalism is a form of governance characterized by an increased importance of corporate and private sector culture – a “market society” – wherein individual responsibility, consumerism, rational choice, and private ownership are emphasized (Giroux, 2004). This style of government leads to a particular focus on governmentality, biopolitics/biopower, and governing through fear, as power is spread throughout various government institutions. This leads to the increased use of risk management as a means of responding to the crime problem. The purpose of this study was to determine how the cultural narratives found in *The Walking Dead* present concerns of law, governance, regulation and social control, and whether these narratives offered criticisms of legitimization of a neoliberal style of governance.

*Zombies in Popular Culture**Cultural Criminology and Constructions of Crime and Justice*

As a means of studying the representation and the meaning of zombies in popular culture and how they reflect societal attitudes and fears in reality, cultural criminology offers a relevant theoretical lens. According to Ferrell (2007), cultural criminology “explain[s] the collective construction of structure and power, helping us to understand the ways in which structures of social life are maintained and given shared meanings, and the ways in which power is exercised, portrayed and resisted” (pg. 97). It is a theoretical approach that considers crime and deviance and their societal responses within the context of culture. It focuses on meaning and interaction. With the rise of cultural criminology, criminologists have increasingly begun to consider how the criminal justice system is represented in popular media and how this contributes to public support for, understandings of, and responses to various crime and justice issues. For example, Epstein (1995) discusses the effect of a cultural obsession with serial killers and how this affects the police pursuit of these killers in reality. The familiar context of the serial killer as a being with supernatural or superhuman powers has in some cases (such as the release of the Yorkshire Ripper in 1981 because he did not match media-created profiles of Jack the Ripper) initially led police to release serial killers because they did not match the supernatural persona created in the fictional media (Epstein, 1995).

Cochran (2006) claims that the investigation into the DC sniper in 2002 was hindered by a serial killer profile that had developed through the media’s obsession with serial killers. Media obsessions encouraged police to focus on the lonely white male stereotype, speculating that a single white male had been committing the acts. Ultimately, this was false and hindered the investigation. Media representations not only shape the actions of the criminal justice system,

influence also happens in the opposite direction such as that ‘reality’ gets reflected through fictional representations.

Phillips and Strobl (2006) make the case that fictional media, including comic books, provide an alternate social reality that mirrors broader society. Fictional media also provide a vehicle for viewers of fictional media to vicariously experience the moral and philosophical questions inspired by themes in criminal justice. Phillips and Strobl’s (2006) research indicates the importance of examining fictional media as a means of reflecting cultural anxieties concerning safety and security. Considering that zombie fiction largely concerns issues of government and security, this type of media is critical in understanding how societal anxieties and concerns are reflected in popular media.

Cultural criminology considers popular culture from an array of perspectives looking at image, meaning, and representation as part of its study of crime and crime control (Ferrell, 1999). It operates from a postmodern proposition that “form is content, that style is substance, that meaning thus resides in presentation and re-representation” (Ferrell, 1999, p. 397). Within this framework, cultural criminology considers the role of the ‘Hall of Mirrors’, where images that are created and consumed in society (criminals, media institutions, audiences, etc.) continuously bounce off one another. In the Hall of Mirrors, cultural fluidity prevents distinctions between an event and its representation. Ferrell, Hayward and Young (2008) suggest that the reality of crime and criminal justice is confounded with its representation as seen in the media and in popular culture. As an example, American jurors expect that evidence presented in criminal court will match what is presented in fictionalized law-related TV shows, leading to the ‘CSI effect’ where they rely too heavily on scientific findings and do not account for human

error (Ferrell, Hayward & Young, 2008). Here, reality and representation merge and reflect one another.

Ferrell (1999) considers the notion of ‘culture as crime’ where the targets of criminalization are cultural in nature. When personas and performances are criminalized, it is primarily done through the mass media as their presentation and re-presentation are demonstrated through sound bites, images and headlines. This leads to a mediated spiral in which media-produced culture forms are criminalized by means of the media, leading to the Hall of Mirrors where images continue to bounce off one another. The Hall of Mirrors generates images of images, leading society to craft criminalized images of those previously created by those in popular culture. It is evident that media dynamics define the criminalization of popular culture (Ferrell, 1999). Zombie media frequently display images of government, which acts as a reflection of current government and social control policies. In the Hall of Mirrors, these images both reflect *and* shape the realities of government, leading to a ‘blurring of the lines’ between what viewers see as fictional representation and actual government policy. This makes a study of how government and societal concerns are reflected in zombie media a worthwhile pursuit, as fictional representations have the ability to shape images of criminal and governmental activities in reality for the general public.

In conducting a study of fictional media, it is important to consider whether the themes and messages being offered are generally critical or supportive of what is being represented. This is particularly vital when considering representations of government and law in a post-9/11, globalized society, as fictionalized representations could have the ability to shape viewers’ opinions of government and law in reality. For example, Erickson (2007) examined eight fictional American cultural representations of terrorism and counter-terrorism. He identified two

prevalent themes - subversion and legitimization. Erickson (2007) observed that some aspects of the narratives of the cultural representations offered criticisms of the 'war on terror' and other aspects of the counter-terrorism efforts in the US. For example, in *The Matrix* and *The X-Files*, dissent is sometimes necessary in counter-terrorist investigations. In looking at themes of invasion and occupation, Erickson (2007) considers *Battlestar Galactica*, where humans are polarized into a resistance network to disrupt alien forces. These representations are informed by the American occupation of Iraq, depicting the harshness of interrogation and torture. In considering themes of legitimization in post 9/11 media representations, Erickson (2007) addresses how *Alias* actress Jennifer Garner was utilized in CIA recruitment videos. This utilization shows a clear blurring between the actual 'War on Terror' and the image presented in fictionalized media. Therefore, some aspects of these cultural representations legitimize the 'war on terror'. The themes that Erickson (2007) determined represent how popular culture can reflect opinions of current power structures in a neoliberal society; there are elements that offer both criticism and legitimization of the war on terror.

### *Zombie Narratives in Popular Culture*

The meaning and general definition of the zombie has changed drastically in the last eighty years. For the purposes of this study, a zombie refers to a deceased human body that has returned to life without any noticeable personality, memories, or rational thought. Consistent with Ferrell's (1999) concept of the Hall of Mirrors, many scholars have argued that the frequently changing portrayals of zombies reflect changes in societal concerns and anxieties. According to Bishop (2009), through almost seventy-five years of film evolution zombie media can be understood as tracking a range of cultural, political and economic anxieties in North America. This ranges from the worker-bee zombie of 1932's *White Zombie*, to the slow,

shuffling zombie in need of human flesh found in the works of George A. Romero, and later to the speedy, virus-induced rage zombie of *28 Days Later*.

The zombies appearing in *White Zombie* were borrowed from the religious rites of the African Atlantic and its folklore about shamans that had the ability to transform corpses into undead servants (Poole, 2011). Other scholars (Bishop, 2010) view *White Zombie* as a critique on American colonialism in Haiti. The representation of the Haitian zombie's connection to slavery is emphasized by a scene where a zombie worker falls into the gears of a machine, only to be completely ignored and disregarded by its fellow zombie workers. With the introduction of *Night of the Living Dead*, Romero transformed zombies into undead creatures in various states of decay, driven by the hunger for human flesh. In this landmark film, zombies could turn more humans into zombies with simply a bite, which introduces the idea that the human race in its entirety could be transformed into zombies (Poole, 2011). In some of the most recent, post 9/11 zombie media representations, zombies have been conceptualized as terrifying, sprinting creatures infected with a virus that is reminiscent of a form of rabies (Birch-Bayley, 2012; Bishop, 2010). In a video response for the Council of Ontario Universities Curiosity Shop, Ironstone (2014) discusses the fear of emerging infectious diseases, why people should feel concerned about previously unknown microbes, and the possibility of the "devolution of humanity" (Ironstone, 2014, n.p.). By presenting the zombie virus as a mutation originated from animal experimentation or unknown microbes with an easy means of transferring the 'virus', zombies are shown as something that could logically happen in reality, making zombie fears that much more prevalent and realistic (Bishop, 2009).

Scholars have discussed the various meanings that are present in zombie media, in an attempt to determine how broad cultural themes and social anxieties are represented. Beginning

with Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*, scholars have described how the film represents fears and anxieties concerning racism and the Vietnam War. The final scene depicts the body of the hero of the film (an African-American character) being thrown onto a fire along with the body of the zombie chasing the female lead in the opening scenes of the film. This represents error in judgement, flawed logic, and inhumane capabilities concerning race and racism in America during the 1960s (Christie, 2011). The Romero film *Dawn of the Dead* has been extensively studied for its comments on consumerism. Harper (2002) discusses the cultural fascination with shopping centres in First World countries. Throughout the film the characters engage themselves in parodies of consumerism as they seek shelter from a zombie horde in a mall. Throughout the film, zombies are continuously drawn to the mall, prompting the characters to draw parallels between the behaviour of the shuffling, one-track-minded zombies and their own consumerist-based behaviours. The film encourages viewers to reconsider their own relationship with consumerism and the value they place on consumer goods (Harper, 2002).

Other scholars have drawn comparisons between zombies in popular culture and concerns surrounding immigration policies and general xenophobia. These concerns about immigration and displaced people can be related back to Agamben's (1995) *homo sacer*, or the sacred man. Zombies are held in suspension as the barest form of life, where social power is no longer apparent or necessary. Zombies and immigrants/refugees can both be viewed as *homo sacer*, as both are deemed to be of little value to the state and can therefore be eliminated as necessary. Stratton (2011) discusses the connection between zombies and displaced people, stating that terminology used to describe zombie threats are similar to the type used to describe refugees and asylum-seekers. He discusses the Romero film *Land of the Dead* as a metaphor for the fear of illegal immigrants that threaten American society. Generally, other scholars have seen

this film as a critique of American foreign policy (Bishop, 2009) and capitalism in America (Paffenroth, 2010; 2011).

Arguably, millennial zombie media representations have continued the trend of reflecting cultural and social anxieties. According to Cameron (2012), there is a connection between the zombies and mass media, as viewed in films like *Diary of the Dead*. The film demonstrates how the speed of information sharing in the 'digital age' is similar to that of the spread of a zombie virus. Both the spread of information and a zombie virus have the capability of spiraling out of control. Keetley (2012) discusses both *Diary of the Dead* and the Stephen King novel *Cell*, looking at their portrayal of the demise of humanity through the use of technology. For example, the article discusses how the 'phoners' in the King novel come to represent the loss of control in a networked environment, and the resultant connection between a collective mind (mob mentality) and violence. According to Keetley, the zombies in both cultural representations act as a metaphor for the viral nature of recent products of human technology.

To date, several authors have considered the role of post-9/11 zombie representations and how they reflect cultural fears and anxiety concerning globalization and government. Birch-Bayley (2012) has elaborated on how post-9/11 zombie representations, particularly *28 Days Later* and its sequel, *28 Weeks Later*, reflect the crisis mentality of Western culture where citizens are always lying in wait of a terrorist attack or pandemic. After the 9/11 attacks, citizens became more aware of the threat of terrorism, especially with the addition of panic-based news reports. As such, Birch-Bayley suggests that individuals are developing a terrorism-based consciousness where they are hypervigilant about potential terrorist attacks. Similarly, Bishop (2009) has identified a connection between zombie cinema and a post-9/11 cultural consciousness. The after-effects of war, terrorism and natural disasters resemble scenarios seen

in zombie cinema, with emphasis on the various scenes in *28 Days Later* and its similarities and inspiration from the Rwandan genocide and other devastating events. The role of the military in both *28* films can also be seen as representative of a general distrust of the military and government, as the military becomes the primary enemy and is displayed as being incapable of handling a global crisis (Bishop, 2010). Froula (2010) similarly discusses how zombie films represent the ramifications of US foreign policies, particularly in the Middle East. The article discusses how a response to threat is as dramatic (or more so) than the original threat itself, and the consequences of empire and war in the age of globalization.

In considering different representations of zombie media, *The Walking Dead* graphic novels have rarely been considered in academic research. *The Walking Dead* has emerged in recent years as a popular culture phenomenon. The first graphic novel of the series was published in 2003, and has continued to spawn video games, other publications and a highly rated television series shown on The American Movie Channel. The AMC series has proven to be unsurpassable in terms of ratings and viewership at the time of writing, with the season 3 finale attracting 12.4 million viewers, 8.8 million of which were in the 18 to 49 age demographic ('The Walking Dead' Ratings for Season 3 Finale Sets Series Record, 2013). While graphic novels do not reach similar levels of circulation as television show, *The Walking Dead* has broken barriers and records in the print media industry as well. In July 2012, the 100<sup>th</sup> issue of the series was released, selling 375 000 copies on the day of release. This makes the 100<sup>th</sup> issue the best-selling graphic novel/comic book of the twenty-first century to date (Couch, 2012). This demonstrates the extreme popularity of *The Walking Dead*, making it a prime candidate for criminological and sociological study in order to determine what societal values and attitudes are reflected.

While there has been extensive research done on zombie media, the vast majority has focused on George A. Romero's zombie films, leaving a large portion of zombie culture untapped. Although Canavan (2011) has considered *The Walking Dead* graphic novels, he focused primarily on the role that the zombies play in the zombie apocalypse as anti-life and how that relates to biopower. Other scholars (Froula, 2010; Birch-Bayley, 2012) suggest that the role of the survivors in the zombie apocalypse is vital in understanding societal anxieties and fears that are currently being played out in a post-9/11, globalized society. The results of these studies suggested that more research was needed on zombie media to promote further understanding of these anxieties under the control of a neoliberal government. It was important to determine whether zombie media representations (and in particular, *The Walking Dead* graphic novels) serve as a means of reinforcing neoliberal governmental control or act as a critique of this form of governing. Zombie media representations continue to gain popularity, demonstrating a need to further study them to determine what allegorical purposes they serve, and to allow for a better understanding of societal beliefs and reactions to current issues in government, law and social control. The impact of 9/11 on views on government and social control can be seen in representations of law and order in fictional media representations due to the effect of cultural criminology's Hall of Mirrors. Images in fiction and in reality continue to bounce off each other, reinforcing and shaping public opinion. The central question of this research is whether these fictional representations serve to critique and/or support current styles of government and forms of control.

### *Summary*

According to Phillips and Strobl (2006) and other scholars (Bishop, 2009; Poole, 2011), fictional media is often utilized as a means of reflecting broad issues in crime and criminal

justice seen in reality. Cultural Criminology has emerged as a criminological lens for examining the images, meaning and representation in fictional and mass media as a way of reflecting broader cultural issues. Ferrell's notion of the Hall of Mirrors (1999) claims that images of crime and social control bounce off one another in media, helping to frame opinions and views of the public. As a means of considering whether fictional media representations act as a criticism or positive reflection of government, Erickson (2012), for instance, has observed the role of themes of subversion and legitimization in post 9/11 media representations, demonstrating how popular culture reflects current power structures in a neoliberal society. Across their roughly 80 year history, zombie narratives have been observed to shift and change, reflecting historical sociocultural anxieties (Bishop, 2010; Poole, 2011). Several themes have been identified in zombie media representations, including neoliberalism (Bishop, 2010), racism (Christie, 2011), consumerism (Harper, 2002), xenophobia (Stratton, 2011) and concerns of globalization and foreign policy (Birch-Bayley, 2012; Froula, 2011). The persistence of the zombie narrative is evidenced by the popularity of *The Walking Dead* graphic novel series. The one hundredth issue of the series sold three hundred and seventy five thousand copies on the first day of release, making it the bestselling graphic novel since 1997 (Couch, 2011).

In summary, little previous research had focused on the shared cultural meanings found in *The Walking Dead* despite the popularity of the novels. Zombie media representations continue to gain popularity in society, which raises questions about what allegorical purposes they serve. In addition, it is important to determine whether zombie media legitimize or criticize with respect to the anxieties they are reflecting. The overall purpose of this study was to conduct an ethnographic content analysis of *The Walking Dead* graphic novels to examine the cultural narratives they present concerning law, governance, and regulation and social control.

## Chapter 3

### *Methodology*

In this chapter, I will review the methodology for this study. First, I will outline the research goals and questions outlined for this study. I will then consider the research design I utilized. I will follow by explaining the sample utilized in this study. I will conclude this chapter with an explanation of the data analysis.

#### *Research Goals and Questions*

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine representations of governance, law and order, and social control in *The Walking Dead* graphic novel series, an example of dystopian fiction. The analysis was based on a social constructivist grounded theory perspective. In this study, my intent was to look at how dystopian narratives construct responses to public safety threats, and to learn what these narratives had to say about governance and social control mechanisms often employed to ensure public safety and stability in neoliberal states. Specifically, I was interested in how the popular zombie narrative of *The Walking Dead* constructed post-9/11 concerns around law, governance, social order and regulation, and social control in neoliberal states. In addition, I wanted to examine whether the construction of these issues in *The Walking Dead* made claims that were subversive criticisms or a legitimization of neoliberal models of governance. Two specific research questions were proposed:

1. How do zombie narratives found in *The Walking Dead* construct law, governance, social control, and regulation and social control in post 9/11 times of transition?  
What comments are made on these themes?
2. Do zombie narratives in *The Walking Dead* offer subversive criticism or legitimization of current models of governance?

Consistent with a grounded theory approach, more specific questions were developed following the initial coding phase. These were:

1. Does the post-apocalyptic zombie narrative create an 'idealized' neoliberal market society?
2. How does the post-apocalyptic zombie narrative construct the identification and regulation of individuals unwilling or unable to 'fit in' to a neoliberal market society?
3. How does the post-apocalyptic zombie narrative construct group efforts to identify norms, social boundaries, and laws in a society where law and government are absent?
4. How does the post-apocalyptic zombie narrative construct modes of governance and responses to external threat?

### *Research Design*

The present study adopted a form of qualitative content analysis referred to by Altheide and Schneider (2012), as an ethnographic content analysis (ECA). ECA is defined as the reflexive analysis of documents, and is used to understand the "communication of meaning" (Altheide & Schneider, 2012, p. 68), where the meaning is believed to be reflected through format, style, and the context of the document itself (Altheide, 1987). A qualitative approach allows the researcher to consider the narrative themes presented in the data being studied.

Briefly, *The Walking Dead* and other media representations can be considered a form of culture in society, allowing this study to be considered ethnographic work. According to Altheide and Schneider (2012), ECA allows for the possibility of constant comparison of texts and images in order to discover emergent patterns, emphases and themes. In particular, situations, settings, styles, images, meanings and nuances are considered important, while the overall aim is to

identify how documents reflect aspects of culture that are part of the larger cultural context (Altheide & Schneider, 2012).

### *Sample*

At the time of writing this thesis, 127 issues of *The Walking Dead* have been released. For the purposes of this study, the first 100 issues have been examined as these cover the majority of the storyline to date. The fact that the one hundredth issue is the best-selling graphic novel/comic book of the twenty-first century (Couch, 2012) makes *The Walking Dead* a prime candidate for criminological and sociological study in order to determine what societal values and attitudes are reflected. For the purposes of this study, a graphic novel utilizes comics to share a story, which is composed of sequential panels of pictures and speech that represent connecting scenes. As well, an issue as it pertains to this series of graphic novels is one released element of the serialized story portrayed by the graphic novel series. In *The Walking Dead*, issues are generally released one month apart and are approximately twenty to twenty-five pages in length.

### *Data Analysis*

In analyzing the sample of the selected issues of *The Walking Dead*, I considered the narrative arcs, character personal traits and qualities, the relationships between characters, character dialogue and illustrations. In my approach to data analysis, I utilized a constructivist grounded theory approach. According to Charmaz (2006), a researcher engaging in grounded theory constructs theory through data, collecting and analyzing simultaneously from the first stage of research. As opposed to beginning a study with a sound hypothesis, a grounded theorist begins a study with general research questions. Charmaz (2006) states that if these research questions prove to be irrelevant to the study, new questions are developed. Grounded theory

“aims for analytic power and conceptual grasp which synthesize, explain, and interpret the data” (Charmaz, 1990, p. 1163).

### *Initial and Focused Coding*

The first steps of the grounded theory approach to data analysis, according to Charmaz (2006), are initial and focused coding. Focused coding allows for the researcher to “build and clarify a category by examining all the data it covers and variations from it” (Charmaz, 1988, p. 117). Data analysis began with an initial read-through of the first ten issues of *The Walking Dead*, where notes were made about dialogue, characters and character behaviours, aspects of narrative and story arcs, and illustrations that were considered relevant to literature pertaining to neoliberalism, governmentality, surveillance, social control and maintenance of fear, as discussed in Chapter 1. These notes were accompanied by a brief description of the general action or phrase I considered relevant to the research questions. A second, more thorough read-through of the first fifteen issues was then conducted, fine-tuning and developing the notes made in the first read-through into more concise codes with more in-depth descriptions. A total of fourteen ‘bucket codes’ were created in the focused coding stage. These are listed in Appendix A.

### *Line-by-Line Coding*

In the second state of grounded theory data analysis, a line-by-line coding approach was utilized. Charmaz (2006) states that line-by-line coding allows for detailed observations, revealing “visibly telling and consequential scenes” (p. 5). The researcher codes every line of their data, allowing for the development of ideas that could escape the reader’s attention when undergoing a general analysis. At this stage of data analysis, I went through all issues included in this study and identified quotations, narrative points, story arcs, character descriptions and

illustrations that were relevant to the themes identified in the first stage of data analysis. In this stage, I began to identify links between themes or coding categories and the specific research questions. Appendix A outlines the protocol used in this study. Although NVivo was not used at this stage, it was later utilized as an organizational tool when further analyzing the data.

Based on analyses, four major themes were identified and were sorted into results chapters. Chapter 4 considers the 'idealized' neoliberal market economy found in *The Walking Dead*. Chapter 5 looks at Lyons (2006) concept of 'social sorting' and the production of 'bare life' within the graphic novel series. Chapter 6 considers the role of 'neoliberal communitarianism' (Van Houdt & Schinkel, 2014) in *The Walking Dead*. As the final results chapter, chapter 7 will consider the role of a 'state of exception' within the graphic novel series. I will conclude with a discussion of the results chapters, including the limitations and possible next steps in this research.

## Chapter 4

*'Idealized' Neoliberal Market Economy in a Post-Apocalyptic Zombie Narrative*

As discussed earlier, neoliberalism is a form of governance characterized by an increased importance of corporate and private sector culture – a “market society” – wherein individual responsibility, consumerism, rational choice, and private ownership are emphasized (Giroux, 2004). Neoliberal state policies focus on deregulation and minimal state intervention in the private sector to promote economic interests while increasingly regulating the public sphere to maximize individual participation in the consumerist culture (Bell, 2001; Giroux, 2004; Deukmedjian, 2013). Giroux (2004) has argued that the neoliberal state is most interested in facilitating full economic participation in market society of its able, rational, and free-thinking members at the expense of social security for the members of larger society. Over a history spanning 80 years, the zombie narrative in popular culture has been continuously altered to reflect a variety of sociocultural concerns including racism, consumerism, and xenophobia (Bishop, 2010; Christie, 2011; Harper, 2002; Poole, 2011). One of the purposes of this study was to examine the extent to which constructions of post-apocalyptic society in *The Walking Dead* graphic novel offer subversive criticism or legitimization of neoliberal modes of governance.

In this chapter I will focus on the construction of an ‘idealized’ neoliberal market society as created in a post-apocalyptic zombie narrative. I will first examine the use of capital accumulation in a post-apocalyptic setting. There are clear needs and roles that must be fulfilled, and various characters utilize these skills to obtain capital accumulation in a ‘Walker Market Economy’. I will then examine the use of deregulation and minimal state intervention, and how they apply to survival in a post-apocalyptic zombie narrative.

*The Walker Market Economy and the Neoliberal Market Subject*

The post-apocalyptic world developed in *The Walking Dead* narrative shares a number of similarities to the actual neoliberal market society wherein clear needs and roles (e.g., consumer) must be fulfilled in order for a consumer-driven society to function properly. A neoliberal ‘market society’ promotes individual rationality and capabilities (Giroux, 2004; Ren, 2005), or what Burchell (1996) describes as “the free entrepreneurial, and competitive conduct of economic-rational individuals” (p. 96). Within a neoliberal mode of governance, individuals are stratified based on their capabilities or the extent to which they actively contribute and participate in capital accumulation (Ren, 2005). Similarly, in the post-apocalyptic narrative of *The Walking Dead*, the value of individual characters to the larger group is contingent on their ability to actively contribute to the group’s survival. *The Walking Dead* narrative replicates and legitimizes both the neoliberal mode of governance and the ideal ‘neoliberal subject’ through a world wherein characters are stratified based upon their ability and willingness to actively contribute to the ‘Walker Market Economy.’ In Issue #36, Rick Grimes, the central protagonist and appointed leader of the Atlanta group of survivors articulates what Ren (2005) describes as the “neoliberal logic of governance” (para. 13) wherein the “emphasis [is] on the neoliberal subject’s individual agency, capability, and intelligence” (para. 2):

“I find myself ranking them sometimes – looking at them and thinking – who do I like the most – who do I need the most – just in case something happens and I have to choose” (*The Walking Dead*, Issue #37, March 2007, pg. 19).

Characters in *The Walking Dead* are comparable to the idea of the ‘neoliberal subject’ in that a character who no longer possesses the necessary capacity to contribute to the group survival drops within the group’s social stratification or is quickly eliminated from the storyline. Characters are judged by other characters in the narrative according to their ability to actively

contribute to survival based on sets of skills deemed valuable in a post-apocalyptic environment wherein a new ‘Walker Market Economy’ (a post-apocalyptic economy without state intervention, wherein only individuals who possess survival skills and are willing to contribute to group survival are able to engage in capital accumulation and survive the hardships survivors face) has formed. As evidenced by the above quote, characters who do not possess a useful skill set or are unwilling to contribute to the group’s survival are judged negatively for it and, in some story arcs, ostracized from the larger group, making protection for them less of a priority. Although referred to a ‘walker’ market economy in this study, it is the survivors as opposed to the walkers themselves that engage in capital accumulation and strive to become the ideal neoliberal subject. As demonstrated in the following examples, characters that exhibit the “free, entrepreneurial, and competitive conduct of economic-rational individuals” (Burchell, 1996, p. 23) associated with the neoliberal subject occupy positions higher in the social stratification of the survivors’ group and are more likely to survive the various attacks and hardships across story arcs.

Two characters from the original ‘Atlanta Survivors Group’ exemplify the entrepreneurial and economical-rational nature of the neoliberal subject. Glenn, a young Asian-American character, is introduced in Issue #2 of Volume 1, *Days Gone By*. Prior to the ‘zombie apocalypse’, Glenn was a pizza delivery man carrying a student debt and occasionally supplementing his income through petty theft. From the outset of his introduction, the narrative quickly establishes that Glenn is a valued member of the original Atlanta group of survivors. In his initial introduction, Glenn is able to rescue Rick, the central protagonist, from ‘Walkers’, as well as inform him that loud sounds attract Walkers, and other risks to be aware of. Across his story arcs included in this study for analysis, Glenn goes on high-risk supply runs that repeatedly

place him in dangerous situations to help ensure that the group has the necessary food and supplies to survive. Other characters in the group are either unwilling or unable to take these risks that jeopardize their own survival as a means of bettering the group's access to resources. But Glenn's current skill set and willingness to make supply runs makes him an important member of the group and earns him a high place in the group's social hierarchy. Glenn demonstrates competitiveness and entrepreneurial skills through his willingness to be put into high-risk situations in order to retrieve the scarce resources needed to contribute to the group's survival. It is Glenn's willingness to take competitive risks that other characters do not take that increases his position in the social strata. Not surprisingly then, Glenn is one of the longest-appearing characters in the series, spanning his first appearance in Issue #2 to his death in Issue #100.

Andrea, a young female adult and original member of the 'Atlanta Survivors Group' is also introduced in Issue #2 Volume 1, *Days Gone By*. Prior to the zombie apocalypse, Andrea was a college graduate and low-level law clerk. When Rick is teaching the members of the group how to use guns properly, Andrea is immediately determined to be an excellent marksman. Her uncanny accuracy with weapons proves to be valuable in any situation where protection of the group from threats is prioritized (From Issue #65: "Watch this. Andrea, the big guy. Left ear. Pow." - September 2009, pg. 20). In the 'Walker Market Economy', the ability to offer protection to other survivors is highly valued and Andrea is able to 'market' this skill to achieve higher levels of social status. This entrepreneurial conduct is illustrated in later issues of the sample when the 'Atlanta Survivors Group' group enters the 'Alexandria Safe-Zone' in Washington, D.C. The 'Alexandria Safe-Zone' is a small gated community run by Douglas, a former member of Congress. The goal of the community is to maintain safety from the Walkers

and provide a sense of normalcy and an illusion of the 'return to better days' for its residents.

The 'Atlanta Survivors Group' are invited in and provided shelter and resources in exchange for performing various duties for the community, with a focus on offering protection from Walkers and from other groups of survivors attempting to take it over. To gain entry into this community, prospective community members are interviewed and assigned roles based on their skills.

Undesirable individuals are denied membership and characters with fewer skills are assigned more dangerous tasks. Given her proficiency with firearms, Andrea is immediately granted membership and assigned to the lookout tower outside the gates in order to watch for potential threats. In the Alexandria Safe-Zone, Andrea instantly ascends to a higher position within the social stratification of the community as evidenced by the importance assigned to her in assuring the ongoing survival of the other characters.

As mentioned above, in a fictional world where immediate survival is the primary concern, the ability to provide security to other group members is highly valued. While Andrea is proficient with firearms, other characters, such as Tyreese and Abraham, illustrate the value of brute force and physical prowess. Tyreese, a black male in his early 40s and former professional football player, is introduced in Issue #7, Volume 2, *Miles Behind Us*. He first encounters the original 'Atlanta Survivors Group' when they are on the road and extremely vulnerable, immediately establishing his worth by eliminating Walkers that come too close as well as removing the physical roadblocks that prevent them from exploring the area further and securing shelter. Rick recognizes Tyreese's ability to contribute to the group's survival, granting him shelter, and Tyreese quickly earns a high position in the group's social hierarchy:

Rick: “Man, I’m glad we ran into you when we did. Even with using the RV to do most of the pushing I don’t think we could have cleared that wreck off the road without your help” (Issue #7, April 2004, pg. 20).

The character of Abraham Ford, a former army sergeant, is introduced in Issue #53, Volume 9, *Here We Remain*, in very similar circumstances to the introduction of Tyreese. When the remaining members of the ‘Atlanta Survivors Group’ have returned to wandering the countryside in search of shelter, they meet Abraham, who immediately uses his strength and past experience to eliminate the threat of Walkers and thus obtains a high place in the social hierarchy. When the ‘Atlanta Survivors Group’ encounters Abraham, they have left the prison, a secure shelter the group had been utilizing and are vulnerable to the Walkers roaming the countryside. Tyreese had been killed in an attack on the prison, leaving the group in need of a member with the physical strength to protect them from ‘walkers’ and help them secure shelter.

Across the story arcs in the sampled issues, the value of brute physical strength in the ‘Walker Market Economy’ fluctuates like other commodities in real markets. Not surprisingly, when the ‘Atlanta Survivors Group’ finds shelter and security in the prison and Tyreese’s physical strength is no longer a necessity for survival, his place in the social strata of the group diminishes; his character is later killed in Issue #46. Similarly, Abraham’s physical strength becomes less valuable in the Alexandria Safe-Zone, where he is assigned to the construction team, a dangerous position indicative of his diminished social status. (Abraham: “[Douglas] says I’d be best on their construction crew, building new walls and whatnot.” – Issue #70, February 2010, p. 20). Abraham is later terminated in the series when the group has secured shelter but has entered warfare with a competing group of survivors. Here, the focus is on stealth, strategy, and

utilizing charisma effectively to gain the upper hand. His brute strength is no longer central to the group's survival and he is killed off in Issue #98.

In order to secure a high place in the social strata of *The Walking Dead*, characters must exhibit the entrepreneurial and economic-rational conduct of the neoliberal subject, and establish a wide array of skills to survive the changing circumstances in a 'Walker Market Economy'. The previously discussed character of Andrea, for example, aggressively 'markets' new skills as circumstance change. When the group arrives at the prison and is therefore protected from most threats, she offers her skills as a seamstress making clothing for the group members. This is beneficial, as clean clothes have become a rarity in their current situation. While her abilities as a sharpshooter are not needed at this point, she is able to maintain her position in the social strata by utilizing different skills, therefore ensuring her necessity and importance in a 'walker market economy'. Eugene, a character introduced in Issue #53, similarly exhibits the economic-rational conduct of the ideal neoliberal subject. Briefly, Eugene initially introduces himself as a scientist with information that could cure the 'zombie apocalypse', a claim that increases his importance within the group's social strata and ensures his survival. When it is later revealed that Eugene had been lying about his occupation and knowledge of a possible cure, he reveals that he did what he felt was necessary in order to ensure that others would protect him:

"I'm not strong. I can't get by on my looks. I'm not some great leader. I'm not brave. I'm not useful. I have two things going for me. I am extremely intelligent. And I am a good liar. I didn't have a lot of options" (Issue #67, November 2009, pg. 19).

Eugene was aware that he did not possess the individual abilities needed to ensure a high place within the social hierarchy and therefore secure protection, so he fabricated a story and a skill set to convince others that he had a means of contributing to society. In later issues of the

study's sample, when the Alexandria Safe-Zone is at war with a hostile group, Eugene is able to manufacture ammunition for the group to use, therefore giving himself a skill set worthy of protecting. In other words, Eugene is able to actively adjust his behaviour to meet specific needs within the 'Walker Market Economy' and, as a result, maintain a position within the group's social strata.

According to Rosenfeld and Messner (2007), one of the consequences of the neoliberal state's focus on facilitating the individual pursuit of economic prosperity is what they refer to as "economic dominance." Briefly, economic dominance is observed when economic norms and values begin to increasingly characterize the functions of non-economic social institutions, such as the family and educational institutions. In the neoliberal state, for instance, the value of an education has less to do with the inherent benefit of learning and has become largely defined as a means to occupational attainment and financial success (Hirtt, 2004; Rosenfeld & Messner, 2007). In *The Walking Dead*, the value of any activity, character or resource is defined largely by its ability to contribute to individual and group survival. While several characters are able to directly contribute to the group's survival, other characters contribute other means of support to characters vital by means of the skills they are able to contribute to the group.

Maggie Greene is introduced in Issue #10 of Volume 2, *Miles Behind Us*, when the original Atlanta survivor group finds safety on the farm of her father, Herschel Greene. Neither proficient with firearms or acquisition of resources, Maggie quickly proposes and forms a relationship with Glenn, acquiring a higher position in the social strata quickly within the survivors' group by virtue of the relationship:

"I'll fuck you. If that's what you're after. I'll fuck you...My boyfriend's gone - - probably dead. To be honest, he was a bit of jerk anyway. You're the first guy I've seen in months

that's not related to me or that Otis idiot. It's like you said – Our choices aren't very broad. We've gotta be proactive or we're going to end up alone" (Maggie Green; Issue #10, July 2004, pg. 20).

Later in the series, Maggie becomes pregnant. This ensures her social capital, as women with the ability to reproduce will become vital in helping to re-establish civilization. Consistent with the Rosenfeld and Messner's (2007) concept of economic dominance and the values of a market society in a neoliberal state, the initial value of Maggie's relationship lies in its ability to increase social capital and promote survival. The character of Rosita Espinosa is introduced in Issue #53, part 5 of *Here We Remain*. She is assisting Abraham Ford and Eugene Porter in their mission to get Eugene to Washington, as he claims to be a scientist with knowledge of how and why the zombies have risen. Similar to Maggie, Rosita's relationship with Abraham and other men is valued because of its ability to promote survival and increase social capital:

"I was doing things...to survive. Nothing bad, just – some of the men in the group, if you gave them a little extra attention, they returned the favor, kept you safe, protected you more" (Issue #99, June 2012, pg. 8).

Rosita's social capital is consistent with Rosenfeld and Messner's (2007) concept of economic dominance, as she is able contribute social capital through non-economic social institutions.

#### *Deregulation and Minimal State Intervention*

The neoliberal states seek to facilitate the economic prosperity of competitive, rational-thinking individuals through deregulation and the removal of constraints on economic activity in the private sector. According to critical scholars, this deregulation in the private sector, however, is accompanied by increased regulation in the public sector to control or remove those

individuals unable or unwilling to participate in the market society (Deukmedjian, 2013; Giroux, 2006). Deregulation in a neoliberal market society is theoretically aimed at increasing competitiveness and productivity. In the post-apocalyptic narrative of *The Walking Dead*, arguments are often made for ‘deregulation’ and ‘minimal state intervention’ in the ‘walker market economy’ where there is a desire to increase the ability to survive. Several aspects of story arcs included in this study’s sample make arguments for deregulation to allow competitive, economic-rational characters to engage in the ‘walker market economy’ and promote group survival while regulating unwilling or less capable characters.

Characters in *The Walking Dead* refer to re-animated corpses, or zombies, as ‘roamers’ or ‘Walkers.’ Walkers represent a looming threat to group safety and survival, but in early issues of *The Walking Dead* the subject of how best to deal with Walkers is a central theme of the stories. While some characters push for the complete elimination of Walkers to ensure group safety, other characters initially argue for them to be preserved or to co-exist with the dead.

Hershel Greene, an older farmer and father, is introduced in Issue #10 when his farm becomes a refuge for the ‘Atlanta Survivors Group.’ In Issue #11, Hershel reveals that he has been keeping the re-animated corpses of family members and neighbours locked in his barn. His rationale is that the Walkers are family and friends and too little is known about the zombie outbreak – a cure may exist or Walkers may naturally heal. However, Rick argues that the amount of effort it takes to place Walkers in the barn and the safety risks it poses to survivors outweighs the possible hope of a cure:

Hershel: “Yeah, we’re keeping them in the barn until we can figure out a way to help them. What have you been doing with them?”

Rick: “What do you think we’ve been doing with them? You said yourself that they should be dead. Shooting them in the head fixes that. We’ve been killing them” (Issue #11, August 2004, p. 2).

Rick’s argument for terminating these Walkers mirrors the push for ‘deregulation’ in neoliberal states - by de-emphasizing any means of assistance for walkers, the group is better able to focus on gathering the necessary resources and eliminating risks, therefore helping to increase their chance of survival. The narrative of this story arc in *The Walking Dead* legitimizes arguments for deregulation. Hershel’s efforts to preserve Walkers in his barn quickly results in the death of his two eldest children, Arnold and Lacey, by the conclusion of that same issue (Issue #11). The ‘walker market economy’ in *The Walking Dead* exists in a post-apocalyptic world where no formal state exists, meaning no overarching organizations such as police or medical personnel can provide assistance to characters. This fictional environment provides the ultimate rationale for Rick’s argument that Walkers should be eliminated with few restrictions to methods employed; the manner in which Rick ultimately deals with ‘Walkers’ is comparable to the minimal state intervention approach in neoliberal states.

The Walkers that inhabit the ‘walker market economy’ of *The Walking Dead* might also be comparable to marginalized groups that require public social assistance programs. In *The Walking Dead*, similar to a neoliberal state, there are ongoing efforts to regulate and dispose of Walkers. According to Brown (2006), a neoliberal society places emphasis on forcing the underclass in society to remain in a state of neediness by minimizing the number of eligible welfare recipients and the amount of social assistance to which people are entitled to. Brown argues that these approaches effectively reduce or remove the burden of providing for non-

contributors and thereby facilitating the ability of competitive, economic-rational neoliberal subjects to maximize capital accumulation.

According to Giroux (2006), the role of the state under a neoliberal model of governance is to facilitate the financial pursuits of willing and able participants in society through the regulation of the social sphere. The role of government is de-emphasized in the provision of what has been traditionally construed as public services such as education, health, welfare and security. He explains that a neoliberal state enacts regulations designed to control, remove or make invisible those individuals who hinder consumerism and market freedoms. In a 'walker market economy', it's clear that Walkers hinder survivor groups' chances of survival, which can be considered their means of consumption in a post-apocalyptic setting. Rick's ultimate goal is to eliminate the Walkers causing these hindrances, therefore allowing survivor groups more market freedom. Providing for the Walkers poses too great a risk, and therefore their complete eradication is beneficial for the survivors.

The focus on deregulation and minimal state intervention is further explored via the interactions between human characters in the series. Allen, along with his wife and sons, is introduced in Issue #2 as part of the original 'Atlanta Survivors Group'. His wife, Donna, dies following a 'walker' attack in Issue #9. Subsequently, Allen's mental state deteriorates, he becomes unable to care for his young sons, and begins to compromise the safety of the group (see Figure 1).



*Figure 1*

When the group is beginning to clear out the prison, Allen is sitting on top of the RV, acting as a lookout for Walkers and backup to Rick, Tyreese and Andrea. They have begun to run out of ammo, so Andrea has gone running back to the RV to instruct Allen to get them more. While there are clear sounds of chaos and fighting, Allen is sitting on top of the RV, clearly distraught and unaware of what is happening around him. This unwillingness and/or inability to participate demonstrates that Allen needs to be regulated in the ‘walker market economy’. He is not able to fully contribute to the survival of the group and therefore is a possible hindrance. Allen dies in Issue #23 due to a zombie attack, while more capable and contributing characters are able to be wary of, and avoid, zombies.

When Carl, Rick’s son, is introduced in the Issue #3 of the series, we learn that he is only seven years old. Nonetheless, Rick feels that it is in Carl’s best interest that he learns to use weaponry and is allowed to keep a gun on his person at all times. In contrast, Rick’s wife, Lori is opposed to the idea of her young son carrying a gun:

Rick (to Carl): “I’ll teach you how to shoot a gun. You want to know how to shoot a gun, don’t you?”

Lori: “No way! He’s too young to shoot a gun!” (Issue #4, January 2004, , p. 6).

Ultimately, Lori loses the argument and Rick teaches Carl to use his weapon. In Issue #5, the Atlanta survivor group finds themselves under attack by a group of Walkers. Lori fumbles to use her weapon when a zombie is making its way towards her, when Carl steps in and eliminates the threat. If Carl had not been taught how to use his gun, the chances of Lori’s survival would have been greatly diminished. In accordance with deregulation policies as seen in a neoliberal market society, Carl is not ‘regulated’ because he demonstrates an ability to contribute to the survival of the group. This is furthered exemplified when he saves Lori’s life, as it demonstrates that his ability to contribute to the safety of other group members allows for the maximization of his personal opportunities to participate in a post-apocalyptic consumerist culture.

Neoliberal state policies focus on deregulation and minimal state intervention in the private sector to promote economic interests while increasingly regulating the public sphere to maximize individual participation in the consumerist culture (Bell, 2001; Giroux, 2004; Deukmedjian, 2013). Giroux (2004) has argued that the neoliberal state is most interested in facilitating full economic participation in market society of its able, rational, and free-thinking, members at the expense of social security for the members of larger society. The general attitude towards ‘walkers’ and other non-contributing members of society in *The Walking Dead* demonstrates how deregulation and minimal state intervention apply in a ‘walker market economy’. Those seen as unable to contribute to or hindering the advancement of consumerism (survival) are seen as obstacles that must be eliminated. Trusting or caring for individuals who don’t contribute often ends in loss and tragedy for the fully functional members, therefore

indicating that they are best eliminated or avoided. One can see how biopower applies in this society, as the members with access to safety and resources determine which individuals are worthy of them. Therefore, those who do not contribute are left without essential resources and are unlikely to survive.

## Chapter 5

*Social Sorting and the Production of 'Bare Life'*

Lyon (2006) discusses how after 9/11, the introduction of the Advance Passenger Information/Passenger Name Record (API/PNR) in Canada allowed for the possibility of 'social sorting,' which is defined as "a standard way of discriminating between different persons and groups for the purposes of providing differential treatment" (p. 404). Specifically, commercial carriers are required to provide Citizenship and Immigration Canada with passenger and crew information. This produces coded categories by which persons can be sorted and possibly, discriminated against – despite the implementation of privacy policies and regulations. Social sorting and other similar practices emerge in what Lyon (2006) has described as a 'safety state' (p. 402) where safety at a number of levels becomes the priority, allowing for the legitimization and rationalization of policies that can promote inequality. Similarly, Amoore (2006) has pointed to the US VISIT program, which uses information technology to calculate risk factors of travellers, allowing the US Department of Homeland Security to engage in 'dataveillance' (p. 339). According to Diken and Laustsen (2002), Agamben's (1998) 'homo sacer' and 'bare life' occur in a 'zone of indistinction' (p. 291) between natural life (zoe) and the proper human life (bios). They use Nazi concentration camps to demonstrate how the state of exception (Agamben, 2005) occurs when there is a complete suspension of law, as guards in the camps could punish prisoners at any point without fear of repercussion. In *The Walking Dead*, elements of 'bare life' are utilized as a means of risk management, allowing characters to torture or kill others as a means of minimizing risks or maximizing their chances of survival. This chapter will consider how the zombie narratives in *The Walking Dead* construct law, governance, social control and regulation in times of post 9/11 transition.

In this chapter, I will first consider how characters in *The Walking Dead* are able to define ‘others’ and utilizing social sorting, allowing them to recognize characters that present the possibility of risk. I will then consider how some characters are reduced to ‘bare life’ based on a marginalized status. This allows for the possibility of torture or murder, as characters in Diken and Laustsen’s (2002) zone of indistinction can be removed for the sake of risk management without fear of persecution or consequences.

#### *Defining ‘Others’ and Social Sorting*

In the post-apocalyptic narrative of *The Walking Dead*, in order for survivors to minimize risk and maximize their chances of survival, risk identification and management is constructed as a prominent need. In *The Walking Dead*, characters must employ identification strategies for risk management purposes, similarly to the API/PNR and US VISIT programs outlined previously in this chapter. As demonstrated in the following section, survivors must engage in methods of ‘social sorting’ in order to identify and determine the level of risk associated with characters as they are introduced across story arcs.

In *The Walking Dead*, the post-apocalyptic zombie setting is characterized as persistently dangerous. However, early story arcs in the issues sampled for this study clearly establish that ‘walkers’ represent only one potential threat. Other human survivors are quickly identified as ‘dangerous’ in the narrative. For example, When Rick finds the ‘Atlanta Survivor Group’, the group is being led by his former best friend, Shane. As the story progresses and Shane’s mental state deteriorates, Rick is given more of a leadership role and their relationship suffers. It culminates when Shane attempts to shoot Rick. A character attempting to kill a friend indicates that any of the characters in *The Walking Dead* narrative can be dangerous. Across the issues sampled in this study, characters must employ a variety of strategies to determine the risk

presented by new characters. When Tyreese first encounters Rick and the ‘Atlanta Survivors Group’ in Issue #7, he declines their offer to stay in the RV with them overnight. This illustrates a form of social distancing frequently used by survivors as they encounter new characters and evaluate risk. In the same issue, upon meeting Tyreese, a member of the ‘Atlanta Survivors Group’, Lori, shows a similar reluctance with sharing the RV with people she does not know.

Lori: “You’re just inviting a stranger to sleep in the same room as us?”

Rick: “He’s got kids with him, Lori.”

Lori: “So do we. Don’t be so trusting, Rick” (Issue #8, May 2004, p. 14).

The ‘Prison’ story arc of *The Walking Dead*, which runs from Issues 12 to 48, further illustrates the process of risk identification and social sorting in which the characters engage. After leaving Hershel’s farm, the group finds the prison, an easily-secured, fenced-in shelter to provide protection from the ‘Walkers’ and later from other survivor groups. Upon the initial arrival to the prison, the ‘Atlanta Survivors Group’ discovers a small group of inmate survivors. Considering that the only information that Rick’s group was able to obtain in a first meeting with the prisoners was what crimes they had committed to get themselves incarcerated, it seems prudent that Rick’s survivor group liked to keep their distance from the prisoners. When the group reaches the prison, again Lori is uncomfortable sharing shelter with strangers, especially those who had been previously incarcerated:

“This just isn’t working out. We’re living with hardened criminals. I’m looking over my shoulder constantly” (Issue #14, November 2004, p. 15).

The Alexandria Safe-Zone is introduced in Issue #69 and serves as the central location for survivors for the remainder of issues included in this study’s sample. When the ‘Atlanta Survivors Group’ arrives at the ‘Alexandria Safe-Zone’, it is clear that the ‘Safe-Zone’ residents

employ various methods of 'social sorting' to determine who they will admit into their community. Specifically, the 'Safe-Zone' inhabitants use various methods of surveillance and 'scouts' to identify outsiders as either potential risks or prospective community members. When Rick's 'Atlanta Survivors Group' are near the 'Safe-Zone', Aaron and Eric, two of the Alexandria 'scouts', are employed to maintain surveillance of the 'Atlanta Survivors':

Rick: "Where did you come from? Were you watching us?"

Aaron: "Full disclosure? Yep. But I was just listening to you guys talk...making sure you weren't dangerous or anything." (Issue #68, December 2009, p.3)

Using surveillance techniques, the Alexandria survivors are able to determine the level of risk associated with the various survivors that they come across, ensuring that those who are invited into the community pose a minimal level of risk. Once survivors have been cleared by Aaron and Eric's scouting techniques, Douglas (the original leader of the Alexandria Safe Zone) is given the opportunity to interview them. This is another level of security for the Safe-Zone, allowing them to further identify any possibility of risk. Douglas states that the purpose of the meeting is to allow him to give survivors a position within the community best suited to their skills, but it acts as a final 'checkpoint' for Douglas to be able to gauge the risks of the new survivors. 'Social sorting' is necessary for the Alexandria Safe Zone as a means of determining which survivors will contribute to the community without causing risk. Through the use of surveillance and interviews, Aaron and Douglas are able to gauge the level of risk associated with the survivors that they meet. This allows them to include or exclude characters based on the amount of risk they present.

In *The Walking Dead*, characters create means of 'social sorting' to determine the risk levels associated with other survivors they meet. According to Lyons (2006), social sorting

allows people to discriminate between individuals based on the likelihood of risk associated with them. When the 'Atlanta Survivors Group' discovers that Hershel's two young girls (Rachel and Susie) have been killed in the prison, Dexter (a large, black prisoner who had been incarcerated for murder) is immediately suspected. He is placed in a prison cell where he can be easily kept under surveillance. His 'risk factors' makes him the primary suspect, so he is re-incarcerated.

When meeting characters for the first time, survivors display some degree of wariness and mistrust, as demonstrated when Tyreese, Julie and Chris first meet up with Rick's group. When the group reached Alexandria, it is clear that Aaron and Douglas engage in various means of 'social sorting' as a means of determining risk when approaching survivors. Characters who are sorted into the 'risky' category are not allowed the opportunity to enter the community, allowing the survivors of Alexandria to be cautious and ensure that 'risky' individuals do not enter.

#### *Risk and the Production of 'Bare Life'*

In *The Walking Dead*, characters are identified as a risk due to some form of marginalized status. Therefore, they are reduced to 'bare life', a sort of existence where they can be killed without sacrifice or a commission to homicide. Diken and Laustsen (2005) describe Agamben's (1998) *homo sacer* (one reduced to bare life) as being in the "zone of indistinction" (p. 291), placing bare life somewhere between natural and human life. Giroux (2006) discusses the 'politics of disposability', using the lack of response by the US Government to the Hurricane Katrina disaster in low-income areas to demonstrate how much of the population most affected by the hurricane were placed in a situation of 'bare life'. Much of the population most severely affected were ethnic minorities with a low socioeconomic status. Comparably, some of the survivors in *The Walking Dead* share a similarly marginalized status. While not contributing

directly to the deaths of those affected by the hurricane, the lack of response reflects “a governmental agenda bent on attacking the poor rather than attacking poverty” (p. 186).

Similarly, in *The Walking Dead*, some characters are perceived as risks and reduced to ‘bare life’, being deemed either not worthy of assistance or subjected to violence.

When discussing the *homo sacer*, Diken and Laustsen (2005) look to the werewolf as a prime example. The werewolf lives between the realms of animal and human, and can be killed without legal sanctions. In *The Walking Dead*, being ‘bitten’ or infected leads to the survivor becoming a zombie upon their death. Like the werewolf Diken and Laustsen describe, zombies in *The Walking Dead* can be killed without fear of persecution, and are forced to live between the realms of monster and human. This represents the simplest form of ‘bare life’ in the graphic novel series. After Chris and Julie are revived as ‘walkers’ despite dying of a gunshot wound and strangulation, it is clear that all the survivors are infected, and will turn after death. “If they revived without a bite – that means we’re all infected – or could be. That means we’re just waiting to die before we come back as one of those things” (Rick Grimes, Issue #15, January 2005, p. 9). These concerns correspond closely with fears of pandemics and illness in the real world. Health scares and pandemics (such as H1N1, SARS, etc.) demonstrate the possibility of an illness that could force individuals to a simple form of ‘bare life’, similar to what the survivors face in *The Walking Dead*.

Mental illness, instability, or breaking previously established social norms proves to be underlying themes with characters that are ultimately determined to be a risk. Throughout the series, characters are assessed as ‘risks’ based on their behaviour surrounding social norms and their propensity towards violating norms. Arguably, *The Walking Dead* could be seen as supportive of traditional, conservative values or norms, such as those surrounding traditional

marriage and law and order. Characters who challenge these traditional values throughout the series are punished. For example, Shane breaks a previously established social norm in terms of sexual relations by sleeping with Rick's wife, Lori. When Rick finds the camp, Dale informs him that he doesn't trust Shane, particularly his relationship with Lori: "But Shane ... he's not glad you're back. He's had his eye on Lori for as long as I've known him" (Issue #3, December 2003 p. 9). Over a span of a few issues, Shane's mental stability continues to decline as he loses both Lori and his leadership position to Rick, culminating when he tries to kill Rick in hopes that what he has lost will be returned to him: "No Rick...this is the only way! This is what has to happen...you weren't meant to come back...you weren't meant to live!" (Issue #6, March 2004 p. 21). What started off as a smaller infraction of social codes (sleeping with his friend's wife) turned into trying to commit murder, making the case that even minor risky behaviour can lead to more serious infractions, and jeopardize the safety of the group.

Carol and Patricia are other characters who demonstrate how an inability to stick to social norms will lead to a marginalized status and a form of 'bare life'. Throughout Carol's time in the series, it is clear that her mental instability and willingness to survive is questioned. After she proposes an alternate marriage to Lori, she is rejected and their friendship is negatively affected. In Issue #22 of the series, Carol attempts suicide, again demonstrating a move away from mental stability and social norms. This leads to her feeling ostracized in the group. After she attempts suicide again and succeeds in Issue #42, characters move on from her death quickly. Because she had broken social norms, her death was not mourned as much or as greatly as much as some of the other characters. Similarly, Patricia was ostracized from the group for straying from social norms. After Rick had decided that Thomas (the prisoner who had killed Hershel's twin girls and attempted an attack on Andrea) needed to be executed, Patricia attempts to rescue

Thomas from his cell. He then tries to attack her, demonstrating the naivety and foolishness of her decision. As a result, she is ostracized and ignored by many of the other survivors (Otis: “I just wanted you to know I ain’t talking ta you neither. Yer dead to me” - Issue #20, June 2005, p. 10). Her tendency to stray outside social norms leads to her being ostracized, and can be considered living in a form of ‘bare life’ until her death when the Governor invades the prison. Characters who challenge traditional norms are reduced to ‘bare life’ and treated as a risk or threat in *The Walking Dead* narrative.

Throughout the series, some characters are demonstrated to be in a form of ‘bare life’ due to their marginal status in society. When the group of survivors arrive at the prison, they learn that the prisoners had been abandoned by the guards. The guards let the prisoners out of their cells, but then chose to abandon the prison and lock the surviving prisoners in the cafeteria. Because they had committed crimes, they were left in a state of ‘bare life’ – the guards did not directly contribute to their deaths, but they did not afford them the resources they needed to escape and survive outside the prison. When the Atlanta survivors have made it to Alexandria and been assigned duties in the ‘safe zone’, it becomes evident that some survivors have been given the most dangerous jobs due to some sort of marginalization. Bruce, the survivor in Alexandria who has been placed in charge of building and repairing walls explains to Abraham that Douglas has assigned them all to this role for a particular reason:

“Douglas’ little interview process...placing people where they’ll do the best work – it’s bullshit. I don’t know how all the pretty girls somehow end up qualified for jobs where he’ll see them frequently. Notice that yet? But the most screwed up thing is us. You think we’re the strongest, or the fastest, sent out to build the wall. But you saw those guys –

we're just the dumbest. We're the dumbest. The most expendable" (Issue #73, 2010, p. 15).

Characters who Douglas considers to be the weakest in intelligence are given the job where they are most likely to be killed or attacked by Walkers. Although Douglas is not specifically contributing to their death, he is placing them in a situation of 'bare life', where they are more likely to be killed without punishment or sacrifice.

In *The Walking Dead*, characters who display some element of risk are often excluded and reduced to a point of 'bare life'. This exclusion is deemed necessary as it allows characters to prioritize the safety of those who have not been reduced to this level and allocate resources accordingly. In the post-apocalyptic setting of *The Walking Dead*, state methods of crime control (such as incarceration or rehabilitation) are unavailable to survivors. Therefore, death or extreme physical punishment is presented as a possible solution for dealing with those who present risks to the group. Ben and his twin brother Billy are the sons of the deceased Allen and Donna who have been taken under the care of Dale and Andrea. After the group has left the prison and began searching for new shelter, Billy finds Ben in a clearing near the property they are temporarily residing in, maiming a dead cat. Shortly afterwards, Ben's issue of mental illness culminates when the other survivors realize that while he and Billy have been off near the woods, he has killed his brother ("Don't worry, he's going to come back. I didn't hurt his brains" (Issue #61, May 2009, p. 7)). The other survivors are left with the question as to how to deal with Ben, as his clear mental instability demonstrates risk to the other survivors. Carl takes the situation into his own hands and kills Ben for the sake of their safety. This presents a notion that all characters (even those who are normally seen as 'untouchable' for harsh punishments) who demonstrate risky behaviour are reduced to bare life, as afterwards Rick supports Carl's decision to kill Ben.

Carl rationalizes his actions by explaining that he did what he felt he had to do to ensure that the risk that Ben posed had been justifiably removed:

Carl: "I know why we do what we do. We do it to protect the weak. To survive. You and Abraham knew what needed to be done...but you couldn't do it. You couldn't kill a kid. I didn't want to kill Ben. I had to" (Issue #67, November 2011, p. 9).

The narrative of *The Walking Dead* and its post-apocalyptic environment also draws parallels with the global 'war on terror'. With the absence of state and law enforcement, *The Walking Dead* creates a world of constant danger where the risk posed by characters justifies reducing them to 'bare life' and enacting harsh sanctions. For example, in one of the early issues of the sample, Tyreese discusses how he killed an old man who tried to rape his daughter. The degree of risk posed by the 'old man' justifies the harsh punishment enacted by Tyreese and renders the character as form of 'bare life':

Tyreese: "I'm not beating myself up because I did it...I'm beating myself up because I don't feel bad about doing it" (Issue #7, April 2004, p. 16).

In Issues #61 to #66, the narrative introduces 'The Hunters', a group of survivors who have turned to cannibalism in order to survive. 'The Hunters' abduct Dale, a member of the 'Atlanta Survivors Group', and subsequently consume one of his limbs. The Atlanta group then utilizes torture, followed by murder, to terminate The Hunters. While Rick later acknowledges that the torture was extreme and inhumane, he stands by the notion that the hunters had to be killed. Despite the fact that The Hunters were attempting to reassure Rick that they would leave his group of survivors alone ("We won't come after you. I promise. Just leave us here. You have my word" - Issue #66, October 2009, p. 3) Rick was not convinced that his group would be safe if the Hunters were left alive. Therefore, to ensure that Rick's group would remain safe from the

threat that the Hunters presented, The Hunters were reduced to a form of 'bare life'. This allowed Rick's group to justly eliminate them, and prevented the deaths from being seen as murder. Once it is believed that a character has the potential to cause some degree of harm to the survivors, severe or capital punishment is seen as justifiable if it means reducing the level of risk surrounding the survivors. Amoore (2006) discusses how, after 9/11, the priority in the 'war on terror' is to correct issues of risk management. Reducing individuals to a position of 'bare life' is presented as the best means of accomplishing this, as it allows for the complete removal of risk without fear of persecution for the overarching authority figures. In *The Walking Dead*, prioritizing risk management by reducing characters to 'bare life' allows Rick and his group to justifiably torture and murder the Hunters. By comparison, when Tyreese admits to his regret over murdering an old man who attempted to rape his daughter in Issue #7, he admits that the only regret he feels is concerning the fact that he does not feel remorse for what he did. Compared to the general lack of remorse concerning the torture and murder of the Hunters in Issue #66, one can see the trajectory of acceptance over 'bare life' and "justifiable" execution. Compared to the beginning of the narrative, over time characters find themselves more accepting of murder.

Throughout the series, it is the leaders of the various survivor groups who determine who should be reduced to bare life. Quite often, leaders use punishment as a means of establishing their leadership and as a consequence when characters do not comply with their orders. When Rick, Michonne, and Glenn enter Woodbury, the Governor demands to know where they're camped out so that he can seize their resources. When Rick refuses to comply, the Governor cuts off his hand as a means of gaining subservience and as punishment for putting up resistance ("One of you will talk. That's just how it works. I will get what I want. There is nothing you can

do to prevent that” - Issue #28, June 2006, p. 7). Here, punishment and torture under the guise of ‘bare life’ is utilized to ensure that the Governor will get compliance from competing survivor groups. When Rick’s group has reached the Washington community and begun to engage in warfare with Negan and ‘the Savivors’, Negan uses harsh physical punishment in an attempt to ensure future compliance from Rick and his group (“Well, you didn’t really think you were going to get through this without getting punished, did you?” - Issue #100, July 2012, p. 16). Because Rick had killed members of Negan’s group, Negan’s response is to kill one of Rick’s group in a particularly severe way (“for that...you gotta fucking pay” - Issue #100, July 2012, p. 17). Negan picks Glenn out of Rick’s group and murders him to demonstrate that Rick’s group should comply to his demands. This demonstrates how leaders of survival groups utilize other survivors as ‘homo sacer’ (Agamben, 1995) and can punish others without fear of repercussion. In order to get what their group needs, competing groups suspend generally accepted moral codes and put competitors in a position of ‘bare life’ in order to pursue their goals. While torture is generally seen as unacceptable, leaders exercise the ability to ignore those moral codes and engage in whatever means necessary to secure the resources and safety ultimately needed to ensure their survival.

In *The Walking Dead*, characters utilize the ability to reduce others to a position of ‘bare life’ in order to justify the punishment and execution of individuals who present some sense of risk to the other survivors. The existence of the zombie in *The Walking Dead* can be seen as the most basic form of ‘bare life’ throughout the series. Characters who break established social norms are put in a position of bare life, and they find themselves ostracized from their fellow survivors. Other characters are placed in a position of bare life due to their marginalization, such as their status as a prisoner. For some characters placed in a position of bare life due to some

degree of risk, harsh punishment or death becomes justifiable. Comparable to the war on terror, risk management is prioritized and used as justification for the utilization of 'bare life'. Group leaders use the competition for resources as justification for putting members of other groups into a position of 'bare life', ensuring that their torture and murder is justifiable and without punishment.

In summary, Lyon (2006) defines the safety state as one where safety becomes the priority, allowing for the legitimization and rationalization of policies that can promote inequality. Diken and Laustsen (2002) discuss Agamben's (1998) 'homo sacer' and 'bare life' as occurring in a 'zone of indistinction' between natural (zoe) and the proper human life (bios). They use Nazi concentration camps to demonstrate how the state of exception (Agamben, 2005) occurs when there is a complete suspension of law, as guards could punish prisoners without fear of repercussion. In *The Walking Dead*, elements of 'bare life' are utilized as a means of risk management, allowing characters to torture or kill others as a means of minimizing risks or maximizing their chances of survival. Characters in *The Walking Dead* are able to define 'others' and utilize social sorting, allowing them to recognize characters that present the possibility of risk. In some cases, characters are reduced to 'bare life' based on a marginalized status. This allows for the possibility of torture or murder, as characters in Diken and Laustsen's (2002) 'zone of indistinction' can be removed for the sake of risk management without fear of persecution or consequences.

## Chapter 6

*The Walking Dead and 'Neoliberal Communitarianism'*

Foucault (2008) describes governmentality as the spread of power throughout various government institutions, creating a more horizontal approach to governance rather than a top-down one. This applies to crime control policy, allowing for privatization (e.g. private security firms and prisons) and what has been referred to as the “localization” of crime control efforts. To illustrate the localization of crime control, Garland (1997) and Ericson and Haggerty (1996) discuss the ‘responsibilization strategy’ in which state authorities enlist other agencies to form a chain of action that reaches the community level as a means of crime control, such as in Neighbourhood Watch programs. Van Houdt and Schinkel (2014) utilize the concept of ‘neoliberal communitarianism’, which focuses on individual responsibility, community and the implementation of a ‘tough state’. In order for neoliberal communitarianism to be implemented, citizens must display a normative attachment to neoliberal rationality, the values of law and order, risk identification, and management and networks between state and non-state actors. In other words, in a neoliberal communitarianism model, non-state actors become vital in controlling crime at a community level through initiatives that promote an ‘eyes on the street’ approach. Instilling a strong sense of community values in non-state actors allows for the initiation of crime control on a local level. One of the purposes of this study was to determine how *The Walking Dead* presents issues of social control, law, governance, and regulation in post 9/11 times of transition, and what comments are made on those themes.

In this chapter, I will examine how the post-apocalyptic zombie narrative constructs group efforts to identify norms, social boundaries and laws in a society where law and government are absent. First, I will discuss the role of post-Keynesian politics in *The Walking*

*Dead*, which demonstrates how the role of ‘active individuals’ is utilized as an effective means of crime control, as opposed to relying on big government. Next, I will consider how characters in *The Walking Dead* identify common group values as a means of constructing clear community beliefs. Finally, I will outline what techniques of community crime prevention are utilized in *The Walking Dead*, and how various characters identify ‘active risk’ and ‘high risk’ citizens.

### *Post-Keynesian Politics*

In a post-apocalyptic setting, survivors must find ways to establish norms, laws and social boundaries without the aid of formal government or legal systems. Some theorists argue that a feature of neoliberalism is the governing through individuals (O’Malley & Palmer, 1996), which leads to de-centralized efforts at crime control. From this perspective, community policing, Neighbourhood Watch Programs, and home security programs become de-centralized efforts at social control and regulation. Van Houdt and Schinkel (2014) refer to this as ‘active individuals’, where crime control happens at a local level. According to O’Malley and Palmer (2006), a post-Keynesian political setting allows communities to form partnerships with police and become knowledgeable about conditions relating to crime control. O’Malley and Palmer (1996) state:

“In this neo-liberal governance of crime risks, individuals and communities are imagined as getting the degree of security against crime that they deserve. Those who participate in community programmes and responsibility make increased police accountability to the customers, who purchase security-enhancing commodities and learn crime preventative skills and habits that would be market and quasi-market processes. Those who rely totally on the social and the state would be confronted by their heightened level of risk and victimization...Prudent, rational and knowledgeable individuals would work together co-

operatively, and adopt or improve upon the community models provided by their more enterprising neighbours” (p. 149).

In *The Walking Dead*, characters have to take responsibility for crime control and prevention. Characters learn that waiting for the state to intervene is ineffective. Characters who showcase themselves as ‘active individuals’ are able to adopt their own localized efforts at crime control to survive, while those who are passive and hope to rely on the state ultimately do not. Throughout the series, the survivors’ views on government change drastically from one of hope that the government will be rescuing them to one where government is generally seen as useless. In the first few issues, various characters express confidence in the idea that the government will be sending in reinforcements to rescue survivors. Soon after Rick meets Glenn in Issue #2, Glenn states that they chose a camp close to Atlanta because “they’ll be able to find us when the government sorts this mess out” (November 2003, pg. 22). At this point, Glenn is already hinting that the government has not been capable of protecting people from the undead threat:

“The government tried to herd everyone into the cities so we’d be easier to protect. All that did was put all the food in one place. Every time one of those things kills one of us we become one of them. It took about a week for everyone in the city to be killed” (November 2003, pg. 20).

This particular quote from an early issue in the sample already illustrates that Glenn is becoming an ‘active individual’, as he becomes less reliant on the help of the state and instead realizes that the issues of safety and security among the survivors must be dealt with on an individual level. He understands the failure of the state as a whole to protect and control the survivors.

Some of the illustrations in *The Walking Dead* similarly suggest a failure of big, centralized government. Figure 2 shows a military tank that has been overrun by zombies and covered in human remains, representing the government's inability to deal with the undead threat in Atlanta. This makes a post-Keynesian approach to crime control seem more plausible and effective in a post-apocalyptic zombie narrative.



Figure 2

When Shane is introduced to the storyline in Issue #2, he makes it abundantly clear that he is counting on the government to rescue survivors. He left Kentucky without taking guns from the police station because he was convinced that the police captain would be angry with him for doing so (“I thought I’d take Lori and Carl to her parents and come back. I thought this thing would be over in a week. I didn’t want to explain stolen guns to the captain when I got back” - Issue #3, December 2003, p. 14). Shane also remains firm in his belief that the government will rescue survivors (“What happens when the government starts cleaning up this mess? They’ll have to start with the cities...they’ll find us faster if we just stay here” - Issue #4, January 2004, p. 3). In contrast, Rick Grimes becomes an active individual, taking responsibility for group safety and crime control rather than waiting for state intervention. Shane’s passivity and

insistence that the government will be able to protect them ultimately contributes to his death, as he feels as though he cannot go on in a society where crime control, protection and legal matters are dealt with on the community level.

In Issue #10 of *The Walking Dead* when the group has arrived at Hershel's farm, Otis claims that "we didn't have the National Guard protecting us like they do in Atlanta" (July 2005, p. 12). Tyreese informs him that Atlanta was actually worse off than they were at the farm, an area that had not seen any sort of government 'protection'. This confirms that the government had been ineffective in protecting citizens, and had in all likelihood been completely eliminated. Throughout the rest of the issues included in this sample, survivors must increasingly abandon any hope or expectation that the government will provide assistance. When Rick and his 'Atlanta Survivors Group' enter the 'Alexandria Safe Zone' near Washington, Olivia informs him that the area was run on a solar power grid, built by the government in case of a crisis. However, she tells him that: "It doesn't work at all the way it was supposed to. Half the houses here can't get hot water and we don't have enough power to run the lights all the time" (Issue #70, February 2010, p. 19). This demonstrates how individuals must be active individuals in a post-apocalyptic setting, as relying solely on government for protection and crime control is ineffective.

Across the issues included in the study sample, characters who demonstrate a tendency towards active citizenship are able to survive and create means of crime control and regulation within the post-apocalyptic setting of *The Walking Dead*. Those who remain passive and reliant on state intervention are less likely to survive. In Atlanta, survivors see first-hand how the government was ineffective at protecting the survivors from the 'walker' threat. Shane, a passive individual determined to rely on state protection does not survive, as he is unable to see the importance of protection and security at a community level. Even when the government had been

able to contribute in some way, active individualism is necessary as governmental contribution has proven to be ineffective in ensuring the safety and survival of the population. It becomes clear that de-centralized efforts are vital and the most effective means of allowing the survivors to continue to receive protection and social control.

### *Identifying Social Values and Building Normative Attachment*

In their discussion of neoliberal communitarianism, van Houdt and Schinkel (2014) argue that to de-centralize or localize crime control efforts, the state has to instill a strong sense of community or shared values in non-state actors. In *The Walking Dead*, active characters must display a strong normative attachment to common values in order to achieve a de-centralized model of crime control. While characters display a sense of reluctance to let go of social values important before the zombie apocalypse, they also must identify new ones to create a cohesive means of social control. In the early issues of *The Walking Dead*, characters attempt to hold on to formal and informal control mechanisms that regulated their behaviour before the zombie apocalypse.

In the early issues of *The Walking Dead*, characters express a clear desire to adhere to old norms, values and laws. That is, characters demonstrate a tendency to rigidly adhere to formal and informal social control mechanisms that regulated their behaviour in the past as they attempt to find social norms appropriate in a post-apocalyptic setting. When Rick first encounters Morgan in Issue #1, the latter expresses some discomfort with the fact that he and his son have been squatting in a neighbour's house. Morgan learns that Rick is a police officer, and expresses concern that Rick will be displeased with their actions ("You don't mind my boy and I taking residence in your neighbour's house, do you?" - Issue #1, September 2002, p. 18). When Rick approaches a farmhouse in search of supplies in Issue #2, he knocks and calls out before

entering, letting any potential residents know that he does not intend to rob them. Despite the fact that the world has changed, characters still express concern with potentially breaking laws established before the zombie apocalypse. As the narrative progresses across story issues, old social norms begin to gradually break down as Rick and other characters become more accepting of their situation, and survival takes priority over abiding by previously established rules and social norms.

Another illustration of the adherence to familiar formal and informal social control mechanisms early in *The Walking Dead* narrative is seen the relationships developed between characters. Dale, Andrea and Amy had all been living together in an RV, which Donna expresses clear disapproval of: “Look at the three of them, carrying on in front of God and everyone. It’s un-Christian” (Issue #5, February 2004, p. 8). Some characters seem aware that old social values in regards to sexual relations don’t necessary apply anymore. In a discussion with Lori, Carol proposes an alternate marriage arrangement that allows for the three of them to be married. She seems accepting of the idea that, in their situation, they are able to create new social norms. Carol: “we don’t have to follow the old rules. We can make new ones” - Issue #26, March 2006, p. 20). Lori rejects the proposal, demonstrating that she is not yet comfortable creating new norms and values surrounding relationships. When Maggie meets Glenn, she is aware that options in terms of romantic prospects are limited, and understands that ‘hooking up’ with someone else increases her own chance of survival in the new world order. These examples demonstrate that while people accept that sexual interaction can change in the new world order, there are still limits as to how far people are willing to accept the possibility of changing relationships. Members start to accept that creating relationships and using sexuality to one’s

advantage can be productive and necessary post-apocalypse, still they draw boundaries around what sorts of relationships are acceptable.

The 'Prison Story' arc of *The Walking Dead* across issues 13-48 illustrates both the gradual relinquishing of old social norms and the importance of developing strong normative attachment to emerging norms among survivors. Survivors have to identify new social norms in direct response to threats or crime, developing a strong normative attachment to an active 'crime control model'. In the 'Prison Story' arc in the sample, two inmates – Dexter and Andrew - attempt to 'take back' the prison from the Atlanta survivors. Rick utilizes a moment of distraction to shoot Dexter under the guise of an accident, thereby eliminating the threat to the group's security. After these events unfold, Dale suggests forming a committee to handle decisions and deal with questions of crime control and regulation. While Rick agrees, he makes it clear that group safety and protection takes priority over previously established rules and regulations. He is building a consensus surrounding their newly forming crime control model, which becomes solidified later in the 'Hunter' story arc. In order for Rick to explain why he preemptively killed Dexter, he has to explain to the other survivors why a new crime control model is necessary:

"I am a cop – I know that technically what I did was wrong. And I know how things used to be. Things have changed. The world has changed. And we have to change with it. Understand? Do you people still think we're going to be rescued? Do you? They're not coming...it's just us and this place. All we have for sure. If you still think things are going to go back to the way they were – Stop! They're not! Nothing will ever be the way it used to be. Ever! Do you think you're ever going to watch television again...You can sit around trying to follow every retarded rule we ever invented to make us feel like we

weren't animals – And you can die. We will change. We will evolve. We'll make new rules – we'll still be humane and kind and care for each other. But when the time comes – We have to be prepared to do whatever it takes to keep us safe” (Issue #24, November 2006, p. 16-18).

Throughout the series, one of the biggest issues the group faces is determining how to best act when faced with a decision regarding crime control (Rick: “I don't let the rules blind me to right and wrong” - Issue #7, April 2004, p. 16). In Issue #14, a suicide pact made between two characters - Chris and Julie - goes wrong and Chris survives while Julie is successful at killing herself. Tyreese, Julie's father, kills Chris out of rage. Rick understands the importance of active individualism and creating a new crime control model, so he informs Tyreese he is sympathetic to his situation. He does not inform the rest of the group that Tyreese is the cause of Chris' death and Tyreese goes unpunished.

In the prison, it is eventually determined that Thomas is the murderer of Hershel's twins when he attempts an attack on Andrea. Rick's group then struggles to establish a method of crime control for dealing with Thomas, as they lack the resources to properly incarcerate or rehabilitate him: “What would you have me do, Lori? Just let him go? Hope that the next person he kills is someone we haven't met yet? Is that what you want?” (Issue #17, March 2005, p. 18). Considering that Rick previously allowed Tyreese to kill Chris without punishment and Dexter has been wrongly incarcerated, dealing with Thomas brings up questions about the source of law and other governance issues. Tyreese states: “We haven't made any rules for this sort of thing. If we're going to start a new life here – try to re-establish society, we need to have rules for this” (Issue #17, March 2005, p. 19). He recognizes the importance of knowing how to deal with dangerous individuals who demonstrate risk to the safety of the group. Rick announces: “We

have to make an example of Thomas. We have to make the statement once and for all – we do not kill” (Issue #17, March 2005, p 21), creating a dilemma concerning when violence is acceptable – Shane had attempted to murder Rick, making Shane’s death the most appropriate means of crime control at the time (Carl: “Only I killed Shane before he hurt anybody.” Lori: “That’s right. But you – you did the right thing” - Issue #18, April 2005, p. 3). When discussing Rick’s methods of eliminating Dexter, Tyreese agrees that a new crime control model has to be created in order to best deal with threats: “I think you did the right thing. The way things were looking that fool was going to attack us as soon as the roamers were cleared out, anyway. Who knows who he would have killed ... still, kinda throws the whole ‘you kill, you die’ thing out the window, huh?” (Issue #19, May 2005, p. 21). These examples make it clear that active individualism and a newly created crime control model that allow issues of security and crime at a community level are best for the group to ensure survival.

In *The Walking Dead*, characters have to develop a strong sense of community values in order to localize their efforts at crime control. This demonstrates a neoliberal idea about crime control and the importance of de-centralization. Characters demonstrate a strong normative attachment to common values. At the beginning of the narrative, characters cling to previously established control mechanisms as a means of regulating their behaviour. As the storyline continues, characters must identify social norms as a response to direct threats, allowing for the development of a strong normative attachment to an active crime control model.

#### *Techniques of Community Crime Prevention*

When discussing a post-Keynesian style of policing, O’Malley and Palmer (1996) explain how community policing becomes a form of social control wherein community liaisons with police and localized crime prevention efforts serve to increase state surveillance and social

control. Similarly, van Houdt and Schinkel (2014) state that a crime control model under a neoliberalist state focuses on crime prevention through the identification of 'active citizens' and 'high risk citizens'. In *The Walking Dead*, characters must also identify which characters are active and which are high risks as a means of promoting a de-centralized crime control model.

Throughout the series, localized techniques of community crime prevention become the primary means of crime control. Characters cannot rely on the state to control crime, so individuals take an active role in establishing a means of de-centralized crime prevention. As stated earlier in this chapter, when Dexter and Andrew attempt a 'coup d'etat' in the prison, Rick must act as an active citizen and utilize crime prevention techniques at a community level. He takes it upon himself to eliminate Dexter to prevent further harm and risk to his group of survivors. Later on in the series, Ben (one of Allan and Donna's twins, who had both been adopted by Andrea and Dale after the death of their parents) kills his twin brother, demonstrating sociopathic characteristics and a lack of understanding of the danger of Walkers and the re-animation process. While the other characters debate what should be done with Ben, Carl takes it upon himself to sneak into the truck where Ben is being kept and kill him. Ben has already harmed one individual, so to prevent further crime, Carl must become an active citizen and eliminate Ben as a means of crime prevention. Carl's act, as well as other acts of murder by active citizens (e.g. Tyreese's murder of Chris), are justified, either through the support of other characters or implicitly through the design of the narrative. These acts are deemed justifiable, as they are presented as necessary for group survival.

In order to engage in localized crime prevention techniques, characters have to identify the 'high risk citizens' that require a preventative response. When Rick's group of survivors encounter and are threatened by 'the Hunters' (a group of survivors relying on cannibalism,

including eating their own children to survive), Rick and some members of his group engage in acts of torture and murder. Rick understands that importance of crime prevention, noting that his localized techniques were necessary, even though he had to establish new norms regarding punishment and crime control that would have been considered unacceptable before the 'walker' apocalypse. "I can't stop thinking about what we did to the hunters. I know it's justifiable...but I see them when I close my eyes...doing what we did, to living people...after taking their weapons...it haunts me" (Issue #66, October 2009, p. 17).

As the central protagonist of *The Walking Dead*, much of the legitimization of the decentralized model of crime control is accomplished through Rick's gradual realization across the sampled issues that drastic actions have to be taken to ensure survival. He must establish crime control techniques while maintaining the norms that the group is establishing surrounding crime prevention. Ben, a small child, murders his twin, demonstrating sociopathic characteristics. Because this proves that Ben presents a danger to the group and could continue to murder others, Carl feels that he must kill him as a means of crime prevention. Rick reassures Carl that engaging in crime prevention techniques as active citizens is necessary to ensure community crime control, even if it unpleasant to do so. As active citizens, they are required to engage in crime prevention techniques even if their actions seem extreme or immoral, which sets them apart from the high-risk citizens. "If these things start becoming easy, that's when it's all over. That's when we become bad people" (Issue #67, November 2009, p.8). Rick maintains that engaging in localized crime control techniques is necessary in order for the group to survive. Although Rick and Carl both feel conflicted about their methods of crime prevention (feeling as though they run the risk of 'losing their humanity') they understand that crime must be dealt with on a localized level in order for it to be most effective.

Tyreese also acts as an active citizen as a means of engaging in crime control techniques after high-risk individuals have been identified. Similar to Rick and Carl, he engages in localized crime prevention:

Tyreese: “This sweet old man...the first thing he sees thinks of when he finally sees people...he tried to rape Julie. Had I been two minutes later when I found them...he’d have done it. I killed that man, Rick. I wanted to...but I didn’t mean to. I beat on him and he died” (Issue #7, April 2004, p. 15).

Later in the story, Abraham admits to facing a similar dilemma when survivors harmed his ex-wife and daughter:

“Some people, it was like a fucking switch went off in them. One day they were nice, law-abiding folk, the next - they were animals. Don’t know what happened to set them off...I’ll never know. Maybe they just thought that this was their last chance to have a woman, so they’d take it ... hundreds of those flesh-eating fucks out there – never thought I’d locked my family up with something worse” (Issue #58, February 2009, p. 4-5).

Abraham is faced with the dilemma of dealing with characters that had harmed his family. Similar to Tyreese, Abraham engaged in localized crime control techniques: “I found out. I found out and I did things to those people ... I did things I never thought I’d be able to do ... six men, pulled apart with my bare hands” (Issue #58, February 2009, p. 5). Abraham recognizes and is uncomfortable with his actions, but in the moment his extreme act of crime control and retaliation against survivors who committed sexual assault on his ex-wife and daughter seemed necessary. Similar to Rick and Carl, both Tyreese and Abraham display some level of discomfort with taking on the role of active citizen and engaging in community crime control. Although they also find themselves questioning their ‘humanity’ and morals, ultimately the benefits of

prevention crime control measures outweighs their discomfort. Localized crime control proves to be the most effective means of identifying high-risk citizens and engaging in crime prevention.

Even when crime is being dealt with at a local, de-centralized level, there is still some element of state co-optation, mainly through Rick's role as leader throughout different story arcs of the series. Preventative crime control is being handled by active citizens, but there is still some sense of one character making decisions for the group. When it comes to making decisions regarding law and crime control, the group is seemingly unanimous in choosing Rick to fill that role. He is asked to lead the group when they are first making camp outside Atlanta, and continues to make decisions for the group throughout the series. When Dale establishes that they will be creating a 'committee' to make decisions, Rick agrees, but makes it clear that he will continue to take preventative crime measures as a means to keep the group safe from threats. When Rick's group first enters the safe zone outside of Washington, D.C., Douglas is in charge of the community. Eventually, Douglas comes to realize that Rick is better suited to keep the community alive: "They don't need me, Rick. What they need is you" (Issue #78, October 2010, p. 21-22). Rick also begins to understand why he is always placed in a leadership role:

"People have been looking to me for answers, pretty much since day one...I was never asked if I wanted to be leader, everyone just started expecting me to fill that role. ... it's the way I see things" (Issue #96, April 2012, p. 18).

Rick understands and accepts that he is best suited to fulfill a leadership role, as he is willing and able to be an active citizen and engage in crime control measures at a local level. Individuals seem to form groups and increase their own chances of survival when they have an individual making decisions and keeping them safe through preventative crime control measures.

*The Walking Dead* narrative demonstrates the importance of community policing and localized crime prevention efforts that serve to increase state surveillance and social control. This demonstrates an adherence to post-Keynesian policing strategies and a neoliberal crime control model. Throughout the series, characters engage in de-centralized crime prevention strategies. Characters identify high-risk citizens and use localized measures to deal with them accordingly. The series also demonstrates a form of state co-optation of community crime prevention, as certain characters make the decisions for the group surrounding survival and crime control. Characters have to create norms, social boundaries and laws at a community level as government systems are absent. Van Houdt and Schnikel (2014) use the concept of 'neoliberal communitarianism', which focuses on individual responsibility, community and the implementation of a 'Tough State'. In order for neoliberal communitarianism to be implemented, citizens must display normative attachment to neoliberal rationality, values of law and order, risk identification, and management and networks between state and non-state actors. Instilling a strong sense of community values in non-state populations allows for the initiation of crime control on a local level. Throughout *The Walking Dead*, characters are divided into active and passive citizens, with the passive citizens demonstrating that reliance on the State for crime control measures is largely ineffective. In order for de-centralized crime control measures to take root, characters in the series must display an attachment to community values. Finally, characters acting as active citizens engage in community policing as a means of providing preventative crime control measures to keep their fellow survivors safe.

## Chapter 7

*States of Exception and The Walking Dead as a Risk Society*

The emergence of the neoliberal governance model has witnessed a shift in the role of the state, or as Hallsworth and Lea (2011) write, “a re-conceptualization of Leviathan” (p. 144), where the state has shifted from a provider of social services for the wider public good to the provision of security for a narrow sphere of individuals pursuing capital accumulation (Giroux, 2006). The shift from a welfare state to a market state has resulted in an increased focus on securitization or a criminalization of social policy wherein aspects of public welfare, including education, health, and social assistance, become the subject of a variety of risk management techniques (Giroux, 2006; Hallsworth & Lea, 2011; Neocleous & Rigakos, 2011). However, as Linnemann (2013) has pointed out, and as was discussed to some extent in the previous chapter, such risk management strategies require some level of public support. In addition to garnering public support through establishing collective norms (as discussed in the previous chapter), the use of fear and the creation of a ‘state of exception’ (Agamben, 1995) are other means for doing so. Numerous scholars have argued that such support is gained through the identification of risky populations and the promotion of fear (Simon, 2007). Agamben (1995) has discussed the concept of a ‘state of exception’ wherein a government increases social controls and regulations citing heightened tensions of fears regarded defined threats. This leads to the development of what Linnemann (2013) refers to as a “risk society.” One of the purposes of this study was to examine the constructions of regulation and social control found in the post-apocalyptic narratives of *The Walking Dead*.

In this chapter, I will focus on how themes of fear and risk in *The Walking Dead* create a ‘state of exception’ wherein concerns of safety and security become the most vital element to

ensure survival post-apocalypse. As Rick explains to his son, a state of exception creates an environment where personal safety and being prepared for security violations should always be priority:

“You are not safe, Carl. No matter how many people are around – Or how clear the area looks. No matter what anyone says, no matter what you think – you are not safe...So you stay alert - - at all times. Never let your guard down. Never.” (*The Walking Dead*, Issue #54, November 2008, p. 23).

This chapter will consider three subthemes in examining how regulation and social control are constructed in *The Walking Dead*. First, I will look at how the fear created in a state of exception justifies the use of security and surveillance. I will then consider how a state of exception provides justification for the use of violent actions as means of establishing control and security. In conclusion, I will examine how fear is utilized in governing communities in a post-apocalyptic setting.

#### *Securitization and Surveillance*

Across the story arcs that develop over *The Walking Dead* series, the post-apocalyptic narrative illustrates how constructions of fear are used to generate a state of exception that justifies both the use and necessity of surveillance and security. The importance and need for constant surveillance is often re-iterated in *The Walking Dead*. Several characters suffer for failing to maintain constant surveillance over their environment. In an early issue, Lori, the central protagonist's wife, complains about the level of surveillance in their survivor's camp as several female characters wash laundry by a river (Lori: “You don't have to constantly keep watch. They're not that fast. A glance in all directions every five minutes will do it” - Issue #3, December 2003, p. 16). Only a few panels later in that issue, Lori and her companions are

attacked and nearly killed, offering a clear legitimization of constant surveillance. Similarly, in the ‘Safety Behind Bars’ story arc, Dale, one of the original Atlanta group survivors, is bitten when he carelessly explores the prison. He has his foot amputated to prevent the spread of the Walker infection. Several issues later, Dale comments directly on how the loss of a limb was due to his failure to be vigilant:

“This damn prison cost me a foot. You hide behind these fences for so long...seeing what’s out there but not being there. Not existing with roamers. Eventually, you forget what it’s like. You just see how slow they are. You forget how dangerous they can be. How easy it is for one of them to get you. I had completely forgotten what it was like out there. It almost got me killed” (Issue #40, August 2007, p. 21).

Both of the examples described above legitimize surveillance through narrative developments wherein survivors who fail to keep surveillance and security a top priority suffer grave repercussions that nearly threaten their survival. The narrative of *The Walking Dead* also legitimizes approaches to security and surveillance – spying and information collection – that have attracted international attention with the discovery of domestic spying programs such as the PRISM Program administered by the National Security Agency (NSA). As a form of surveillance, survivor groups in *The Walking Dead* utilize spying as a means of gaining information about other groups to ensure protection or plan pre-emptive attacks.

As discussed in previous chapters, when determining which survivors will be accepted into the ‘Alexandria Safe-Zone’, scouts utilize surveillance to determine who would be a ‘good fit’ for them. They spy on survivor groups, looking for useful skill as well as any signs of danger or risk. “Make no mistake, the majority of what decides whether or not you live here – is what Aaron and Eric see before they even contact you. The idea is to observe how you act when you

think you're not being watched. They're looking for red flags" (Issue #70, February 2010, p. 9). Here, surveillance is a useful tool in determining who has access to the resources and protection they can offer. This allows the community to 'keep out' any survivors who would pose too many risks or do not offer enough skill or talents to enhance the community.

The methods of surveillance illustrated in the above examples allows characters in the post-apocalyptic society of *The Walking Dead* to engage in risk management. In a neoliberal style of governance, surveillance is used to identify certain subgroups as 'high-risk', subjecting them to management through preventative crime measures (Garland, 1997). Lyon (2004) and Haggerty and Ericson (2006) discuss how certain subsets of the population are considered to be in need of more extreme surveillance than others, which leads to an increased militarization of certain members in society. In a post-apocalyptic setting, surveillance is utilized to determine who needs to be 'managed' and kept from accessing certain resources. Once a character has been determined to be expressing some sort of risk, they are labelled as having the potential for 'high-risk' and are therefore managed and watched closely. For example, after Hershel's twin girls Susie and Rachel are killed and Dexter is suspected of the murder, he is locked up in one of the prison cells. This ensures that all of his actions are monitored. Characters who do not express any sort of risk to the group (such as Carl, Glenn and Andrea) are never discussed as needing to be managed. Through surveillance, survivors are able to determine who the biggest risks to safety are, and subject them to higher levels of management.

In addition to an increased need for surveillance, the narrative of *The Walking Dead* legitimizes efforts to increase security. Throughout the series, certain images and phrases are invoked to draw a connection to military and security. As previously stated, when Rick and Glenn return to Atlanta in search of weapons near the beginning of the series, they find an

abandoned army tank, which demonstrates how the army and government were unable to deal with the zombie threat and had abandoned attempts at rescue. Later on in the series, characters employ military/security tactics to demonstrate how the survivors have to engage in their own securitization to gain resources and keep themselves safe. First, in the prison the survivor group finds and utilizes riot gear. While this gives them an additional layer of protection when fighting zombies, it seems to act metaphorically to demonstrate how the survivors are taking self-protection into their own hands. There will not be any army or military to protect them, so they are protecting themselves.

The 'Prison' story arc incorporated several allusions to increased militarization and securitization. The prison represented as ideal shelter for survivors in *The Walking Dead* – the fences surrounding the property and the thick walls makes it an ideal safe haven. Therefore, it is important to the 'Atlanta Survivors Group' to remain in the prison and keep it secure. It also makes the prison attractive for the Governor, the self-appointed leader of Woodbury, a fortified survivor town nearby. Similarly, the 'Alexandria Safe-Zone' uses increased militarization (through the use of gated community with fortified walls) as a form of security and safety for survivors.

When the Governor is attacking the prison, he utilizes techniques and strategies that make it seem as though he is invoking an army. This is demonstrated when the Governor approaches the fence at the prison declaring: "kill them all!" (Issue 42, September 2007, p. 22). His goal is to completely eliminate the competition for the resources that are secure in the prison. When Rick and his group of survivors are feuding with Negan's group, the Saviours also utilize military imagery and phrases. When planning to mount an attack on the Washington community, one of Negan's generals states: "We attack at dawn" (Issue #99, June 2012, p. 23). When it comes to

the Walker threat, eventually Rick believes that the survivors can start not only avoiding and protecting themselves from Walkers but eliminating them entirely. He brings up the idea of using survivors to create an army, further demonstrating the military/securitization imagery:

“They’ve got nearly two hundred people...we can turn them into an army. An army to protect us from anyone who would do us harm...but also an army to actually face this undead menace head on...really do something about it” (Issue #96, April 2012, p. 19).

These examples demonstrate how survivor groups utilize militarization as a part of security when attempting to gain resources and/or protection in their post-apocalyptic society.

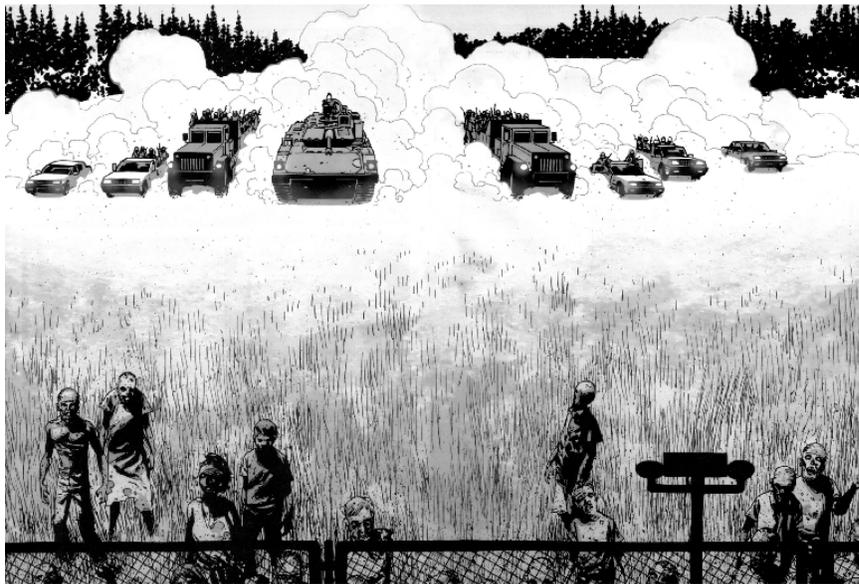


Figure 3

It can be argued that *The Walking Dead* attempts to offer some critical commentary of a ‘risk society’. The narrative contrasts Rick and the ‘Atlanta Survivors Group’ and the Governor and Woodbury. The issues included in this sample also show the beginning of a contrast between Rick and Negan with his band of followers, the Saviours. Negan and the Governor with their respective followers evoke comparisons to military states with dictator-style leadership. In *The Walking Dead*, the themes presented seem to be almost entirely legitimizing current government structure. However, there is room for a minor criticism of the ‘security state’ when drawing a

comparison between Rick Grimes and ‘The Governor’ and their competitive groups. ‘The Governor’ has created the town of Woodbury around a dictatorship, using fear to convince his followers to follow his agenda. Ultimately, ‘The Governor’ leads his followers into a futile attempt to take over the prison, destroying the walls, ruining the prison as a ‘safe haven’ and leading to his own death. ‘The Governor’ is presented as corrupt, unrelenting, and incapable, which could be seen as a comment on the futility of ‘big governments’. The military state with a dictatorial governance is incapable of survival in *The Walking Dead*, which could be viewed as a criticism of this sort of governance.

Other images of military, security, and crime control-type protection are invoked by the amount of political and crime-control careers seen throughout the series. Rick, the main character, is a former police officer. Although he rarely saw action as a police officer in a small town, his knowledge of legal issues and methods of crime control are often utilized throughout the series and affected his decisions as leader and one of the protectors of the group (“I can’t think of a better way to ‘protect and serve’ under the circumstances” - Issue #1, October 2003, p. 21). When Abraham is introduced to the series, he introduces himself as former military personnel. His military knowledge and background ensures that he contributes by his ability to ensure the safety of the group. When the group reaches the community in Washington, it is being led by Douglas, a former politician. Having past experience in government or crime control is considered a valuable asset post-apocalypse because it helps to assure survivors that they are being kept safe from various threats.

#### *States of Exception and the Maintenance of Fear*

*The Walking Dead* narrative also features prominent depictions of how a ‘state of exception’ is both developed and used to provide justification for coercive and violent ‘state

actions' in the name of control and security (Hallsworth & Lea, 2011). In the post-apocalyptic setting of *The Walking Dead*, the leaders who emerge within the various groups of survivors (Atlanta Survivors, Woodbury, The Savivors) produce campaigns of fear, sometimes manufactured fear, to create a 'state of exception' that allows for increased social control. Garland (1997) argues that increasing public fear of crime allows for the promotion a culture of security. Increasing fear of crime allows for the justification of 'tough-on-crime' agendas. In *The Walking Dead*, characters promote a fear of crime in order to justify violent actions and a 'tough on crime' approach.

In Issue #16 of the series, two children are found murdered inside the prison. Dexter, a black inmate who was serving a sentence for murder, is the primary suspect and is placed inside one of the holding cells. In the succeeding issue, the murderer is identified as an older white male, Thomas. Although he was believed to be a white-collar offender, Thomas is revealed to be a sexual predator and murderer who is caught when he attempts to sexually assault Andrea, one of the Atlanta survivors. Thomas is severely beaten and sentenced to death by hanging by Rick, the appointed leader of the group. Importantly, Rick's imposition of the death penalty is a unilateral decision made without consultation and with some criticism from other survivors. However, Rick, as a leader, is able to use the constant threat posed by Walkers and the need for security to gain the acquiescence of his group:

"I trust my wife is the only one against capital punishment at this point? We have to make an example of Thomas – we have to make the statement once and for all – We do not kill. We do not tolerate it. We will not allow it. That is our rule, our pledge. You kill, you die" (Issue 1#7, March 2005, p. 21).

When Negan is introduced in Issue #100 as leader of 'The Saviors', it is clear that he employs certain methods to keep his followers pacified and supportive of his leadership. Specifically, the character is constructed as sharing a number of similarities with real-world cult leaders. In the narrative, Negan characterizes himself to followers as their saviour, evoking religious undertones. His followers seem to almost view him as an ethereal being, feeling as though he has the ability to speak through them.

Follower: "We are all Negan. He speaks through us and we speak for him. His words are our words" (Issue 397, May 2012, p. 11).

By presenting himself in this way, Negan is able to maintain his leadership position despite the fact that his methods could be considered morally questionable. Through his unusual methods, he is able to keep his followers pacified and following his commands. In order to get supplies, Negan instructs his followers to extort supplies from other survivor groups in exchange for Walker protection. In order to ensure public safety, Negan is able to create a 'state of exception' with increased social control and regulations. This allows him to coerce other groups into providing 'The Saviors' with necessary supplies.

The character of The Governor and community of Woodbury are introduced in Issue 27. Very little background information regarding The Governor is offered in the narrative. He rules the Woodbury community and provides a strong example from *The Walking Dead* narrative of governing through crime and fear, as detailed by Simon (2007). The Governor provides residents with security and basic necessities but governs through the use of fear, exploiting the continuous threat posed by 'walkers' that surround the gated community.

"You forget the agreement? I keep this little community fed, happy, and well supplied, and you don't ask any goddamn questions" (Issue #28, June 2006, p. 12).

The Governor controls the narrative about community safety in Woodbury, either using indirect measures such as public gladiatorial combat to entertain and distract residents, or through direct threats to safety:

Doctor Stevens: “Whatever else he does...he keeps these people safe. That’s enough for most people. As long as there’s a wall between them and the biters, they’re not too concerned with who’s with them on their side of wall” (Issue #29, June 2006, p. 19).

In Woodbury, the Governor has set up ‘fights’ to keep his followers pacified and entertained (“Ain’t a whole lot in the way of entertainment to be had. People get restless without entertainment” - Issue #27, April 2006, p. 21). Generally speaking, as long as the people of his city are kept safe from threats and given a means of entertainment, they will not question his decisions or leadership style. Despite the fact that some followers, such as the doctor, question his motivation, the realization that the citizens are kept safe keeps them from threats keeps most of them from attempting to put someone else in charge.

*The Walking Dead* narrative offers an interesting comparison between the conflict that develops between the Woodbury and Prison survivors and the ‘War on Terror’ that emerged following 9/11. The Governor discovers the existence of the Prison survivors after capturing Rick Grimes, Glenn, and Michonne. He uses physical torture in an effort to gain information about the prison, cutting off Rick’s hand. Glenn is isolated in a room and forced to listen with The Governor sexually assaults Michonne in the adjoining room. As this story arc progresses to a confrontation between the two groups, The Governor constructs the ‘prison survivors’ as a threat to Woodbury to build support for a military response to obtain the prison, which is valued for the security it promises to survivors:

The Governor: “I just want to make you all completely aware of the kind of people we’re dealing with – MONSTERS!...These savages know where we live! They know what we have! They know our strengths and they know our weaknesses!! I say we strike at them before they have a chance to come at us” (Issue #43, October 2007, p. 12-13).

Throughout the series, fear is a common underlying theme. It is utilized both to keep survivors safe from threats, and to for leaders to coerce their followers to go along with their agenda. Both Rick and The Governor utilize the production of fear to maintain survival post-apocalypse. Rick uses it to keep people safe from risks, while the Governor utilizes it to convince his followers to follow his lead, under the guise that he is keeping them safe. In order for Governor to convince the people in Woodbury to attack the prison, he needs to persuade them that the survivors in the prison are dangerous and need to be eliminated for their safety. He lies to and deceives his followers to keep them in a state of fear. When The Governor beheads Tyreese in front of the survivors at the prison, he misleads and lies to his own followers to make the other group of survivors seem dangerous and risky:

“These crazy—evil sons of bitches shot down their own man! We had a bit of leverage and they shot their own guy in the fucking head...what do we do? We kill every last one of them – that’s what we do” (Issue #46, February 2008, p. 22-23).

He ensures that his followers become afraid of the prison survivor group and creates a level of risk associated with them, ensuring that his followers will follow his lead in trying to eliminate them.

Rick feels that fear is useful in keeping the group safe, because it prevents them from letting their guard down and not making safety their number one priority. Even when the group has reached the Washington community (which is a gated, well-guarded area), Carl reminds Rick

that they still need to be wary of what happens outside the city walls. He is uncomfortable being in such safe surroundings because he fears that they will lose their ability to protect themselves if they are no longer in the community. After a Walker attack: “What happened yesterday was a good thing. Now maybe everyone will stop pretending we’re all safe” (Issue #67, November 2009, p. 9). Carl and Rick understand that the maintenance of fear is necessary in ensuring the group’s survival.

In *The Walking Dead* post-apocalyptic narrative, issues of fear and risk become primary themes of survival, leading to the prioritization of risk management and the creation of a ‘state of exception’. It is clear throughout the series that maintaining vigilant surveillance is necessary in order for survivor groups to maintain their safety. Group leaders create and maintain ‘states of exception’, allowing for the use of violent and drastic actions in the name of group control and safety. Leaders also promote and maintain fear among their followers in order to coerce others to follow their agenda. Through these means, one can see how risk management and the maintenance of fear are utilized in a post-apocalyptic setting.

## Chapter 8

*Discussion*

When considering the Hall of Mirrors as it relates to the criminalization of popular culture, Ferrell (1999) states that the images of government presented in fictional media 'blur the lines' between fictional representation and actual government policy for viewers. *The Walking Dead* creates a representation of governmental activities and crime control that can be seen as reflective of current government policies as well the public's reactions to these policies, thus making the 'hall of mirrors' applicable to the post-apocalyptic narratives that the graphic novel series presents. If *The Walking Dead* series is able to instill fear and a desire for increased crime control, governments will potentially perceive this public demand and react accordingly. Therefore, reading *The Walking Dead* graphic novels and watching the television show creates the possibility of the framing of readers' support for, understanding of, and response to a neoliberal market economy and the governmental strategies used in a post-9/11 society.

Phillips and Strobl (2006) found that fictional media (including graphic novels) allow readers to vicariously explore moral and philosophical questions inspired by themes in criminal justice. The themes presented in *The Walking Dead* inspire readers to think about law and social control within a neoliberal framework, encouraging them to be supportive of crime control on a street level and actively support the identification and regulation of individuals unable or unwilling to fit into a neoliberal market society. However, it can be argued that this contradicts both the use of military tactics and general thoughts on 'maintaining humanity' seen throughout the series. This points to tension and a more complex relationship between government-imposed militarization and active individuals in regards to tactics used for crime control. Erickson (2007) found two prevalent themes when considering terrorism and counter-terrorism in popular culture

– subversion and legitimization. Similarly, *The Walking Dead* includes both subversive criticisms and legitimization of counter-terrorist measures in a post 9/11 society.

### *The Construction and Legitimization of a Neoliberal Agenda*

I have argued that *The Walking Dead* creates and legitimizes an ideal neoliberal market economy in the post-apocalyptic zombie narrative. First, I will explain how a neoliberal agenda is constructed through crime control and safety issues in *The Walking Dead*. This is constructed through the importance of surveillance, the use of the ‘state of exception’, and the importance of risk management. I will then outline how the construction of the neoliberal subject is created in the series.

One of the major ways in which *The Walking Dead* legitimizes a neoliberal agenda is through the construction of crime control and safety issues. In *The Walking Dead*, the narrative constructs the need to monitor danger and security as constant for characters. As soon as they give up a vigilant guard, characters regularly find themselves placed in a dangerous situation. Because they are always at risk of a ‘state of exception’ (Agamben, 1995) occurs wherein the ‘leaders’ of groups heighten social control and regulation. This allows leaders to engage in coercive and violent actions. In comparison to a neoliberal post-9/11 society, *The Walking Dead* promotes the idea that community members are allowed to be placed in a ‘state of exception’. Whether these decisions are dangerous or morally questionable (e.g., ‘The Governor’ encouraging his followers to attack fellow survivors) or imposing on citizens’ rights (the utilization of surveillance before offering assistance to survivors), survivor group ‘leaders’ are engaging in risk management and the maintenance of fear to promote their agenda.

In *The Walking Dead* narratives, specific story arcs also serve to legitimize militarization and securitization. The prison, Woodbury, and the ‘Alexandria Safe-Zone’ are all gated

communities, giving those inside the ability to determine who can access the resources and safety they offer. Much of the narrative of *The Walking Dead* involves characters seeking out these types of gated communities and the security associated with these communities is constructed as ensuring that those inside are protected and have the resources to continue to contribute to the 'Walker market economy'. Characters are depicted as at their most vulnerable when they are not inside one of these gated communities and those who are unable to gain access (due to a lack of necessary skills to contribute to survival or a presentation of risk) fall victim to biopower or reduced to a position of 'bare life' (Agamben, 1995). This reflects the importance of security in the graphic novels.

Risk management and surveillance are also legitimized in *The Walking Dead*. Characters who present risks are removed or placed under high levels of regulation. If these characters go unchecked, they continue to present risks to the safety of the other survivors. Amoores (2006) discusses how after 9/11, the 'war on terror' was presented as a means of correcting issues of risk management, accomplished by placing certain 'risky' people in situations of 'bare life'. In *The Walking Dead*, drastic actions and punishments under the guise of 'risk management' are presented as the best means of the ensuring safety of the remaining survivors. Characters that are completely unregulated, such as The Hunters in Issue #66 or Thomas in Issue #17, present high levels of risk to the safety and security of the survivors.

As a means of both personal safety and protection of resources, surveillance in *The Walking Dead* is constructed as both necessary and beneficial for survivors. This construction reflects the move towards a hyper-surveillance state – it is presented as only being harmful to those who are presenting a risk or breaking laws. Lyon (2006) discusses the use of surveillance and 'social sorting' by Citizenship and Immigration Canada as a means of intercepting possible

threats. *The Walking Dead* promotes the importance of surveillance as an opportune means of social control and regulation, as it ensure the safety of survivors: “The idea is to observe how you act when you don’t know you’re being watched” (*The Walking Dead*, Issue #70, February 2010, p. 9). Looking out for these ‘red flags’ is seen as beneficial and compares to governmental approaches to security post 9/11. *The Walking Dead* promotes a neoliberal communitarian (van Houdt & Schinkel, 2014) approach, in which non-state actors are encouraged to control crime at a community level. Characters emphasize de-centralized methods of crime control and those characters (e.g., the character of Shane) who rely on government for protection or safety are shown as ineffective. The graphic series demonstrates that a post-Keynesian approach to crime control is more effective as active individuals are able to promote crime control in an ‘eyes on the street’ approach. In comparison to a post-9/11 neoliberal society, *The Walking Dead* constructs crime as something to be dealt with on a community level by active individuals, forcing citizens to be effective in their own security and safety measures. Although, some aspects of state co-optation are necessary in order to be effective, groups must have some sort of ‘leader’ to encourage and regulate the community members into engaging in neoliberal communitarianism.

A second major way in which *The Walking Dead* legitimizes a neoliberal agenda is through the construction of an ideal ‘neoliberal subject.’ In the ‘Walker market economy’ presented in *The Walking Dead*, characters need to actively contribute and participate in capital accumulation in order for the group to survive. Characters unable or unwilling to participate are ostracized, and protecting them becomes less of a priority. Similar to a neoliberal market society, individuals are rewarded and their safety is prioritized based on their abilities to contribute to this group. Characters either possess or do not possess the “the free, entrepreneurial, and competitive

conduct of economic-rational individuals” (Burchell, 1996, p. 96) seen as beneficial in neoliberal market societies. In a neoliberal market society, the individuals who possess these skills are much more likely to be successful. Glenn’s willingness to be put in dangerous situations to benefit the group can also be reflective of how people who are willing to participate in a neoliberal market society are generally more successful. Characters who do not possess the necessary skills are eliminated and afforded less protection than characters able to offer a unique skill set. Characters fabricate contributions (e.g. Eugene introducing himself as a scientist with knowledge of what caused the zombie apocalypse) or attach themselves to characters with the ability to contribute (e.g. Maggie engaging in a relationship with Glenn) as strategies in presenting themselves as capable individuals in a Walker market economy.

By de-emphasizing assistance for Walkers, survivors are better able to focus on gathering resources and eliminating risks. Brown (2006) argues that by engaging in deregulation and minimal state intervention in a neoliberal market society, the burden of providing for non-contributors is lifted and economic-rational individuals are better able to maximize capital accumulation. *The Walking Dead* reflects and legitimizes this rationality as through the elimination and lack of support for both Walkers and human non-contributors, the characters best able to participate and contribute are better able to ensure their survival.

*The Walking Dead* also promotes strategies seen under a neoliberal market society as a means of promoting regulation, social control, social order, and governance. The characters willing and able to participate in the ‘Walker market economy’ are ultimately prioritized and successful in their ultimate goal of survival, whereas those who are unable or unwilling are unsuccessful. Crime control is ultimately done at a community level, encouraging survivors to create normative attachment to their community and engage in neoliberal communitarianism.

The use of risk management and the maintenance of fear are promoted as necessary as a means of garnering public support. Therefore, *The Walking Dead* constructs and promotes a neoliberal governmental agenda. The 'Walker market economy' is promoted as rational and beneficial, therefore legitimizing the neoliberal market economy and crime control strategies seen under a neoliberal governmental agenda in reality.

#### *Subversive Criticisms of Counter-Terror Strategies*

In his study of eight television series or films examining terrorism or counterterrorism, Erickson (2007) determined that the representations he studied offered themes of both criticism and legitimization. Similarly, in addition to the themes of legitimization of post-9/11 law, security and governance, *The Walking Dead* offers criticisms as well. The use of 'bare life' could be interpreted as unfair and undeserving for some of the characters in *The Walking Dead*, which can represent some discomfort with government strategies in risk management. Rick and the Governor's contrasting uses of fear and the state of exemption can demonstrate discomfort with 'big government' tactics and motivations. Finally, the underlying tensions and conflicts that characters experience in an attempt to balance 'maintaining their humanity' while taking every precaution necessary to survive can be argued as a representation of the uneasiness members of society feel when considering the counter-terror strategies and measures taken post 9/11 in regards to safety and security.

Throughout the series, various characters are placed in a position of 'bare life' as a means of risk management. While this is presented as a necessary solution for some characters (those who presented a high possibility of risk), for others this solution is presented as a negative and unfair. When Abraham is introduced to the series, he is seen as a positive character, able to contribute to capital accumulation through his strength and military knowledge. However, upon

entering the Atlanta Safe Zone, he is placed in a dangerous position where he is unsafe and likely to be killed easily. He is informed that Douglas (he is the leader of the Atlanta Safe Zone) keeps the attractive women in safe positions. Despite Abraham's proven capabilities, Douglas places him in a situation of 'bare life'. This could be seen as a criticism of the use of 'bare life' and a state of exception by governments, suggesting that there could be issues in the motivation to place some populations in that setting.

In leading their respective groups, both Rick and the Governor use fear as a means of controlling and encouraging their followers in their respective agendas. Rick uses it to encourage Carl to maintain his sense of safety and vigilance. However, the Governor uses fear to coerce his followers to attack the Prison, lying to and manipulating them so that they believe that they have to kill the survivors in the prison to maintain their safety. The governor is unrelenting, incapable, and presented as 'evil', which could be a comment on the futility of big governments and their use of fear to convince citizens of the importance and necessity of measures undertaken in the 'war on terror.'

One of the underlying themes presented in *The Walking Dead* is the tension that characters experience between maintaining their safety and 'losing their humanity'. Throughout the series, characters engage in torture, murder, and other extreme acts as a means of either revenge or safety (Tyreese killing the 'old man' who tried to rape his daughter; Rick and his group killing 'The Hunters') so that they were unable to threaten Rick's group). Even when they see their actions as necessary or justified, The 'Atlanta Survivors Group' feel conflicted due to their guilt (or concern of their lack thereof) over their actions. While doing what they can to maintain their survival, they are distressed because they fear of 'losing their humanity'. Rick maintains that they have to ensure that they remember that this is for survival and maintain their

enacted laws and social order, and it is only if they forget that do they become 'bad people'. These underlying fears could be examined as reflecting general concern and anxieties about tactics and goals that 'big governments' utilize as a means of security and maintaining law. While appreciating the importance of maintaining safety and security, these underlying tensions could represent conflicted feelings about tactics utilized in the war on terror and other means of promoting safety and security in a post-9/11 setting.

### *Limitations and Next Steps*

Ferrell (1999) discusses how the Hall of Mirrors allows for the blurring between an event and its representation in the media, allowing for the reflection of societal fears and anxieties. While this study indicates the similarities to and legitimization of neoliberalism in *The Walking Dead* while reflecting criticisms of certain strategies undergone in the 'war on terror', it does not indicate the effect that both these legitimizations and critiques has on readers. This study has attempted to show the effect of media representations on neoliberalism and cultural fears, but the notion that one graphic novel series has the ability to sway and influence readers' opinions on government is overly simplistic. More research is needed to determine exactly how much influence *The Walking Dead* and other zombie media representations have on viewership, and vice versa.

At the time of writing, one hundred and twenty-seven issues of *The Walking Dead* have been released, allowing for the continuation of the storyline. Because this study does not encompass the series in its entirety, it is entirely possible that the themes in the remainder of the series could switch to show the futility of the neoliberal-supportive strategies undergone in the series thus far. Until the series has reached its conclusion, it is impossible to be sure of whether the neoliberal strategies will ultimately be successful and allow the survivors to re-establish

civilization. More research will be needed on later issues of *The Walking Dead* graphic novel series to determine if the complexities and ambivalences regarding neoliberalism and 'big government' tactics are resolved.

The graphic novel series has broken sales records in regards to comic books. However, the television show reaches a much broader audience. *The Walking Dead* aired on the American Movie Channel should be analyzed to determine if the themes presented in the graphic novel translates onscreen. While engaging in the same basic storyline, the television show has included characters and situations not seen in the graphic novel series, while leaving other instances out. To further research on *The Walking Dead* and the complex relationship of legitimization and criticisms of neoliberalism and post-9/11 styles of law and governance determined in this study, studies should consider analyzing the television show to determine if it draws the same conclusions.

Various scholars have studied various representations of zombie media, determining how cultural themes and anxieties are represented. In over eighty years since *White Zombie*, the first film representation of zombies, many different representations have been released. It is unlikely that the cultural fascination with zombies will come to an end anytime soon, and more representations will be released. Further studies will have to look at these not-yet-released representations to continue to further understandings of how zombie media represents cultural fears and anxieties, and whether they offer criticism or legitimization of various issues seen in society.

Also of interest in *The Walking Dead* are the issues of gender and race found within the theme of 'homo sacer' found throughout the graphic novels. With few exceptions, the female characters in this show generally contribute through support to male characters. For example, the

characters of Maggie and Laurie contribute to capital accumulation through their ability to reproduce, therefore acting as supporting roles. Rosita is able to ensure her survival by her willingness to keep male characters company, who therefore take extra precaution to keep her safe. While outside the realm of this study, further research should consider the roles of gender and heteronormative relationships within *The Walking Dead*.

### *Conclusion*

The overall purpose of this study was to consider how *The Walking Dead* constructed themes of law, governance, social order, regulation and social control in post-9/11 times of transition. Although the story takes place in a world where 'big government', and therefore formal law, has been eradicated, the world in *The Walking Dead* operates on a highly neoliberal agenda. Characters that are able to contribute to capital accumulation are able to survive, while those who rely heavily on support and/or have little to offer society are eliminated. Survivors are encouraged to support crime control on a community level and become active individuals, becoming self-sufficient and without a need for state intervention.

An additional purpose of this study was to consider if the zombie narratives found in *The Walking Dead* acted to legitimize or criticize of current models of governance. Ultimately, this graphic novel series seems to have elements of both. In terms of strategies utilized in a neoliberal market society and what is expected of its citizens, *The Walking Dead* seems to be highly supportive. However, in issues of strategies presented in tactics of the 'war on terror', the novels seem to offer more criticism. The storyline seems to offer some thought on the shortfalls of 'big government' and the strategies utilized under the guise of safety and security. In some instances in the storyline, the strategies utilized for the sake of survival can be regarded as unnecessary, extreme and inhumane. The constant tensions over 'maintaining humanity' throughout the series

could reflect fears about government tactics, suggesting issues with government strategies of occupation and anti-terrorism. Erickson (2007) suggests that critiques of these issues are given a 'free pass' within the realm of science fiction, where there is less likely to be censorship. This seems to be the case for *The Walking Dead*. Ultimately, this study reflects the complications and ambivalence in understanding how society reacts to governmental strategies post-9/11. A market economy and minimal government intervention is generally supported, but there seems to be some uneasiness with the use of fear, 'bare life' and other strategies as a means of combating terror.

This project illuminated the allegorical purposes of zombie media in regards to themes of neoliberalism, Agamben's State of Exception/governing through fear, and biopower/biopolitics. Specifically, the study looks at the graphic novel series *The Walking Dead*, which has proven to play a vital role in zombie media representations as a popular culture phenomenon. Previous research had indicated the importance of the zombie media as a reflection of societal concerns and anxieties at that particular time period. Although research on zombie media is plentiful in sociological and criminological studies, previously, few studies have considered the role of *The Walking Dead*, arguably one of the most popular zombie media representations of our time. Ultimately, this study used an ethnographic content analysis to determine what messages are being reflected in *The Walking Dead* graphic novel series concerning neoliberal governance and times of transition, and whether or not these messages served as criticism or a legitimization of these modes of governance. This study determined that the themes in *The Walking Dead* can be seen as supportive of a neoliberal style of governance, while reflecting criticisms of certain strategies used in post-9/11 times of transition. Utilizing the concept of the 'hall of mirrors', to extend the ambivalence reflected in this study to the general feelings of members of society, this

study suggests that the population may struggle with a somewhat complicated and ambiguous relationship with strategies utilized under a neoliberal style of governance, supporting some elements while expressing fear and uncertainty over others.

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*Appendix A*

Code	Definition
“Risky Other”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Showing distrust or weariness for individuals outside of immediate circle</li> <li>- The identification of individuals as ‘at risk’ or ‘high risk’</li> </ul>
DIY Self-Reliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demonstrating a belief that individuals must take care of themselves</li> <li>- Instructing or teaching others in how to protect themselves and/or use weapons</li> <li>- Aspects of the narrative, character development, or dialogue that emphasizes DIY independence</li> </ul>
Desired Social Order (Infantized state)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Imagery, aspects of narrative, characters, and/or dialogue that reflect a desire for a particular form of governance</li> </ul>
Social Control and Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attempts or discussion on how to control or lead other survivors</li> <li>- Aspects of the narrative (plot, characters, dialogue) that reflect efforts to control or exert control; Efforts to regulate the behaviour of a character or characters</li> </ul>
Mythic Return to Better Days (“How it Used to Be”)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Imagery, dialogue, aspects of narrative or characters that communicate a desire to return to a past social order</li> <li>- Idealizing a past social order, way of life</li> </ul>
Disposability or ‘Bare Life’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Determining who/what characters or beings need to be terminated</li> <li>- Characters or groups identified as having limited identity, rights, responsibilities</li> </ul>
Punishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Doling out consequences for individuals who break designated rules or laws</li> <li>- Rationales offered for punishment; Definitions of punishments</li> </ul>
Surveillance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Imagery, aspects of the narrative, or character dialogue that depict surveillance, the use of surveillance, the importance of surveillance</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Surveillance of ‘walkers’, Surveillance of ‘others’</li> </ul>
Social Tensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Us vs. Them” rhetoric; disagreements and tensions between groups of survivors</li> </ul>
State of Exception (Control through Fear)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Using fear or a defined threat to social well-being as a means of persuasion or control</li> <li>- Acts of organized use of fear to regulate the behaviour of a character or characters in the narrative</li> <li>- Use of fear or a defined threat to remove rights from a character or characters</li> </ul>
Militarization/Securitization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Imagery or aspects of narrative that symbolize military, police or security</li> </ul>
Active Subjects or “Pulling My Own Weight”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individual contributions to the overall well-being of the group</li> <li>- Imagery, aspects of narrative, or character dialogue that emphasize the importance of an individual’s ability to contribute or participate in the accepted social order</li> <li>- Willingness of characters to self-govern or restrict their own behaviour in accordance with the dominant social order</li> </ul>
Social Order, Law, and Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Images of dominant social order</li> <li>- The ways in which rules or laws are enacted</li> <li>- Approaches to governance and social control enacted in the narrative</li> </ul>
Allocation of Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Determining who resources (food, shelter) should be given to</li> </ul>