

## Beyond Gun Control: Examining Neoliberalism, Pro-gun Politics and Gun Violence in the United States

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Although the tragic shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut prompted national debate about how to minimize gun violence, these exchanges have tended to focus almost exclusively on issues related to gun control. Our central point in this article is that these discussions have largely ignored the relevance of neoliberalism in terms of how this market ideology has, particularly since the 1980s, supported many of the values, perspectives, and behaviors that are central to America's pro-gun culture and politics. We discuss how neoliberal ideology bolsters problematic pro-gun claims related to: (1) the dangers of "big government," (2) the virtues of "rugged individualism" and self-reliance, and (3) gun violence as a personal problem involving evil, sick, or irresponsible individuals. We also address how the sort of hyper-masculine subject associated with pro-gun politics is compatible with (and reinforced by) the sorts of values and forms of agency encouraged within a neoliberal market society. We conclude by making the point that efforts to minimize gun violence must move beyond the issue of gun control and focus on challenging the neoliberal ideological forces and social structures that, among other things, erode social bonds, encourage hyper-individualism, and normalize a survival of the fittest ethic. [Article copies available for a fee from The Transformative Studies Institute. E-mail address: [journal@transformativestudies.org](mailto:journal@transformativestudies.org) Website: <http://www.transformativestudies.org> ©2014 by The Transformative Studies Institute. All rights reserved.]

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