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## GLOBAL ANOMIE THEORY

### INTRODUCTION

Global anomie theory (GAT) is not a “grand theory of deviance” (Passas, 1997, p. 88) but a foundation for theory integration. The theory posits that neoliberal globalization has produced an anomic environment that creates dysnomie and deviance in society. The theory provides a theoretically integrative and chronologically ordered explanation using anomie as a middle-range concept that links the social structure with social action at the individual and group levels (Passas, 2000a). This article begins by providing clarification on some key concepts included in the theory before tracing the development of GAT from its core concept of anomie to its articulation by Nikos Passas. This is followed by a detailed explanation of the theory using an analytic framework developed for GAT research. To conclude, the article provides examples of how GAT has been used to explain different types of behaviors in different geopolitical contexts.

### KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

In his formulation of GAT, Passas uses an inclusive and broadened definition of crime. Rather than using a limiting and narrow

legalistic definition of crime, the law is used as a point of reference, stating that crime is “avoidable and unnecessary harm to society, which is serious enough to warrant state intervention and similar to other kinds of acts criminalized in the countries concerned or by international law” (Passas, 2005b, p. 773). Crime, therefore, refers to various types of misconduct that includes behaviors that are criminalized as well as acts that are harmful to society that have not been criminalized. Throughout this article, the word *deviance* is used to suggest both legally defined crimes and willful social harms.

Globalization, at a basic level, refers to the interconnectedness of nation-states and societies (Held, 2000). Although it is often seen as an economic phenomenon, it is in fact a multidimensional and often contradictory set of processes that include transformations in culture, politics, law, and environment (Sheptycki, 2005; Steger, 2013). The current form of globalization has its structural roots in the global empires and economic systems of the past (Isbister, 2006). However, globalization today is distinctive in its dual role; it espouses a universality of democracy with respect for human rights while also advocating for an ideological orthodoxy of a market economy based on neoliberalism and free trade with reduced government intervention (Twyman-Ghoshal, 2019).

Neoliberalism refers to the global capitalist system that is the engine of the current form of globalization (Brenner, Peck, & Theodore, 2010). A neoliberal economic ideology advocates for an open and integrated economy between nations, allowing for unfettered international trade and financial flows. Through the neoliberal ideology, the nation-state’s primary role has evolved to assist free trade and foreign investment through extensive regulatory restructuring in order to ensure minimal state interference in

the capitalist market. Neoliberal policies usually include privatization of state assets, deregulation, reduction in state spending, and austerity (Franko Aas, 2013). Although a pure free market has not been achieved either at the global or national level, the emphasis has been on the imposition of neoliberal policies (Brenner, Peck, & Theodore, 2010). These policies have been promoted by international financial institutions such as the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. This has been particularly visible across the Global South, where structural adjustment programs have mandated political and economic transformations in exchange for development and aid loans (Steger, 2013).

The definition of *anomie* used in GAT draws on work by Durkheim and Merton (Cullen & Messner, 2007; Passas, 2000a). Passas defines anomie as the “withdrawal of allegiance from conventional norms and a weakening of these norms’ guiding power on behavior” (2000a, p. 20). Anomie describes an erosion of the influence of social rules on human conduct—a disintegration of the state of society.

There is frequent mention of the term *criminogenic asymmetries* in GAT, and this term refers to structural-cultural incongruities and discrepancies produced in the economy, law, politics, and culture. These asymmetries are the intermediate condition that link globalization and neoliberal policies to individual and group misconducts (Passas, 1999). These mismatches are produced and embedded in the international system, creating criminogenesis.

Finally, the term *dysnomie* is introduced in Passas’s work on GAT. *Dysnomie* describes a condition in which it is difficult to govern (Passas, 2000a). *Governance* here refers to both the act of exercising authority and the process used to implement decisions (World Bank, 1989). Passas theorizes that governance

is inhibited through both the reduction of government oversight, as suggested by neoliberal ideology and the resulting normalization of deviance.

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF GAT

Although the concept of anomie was introduced by Émile Durkheim (1893/1964, 1897/1966), it was Robert K. Merton (1938) who developed it to explain the sociological context for crime. Merton's social-structure-and-anomie paradigm was the foundation for two independent but related theoretical arguments—strain and anomie (Featherstone & Deflem, 2003). Strain theories look at situations that create pressures for deviance at the micro-level, which include macrosocial environmental causes (Agnew, 1997). Anomie theories look at the macro-level determinants of delinquency, which can be experienced through the intermediate effect of strain but, as described in GAT, can also create deviance without strain (Agnew & Passas, 1997). The focus of GAT is on the macro-level determinants of delinquency as created by anomie.

Essentially, anomie describes the process of social disintegration due to a breakdown in the normative structure and culture. The causes of anomie vary. Durkheim (1893/1964) identified rapid social changes and industrialization as the cause of anomie where existing norms lag behind the needs of a transforming society. Anomie has also been suggested as the outcome of discrepancies between culturally espoused goals and the legitimate means to achieve those goals (Merton, 1938). Messner and Rosenfeld (1994) explored institutional imbalance as the predicate for anomie. Passas's (2003a) work integrated and developed these perspectives, identifying the anomic effect of socially induced normative contradictions

stemming from changes created by neoliberalism in a globalized world that create institutional, value, and role conflicts.

In his seminal 1938 article, Merton focused on the problems caused by the emphasis on achieving the American dream in the United States, a message that was and continues to be institutionally promoted. The American dream relies on a myth of classlessness, suggesting opportunities to achieve are equitable and available to all. It implies that material success is attainable and only limited by an individual's ability and personal determination. However, American society was, and continues to be, deeply stratified and segregated by class, ethnicity, and race. Merton (2000) theorized it was this cultural context that created the environment for high crime rates in the United States; crime was the consequence of a society that placed too much emphasis on attaining material goals and not on the rules for achieving those lofty ambitions.

As these cultural and structural contradictions become palpable and create anomie, different methods are sought by individuals to adapt to the ensuing strain (Merton, 1938). Merton suggested five different strain adaptations. Many in society *conform* by upholding the culturally promoted goals and the institutional means to achieving these. Others find ways to reduce the strain, such as rejecting or scaling down the goals and instead follow institutional norms *ritualistically*. Some reject both the goals of economic success and the means of attaining such success, in effect giving up on social life and *retreating*. People may ascribe fully to the cultural goals but *innovate* alternative means of achieving them, even if these contravene the institutional norms. A few will reject the goals and means prescribed by society, instead campaigning for a transformation, a *rebellion*, which advocates for new goals using alternative means.

Within the anomie tradition, Messner and Rosenfeld's (1994, 2001) institutional-anomie theory (IAT) further developed the explanation for the macro-level context for crime by focusing on the imbalance of the four institutional pillars of society (economy, polity, family, and education). Their work offered "an explanation of the empirical evidence about crime in the United States" (Messner & Rosenfeld, 2009, p. 127) by identifying the subservience of polity, family, and education to the economy, creating an anomic environment. They argued that as the economy becomes the dominant institution, non-economic social functions and roles are devalued; economic norms penetrate other domains, and economic requirements gain primacy and are accommodated by the other social institutions.

Messner and Rosenfeld's (2009) IAT does not incorporate an explanation of the stratification system and how it interacts with social institutions. They have, however, suggested that the motor of globalization has dispersed American style capitalism and market forces beyond the United States, creating institutional imbalances elsewhere (Messner & Rosenfeld, 1997). In effect, the goals of the American dream have been exported beyond the United States (Thiel, 2011; Twyman-Ghoshal & Rousseau, 2010). Messner and Rosenfeld particularized that "reducing political controls on pure market forces, cut-backs in the welfare state can be viewed as tipping the institutional balance of power toward the economy and away from the polity" (1997, p. 221), and this ultimately has a detrimental effect on crime rates.

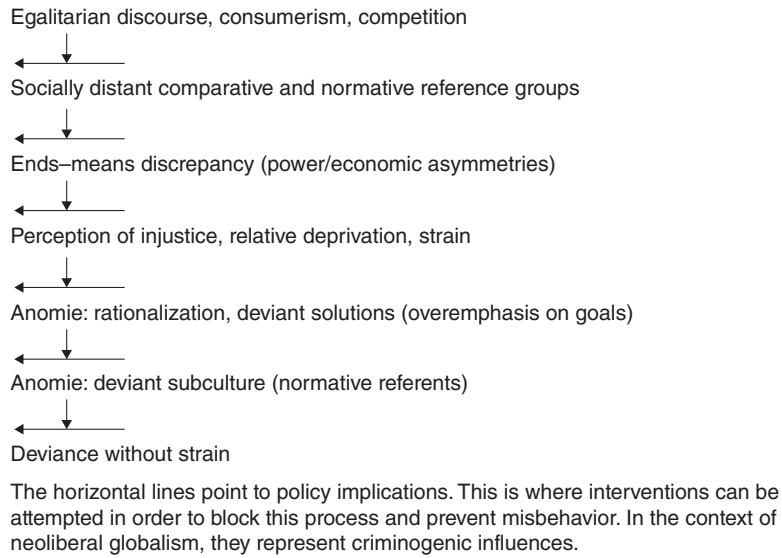
Others have made similar arguments about the grave impacts of libertarian economic policies on social life and governance (see Braithwaite, 1984; Currie, 1997; Franko Aas, 2013; Klein, 2007; Shelley, 1981; Young, 2007). Other anomie theorists, such as

Bernburg (2002), have argued that the social origins of anomie are in the free-market economic structure. The formulation of GAT is designed to be an integrative theory that uses a combination of traditional theoretical knowledge to understand social reality and explain how the dominant global forces of our time (neoliberalism) lead to anomie, dysnomie, crim—social harm, and deviance without strain (Passas, 1999, 2000a, 2005a).

### THE GAT ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

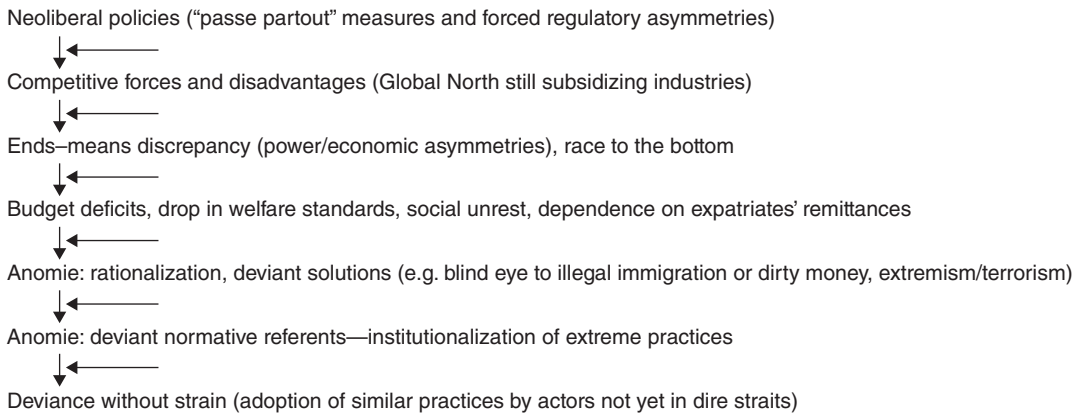
The integrated approach of GAT suggests there is a distinct social process leading to anomie and deviance that is chronologically ordered. Passas's first schematic representation (see Figure 1) focused on providing a visualization of the process that produced "structurally induced strain, anomie, and deviance without strain" (2000a, p. 19), not only in the United States as suggested in Merton's theory but around the world. In this representation, Passas makes clear the importance of the contradictory nature of globalization, which simultaneously espouses egalitarian discourse as well as competition and consumerism—a process that introduces actors to new social referents that stimulate enhanced desires and feelings of frustration when aspirations are unfulfilled. Figure 1 illustrates that the subsequent normalization of deviant solutions provides for the context for harmful behavior even when the original stressors are absent.

In 2005, Passas amended the schematic representation (see Figure 2) to more accurately represent GAT. The amended representation was aimed at identifying the origin of the process in neoliberal policies and the regulatory asymmetries that trigger competitive forces and highlight disadvantages. In the updated schema, the reduction of safety nets is more clearly identified as an interim stage



**Figure 1.** Social processes leading to anomie and deviance.

Source: Passas (2000a, p. 39).



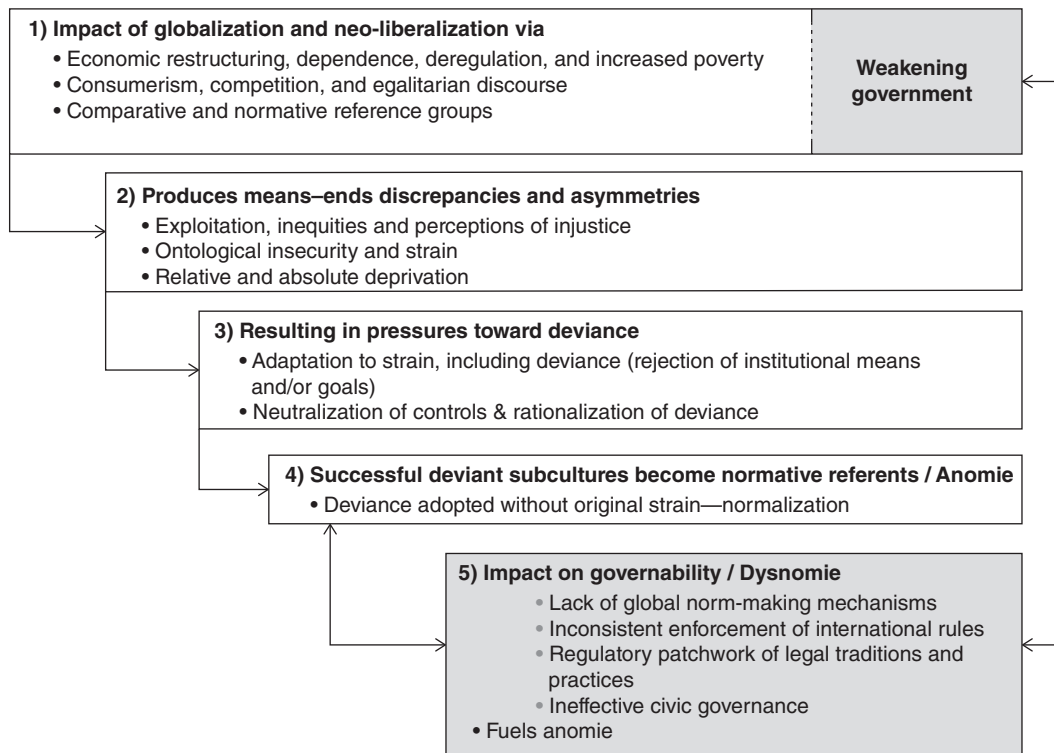
**Figure 2.** Global anomie theory.

Source: Passas (2005a, p. 177).

that produces anomie. In addition, the representation provides some illustrative examples. The horizontal lines in Figures 1 and 2 represent the locations for policy intervention that can stymie anomie and the escalation of deviance.

These schematic representations were adapted by Twyman-Ghoshal (2012) into a linked-phases framework (see Figure 3) to

provide a scaffold to use for qualitative research that aims to develop or test GAT (see Appendix for a non-exhaustive list of suggested indicators). The analytical framework provides for a clearer, chronological explanation of the social process that leads to both the onset and continuance of deviance. Using Passas’s schematic representations, the framework incorporates the various elements



**Figure 3.** Global anomie theory analytic framework.

Source: Adapted from Twyman-Ghoshal (2012, p. 237); Twyman-Ghoshal and Passas (2015, p. 107).

of the theory into more extensive descriptions of each component of the process. The elaborated framework includes Passas's (2000a) concept of *dysnomie* (ineffective governance), which describes the weakened ability of governments to deal with deviance and to shield societies from the harmful effects of unfettered market capitalism. The framework adds a feedback process that illustrates that free-market economic restructuring weakens the role of government. A second feedback effect is included to illustrate the reciprocal effect of governance and impunity.

The first phase of the GAT analytic framework examines the impact of neoliberal globalization through several key factors that include both markers of a neoliberal-trending economy and the effects of these transformations.

Neoliberal policies include a syndrome of processes and activities that include regulatory restructuring of a country to create an environment conducive to a self-regulating free market (Brenner, Peck, & Theodore, 2010; Mittelman, 2000). The restructuring may be part of a structural adjustment program mandated by international financial institutions or driven by libertarian-leaning governments (Harvey, 2007; Steger, 2013). International financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, have been active in the promulgation of free-market economics, enhancing global mobility of capital and creating what is in effect an international division of labor, products, and services. The process is fundamentally contradictory as it requires an

increase in centrally organized and controlled intervention from state institutions that enforce new *laissez-faire* economic relations, marketization, and commodification (Brenner, Peck, & Theodore, 2010; Polyani, 1944). The promise of these actions is to create a more efficient allocation of resources with enhanced productivity that will benefit everyone through a trickle-down effect (Harvey, 2007; Passas, 2000a).

Key elements of free-market structural adjustments are spending cuts, privatization, and the reduction or removal of rules that restrain the activities of the private sector while strengthening the rights of corporations (Harvey, 2007; Mittelman, 2000). This is coupled with the application of austerity politics, which is seen in the reduction of public spending and in the changes of policies governing the public sector. These policies push for the privatization of the economy. Privatization requires the sale of government-controlled assets, such as shipping, banking, telecommunications, energy, commodity reserves, water supplies, and so on. Another key marker of the trend toward neoliberalization, particularly in the Global South, is increased dependence on superpower states and international financial institutions, often as a result of monetarist shock therapy (Mittelman, 2000; Munck, 2005). This may be in the form of political alignments and/or in reliance on foreign capital. Such actions result in governments that are increasingly aligned with corporate interests rather than public ones (Munck, 2005). Laws and public policies are driven by economic rationalism, which prioritizes the economy rather than local needs (Tejani, 2019).

These economic shifts aim to create a self-regulating economy that is not bound by national borders; one which requires mutual dependence (Harvey, 2007). However, the promises of neoliberalization have not

materialized (Munck, 2005; Passas, 2000a). Mutual dependence is heavily weighted in favor of richer, more powerful nations that continue to reap the benefits built on a legacy of colonialism. The effects have been the reduction of wage growth, immiseration, and marginalization of the vulnerable in society (“Facts: Global inequality,” n.d.).

These structural changes have been coupled with multilateral cultural shifts. Libertarian economic policies have been tethered with notions of social freedoms and progressive politics on gender, race, sexual orientation, and identity. As neoliberalism has taken on the guise of progressiveness, it has recently been juxtaposed with reactionary populism, leading to an anti-globalist backlash (Fraser, 2017). Contemporary social movements have been somewhat neglectful of the effects of income inequality and the erosion of workers’ rights, especially for blue-collar workers. The result has been an increase in discontent that has been targeted at progressive and globalist politics and at democracy as a whole. This has recently manifested in the increased popularity of populist and authoritarian leaders (Eichengreen, 2018).

The free market requires “lofty aspirations, consumerism, emphasis on material/money goals, and competition” (Passas, 2000a, p. 19) to feed continued growth. Individualism and the goal of accumulating wealth has become the dominant mandate. Passas (2000a) adds that factors such as the availability of imported goods, international travel, and exposure to media become enshrined in the local culture, which fuels new desires. This is coupled with the exposure to distant referents that are used as points of comparison.

In the spirit of creating a holistic and integrated theory, Passas links anomie and Merton’s reference group analysis (Merton, 1968; Passas, 1990, 1997). Reference groups

explain the influence of others on the internalizing of cultural goals. They are the theoretical link between the macro-level forces of globalization that create anomie and the micro-level outcomes that contribute to individual strain (Agnew, 1997). Individual values and attitudes are shaped by those in their proximate environment. Referents may be individuals, ideas, or abstract ideas (Passas, 1997). Globalization expands reference groups to include three sources (Twyman-Ghoshal, 2012). First, referents in a person's *local membership groups* are those being interacted with directly. Second, *local non-membership groups* are ones not in the person's direct interaction group but are from familiar and proximate environments. Finally, the third are *distant non-membership groups*, which are influencers that are both socially and physically distant. Factors such as media, entertainment, migration, and diasporas have created a new class of referents that fuel aspirations disembedded from local contexts. The disembedding process of globalization allows social relations to be made across time and space (Giddens, 1990). This means that comparisons can also be made to past conditions (Passas, 2000a). These referents are not only comparative, where individuals model their aspirations on others, they are also normative (Passas, 1997). Therefore, actions and behaviors of referents become paradigms to be emulated.

This selection of referents provides for unique globalized environments that blend local and distant realities. Globalization's effects are not uniform, instead creating unique cocktails of global and local (Sheptycki, 2005). The variation and relativism of the globalized experience is explained in GAT through reference group analysis. The interconnectedness created by globalization includes the sharing of ideas through the various types of reference groups. The current form of globalization has blended notions of

freedom and liberty, where narratives move beyond consumerism and competition to include ideas of upward social mobility, egalitarianism, fundamental human rights, democracy, and justice, all filtered through a local prism.

The neoliberal economic model requires the stimulation of new needs and goals, especially the value of material gain. It has dispersed a celluloid fantasy that drives grand ideas disconnected from reality. The result is a medley of local and global mores that for so many are unachievable. When this is coupled with an awareness of inequalities and injustices due to structural constraints and asymmetries, it creates anxiety and frustration.

Phase two analyzes the discrepancies caused by the incongruence of the promises of global neoliberalism and the reality of structural inequalities and perceived injustices. The neoliberal model fails to account for the historic power imbalance stemming from colonialism, exploitation, and white supremacy, which has a direct effect on the practical application and functioning of the free market (Kennedy, 2016). The free market maintains a stark resemblance to older forms of exploitation with asymmetries visible both between and within nations. This is evident by practices such as trade protective measures and subsidies in the Global North, which hamper the penetration of markets by goods from countries in the Global South. This is while nations in the Global South are pressured to accept complete liberalization of their economies in exchange for debilitating development loans that create odious debt (Passas, 2000a). The means–ends discrepancies are felt both at an individual and an organizational level.

Older forms of exploitation are also evidenced in the Global North, with increased concentrations of wealth widening the gap between rich and poor (Fuentes-Nieva &



Galasso, 2014). Although some places have reduced the number of people living in extreme poverty, overall income inequality has expanded with unprecedented levels of wealth amassed by the well-off (“Facts: Global inequality,” n.d.). Widening income inequality in the Global North has created measurable public health indicators, including higher infant mortality, declining life expectancy, reduced social mobility, increased teenage births, surging mental illness, and decreasing public trust (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). A key driver of neoliberal policies, the United States, has witnessed the growth of income inequality and wealth disparities at unprecedented levels (Chappell, 2019).

GAT centers the analysis on neoliberal policies that have created increased inequality and eroded welfare and other assistance programs. The effects are intensified because fundamental neoliberal ideology promotes individualism and personal responsibility for failures while actively eroding communitarianism and social responsibility (Harvey, 2007). The result is that the promises of the free market are broken through stratification, discrimination, and adverse structural conditions all while failure is constructed as self-created. Adler has characterized this shift as one moving away from *synnomie*, that is, “a state of social solidarity characterized by conformity, cohesion, intact social controls, and norm integration” (2000, p. 281) toward *anomie*.

The concept of ontological insecurity was added to GAT to capture the psychological impact of these contradictions on the psyche of society (Twyman-Ghoshal, 2012). Giddens defines ontological insecurity as “a lack of confidence that most human beings have in their self-identity and the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action” (1990, p. 92). The outcome of disembedding social relations and

cultural identities from their local and community context is that of feelings of instability. With continuous, large-scale transformations uncertainty about the future and about the roles individuals play in the system become a permanent concern. Awareness of inequities, injustice, and exploitation creates feelings of strain, where aspirations cannot be achieved under the existing structural conditions.

Systematic strain is experienced at all social strata. Passas uses Merton’s work on deprivation to explain how frustration is not solely an attribute of the poor (Clinard, 1964; Cullen & Messner, 2007; Merton, 1957, 1968; Passas, 1990, 1997; Taylor et al., 1973). Deprivation analysis includes two types: absolute and relative. Absolute deprivation refers to the experience of demonstrable hardship. Relative deprivation is the perception of hardship that results from the comparison with others that are considered peers or aspirants. It is aptly explained by the insight that “the less one has the less one aspires to, the less limited one feels the more intolerable any and all limitations appear to be” (Passas, 1997, p. 69). When aspirations are sold wholesale to entire societies that are subject to class, gender, and racial hierarchies, the result is a discontented and frustrated population. Frustration leads to a search for ways to alleviate the systemic pressures. Adaptations vary; solutions may be individual, organizational, or specific to a stratified social group.

The means–ends discrepancies produced by neoliberalism felt at an organizational level provide the impetus for harmful behaviors by corporate and state actors. The pervasiveness of the neoliberal promise has enshrined expectations of unfettered growth and market freedom in corporate culture. Restrictions on such behavior are perceived as unjust and produce pressures toward

deviance. These occur through the exploitation of political, economic, legal, and other asymmetries. This can manifest in corporations rationalizing harmful actions as conforming, “while blocking attempts to reduce their harmful effects and externalities” (Passas, 2005b, p. 776). Nation-states similarly feel pressures for deviant adaptations when desired goals cannot be achieved under extant conditions. These pressures stem from goals that prioritize economic power and political dominance. When such goals are not met due to limitations placed in international law that protect human rights or the environment, governments experience strain and rationalize harmful actions as being in the national interest (Twyman-Ghoshal & Passas, 2015).

The third phase of the framework examines the resulting pressures toward deviance. The impact occurs over time when strain creates pressure for different adaptations, some of which are deviant. The adaptations differ based on whether institutional means and/or cultural goals are accepted or rejected (see Merton, 1938). These adaptations may take the form of *innovation*, where culturally promoted aspirations are sought through creative but possibly socially harmful or criminal means. Adaptations may also be *rebellious*, where both the cultural goals and the institutional means are rejected. These may take the form of violent or non-violent opposition aiming to reshape cultural goals and the established normative practices. This could also present itself in a rejection of progressive values and democracy, with a push for a return to more traditional values (Eichengreen, 2018). Alternatively, those that feel they are not able to achieve the goals and cannot continue to follow the legally proscribed means, may *retreat*, through various forms of social escape such as living in seclusion or through substance abuse. Conformity, the most common

adaptation, where proscribed goals are sought using accepted means can also be deviant, particularly in a noxious social environment (such as in a fascist state). Although Merton’s (1938) original formulation of adaptations seems linear, drawing on knowledge from the life-course perspective (Benson, 2013), it is probable that these adaptations change over time. For instance, *conforming* behavior, the most common adaptation, may develop into *ritualism* (where cultural goals remain distant, despite efforts to achieve them using accepted means, are ultimately rejected) or *innovation* (where ambitions remain unfulfilled using conventional methods and are replaced with creative, alternative, and perhaps, criminal means).

To identify the likelihood of a particular outcome for individual cases requires intervening structuring variables (Cullen, 1984). Structuring variables, when coupled with environmental opportunities, explain the direction of an actor’s deviant outcomes. These have not been explored in the current formulations of GAT and remain an important area for theory elaboration. Vaughan (2007) has suggested that the macro-level and micro-level variables can be integrated through the analysis of formal and complex organization at the meso level. Another possibility would be to explore the psycho-social impact of inequality on values, self-worth, and mental health (see Wilkinson & Pickett, 2019). This would also pave the way for links to the various types of strains experienced and their effects as elaborated in general strain theory (see Agnew, 1997, 2010).

To explain how social controls are loosened to allow for deviant adaptations, Passas integrated Sykes and Matza’s (1957) neutralization theory into the global anomie approach (Passas, 2005a). Behaviors that are illegal or socially harmful are enabled when certain social values and norms are deactivated.

This takes into account that norms are not rejected wholesale but are a result of an increased amount of drift (see Matza, 1964/2018) created in an anomie-trending environment. Deviance is rationalized and explained within the structural-cultural contradictions. Neutralization allows individuals and collective actors to act harmfully, creating another source of anomie.

Phase four considers the development of deviant normative subcultures. Passas (2005a) posits that when deviant adaptations are successful (achieving or advancing toward intended goals) and continue with impunity (social controls are ineffective or absent), behavior is normalized, and subcultures develop. Drawing on Vaughan's (1996) work on normalization, GAT suggests that actors engaged in illicit or harmful conduct become normative referents for others. New members of the deviant subculture may join the activities even if the original source of strain was not experienced, imitating behavior because it is both successful and accepted. The deviant behavior becomes a normative standard, resulting in further descent toward a state of anomie.

Finally, the fifth phase examines the effect of anomie on governability. The implementation of neoliberal policies has required nations to reduce interference in the private sector, to allow it to grow in all aspects of social life. However, as societies struggle with the shifts in structure and culture, the "shield of state," which is needed to cushion the most damaging effects of an uncontrolled capitalist environment, are absent or insufficient to reduce the suffering (Passas, 2000a). This is heightened by a lacking and inconsistent legal and institutional infrastructure, which creates dysnomie.

Dysnomie, which makes effective governance difficult, is based on a deficient normative framework. It is about the failure of lead-

ership and the social structure to effectively regulate harmful behavior. In its original formulation, dysnomie is caused by three factors: "a lack of global norm-making mechanism, inconsistent enforcement of international rules, and a regulatory patchwork of diverse and conflicting legal traditions and practices" (Passas, 2000a, p. 37). The focus of neoliberalism on deregulation belies the inherent need for global norm-making in a free-market environment (Munck, 2005). The free market has stimulated global profit seeking, which when left unfettered by universal standards to protect the vulnerable, allows for harmful and criminal practices, both illegal and legal (Passas, 2005b).

Two examples are the unprecedented levels of human exploitation and environmental degradation that are currently being witnessed. The result of an uncontrolled free market is that it is estimated that there are currently 35.8 million slaves, more than at any time in history (Bales, 2016). At the same time, it is clear that human activity is the cause of the heating of the Earth's surface, creating the existential crisis of anthropogenic climate change (Hansen, 2009; Oreskes, 2004). Without commensurate legal standard, the free market has allowed profit seeking to trump responsible, humane, and sustainable activities.

In his conception of dysnomie, Passas was particularly concerned with international law (Passas, 2000a). His analysis was focused primarily on the failures of developing adequate international standards and the inconsistent application of those standards. A particular issue with regard to the introduction of international standards and laws has been the selective insistence on national sovereignty. This is evident in the contradiction of countries being resolute about their right to self-determination while simultaneously being forced to accept structural adjustments

mandated by international financial institutions. This paradox provides context for the dysnomie at a domestic level.

In the original formulation of GAT, dysnomie on the domestic level is not elaborated. Building on Passas's notion of the shield of the state, the impact on governability was expanded to include analysis of domestic governance (Twyman-Ghoshal, 2012; Twyman-Ghoshal & Passas, 2015). Scholars have identified that government action can be a significant mediator between neoliberal globalization and societies (Dupont, Grabosky, & Shearing, 2003; Giddens, 2003; Munck, 2005). Moreover, it also has a central role in stimulating or thwarting criminal behavior (Neumayer, 2003; United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2007; Waller & Sansfacon, 2000; Williams & Baudin O'Hayon, 2002).

As societies have changed with globalization, traditional governance practices that are based on a hierarchical relationship between the state and its citizens have become inadequate (Stoker, 1998). Nevertheless, neoliberal ideology has used these traditional practices to deregulate the system. Drawing on democratic principles where a domestic government's role is in representing and empowering its citizenry (rather than corporate or elite interests), the concept of *civic governance* was introduced to augment GAT. Civic governance describes governance that transcends the facilitation of a free market to establishing legitimacy (Twyman-Ghoshal, 2012). A lack of legitimacy has been established as a key element of anomie (Teymoori et al., 2016). Legitimacy originates from a state's justification for its authority, which comes from the public that it seeks to govern. Shearing and Wood (2003) refer to the related idea of *community governance*, where central authority is dispersed and the boundaries between public and private are blurred.

"This is not about a reduction of government, rather the dispersal of government power across new sites of action, augmented through new strategies and technologies" (Kennett, 2008, p. 10). It is argued that maintaining a stable, reflexive, and effective legal order is achieved through empowering civil society through collaboration. An empowered civil society enables more communitarianism; residents and groups are able to articulate interests, voice concerns, exercise legal and human rights, fulfill responsibilities, and mediate conflicts in an equitable environment. Civic governance requires rules, institutions, practices, and social control mechanisms that create a normative framework that sets both limits and incentives. Rights and responsibilities are negotiated between the three pillars of society: the state, civil society, and private sector. With a nod to IAT, the idea is that an empowered civil society rebalances the equilibrium between the pillars of society by strengthening the role of individual actors, social groups, public or semi-public organizations, and social institutions. Countries where societies, economies, and communities work together to create sustainable environments for people and nature have higher levels of well-being (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2019). Such a strengthening of civic governance through a democratizing process increases the effectiveness of domestic norms by reducing structural discrepancies and inequalities. There is strong empirical evidence that more unequal societies have more acute health and social problems that affect all (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). Therefore, civic governance abates dysnomie at a domestic level and can support consistent and universal norm-making mechanisms and its enforcement at an international level.

Aiming to provide key points of policy intervention, GAT is a functionalist and integrative theory (as evidenced in Figures 1 and 2).

At the early stage of the process, it suggests that open-market policies need to account for the power and economic imbalances present in the system, specifically to reduce or eradicate asymmetries that are undesirable and to create a criminogenic effect (Passas, 1999). Accommodations need to be made for countries in the Global South to help shield populations from the pressures of a hyper-capitalist environment. Similar strategies are needed in developed economies to ensure that the most vulnerable and marginalized in society do not suffer. Compensations need to be made to address the decline in communitarianism that has increasingly been forfeited for the benefit of individualism and consumerism. These interventions address the need for a rebalancing of the institutional pillars of society and a reduction in the means–ends discrepancies that produce strains.

Simultaneously, GAT identifies that governments need to ensure that regulations represent and respond to citizen's needs. There needs to be space for a "globalization from below" (Passas, 1999, p. 417) that respects and empowers civil society. This cooperation between civil society, the state, and the private sector for the benefit of harmonization and rebalancing can only occur if there is consensual knowledge on the risks of an unfettered market economy and its consequences. Therefore, education of the public and policymakers is essential to curb criminogenic asymmetries (Passas, 1999).

Finally, the governability element of GAT identifies that global markets need commensurate international regulations that ensure human rights and the environment are protected. This requires a harmonization of laws across jurisdictions by lawmakers. This will be particularly fruitful if there is collaboration across and within jurisdictions, as well as between public and private sectors, to ensure

standards are perceived as fair and warranted. The formulations of the theory and points of intervention make clear that governments are not powerless to reduce the harm and crime produced by the global anomie process; what is necessary is a willingness to actively tackle the problems created.

## APPLICATIONS OF GAT

Much of the focus on developments from Merton's social-structure-and-anomie paradigm have been on the elaboration and testing of strain theory (Featherstone & Deflem, 2003). This has somewhat overshadowed the power and effectiveness of anomie theory generally and GAT specifically. Due to its complexity, GAT presents unique methodological challenges. For instance, the conceptualization and measurement of anomie has been fraught with difficulties (Passas, 2000b; Teymoori et al., 2016). Conceptualizations have varied between understanding anomie as a state of society and a state of mind (Teymoori et al., 2016). Measurement of the social structure has been particularly challenging, and many quantitative studies have used individual perceptions to capture societal conditions (see Atteslander, Gransow, & Western, 1999 as a notable exception of measuring anomie as a combination of objective- and subjective-level variables).

Nevertheless, from around the end of the 20th century, GAT has been applied in a variety of international contexts. It has also been applied to a range of behaviors and crime types, looking at both crimes of the powerful (such as state crime and corporate crime) and the powerless (such as the trade in antiquities and maritime piracy). The theory lends itself well to understanding white-collar and corporate crimes, state and state-corporate crimes, and transnational and international crimes, all of which require a more systemic

analysis. GAT has been used to analyse un-sanctioned wars, terrorism, extraordinary renditions, torture, toxic waste, environmental harms, corporate crime, human trafficking, maritime piracy, countering terrorist finance, counter-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, illicit markets, and the conflict economy (Passas, 2005a, 2005b, 2009, 2012; Passas & Bowman Proulx, 2011; Passas & Jones, 2006; Twyman-Ghoshal, 2012; Zabyelina, 2014). The theory has also been applied in its distinct parts, particularly to study dysnomie and criminogenic asymmetries (Passas, 2003a; Twyman-Ghoshal, 2014; Zabyelina, 2014). Much of this empirical work on GAT has been done using qualitative methods that allow for the use of a wide variety of primary and secondary sources.

The global anomie process has been particularly useful to explain economic crimes, including transnational and corporate deviance that have been a major concern of our time (Myers, 1995; Passas, 1990, 1998, 1999, 2003b, 2005b; Shelley, 1995; UNODC, 2010). The through line of this work has been to identify how neoliberal policies that deregulate business practices and minimize the role of governments in economic life have served to create anomic trends, asymmetries, and criminogenesis that have fundamentally undermined “the democratic process and sustainable economic growth” (Passas, 2005b, p. 772). This work has been useful in exposing the many willful social harms perpetrated by legal entities and individuals in high social standing.

Like other complex theories (see, for example, “General Strain Theory” and “Differential Association”), GAT has been used to study select components of the theory as well as in its entirety. An example of an element of the theory being used for analysis was Passas’s (2003a) examination of abortion law reform in the United Kingdom. Here, the effect of

socio-economic changes on normative contradictions were analyzed. Looking at the passing of the British Abortion Act of 1967, Passas (2003a) analyzed the social conditions of the 1960s that created an environment conducive to social reform. At the time of its passing, British society was experiencing structural contradictions, conflicts, and tensions that led to a waning of traditional beliefs and morals. Therefore, despite a rather long history of women having to deal with unwanted pregnancies, this analysis identified how structural contradictions of the time created a unique environment that allowed pressure groups, such as the Abortion Law Reform Association, to seize the moment to generate the necessary momentum for reform. In this study, anomie was a beneficial factor in bringing about a desirable social change.

Zabyelina (2014) used another GAT component, the articulation of criminogenic asymmetries, to explain wildlife crime—specifically the illicit market for black caviar in the Volga–Caspian basin. She identified how wealth gaps between states, together with legal and price asymmetries, have enabled an illicit market that provides incentives for profit, and identified a new type of asymmetry—the uneven access to resources—that is likely to become an increasing problem with the effects of climate change. Resource asymmetries were an added incentive for deviance, particularly in a free-market global economy that focuses on limitless growth.

Another element of GAT—the concept of dysnomie—has also been explored independently. Dysnomie was used for the analysis of the normative framework governing maritime piracy, a crime with universal jurisdiction (Twyman-Ghoshal, 2014). The analysis studied specifically the international response to Somali piracy and the international normative framework. The work illustrated

the problems created when rules governing behavior are based on antiquated and historical notions of the piracy problem and the resistance to creating more responsive and effective rules. The analysis also examined the problems of the lack of enforcement of related legislation due to power asymmetries.

Thiel's (2011) work on India is an example of applying the core elements of GAT. Although she did not use the GAT analytic framework to guide the study, her approach of the India case study provides an in-depth examination of how the first and second phases of the framework triggered "anomic tendencies in Indian society" (p. 24). Thiel used the theory to analyze how the economic reforms of the 1990s dramatically changed the Indian economy. India, like many other countries in the Global South, was subject to World Bank conditionalities that changed the political economy. The study showed that as India was restructured and opened to international trade, the economy boomed but simultaneously created an overemphasis on goals. The effect has been measurable societal-level harms, including increased rates of corruption, corporate fraud, suicide, bride burning, and female infanticide. Case studies such as these have been particularly useful for testing GAT because they allow for the use of multiple sources of qualitative and quantitative data and look at contemporary phenomena within their real-life context.

A holistic analysis of the theory was Passas's study of transnational economic crime in countries transitioning to market democracies, focusing particularly on Russia (Passas, 2000a, 2003). Russia provided the opportunity to study a natural experiment of a country transitioning from a highly controlled political environment to the free market. The analysis traced the development of criminogenic asymmetries in economy, politics, law, and culture created through the

rapid alignment of Russia to the free market. The case was used to illustrate how the intensity with which economic reforms occurred created counterintuitive results of increased crime, corruption, and economic hardship for many.

Passas (2000a) examined the case of Russia from prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the period from 1985 to 1991, when gradual economic reforms were introduced that paved the way for future transitions. As this was accelerated by the 1991 coup, policies were implemented that accelerated the pace of transition to a free market without the commensurate support of institutions and regulatory infrastructure. Simultaneously, promises of prosperity were made by both government leaders and an increasingly open media. Means–ends discrepancies were created when the necessary structural opportunities were absent for most in the country to achieve the new goals. The erosion of government protections to shield the population from absolute poverty and high unemployment created desperation for many. Using reference group and deprivation analysis, Passas identified that individual comparisons were made not just to new distant referents but also to their past situation. This created frustration across the population when stagnant wages were no longer sufficient to provide basic necessities or expected wealth. The outcome was a variety of adaptive behaviors, including an increase in deviance such as forced prostitution, child labor, car smuggling, banking crimes, and alcoholism. At the same time, the mechanisms of social control were eroded due to the decreased level of autonomy of the state to govern legitimately and effectively. Successful deviance became normative as the country continued to spiral into a wider normative breakdown and the distinction between legal and illegal became blurred.

The development of the GAT analytic framework (Figure 3) modeled on the Russian case study (Passas, 2000a) has allowed for a more detailed and empirical analysis of the social process leading to anomie, dysnomie, and deviance. The GAT framework was first used to analyze the onset and prevalence of maritime piracy in Somalia (Twyman-Ghoshal, 2012). In order to provide a more robust analysis of the effects of globalization and neoliberalism on society that create anomie and deviance, the framework provided clear components that encapsulate predicted factors that were compared to the case being studied. The Somali piracy study identified how the impact of globalization and neoliberalization created the context for the emergence of piracy in a country that had no history of piratical activity. Beyond explaining the onset of piracy in Somalia, the study examined whether reference group, deprivation, and normalization effects could explain the escalation of piracy in the mid-2000s, using a wide range of primary and secondary materials. It was identified that the predicted process did match the sequence of events in Somalia that led to the increase in piracy attacks. Notably, the use of the GAT framework for this case provided valuable theoretical development that included the incorporation of feedback effects on governance and the recognition of the importance of both global and domestic governance.

The GAT analytic framework was also used to examine the state crime of forced eviction of Chagossians from the British Indian Ocean Territory (Twyman-Ghoshal & Passas, 2015). Here, the framework was used to examine the effects of anomie-trending economies on state actors, who in the face of international legal restrictions used their political and economic power to forcibly remove the entire indigenous population of the Chagos Archipelago in the

1970s. The goals for the U.S. and the U.K. governments were to maintain hegemony of the global economy that was being threatened by post-war decolonization. The U.S. and U.K. governments perceived the Chagos island of Diego Garcia as a critical access point to achieve strategic economic and political goals (Twyman-Ghoshal, 2021). This human rights violation resulted in long-term physical and psychological harm to the dispossessed population and their descendants.

The analytic framework paves the way for GAT to be used in a more systematic and replicable way in future empirical tests. Concerns have been raised about the possibility of omitting contradictory evidence when studying the concepts of a theory such as GAT (Zabyelina, 2014). This can be addressed with a more systematic approach to testing theories, such as through the use of an analytic framework that organizes empirical research (Twyman-Ghoshal, 2012). The combination of chronological order with a list of suggested indicators (see Appendix) provides researchers with a structure that compares evidence collected against the theoretically predicted outcomes (Yin, 2003). The repeated testing of the theory using this analytic structure allows researchers to identify the validity and reliability of the framework. Applying the framework, as was done in the Somali piracy and the Chagos forced eviction studies, allows the opportunity to develop and enhance the structure to better represent social reality (Twyman-Ghoshal & Passas, 2015).

In conclusion, it remains to be reiterated that Passas's GAT is not meant to be an abstract theory of deviance but a reflection of social reality. GAT strengthens and makes clear that anomie is a relevant and useful concept for understanding the social conditions in the age of globalization. While GAT concentrates on understanding and critiquing



the effects of globalization underpinned by neoliberal ideology, it does not endorse other economic models. In fact, the theory posits that any economic model that creates stratifications and asymmetries in a world of interconnections will have similar outcomes. The aim of GAT has been to provide a more robust understanding of the social context for crime and willful social harm.

Other theories are compatible with GAT, and these need further integration. There are areas where the theory can be further strengthened. For instance, the theory does not articulate the structuring variables that

predict the types of adaptation, or the way institutional balance changes depending on the global-local context of neoliberal reforms. Moreover, much of the research on GAT has been qualitative, paving the way for scholars using quantitative methods to develop representative samples to test the theory. These and other lines of theory development identified in this article invite a range of future research projects. A better analysis of the global anomie process and future applications of the theory will allow for better policy implications that can pave the way for a more just society.

**APPENDIX: GLOBAL ANOMIE THEORY ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK PHASES AND SUGGESTED INDICATORS**

PHASE	TYPE	THEMES	EXAMPLES
1	<b>Globalization &amp; Neoliberalization</b>	Economic Restructuring	Structural adjustments; legal reforms; societal reforms; privatization; austerity; changes in public spending, public sector and public service policies.
		Deregulation	Reduction on legal constraints, regulations, and government mandates; reduction of standards and safety nets; strengthening rights of corporations, e.g., land and property rights.
		Dependence	Development of new international relations; increased reliance on superpower states and international financial institutions; reliance on aid, foreign investment, and imports.
		Increased Poverty	Poverty levels; income inequality; increased marginalization; homelessness; charities; private service providers.
		Consumerism & Competition	Increased levels of international trade; availability of foreign products in domestic markets; increased availability of foreign travel; migration; increased levels of communication; media access and exposure.
		Comparative & Normative Referents	Levels of interconnectedness both domestically and internationally, increase in numbers of foreign corporations and foreign populations; migration; increased levels of communication; media access and exposure.
		Egalitarian Discourse	Exposure to promises of human rights, democracy, justice and equity, media, literacy.

*(continued)*

APPENDIX: Continued

PHASE	TYPE	THEMES	EXAMPLES
2	<b>Means–Ends Discrepancies &amp; Asymmetries</b>	Means–Ends Discrepancies	Opportunities limited to select sectors of society; unmet aspirations; stratification; lacking or insufficient social services; discrimination; widening gap between rich and poor.
		Perception of Injustice, Inequities, & Exploitation	Injustices real or perceived; discontent voiced.
		Deprivation: Absolute & Relative	Changes in level of poverty, hunger, homelessness, life expectancy, infant mortality, and literacy; lack of basic needs; perception of deficit; increased materialism; expectations of social mobility.
3	<b>Pressures toward Deviance</b>	Ontological Insecurity & Strain	Feelings of uncertainty of income, of familial roles, and of opportunities; insecurity; unhappiness; desperation; anger; growing distrust; growth in mental illness.
		Overemphasis on Goals	Growth of focus on success, material goals, making money, and status.
		Adaptations	Conflict, activism, protests, social movements; corruption; crimes, homelessness; drug use; alcoholism; unemployment; truancy; low school attendance; stagnation; mental illness.
4	<b>Successful Deviant Subcultures</b>	Neutralization	Rationalizations; explanations; societal response to deviance; decrease in public health.
		Deviance Becomes Normative	Growth in crime rates, destructive social behaviors.
		Deviance Adopted Without Strain	Increased recruitment in deviant groups; increased deviance in organizations.
5	<b>Impact on Governability</b>	Dysnomie	Lack of global norm-making mechanisms, lack of international laws and regulations to govern behavior. Inconsistent enforcement of international rules, international conventions remain unratified, unenforced, or ignored. Regulatory patchwork of legal traditions and practices creates confusion over applicable norms or is enforced discriminately.
		Ineffective Civic Governance	Punishment practices; government form (i.e., authoritarian, totalitarian, etc.); representation of citizens; participation of citizens.

Adapted from Twyman-Ghoshal (2012, pp. 260–261).

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**Anamika Twyman-Ghoshal**

## **GLOBAL COMMERCIAL AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN**

### **DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTUAL ISSUES**

Despite slavery being illegal in every country in the world, estimates suggest that today, there are more people trafficked for servitude than ever before in history (Free the Slaves, n.d.). Slavery has been present for millennia, and the institution itself has seen dramatic changes with modernity. Its persistence is proof of this criminality’s ability not only to survive, but to thrive, fueled by increasing levels of poverty, migration, and the vulnerability of humans (Hepburn & Simon, 2013). Modern slavery is composed of the sale, transfer, and receipt of human beings, known today as human trafficking or trafficking in persons (TIP), and entraps people through infinitely varied forms of force, fraud, and/or coercion (Laser-Maira, Huey, Castro, & Ehrlich, 2016; Laser-Maira, Huey, Castro, Ehrlich, & Nicotera, 2018). According to the United Nations (U.N.), TIP generates \$32 billion to \$36 billion in profit annually, third only to drug and arms trafficking (UN, 2014), and that market is rapidly growing. The relatively low risk and operational costs of TIP,

compared to drug and arms trafficking (Haynes, 2004; Hepburn & Simon, 2013), suggest that this illicit industry will continue to see rapid growth for the foreseeable future.

Human trafficking is clandestine, and reliable statistics are often difficult to obtain (Tyldum, 2010). The United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) reports that across the world, 46% of victims were trafficked domestically, thus never leaving their country (2016). Therefore, many victims and traffickers share a language and ethnicity (UNODC, 2016). That similarity makes exploitation by traffickers easier, since they can generate greater trust and may even be acquainted with the victim’s family (Laser-Maira et al., 2016; UNODC, 2016). Additionally, being of the same gender also facilitates trafficking, with many girls and women being trafficked by other girls or women (UNODC, 2016). However, 54% of trafficking victims are coming from another country and are crossing borders due to conflict, violence, persecution, human rights violations, or economic devastation (Hepburn & Simon, 2013; UNODC, 2016). These victims can be seen as foreign, different, or coming from religious traditions that reduce traffickers’ feelings of compassion and may increase brutality (Burke, 2015; Global Detention Project, 2018; Walk Free, 2018). The foreign victim of human trafficking can also experience isolation and fear of deportation (Burke, 2015; Laser-Maira & Campos, 2018; Polaris, 2010).

Victims are trafficked for sexual exploitation (54%), forced labor (38%), and other forms (8%, including removal of organs or tissue, selling babies/children, forced marriage, forced begging, and child soldiers; UNDOC, 2016). Trafficking victims were