



# Book Talk:

## Youth Street Gangs

### New Directions in Critical Criminology

Thursday, May 14, 2015  
4:15pm to 6:00pm

### Moot Court Room, 6.68, New Building

Dr. Brotherton grew up in the East End of London, England where he worked in various blue-collar jobs while organizing labor and youth. He came to the United States in the 1980's earning his Ph.D. degree in Sociology in 1992 at the University of California, Santa Barbara while teaching public high school in San Francisco. Dr. Brotherton began research on street gang subcultures as a post-doctoral student at U.C. Berkeley in the same year. In 1994, Dr. Brotherton came to John Jay College of Criminal Justice where he continued his work on resistance, marginalization, and deportation co-founding the Street Organization Project with Luis Barrios in 1997. He has received numerous research grants from private and public agencies and has published widely in journals, books, newspapers and magazines. Dr. Brotherton edits the Public Criminology book series (established with Jock Young) at Columbia University Press. In 2011 he was named Critical Criminologist of the Year and in 2014 received the Distinguished Fellowship Award for Advanced Research at the CUNY Graduate Center. His work has won the Choices Award from the American Library Association and has been nominated for the George Orwell Prize in England and the C. Wright Mills Award in the United States.



*David Brotherton, Professor of  
Sociology, John Jay College and  
Graduate Center*

Gangs have been heavily pathologized in the last several decades. In comparison to the pioneering Chicago School work on gangs in the 1920's we have moved away from a humanistic appraisal of and sensitivity toward the phenomenon and have allowed the gang to become a highly plastic folk devil outside of history. This pathologization of the gang has particularly negative consequences for democracy in an age of punishment, cruelty and coercive social control. This is the central thesis of David Brotherton's new and highly contentious book on street gangs. Drawing on a wealth of highly acclaimed original research, Brotherton explores the socially layered practices of street gangs; including community movements, cultural projects and sites of social resistance. The book also critically reviews gang theory and the geographical trajectories of streets gangs from New York and Puerto Rico to Europe, the Caribbean and South America, as well as state-sponsored reactions and the enabling role of orthodox criminology. In opposition to the dominant gang discourses, Brotherton proposes the development of a critical studies approach to gangs and concludes by making a plea for researchers to engage the gang reflexively, paying attention to the contradictory agency of the gang and what gang members actually tell us. The book is essential reading for academics and students involved in the study of juvenile delinquency, youth studies, deviance, gang studies and cultural criminology.