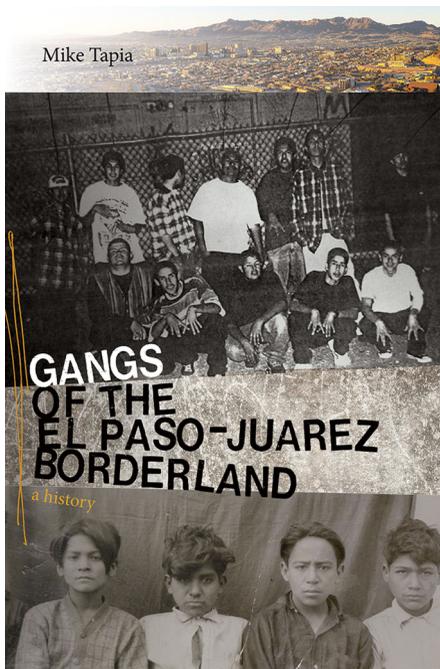


globally. Still, much more needs to be said about “Gangsta Rap” and the often-horrid conditions that propelled it.

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GANGS OF THE EL PASO-JUÁREZ BORDERLANDS. By Mike Tapia (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2019, 200 pp., \$29.95 paper). Reviewed by James Diego Vigil.

This book is a long overdue account of one of the most volatile regions of the world. The author has persuasively argued that the borderland space where the cities of El Paso (US) and Juarez (Mexico) merge is a contiguous area that includes dozens of towns on both sides of the border. Street gangs and more sophisticated cartel drug members are responsible for the mayhem and crime in the region, even though El Paso has a low crime rate. This borderland space has a long history going back to the Wild West period; John Wesley Hardin, the famous gunslinger is buried in an El Paso public cemetery. It also is the oldest western US city with a street gang history.



I once asked a girl who joined us on an auto cruise through our neighborhood in early 1950s Downtown Los Angeles where she was “from,” a common practice for street people, and her answer surprised me. She responded with pride and an “attitude” that was supposed to command respect from me: EPT, she uttered, an acronym for El Paso Texas. Later, when I joined Pro-

essor Joan Moore’s group, the Chicano Pinto Research Project, she had just completed her book, *Homeboys* (1978, Temple), and in the account had mentioned in some detail the Texas syndicate in California prisons: EPT. As Tapia correctly states, the cholo gang style was born in El Paso, named pachuco, and found its way to Los Angeles during the early 1940s. Tapia views this earlier and later gang history as a result of poverty and discrimination and poignantly portrays how it unfolded in the El Paso/Juarez borderlands region.

Although full of descriptive content, Tapia allows readers to see for themselves what the trials and tribulations of the youth population are like. Expert analysis follows when needed and is thought provoking, insightful, and grounded upon data gathered by other researchers. The chapters are organized sequentially from the beginnings to the present day when drug cartels appeared and women became targets of a murderous element in the area. These are very gripping, telling stories, delivered in a very clear style that additionally captures a broad tapestry of the region, neighborhood, and family life. Children suffered from both the restrictions and discrimination heaped on them; stigmatized as poor and faulted for their own problems, the public seldom looked behind the situations and conditions that gave impetus to this street lifestyle.

Professor Tapia finishes with a concluding chapter that expertly ties together the importance of history and geography in understanding criminal subcultures. The developments in this case are far reaching because they begin just after the War of 1848, when Mexicans had to adjust to a racist US government, and continue to the present when President Trump decided to put children in cages. Many of the towns on the borderlands developed the street lifestyle to ward off this treatment, but unfortunately, they became victims of their own anger and frustration.

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