

toughness compared with other groups. One's rep refers to both law-abiding and law-violating behavior. Which behavior will dominate depends on a complex set of factors, such as which community reference groups (criminals or police) are admired or respected or the individual needs of the gang members. Above all, having status is crucial and is far more important than the means selected in achieving it.

Violence is a learned behavior that can be unlearned. In desolate areas, pride becomes a fiercely guarded commodity and showing weakness invites trouble (Ahmed, 2010). Deanna Wilkinson of Ohio State University researches urban youth violence and notes that if youths in some subcultures walk away from a fight, they fear losing whatever status they had. Gary Slutkin of Chicago's Cease Fire program said his group targets changing the social norms that feed violence. Experts believe many factors put children at risk of falling into a pattern of violent thinking and behavior: "growing up in poverty, living in violent circumstances, failing to read at grade level by third grade, not graduating high school, and not being surrounded by caring, protective adults" (Shelton, 2010). Greg Boyle, a Jesuit priest in Los Angeles who runs Homeboy Industries (one of the nation's largest gang-intervention programs) comments: "It's not about thinking or behavior. It's about infusing a sense of hope so the kid starts to care. No one scares them straight—you care them straight" (Shelton, 2010; see also Boyle, 2010).

In her dissertation, Margaret Hughes of CSU-San Bernardino focused on turning points in the lives of young men who abandoned destructive behaviors, who identified alternatives to crime, made connections to neighborhoods, and understood the damage they were causing in their communities as pivotal factors for change. Hughes notes that organizations can work on changing thinking and behavior, but unless they can offer employment, violence and crime will remain in the background as alternatives (Shelton, 2010).

Several recent studies have found that lower-class offenders are often singled out for excessive punishments (especially minority males) by a court system that fails to take into account this subculture. Essentially, a mostly white, middle-class, bureaucratic subculture passes judgement on a very different subculture. Knowing that they will receive excessive punishment by the system, lower-class minority males are motivated not to get caught. At the same time, they believe they must live up to, and integrate, these focal concerns into their everyday lives.¹⁷

Control Theory

The essence of **control theory** (sometimes called **social bond theory**) is that the weakening, breakdown, or absence of effective social control accounts for delinquency. A unique feature of this perspective is that instead of asking why they do it, it asks why *don't* they do it. In other words, this theory wrestles with what it is that keeps or prevents people from committing crime. In this sense, control theory is really a theory of prevention.

The basic assumption of control theory is that proper social behavior requires socialization. Thus proper socialization leads to conformity, while