

views (see Santrock, 1981: 35–88; Cianci and Gambrel, 2003; Kenrick et al., 2010). While all of these views can be used to better understand the development of gangs, one perspective seems to relate to gangs better than most—namely, Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1951).

According to Maslow, there are five basic human needs that evolve in the following order: 1) physiological/biological, 2) safety and security, 3) love and belongingness, 4) self-esteem, and 5) self-actualization. Satisfying these needs is an essential part of everyday human struggles. Initial needs are those for basic survival, such as food and shelter, which should be met by one's parents during early childhood. The need for safety and security refers to stability, protection, freedom from fear, freedom from anxiety and chaos, and the need for structure, order, and limits.

The need for love and belongingness refers to the need to belong to some group or some individual, especially a family. If all three basic levels of needs are met, especially through the family, then the adolescent will be able to get along well with others and be motivated to satisfy the next level of need in the hierarchy. It should be noted that the need for love and belongingness becomes more problematic in an industrialized society with high geographic mobility, leading to the breakdown of traditional groupings. This often results in the formation of artificial groups, such as religious cults and gangs. (This is consistent with the social disorganization perspective.)

Self-esteem needs include self-respect, feeling good about oneself, and being held in esteem by others. It also includes the need for strength, achievement, adequacy, confidence, and a positive reputation. These needs can best be fulfilled by learning a skill, pursuing a profession, or otherwise engaging in conduct that elicits positive regard from others. Looking closely at youth gangs today, we can see how important reputation, or rep, is, and why an attack against one's reputation (often called "dissin") is a serious offense calling for severe sanctions against the offending party (Vigil, 2010).

Finally, self-actualization needs are those that can be satisfied only when all the others are satisfied. Here the individual strives to become everything he or she is capable of becoming, to fulfill his or her potentiality. Self-actualized people can keep pessimistic doubts, wishes, fears, and so on from bothering them. They are very spontaneous and creative people. They accept themselves and others and are reasonably independent.

Clearly, gangs provide many of these developmental needs of adolescents, especially those from disadvantaged neighborhoods. Perkins suggests that some gangs (especially black gangs) provide members with housing, food, clothing, and other essentials (Perkins, 1987: 59). They are given a sense of security and power, a sense of belonging, identity, and discipline. Moore has noted that some gangs have functioned to help "order" adolescents' lives. They provided outlets for sociability, courtship, and other normal adolescent activities. More important, the legitimate institutions of socialization, such as schools and families, have become less important in adolescents' lives, and "street socialization" has begun to compete with, and often replace, these institutions (Moore, 1991: 6). In still another statement reminiscent of Thrasher, Moore further suggests that

"institutions develop where there are gaps in the existing institutional structure. Gangs as youth groups develop among the socially marginal adolescents for whom school and family do not fill socialization needs." Moreover, gangs "persist as young-adult institutions in a changed society, in which the labor market is not filling the needs of the transition from adolescence to young adulthood. It is not that they are rebels, rather it is that they are left out of the credentialed, ordered society" (Moore, 1991: 9).

Bing provides an insightful look at what gangs provide for youths. A. C. Jones, a counselor at a youth camp in Southern California, puts it this way:

What do you think happened when that kid there first began to seek out his masculinity? What happened when he first tried to assert himself? If he lived in any other community but Watts there would be legitimate ways to express those feelings. Little League. Pop Warner. But if you're a black kid living in Watts those options have been removed. You're not going to play Pop Warner. Not in Watts. Maybe if you live in Bellflower, maybe if you live in Agoura, but not in Watts—it's just not there, there's no funding for it. But you're at that prepubescent age, and you have all those aggressive tendencies and no legitimate way to get rid of them. And that's when the gang comes along, and the gang offers everything those legitimate organizations do. The gang serves emotional needs. You feel wanted. You feel welcome. You feel important. And there is discipline and there are rules. (Bing, 1991: 12)

Juv. Crp #3

Rational Choice Theory

Modern versions of the classical approach to crime learned from the mistakes of the original Classical School. Beccaria and Bentham erroneously assumed that all humans behave "rationally" all the time—that they consistently, carefully calculate the pros and cons of their behaviors. More recent examples of this view—including the *rational choice theory*—recognize that choices are often not based on pure reason and rationality; rather, they are determined by a host of factors. There are constraints on our choices because of lack of information, differing moral values, the social context of the situation, and other situational factors. In short, not everyone acts logically and rationally all the time, which may be especially true for young offenders. Indeed, it has been estimated that as many as two-thirds of delinquent acts are spur-of-the-moment acts with no advanced planning. Some planning does, of course occur, especially when the crimes are serious property crimes or systematic drug sales (Gove, 1994; Wolfgang, Thornberry, and Figlio, 1987).

Various terminology has been used, almost interchangeably, with this idea, such as *criminal opportunity theory* and *routine activity theory*.²⁰ Actually, these recent developments are merely a kind of "old wine in new bottles" since this kind of thinking originated with what has come to be called the **Classical School of Criminology**, starting with the writings of Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.