Youth Gangs in American Society

Third Edition

RANDALL G. SHELDEN
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

SHARON K. TRACY
Georgia Southern University

WILLIAM B. BROWN
Western Oregon University

THOMSON
WADSWORTH

Australia • Canada • Mexico • Singapore • Spain
United Kingdom • United States

THOMSON
WADSWORTH

Senior Executive Editor: Sabra Horne
Editorial Assistant: Paul Massicotte
Marketing Manager: Dory Schaeffer
Marketing Assistant: Alana Kelly
Advertising Project Manager: Stacey Purviance
Project Manager, Editorial Production: Matt Ballantyne
Print/Media Buyer: Rebecca Cross

Permissions Editor: Keiley Sexton
Production Service: Shepherd, Inc.
Copy Editor: Jean Pascual
Cover Designer: Yvo Riezebos
Cover Image: Getty Images
Compositor: Shepherd, Inc.
Text and Cover Printer: Transcontinental Printing, Louisville

Printed in Canada

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 07 06 05 04 03

For more information about our products, contact us at:
Thomson Learning Academic Resource Center
1-800-423-0563
For permission to use material from this text, contact us by: Phone: 1-800-730-2214
Fax: 1-800-730-2215
Web: http://www.thomsonrights.com

Library of Congress Control Number:
2003110794
ISBN 0-534-61569-4

Wadsworth/Thomson Learning
10 Davis Drive
Belmont, CA 94002-3098
USA

Asia
Thomson Learning
5 Shenton Way #01-01
UIC Building
Singapore 068808

Australia/New Zealand
Thomson Learning
102 Dodds Street
Southbank, Victoria 3006
Australia

Canada
Nelson
1120 Birchmount Road
Toronto, Ontario M1K 5G4
Canada

Europe/Middle East/Africa
Thomson Learning
High Holborn House
50/51 Bedford Row
London WC1R 4LR
United Kingdom

Latin America
Thomson Learning
Seneca, 53
Colonia Polanco
11560 Mexico D.F.
Mexico

Spain/Portugal
Paraninfo
Calle/Magallanes, 25
28015 Madrid, Spain

6

Why Are There Gangs?

Explanations of why there are gangs are really part of a much larger concern with explaining crime and delinquency in general. In fact, some of the most popular sociological theories of crime and delinquency have actually been attempts to explain gang delinquency or crime (e.g., the theories of Cohen, Cloward, Ohlin, and Miller to be discussed here). Thus, in a sense, this chapter is really a summary of some of the major theories of crime and delinquency.

Multiple theories have been offered to explain crime, delinquency, and gangs. Some have taken a strictly sociological perspective, others have come from a purely psychological point of view, while others have been a combination of both of these perspectives. Space does not permit a complete review of all the theories of crime and delinquency and gangs, although the most common theories are included here, and these take a mostly sociological approach to the problem. The theories to be reviewed here can be grouped into eight general categories: 1) social disorganization/social ecology, 2) strain/anomie, 3) cultural deviance, 4) control theory (also known as social bond), 5) social learning, 6) rational choice, 7) labeling, and 8) critical/Marxist perspectives. Figure 6.1 provides a general summary of each of these perspectives. In this chapter we will provide a general overview of each of these perspectives, followed by a more detailed discussion of specific representations of these theories.

Theory	Major Points/Key Factors
1. Social disorganization	Crime stems from certain community or neighborhood characteristics, such as poverty, dilapidated housing, high density, high mobility, and high rates of unemployment. Concentric zone theory is a variation that argues that crime increases toward the inner city area.
2. Strain/anomie	Cultural norms of "success" emphasize such goals as money, status, and power, while the means to obtain such success are not equally distributed; as a result of blocked opportunities many among the disadvantaged resort to illegal means, which are more readily available.
3. Cultural deviance	Certain subcultures, including a gang subculture, exist within poor communities, which contain values, attitudes, beliefs, norms, and so on that are often counter to the prevailing middle class culture; an important feature of this culture is the absence of fathers, thus resulting in female-headed households which tend to be poorer; youths get exposed to this subculture early in life and become embedded in it.
4. Control/social bond	Delinquency persists when a youth's "bonds" or "ties" to society are weak or broken, especially bonds with family, school, and other institutions; when this occurs a youth is apt to seek bonds with other groups, including gangs, in order to get his/her needs met.
5. Learning	Delinquency is learned through association with others, especially gang members, over a period of time. This involves a process that includes the acquisition of attitudes and values, the instigation of a criminal act based on certain stimuli, and the maintenance or perpetuation of such behavior over time.
6. Labeling	Definitions of delinquency and crime stem from differences in power and status in the larger society, and those without power are the most likely to have their behaviors labeled as "delinquency"; delinquency may be generated, and especially perpetuated, through negative labeling by significant others and by the judicial system; one may associate with others similarly labeled, such as gangs.
7. Rational choice	People freely choose to commit crime based on selfinterest because they are goal oriented and want to maximize their pleasure and minimize their pain. A variation is known as routine activities theory, which suggests that criminals plan very carefully by selecting specific targets based on such things as vulnerability (e.g., elderly citizens, unguarded premises, lack of police presence) and commit their crimes accordingly. However, choices are often based not on pure reason and rationality.
8. Critical/Marxist	Gangs are inevitable products of social (and racial) inequality brought about by capitalism itself; power is unequally distributed, and those without power often resort to criminal means to survive.

FIGURE 6.1 Perspectives on delinquency, crime, and gangs.

ommunity or neighborhood
erty, dilapidated housing, high
high rates of unemployment.
variation that argues that crime
city area.

' emphasize such goals as
while the means to obtain such
ributed; as a result of blocked
the disadvantaged resort to
ore readily available.

ng a gang subculture, exist within
ntain values, attitudes, beliefs,
ften counter to the prevailing
ortant feature of this culture is
resulting in female-headed
e poorer; youths get exposed to
nd become embedded in it.

a youth's "bonds" or "ties" to
, especially bonds with family,
ns; when this occurs a youth is
er groups, including gangs, in
met.

ough association with others,
over a period of time. This
udes the acquisition of attitudes
of a criminal act
nd the maintenance or
vior over time.

and crime stem from differences
larger society, and those
st likely to have their behaviors
delinquency may be generated,
l, through negative labeling by
ne judicial system; one may
rly labeled, such as gangs.

mmit crime based on selfinterest
nted and want to maximize their
ir pain. A variation is known as
hich suggests that criminals plan
specific targets based on such
., elderly citizens, unguarded
sence) and commit their crimes
ces are often based not on pure

ucts of social (and racial)
by capitalism itself; power is
those without power often
survive.

angs.

SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION/ SOCIAL ECOLOGY THEORY

Social disorganization theory has been one of the most popular and enduring sociological theories of crime and delinquency. Variations of this theory have been called the **social ecology** perspective, since it has a lot to do with the *spatial or geographical distribution* of crime, delinquency, and gangs (Lanier and Henry, 1998: chapter 9; Stark, 1987). Modern versions of this perspective began with the work of several sociologists at the University of Chicago during the first three decades of the 20th century. The original idea behind the spatial distribution of crime can be traced back to the mid-19th century to the work of two rather obscure scientists, Adolphe Quetelet (1796–1874), a Belgian astronomer and mathematician, and a French lawyer and statistician named Michel Guerry (1802–1866). These two were actually the first scientists who collected and analyzed various crime data and examined the residences of offenders, matching them with various socioeconomic variables, such as poverty, infant mortality, unemployment, and other social indicators. This began what became known as the **Cartographic School** of criminology—in other words, mapmaking, which involved merely plotting on a city map the location of criminals and various social indicators (e.g., with colored dots, as police departments still do today when, for example, they plot the locations of certain crimes, such as a serial rapes, or the locations of a series of muggings, auto thefts, and so on).[1]

This idea of mapmaking and the more general notion that crime is *spatially* distributed within a geographical area became one of the hallmarks of what came to be known as the **Chicago School** of sociology (named after the many researchers in the sociology department at the University of Chicago during the early 20th century). Within the city of Chicago (and other major cities of the era) these researchers noticed that crime and delinquency rates varied by areas of the city (just as Guerry and Quetelet had done 50 years earlier). The researchers found that the highest rates of crime and delinquency were also found in the same areas exhibiting high rates of multiple other social problems, such as single-parent families, unemployment, multiple-family dwellings, welfare cases, and low levels of education. One of the key ideas of the social ecology of crime is the fact that high rates of crime and other problems persist within the same neighborhoods over long periods of time *regardless of who lives there.* As several gang researchers have noted, some gangs in certain neighborhoods have existed for as long as 50 or more years, often spanning three generations. This has been especially the case in East Los Angeles.[2] Thus there must be something about the places themselves, perhaps something about the neighborhoods, rather than the people per se that produces and perpetuates high crime rates (Stark, 1987).

The social ecology perspective borrows concepts from the field of plant biology, specifically studying human life and problems using notions derived from studies of the interdependence of plant and animal life. From this perspective, people are seen as being in a relationship to one another and to their physical environment. Further, just as plant and animal species tend to colonize

their environment, humans colonize their geographical space.[3] One of the most important ideas originating from these Chicago sociologists (specifically Robert Park and Ernest Burgess) was the **concentric zone** model of city life (Burgess, 1925). This perspective on city life and land use patterns identified specified zones emanating outward from the central part of the city. Five zones were identified: 1) central business district, or the "Loop"; 2) zone in transition; 3) zone of workingmen's homes; 4) residential zone; and 5) commuter zone.

According to this theory, growth is generated (from mostly political and economic forces) outward from the central business district. Such expansion occurs in concentric waves, or circles. Such expansion and movement affects neighborhood development and patterns of social problems. Studies of the rates of crime and delinquency, especially by sociologists Henry Shaw and David McKay, demonstrated that over an extended period of time, the highest rates were found within the first three zones *no matter who lived there.* These high rates were strongly correlated with such social problems as mental illness, unemployment, poverty, infant mortality, and many others.[4]

Such a distribution is caused by a breakdown of institutional, community-based controls, which in turn is caused by three general factors: industrialization, urbanization, and immigration. People living within these areas often lack a sense of community because the local institutions (e.g., schools, families, and churches) are not strong enough to provide nurturing and guidance for the area's children. It is important to note that there are important political and economic forces at work here. The concentration of human and social problems within these zones is not the inevitable natural result of some abstract laws of nature but rather the actions of some of the most powerful groups in a city (urban planners, politicians, wealthy business leaders, and so on).

Within such environments there develops a subculture of criminal values and traditions that replaces conventional values and traditions. Such criminal values and traditions persist over time regardless of who lives in the area. (This is part of the cultural deviance theory, to be discussed shortly.) One of the classic works about gangs coming from a social disorganization perspective was that by Frederic Thrasher. His book *The Gang,* published in 1927, seems to be as relevant today as it was when originally published. For Thrasher, gangs originate from

> the spontaneous effort of boys to create a society for themselves where none adequate to their needs exists. What boys get out of such associations that they do not get otherwise under the conditions that adult society imposes is the thrill and zest of participation in common interests, more especially in corporate action, in hunting, capture, conflict, flight, and escape. Conflict with other gangs and the world about them furnishes the occasion for many of their exciting group activities. (Thrasher, 1927:32–33)

Thrasher's view of gang causation was consistent with the social disorganization perspective. Specifically, gangs develop within the most impoverished areas of a city. More specifically, Thrasher noted that gangs tend to flourish in areas he called *interstitial.* These areas lie within the poverty belt within a city, "a region characterized by the deteriorating neighborhoods, shifting populations,

and the mobility and disorganization of the slum. . . . Gangland represents a geographically and socially interstitial area in the city" (Thrasher, 1927:20–21). Such an area has been called many names, such as the zone in transition, the slum, the ghetto, and the barrio.

Thrasher found evidence of at least 1,313 gangs in Chicago, with an estimated 25,000 members. No two of these gangs were alike; they reflected the great diversity characteristic of the city of Chicago in the 1920s (even today Chicago itself and the gangs of Chicago reflect this diversification). Much like today, gang delinquency in Thrasher's day ranged from the petty (such as truancy and disturbing the peace) to the serious (serious property crime and violent crime).

His theory of why gangs exist and what functions they perform can be summarized in the following quotes:

> The failure of the normally directing and controlling customs and institutions to function efficiently in the boy's experience is indicated by the disintegration of family life, inefficiency of schools, formalism and externality of religion, corruption and indifference in local politics, low wages and monotony in occupational activities; unemployment; and lack of opportunity for wholesome recreation. All these factors enter into the picture of the moral and economic frontier, and, coupled with deterioration in the housing, sanitation, and other conditions of life in the slum, give the impression of general disorganization and decay.
>
> The gang functions with reference to these conditions in two ways: It offers a substitute for what society fails to give; and it provides a relief from suppression and distasteful behavior. It fills a gap and affords an escape. (Ibid.:228–231)

According to Thrasher, by being in a gang a young man acquires a personality and name for himself; he acquires a sort of status and has a role to play. Without the gang the individual would lack a personality in the sense used here. The gang "not only defines for him his position in society . . . but it becomes the basis for his conception of himself." The gang becomes the youth's reference group, that is, the group from which he obtains his main values, beliefs, and goals. In a sense the gang becomes his family. Moreover, these groups of youths tend to progress from what Thrasher called "spontaneous play groups" to gangs when they begin to bring on disapproval from adults. When this occurs, particularly if coupled with legal intervention, the youths become closer and develop a we feeling.[5]

Thrasher clearly believed that gangs provided certain basic needs for growing boys, such as a sense of belonging and self-esteem. This perspective is consistent with Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Maslow's views will be discussed in a later section of this chapter.

Several subsequent studies have focused on the community or neighborhood as the primary unit of analysis. Such a focus begins with the assumption that crime and the extent of gang activities vary according to certain neighborhood or community characteristics. In a study called "Racketville, Slumtown and Haulberg," Spergel found that the three neighborhoods he studied varied according to a number of criteria and had different kinds of

traditions, including delinquent and criminal norms. For example, Racketville, a mostly Italian neighborhood, had a long tradition of organized racketeering. Gangs in this neighborhood were mostly involved in the rackets because this was where the criminal opportunities were to be found (Spergel, 1964).

In contrast, the area Spergel called Slumtown was primarily a Puerto Rican neighborhood with a history of conflict and aggression. The gangs in this area were mostly involved in various conflict situations with rival gangs (usually over turf). Haulberg was a mixed ethnic neighborhood (Irish, German, Italian, and others) with a tradition of mostly property crimes; thus a theft subculture flourished.

A more recent variation of this theme can be seen in the ethnographic fieldwork of Sullivan (1989). His study of three neighborhoods in Brooklyn (which he called Projectville, La Barriada, and Hamilton Park) provides important new information about the relationship between social, cultural, and economic factors and gangs.

The three neighborhoods studied by Sullivan varied according to several socioeconomic indicators. These neighborhoods also had significantly different patterns of crime. Hamilton Park had the lowest rate of all three neighborhoods, whereas Projectville ranked first, and La Barriada ranked second. La Barriada ranked the highest for crimes of violence.

La Barriada was a mixed Latino and white area; Projectville was a largely African-American neighborhood. The third area, Hamilton Park, was predominantly white. The two neighborhoods with the highest crime rates (Projectville and La Barriada) also had 1) the highest poverty level, with more than half the families receiving public assistance; 2) the highest percentage of single-parent families; 3) the highest rate of renter-occupied housing; 4) the highest rate of school dropouts; and 5) the lowest labor-force participation rates (and correspondingly highest levels of unemployment) (Sullivan, 1989:21–27, 98).

Sullivan suggests that these differences can be explained by noting;

> The concentration in the two poor, minority neighborhoods [La Barriada and Projectville] of sustained involvement in high-risk, low-return theft as a primary source of income during the middle teens. The primary causes for their greater willingness to engage in desperate, highly exposed crimes for uncertain and meager monetary returns were the greater poverty of their households, the specific and severe lack of employment opportunities during these same mid-teen years, and the weakened local social control environment, itself a product of general poverty and joblessness among neighborhood residents. (Ibid.:203)

A key to understanding these differences, argues Sullivan, is that of personal networks rather than merely human capital. He explains that these

> personal networks derived from existing patterns of articulation between the local neighborhoods and particular sectors of the labor market. These effects of labor market segmentation were important for youth jobs both in the middle teens and during the ensuing period of work establishment. The Hamilton Park youths found a relatively plentiful supply of

temporary, part-time, almost always off-the-books work through relatives, friends and local employers during the middle teens, most of it in the local vicinity. (Ibid.:103)

When these youths reached their late teens, they were able to make use of these same contacts to get more secure and better-paying jobs. The minority youths from Projectville and La Barriada never developed such networks.

Sullivan found that among the precursors to a criminal career among most of the youths studied was involvement in some gang or clique of youths. It typically began with fighting with and against other youths. Street fighting was motivated mostly by status and territory. Beginning in their early teens, these youths would spend a great amount of time within what they considered to be their own territory or turf. The cliques and gangs these youths belonged to "were quasi-familial groupings that served to protect their members from outsiders" (ibid.:110).

STRAIN/ANOMIE THEORY

Strain theory originated with Robert Merton, who borrowed the term *anomie* from the 19th-century French sociologist Émile Durkheim and applied it to the problem of crime in America (Merton, 1968). The concept of anomie refers to inconsistencies between societal conditions and opportunities for growth, fulfillment, and productivity within a society (the term *anomia* has been used to refer to those who experience personal frustration and alienation as a result of anomie within a society). It also involves the weakening of the normative order of society—that is, norms (rules, laws, and so on) lose their impact on people. The existence of anomie within a culture can also produce a high level of flexibility in the pursuit of goals, even suggesting that it may at times be appropriate to deviate from the norms concerning the methods of achieving success.

Durkheim, writing during the late 19th century, suggested that under capitalism there is a more or less chronic state of deregulation and that industrialization had removed traditional social controls on aspirations. The capitalist culture produces in humans a constant dissatisfaction resulting in a never-ending longing for more and more. And there is never enough—whether this be money, material things, or power. There is a morality under capitalism that dictates "anything goes," especially when it comes to making money (it certainly applies to the modern corporation).

What Durkheim was hinting at (but never coming right out and saying it—this was said very forcefully by Karl Marx) was that a very strong social structure is needed to offset or place limits on this morality. In other words, strong institutions, such as the family, religion, and education, are needed to place some limits on us. But the failure of these institutions can be seen in our high crime rates and the fact that the economic institution is so powerful that it has sort of "invaded" and become dominant over other institutions. (More will be said about this shortly.)

The basic thesis of strain theory is this: Crime stems from the lack of articulation or fit between two of the most basic components of society: *culture* and

social structure.[6] Here we refer to culture as consisting of 1) the main value and goal orientations or "ends" and 2) the institutionalized or legitimate means for attaining these goals. Social structure, as used here, consists of the basic social institutions of society, especially the economy, but also such institutions as the family, education, and politics, all of which are responsible for distributing *access* to the legitimate means for obtaining goals.

According to Merton, this "lack of fit" creates strain within individuals, who respond with various forms of deviance. Thus people who find themselves at a disadvantage relative to legitimate economic activities are motivated to engage in illegitimate activities (perhaps because of unavailability of jobs, lack of job skills, education, and other factors). Within a capitalist society like United States, the main emphasis is on the success goals, while less emphasis is on the legitimate means to achieve these goals. Moreover, these goals have become institutionalized in that they are deeply embedded into the psyches of everyone via a very powerful system of corporate propaganda.[7] At the same time, the legitimate means are not as well defined or as strongly ingrained. In other words, there is a lot of discretion and a lot of tolerance for deviance from the means but not the goals. One result of such a system is high levels of crime.

Another important point made by strain theory is that our culture contributes to crime because the opportunities to achieve success goals are not equally distributed. We have a strong class structure and incredible inequality within our society, which means that some have extreme disadvantages over others.[8] Another way of saying the same thing is that *culture promises what the social structure cannot deliver,* that being equal access to opportunities to achieve success. People faced with this contradiction (one of many under capitalism) face pressures, or strains, to seek alternatives.

According to Merton, there are several possible alternatives, which he calls "modes of adaptation." In his now famous typology of adaptations (reproduced in almost every criminology textbook), Merton suggested several alternatives, which include the following:

1. *conformity*—accepting both the legitimate means and the success goals;
2. *ritualism*—accepting the means but rejecting the goals (one just goes to work every day but has given up the goal of "success");
3. *innovation*—where the person accepts the *goals* of success but rejects the legitimate *means* to obtain them;
4. *retreatism*—where one rejects both the goals *and* the means and more or less drops out of society (e.g., to become part of a drug subculture);
5. *rebellion*—where one rejects both the goals and the means but, instead of retreating, begins to substitute *new* definitions of success and means to obtain them.

Obviously, the adaptation known as *innovation* directly relates to criminal activity, including gang activities. Thus strain/anomie theory would suggest that participating in gang-related activities would be an example of being *innovative* in the pursuit of success.

According to Messner and Rosenfeld, in a recent revision of anomie theory, such strain explains high rates of crime not only among the disadvantaged but also among the more privileged since they are under "strains" to make more money, often "by any means necessary." This theory can certainly help explain the large amount of "corporate crime" in this country (Messner and Rosenfeld, 2001). Messner and Rosenfeld's revision of strain theory contains an important component that has usually been missing from writings on this particular theory. We are referring here to their emphasis on the importance of social institutions and the relationship with what is normally called the American Dream. The next section pursues this idea in more detail.

Strain Theory and the Institutional Structure of Society: Crime and the American Dream

The American Dream is a sort of ethos that is deeply embedded into our culture. Generally, it refers to a commitment to the goal of material success that is to be pursued by everyone. Within a capitalist society everyone is supposed to act in his or her own self-interest (part of the creed of rugged individualism) in this pursuit (this has been part of the mythology of the free enterprise and the free market), and this, in turn, will automatically promote the common good. Somehow, the fruits of individual pursuits in this "free market" system will eventually "trickle down" to benefit others.

The American Dream contains four core values that are deeply embedded within American culture. These are summarized in Figure 6.2. There is, however, a "dark side" to the American Dream, which stems from a contradiction in American capitalism: The same forces that promote progress and ambition also produce a lot of crime since there is such an incredible pressure to succeed at any cost. The emphasis on competition and achievement also produces selfishness and drives people apart, weakening a collective sense of community. The fact that monetary rewards are such a high priority results in the fact that tasks that are noneconomic receive little cultural support (e.g., housewives and child-care workers). Even education is seen as a means to an end—the end being a high-paying job or any secure job (an advertisement for a local university that the senior author saw on a Boston subway encouraged people to "go back so you can get ahead" rather than encouraging people to obtain a degree for the sake of expanding their knowledge base and other noneconomic benefits). The existence of such a high degree of inequality produces feelings of unworthiness. Those who fail are looked down on, and their failure is too often seen as an *individual failure* rather than a failure attributed to institutional and cultural factors.

One of the keys to understanding the linkage of the American Dream and crime is understanding the meaning and importance of the term **social institution.** Social institutions can be defined as a persistent set of organized methods of meeting basic human needs. If you think of fundamental human needs, then there are relatively stable groups and organizations, complete with various norms and values, statuses, and roles, that over time have become the human equivalent of "instincts" in lower forms of animal life (because humans do not have such

1. *achievement*—Often expressed by the phrase "Be all that you can be" (contained in a popular advertisement for the U.S. Army). According to this value, one's personal worth is typically evaluated in terms of one's monetary success and/or how "famous" one has become. This stems from a culture that emphasizes doing and having rather than being. Failure to achieve is equated with the failure to make a contribution to society. This value is highly conducive to the attitude "it's not how you play the game; it's whether you win or lose." A similar attitude is "winning isn't everything; it's the only thing."
2. *individualism*—According to this value, people are encouraged to "make it on your own." This value discourages one value that could (and has proven to successfully) reduce crime, namely cooperation and collective action. The so-called rugged individualist is perhaps the most famous representation of this cultural value. A corollary to this value is that "I don't need any help." Messner and Rosenfeld comment that "the intense individual competition to succeed pressures people to disregard normative restraints on behavior when these restraints threaten to interfere with the realization of personal goals."
3. *universalism*—According to this value, everyone is supposed to strive for the American Dream. And, of course, everyone has the same opportunity to succeed, as long as you "work hard." Part of this stems from the famous Protestant work ethic.
4. *fetishism of money*—Money is so important in our culture that it often overrides almost everything else. It is often worshiped like a God. Money is the currency for measuring just about everything. Moreover, there is no end, "no final stopping point," for it is relentless. It has created what many call a consumerist culture, where everyone is being socialized, almost from the day they are born, to be first and foremost a consumer. (Witness the emergence of corporate-sponsored programs within elementary schools, including the ever-present McDonald's.)

FIGURE 6.2 Core values of American culture (Messner and Rosenfeld, 2001:62–64).

instincts). The human needs that these institutions seek to meet revolve around the need to 1) "adapt to the environment," 2) to "mobilize and deploy resources for the achievement of collective goals," and 3) to "socialize members to accept the society's fundamental normative patterns" (Messner and Rosenfeld, 2001:65). The most important of these institutions include 1) the economy, 2) the family, 3) education, and 4) politics. Other important institutions include health care, media, religion, and legal (many would place the legal within the much larger political institution).

It is important to understand that when these institutions fail to provide the needs of the members of society (at least of a sizable proportion of the population), then alternative institutions will begin to develop—not the "institution" per se but different forms, or methods, of meeting needs. For example, if the prevailing economic system is failing, more and more people will engage in alternative means of earning a living; if organized religion is not meeting such needs as answers to fundamental life questions, then people will seek out unorthodox religious forms (e.g., cults like the Branch Davidians or Heaven's Gate); if the legal institution is not perceived as providing justice, then people may take the law into their own hands; and if the mainstream media provide too much disinformation and do not allow dissenting views, then we will see alternative media emerge. Given that our major institutions are not providing the needs of every-

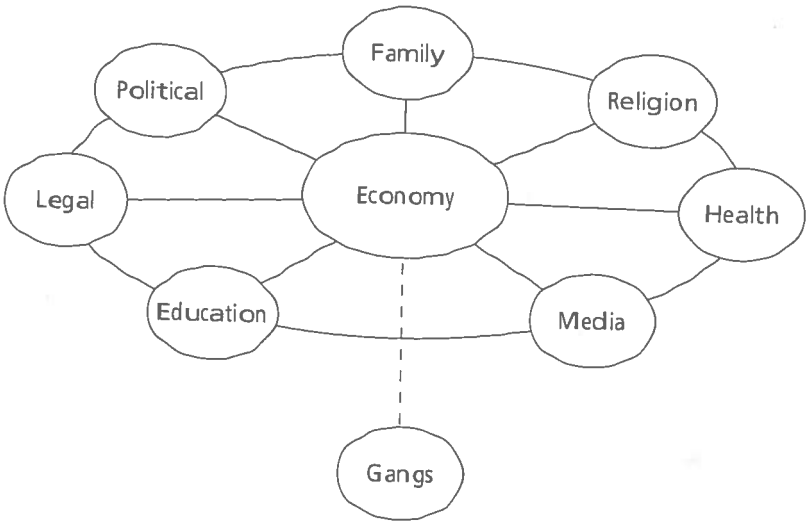

FIGURE 6.3 Social institutions and gangs.

one, it is our contention that one of the functions of gangs is to provide what our social institutions have failed to deliver. This view is depicted in Figure 6.3.

As Messner and Rosenfeld suggest, what is unique about American society is that the economic institution almost completely dominates all other institutions. This was once expressed by the famous American philosopher and educator John Dewey, who said something to the effect that "politics [or government] is the shadow that big business casts over society" (Chomsky, 1996:29). American capitalism, unlike capitalism in other countries, emerged with virtually no interference from previously existing institutions. Unlike other societies, there were no other existing institutions that could tame or offset the economic imperatives. European and Japanese cultures, in contrast, place almost equal importance on the family, religion, education, and other institutional concerns. Under American capitalism, these other institutions become subordinate to the economic one (which is why in Figure 6.3 we have placed it in the middle). The goal is to make a profit, and everything else becomes secondary. Over time this has become a market society in contrast to a market economy. In the former, the pursuit of private gain dominates all other pursuits (e.g., the arts or family support).[9]

As depicted in Figure 6.3, gangs fit into this scheme by providing some alternatives to the dominant institutions. Note that in this diagram all of the major institutions shown here are connected by straight lines. This suggests what should be considered a truism, namely, that every institution is in some way connected with all the others; problems in one cause problems in another. And all the lines lead, eventually, to the center since the economic institution dominates all others.[10] As suggested in an earlier chapter, gangs function as sort of quasi-institutions in many ways. For example, many gang members feel that their homies are like a family. Gangs provide methods and incentives to seek alternative methods of earning money. They also provide an alternative media

(graffiti) and an alternative religion (putting "RIP" style of graffiti on walls). They even have their own informal legal system. In short, gangs provide many of the needs that are supposed to be provided by mainstream institutions.

Differential Opportunity Structures

A variation of strain theory comes from the work of Cloward and Ohlin in *Delinquency and Opportunity* (1960). These authors argued 1) that blocked opportunity aspirations cause poor self-concepts and feelings of frustration and 2) that these frustrations lead to delinquency, especially within a gang context. A key concept here is **differential opportunity structure,** which is an uneven distribution of legal and illegal means of achieving economic success, especially as they are unequally divided according to class and race. Cloward and Ohlin argued that while legitimate opportunities are blocked for significant numbers of lower-class youths, the same cannot be said for illegitimate opportunities (e.g., selling drugs and other crimes). Their major thesis was that

> the disparity between what lower class youth are led to want and what is actually available to them is the source of a major problem of adjustment. Adolescents who form delinquent subcultures, we suggest, have internalized an emphasis upon conventional goals. Faced with limitations on legitimate avenues of access to these goals, and unable to revise their aspirations downward, they experience intense frustrations; the exploration of nonconformist alternatives may be the result (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960:86).

Among the specific assumptions of this theory is that blocked opportunities (or aspirations) create feelings of frustration and low self-esteem, which in turn often lead to delinquency and frequently gang behavior. Cloward and Ohlin postulate that three different types of gangs emerge and that these types correspond with characteristics of the neighborhoods (which affect opportunities to commit different types of crimes) rather than of the individuals who live there. The three types of gangs are 1) **criminal gangs,** which are organized mainly around the commission of property crimes and exist in areas where there is already in existence relatively organized forms of adult criminal activity (thus adult criminals are seen as successful role models by youths who live there); 2) **conflict gangs,** which engage mostly in violent behavior, such as gang fights over turf, and exist in neighborhoods where living conditions are for the most part unstable and transient, resulting in the lack of any adult role models, whether conventional or criminal; and 3) **retreatist gangs,** which engage mostly in illegal drug use and exist in those neighborhoods dominated by a great deal of illegal drug activity. These youths are described as double failures by Cloward and Ohlin.

Social Embeddedness

One of the most interesting new variations of strain theory comes from Hagan (1993:465–491). Hagan borrows the term **social embeddedness** from economist Mark Granovetter (1992) to describe a developmental view of involvement in delinquency. Because much of the literature Hagan cites in support of this view pertains to gangs, it is obviously highly relevant here.

; "RIP" style of graffiti on
system. In short, gangs provide
led by mainstream institutions.

Structures

ork of Cloward and Ohlin in
hors argued 1) that blocked
and feelings of frustration and
ecially within a gang context. A
structure, which is an uneven
ng economic success, especially
and race. Cloward and Ohlin
locked for significant numbers
for illegitimate opportunities
r thesis was that

are led to want and what is
ajor problem of adjustment.
s, we suggest, have internalized
with limitations on legitimate
revise their aspirations
ns; the exploration of
(Cloward and Ohlin, 1960:86).

y is that blocked opportunities
low self-esteem, which in turn
havior. Cloward and Ohlin pos-
nd that these types correspond
affect opportunities to commit
iduals who live there. The three
e organized mainly around the
where there is already in exis-
al activity (thus adult criminals
live there); 2) **conflict gangs,**
gang fights over turf, and exist
for the most part unstable and
odels, whether conventional or
e mostly in illegal drug use and
eat deal of illegal drug activity.
Cloward and Ohlin.

ess

rain theory comes from Hagan
social embeddedness from
ibe a developmental view of
the literature Hagan cites in
ously highly relevant here.

Hagan notes that instead of unemployment preceding involvement in criminal behavior (a common view in criminology), for young offenders the reverse is actually the case. For these youths, involvement in crime begins well before they can legally be involved in the labor market. According to Granovetter, becoming a regularly employed person involves much more than an individual's skills and education. It involves being connected to a social network of contacts that accrue over time and usually begins at a relatively early age. In other words, in order to become involved in the labor market, one needs to be socialized into this market starting at an early age. This means, among other things, that a youth begins to earn money doing odd jobs such as mowing lawns, babysitting, washing windows, shoveling snow, delivering papers, and so on long before turning 16. Through such activities a youth begins a process of social embeddedness rather early in life. For those youths who do poorly in school and/or drop out, such contacts become difficult to establish.[11]

Hagan argues that, just as one can become socially embedded in the world of regular job contacts and the world of work, so too can one become embedded in a network of crime and deviance. In most of the high-crime, inner-city neighborhoods, the odd jobs of middle-class youths noted above do not exist in large number (e.g., in the projects there are no lawns to be mowed). He notes that parental involvement in crime will integrate youths into networks of criminal opportunities. Likewise, association with delinquent peers or contacts with drug dealers can also integrate youths into criminal networks. Moreover, delinquent acts tend to cause youths to become further isolated from networks of employment. A sort of snowballing effect takes place whereby each delinquent act and/or contact with the world of crime further distances a youth from the legitimate world of work. Thus the perspective of social embeddedness identifies "a process of separation and isolation from conventional employment networks" that has a time sequence with a "lagged accumulation of effect that should build over time" (Hagan, 1993:469).

Hagan goes on to cite several examples of recent ethnographic research on delinquency (mostly work on gangs) that support this view (Anderson, 1990; Hagedorn 1998; Moore, 1991; Padilla, 1992; MacLeod, 1987; and Sullivan, 1989). Hagan quotes Anderson, who noted; "For many young men the drug economy is an employment agency. . . . Young men who 'grew up' in the gang, but now are without clear opportunities, easily become involved; they fit themselves into its structure, manning its drug houses and selling drugs on street corners" (Anderson, 1990:244). Similarly, Padilla noted that gang youths he studied "began turning to the gang in search of employment opportunities, believing that available conventional work would not sufficiently provide the kinds of material goods they wished to secure." Padilla also noted that these youths became involved in the gang world between the ages of 13 and 15. Increasing involvement in the gang further embedded them, and entry into the legitimate world of work became a serious problem for them later in life (Padilla, 1992:101–102).

The process of estrangement from the legitimate world of work and consequent embeddedness in the world of criminal opportunities are further documented in Moore's study of Hispanic gangs in East Los Angeles, Hagedorn's work on Milwaukee gangs, Sullivan's study of three neighborhoods

in New York (as reviewed in the previous section), and MacLeod's study of youths in a Chicago housing project. All of these studies found evidence of the socialization of inner-city youths (especially minority youths) into the world of criminal opportunities and their subsequent isolation from the social networks of legitimate work.

CULTURAL DEVIANCE THEORIES

Cultural deviance theory proposes that delinquency is a result of a desire to conform to cultural values that are to some extent in conflict with those of conventional society. In part, this perspective is a direct offshoot of social disorganization theory because part of that theory (as noted previously) suggests that criminal values and traditions emerge within communities most affected by social disorganization.

Cohen's Culture of the Gang

One of the most popular versions of cultural deviance theory was Albert Cohen's work, *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang* (1955). Cohen's view incorporates the following assumptions: 1) a high proportion of lower-class youths (especially males) do poorly in school; 2) poor school performance relates to delinquency, 3) poor school performance stems from a conflict between dominant middle-class values of the school system and values of lower-class youths; and 4) most lower-class male delinquency is committed in a gang context, partly as a means of meeting some basic human needs, such as self-esteem and belonging.

There are two key concepts in Cohen's theory: 1) *reaction formation*, meaning that one openly rejects what he wants, or aspires to, but cannot achieve or obtain, and 2) *middle-class measuring rod* or evaluations of school performance *and* behavior within the school based on norms and values thought to be associated with the middle class, such as punctuality, neatness, cleanliness, nonviolent behavior, drive and ambition, achievement and success (especially at school), deferred gratification, and so on. Cohen argues that delinquents often develop a culture that is at odds with the norms and values of the middle class, which they turn upside down and rebel against.

Lower Class Focal Concerns

Still another variation of this perspective comes from the work of Walter B. Miller, an anthropologist from Harvard University, who has published extensively on the topic of gangs for the past 30 years. His theory includes an examination of what he calls the **focal concerns** of a distinctive lower-class culture (Miller, W. B., 1958:5–19). Miller argues specifically that 1) there are clear-cut focal concerns (norms and values) within the lower-class culture and 2) that **female-dominated households** are an important feature within the lower class and are a major reason for the emergence of street-corner male adolescent groups in these neighborhoods.

tion), and MacLeod's study of
e studies found evidence of the
inority youths) into the world
t isolation from the social net-

THEORIES

uency is a result of a desire to
xtent in conflict with those of
a direct offshoot of social dis-
y (as noted previously) suggests
hin communities most affected

e Gang

iance theory was Albert Cohen's
955). Cohen's view incorporates
of lower-class youths (especially
ormance relates to delinquency,
lict between dominant middle-
lower-class youths; and 4) most
gang context, partly as a means
f-esteem and belonging.
ory: 1) *reaction formation,* mean-
ıspires to, but cannot achieve or
luations of school performance
s and values thought to be asso-
ty, neatness, cleanliness, nonvio-
ıent and success (especially at
en argues that delinquents often
ıs and values of the middle class,
it.

oncerns

ıes from the work of Walter B.
rsity, who has published exten-
ts. His theory includes an exam-
f a distinctive lower-class culture
ically that 1) there are clear-cut
lower-class culture and 2) that
ortant feature within the lower
ce of street-corner male adoles-

Two key concepts here are 1) *focal concerns,* which include trouble, toughness, smartness, excitement, fate, and autonomy; and 2) *one-sex peer units,* which serve as alternative sources of companionship and male role model development outside the home. Such concerns are often at odds with mainstream middle-class society. The one-sex peer group is important to Miller's theory in the sense that gangs provide male members opportunities to prove their own masculinity in the absence of an adequate male role model within their family of origin. The principal unit in lower-class society is an age-graded, one-sex peer group constituting the major psychic focus and reference group for young people. The adolescent street-corner group is one variant of the lower-class structure, and the gang is a subtype distinguished by law-violating activities. For boys reared in female-headed households, the street-corner group provides the first real opportunity to learn essential aspects of the male role—by learning from other boys in the group with similar sex-role identification problems. The group also acts as a selection process in recruiting and retaining members. These concerns are illustrated in Figure 6.4.

Echoing Thrasher's work, Miller states that two central concerns of the adolescent street-corner group are belonging and status. One achieves belonging by adhering to the group's standards and values and continues to achieve belonging by demonstrating such characteristics as toughness, smartness, and autonomy. When there is conflict with other norms (e.g., middle-class norms), the norms of the group are far more compelling because failure to conform means expulsion from the group. Status is achieved by demonstrating qualities adolescents value (e.g., smartness, toughness, and others, as defined by lower-class culture). Status in the adolescent group requires *adultness,* that is, the material possessions and rights of adults (e.g., a car, the right to smoke and drink, and so on) but *not the responsibilities of adults.* The desire to act like an adult and avoid "kid stuff" results in gambling, drinking, and other deviant behaviors and compels the adolescent more than the adult to be smart, tough, and so on. He will seek out ways to demonstrate these qualities, even if they are illegal.

There is also a pecking order among different groups, defined by one's "rep" (reputation). Each group believes its safety depends on maintaining a solid rep for 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.

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 do they do it?" it asks "Why *don't* they do it?" In other words, this theory wrestles with

1. *Trouble* is a dominant feature of lower-class life. The major axis is law-abiding/non-law-abiding behavior. Unlike the middle class, where judgment is usually based on one's achievements (e.g., education, career advancement), the lower-class concern is whether one will pursue the law-abiding route or its reverse. Further, membership in a gang is often contingent on demonstrating a commitment to law-violating behavior, acts that carry much prestige.
2. *Toughness* is associated with stereotypical masculine traits and behaviors, featuring mostly an emphasis on a concern for physical prowess, strength, fearless daring, and a general macho attitude and behavior (or machismo). It also includes a lack of sentimentality, a disdain for art and literature, and a view of women as sex objects. Concern over toughness may derive from being reared in a female-headed household and lack of male role models. The concern with toughness precludes males from assuming roles that might be seen as feminine, such as caring for one's children and acting responsibly toward fathering children out of wedlock.
3. *Smartness* revolves around the ability to con or outwit others, to engage in hustling activities. Skills in this area are continually being tested and honed, and the really skillful have great prestige. Many leaders of gangs are more valued for smartness than toughness, but the ideal leader possesses both qualities.
4. *Excitement* refers to the lifestyle within the lower class that involves a constant search for thrills or kicks to offset an otherwise boring existence. Alcohol, sex, and gambling play a large role here. The night on the town is a favorite pastime involving alcohol, sex, and music. Fights are frequent, so "going to town" is an expression of actively seeking risk and danger, hence excitement. Most of the time between episodes of excitement is spent doing nothing or hanging around—common for gang members.
5. *Fate* involves luck and fortune. According to Miller, most members of the lower class believe that they have little or no control over their lives, that their destiny is predetermined. Much of what happens is determined by luck, so if one is lucky, life will be rewarding; if one is unlucky—then nothing one does will change one's fate, so why bother working toward goals?
6. *Autonomy* is reflected in a contradiction of sorts. On the one hand there is overt resentment of external authority and controls ("No one is going to tell me what to do!"), and on the other hand there are covert behaviors that show that many members of the lower class do want such control. They recognize that external authority and controls provide a somewhat nurturing aspect to them. So, if one is imprisoned and subjected to rigid rules and regulations, one may overtly complain while locked up but on release may soon behave in such a way as to ensure reimprisonment and its corresponding nurturance. Rebellion over rules is really a testing of the firmness of the rules and an attempt to seek reassurance that nurturing will occur. Youngsters often misbehave in school because they do not get such reassurance.

FIGURE 6.4 W. B. Miller's "focal concerns" of lower-class culture.

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

1. *Attachment*—This refers to ties of affection and respect between kids and parents, teachers, and friends; attachment to parents is most important because it is from them that they obtain the norms and values of the surrounding society and internalize them (very similar to Freud's superego but more conscious than his term).
2. *Commitment*—Similar to Freud's concept of ego, except it is expressed in terms of the extent to which kids are committed to the ideal requirements of childhood, such as getting an education, postponing participation in adult activities (e.g., working full-time, living on your own, getting married), or dedication to long-term goals; if they develop a stake in conformity, then engaging in delinquent behavior would endanger their future.
3. *Involvement*—Similar to the conventional belief that "idle hands are the devil's workshop"; in other words, large amounts of unstructured time may decrease the ties to the social bond; those busy doing conventional things, such as chores at home, homework, sports, camping, working, or dating, do not have time for delinquency.
4. *Belief*—This refers simply to the belief in the law, especially the morality of the law (e.g., belief that stealing is just plain wrong).

FIGURE 6.5 Hirschi's four elements of the social bond.

improper socialization leads to nonconformity. Delinquency is one consequence of improper socialization.

The essence of control theory is that delinquent behavior occurs because it is not prevented in the first place. There are several different versions of this theory. One states that the delinquent lacks either strong inner controls and/or strong outer controls (Reckless, 1961). The former refer to things such as a positive self-image or strong ego, while the latter refer to strong family controls, community controls, legal controls, and so on. Another version maintains that many youths commit delinquent acts because they rationalize deviance before it occurs—that is, they neutralize the normal moral beliefs they have learned while growing up. For example, they deny that there is a victim by saying things like "He had it coming," or they deny that there was any real harm by saying something like "No one was really hurt" or "They won't miss it" (Sykes and Matza, 1957).

The most popular version is the one put forth by sociologist Travis Hirschi (1969). According to Hirschi all humans are basically antisocial, and all are capable of committing a crime. What keeps most of us in check (i.e., prevents us from deviating) is what he calls the "social bond to society," especially the norms of society that we have internalized. There are four major elements of this bond, as shown in Figure 6.5 (Hirschi, 1969:16–34).

This theory is very popular (although many do not express it as "control theory"), as most people believe these traditional values about what is and is not appropriate role behavior for young people. Furthermore, juvenile justice workers practice this every day as they try to, in a sense, *reattach* delinquents to family, school, and so on; to get them to *commit* themselves to the demands of childhood; to *involve* them in conventional activities; and to help them acquire a *belief* and respect for the law. This theory becomes an important starting point for the social development model and the risk-focused approach of delinquency prevention.

Johnstone, quoted earlier concerning strain theory, suggests that purely ecological explanations of gangs are limited "and cannot account for why gangs influence only some of the boys who live in gang neighborhoods. . . ." Continuing, he notes that the opportunity to join a gang "is established by the external social environment, but the decision to do so is governed by social and institutional attachments and by definitions of self. . . . The transition from unaffiliated to gang-affiliated delinquency occurs at the point that a boy comes to believe that he has nothing further to gain by not joining a gang" (Johnstone, 1983:297).

One recent study confirms control theory. Extensive studies of various ethnic gangs by Vigil and Yun led them to conclude that the common theme for all these gangs is that the weakening of the bonds identified by Hirschi sort of "frees" these youths "from social control and encourages deviant behavior." The study by Vigil and Yun, based on interviews of 150 incarcerated gang members from four ethnic groups (Vietnamese, Chicano, African-American, and Hispanic), confirms the social control thesis (Vigil and Yun, 1996).

SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

According to this theory people become delinquent or criminal through the same kind of process as learning to become anything else. One learns behavior as one learns values, beliefs, and attitudes, through one's association with other human beings. One of the earliest variations of this theory as it applies to delinquency was the theory of **differential association** originally developed by Edwin Sutherland (Sutherland and Cressey, 1970). According to this theory, one becomes a delinquent not only through contact with others who are delinquent but also through contact with various values, beliefs, and attitudes supportive of criminal/delinquent behavior in addition to the various techniques used to commit such acts. One of the central points of this theory is the proposition that one becomes a delinquent/criminal "because of an excess of definitions favorable to violation of law over definitions unfavorable [to violation] of law" (Shoemaker, 1996:152–153). In other words, a young person will become delinquent through his or her association with delinquent youths. Together they reinforce beliefs, values, and attitudes that lead to and perpetuate delinquency.

Social learning theory suggests that there are three related processes that lead one to become a delinquent or criminal. These are 1) acquisition, 2) instigation, and 3) maintenance (Goldstein, A. P., 1991: 55–61).

Acquisition refers to the original learning of behavior. The key to this process is that of reinforcement through the modeling influences of one's family, the immediate subculture (especially the peer subculture), and symbolic modeling (e.g., via television). In the case of learning aggression, a child who witnesses violence within the home is apt to engage in violence later in life. This is especially true if such violence within the home is rewarded or no sanctions are applied. Important here is the fact that children tend to acquire behaviors they observe in others and to see that these behaviors are rewarded.

theory, suggests that purely eco-
not account for why gangs influ-
ighborhoods. . . ." Continuing, he
stablished by the external social
erned by social and institutional
ne transition from unaffiliated to
that a boy comes to believe that
gang" (Johnstone, 1983:297).
Extensive studies of various eth-
de that the common theme for
nds identified by Hirschi sort of
courages deviant behavior." The
150 incarcerated gang members
icano, African-American, and
igil and Yun, 1996).

THEORY

nquent or criminal through the
ything else. One learns behavior
ugh one's association with other
this theory as it applies to delin-
iation originally developed by
'0). According to this theory, one
: with others who are delinquent
eliefs, and attitudes supportive of
the various techniques used to
his theory is the proposition that
of an excess of definitions favor-
favorable [to violation] of law"
young person will become delin-
elinquent youths. Together they
to and perpetuate delinquency.
ere are three related processes
l. These are 1) acquisition, 2) insti-
)1:55–61).
ning of behavior. The key to
gh the modeling influences of
cially the peer subculture), and
ne case of learning aggression, a
ne is apt to engage in violence
nce within the home is rewarded
is the fact that children tend to
nd to see that these behaviors

Instigation refers to the process whereby once a person has acquired the behavior, certain factors work to cause or instigate a specific event—in this case, an act of delinquency. Learning theory suggests five key factors as major instigators:

1. *Aversive* events—events characteristics such as as frustration, relative deprivation, and, of particular importance in gang violence, verbal insults and actual assaults. For those who are especially violent, threats to one's reputation and status, especially those occurring in public, are very important instigators of violent acts.
2. *Modeling influences*—actually observing delinquent or criminal behavior by someone who serves as a role model can be an immediate instigator.
3. *Incentive inducements*—anticipated rewards. One can be motivated to commit a crime by some perceived reward, usually monetary.
4. *Instructional control*—following orders from someone in authority. A gang member, for example, may obey a direct order from a leader within the gang.
5. *Environmental control*—factors in one's immediate environment, which include crowded conditions (including traffic), extreme heat, pollution, and noise.

Each of these can cause someone to "lose it" and act out, sometimes in a violent manner.[12] In order for delinquent or criminal behavior to persist, there needs to be consistent **reinforcement** or **maintenance.** Social learning theory suggests four specific kinds of reinforcement:

1. *Direct reinforcement* refers to extrinsic rewards that correspond to an act (e.g., money or recognition).
2. *Vicarious reinforcement* includes seeing others get rewards and/or escape punishment for delinquent or criminal acts (e.g., a youth sees someone carrying a lot of money obtained by selling drugs).
3. *Self-reinforcement* simply means that a person derives his self-worth or sense of pride as a result of criminal acts.
4. *Neutralization of self-punishment* is the process whereby one justifies or rationalizes delinquent acts.

Concerning the last method of reinforcement, one long-standing sociological theory is commonly referred to as *techniques of neutralization* (Sykes and Matza, 1957). The authors of this perspective suggest that delinquents often come up with rationalizations or excuses that absolve them of guilt. Thus, for example, a youth may say that no one was harmed or that the victim deserved it ("He had it coming to him"), or he may condemn those who condemn him (e.g., by saying that adults do these kinds of things, too), appeal to higher loyalties (e.g., "I'm doing it for the 'hood"), or merely put the blame on various external factors. An important aspect of such techniques of neutralization is that during the process the victim is dehumanized, and there is a gradual desensitization regarding the use of violence or other means of force to get one's way.

GANGS AND MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

Consistent with social learning theories is the view that humans pass through various stages in their lives. Relatedly, this view suggests that human problems do not emerge overnight, seemingly out of nowhere. Rather, life is a process, and humans go through life developmentally, through various stages of growth. There are numerous theories relating this process to human growth and fulfillment (e.g., those of Freud, Piaget, and Erikson), but space does not permit a complete summary of these views (Santrock, 1981:35–88). 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.

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 African-American 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).

RATIONAL CHOICE THEORY

A theory that became popular in the 1970s and 1980s took the position that crime was merely a product of "rational" choices and decisions that people made in their daily lives. Various terminology has been used, almost interchangeably, with this idea, such as *criminal opportunity theory* and *routine activity theory*.[13] 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.

From the perspective of the classical school an unwritten social contract emerged roughly during the period known as the Renaissance (1300–1600), which

was a vast social movement that swept away old customs and institutions and old feudal estates and made for gains in intellectual development and paralleled the emergence of capitalism throughout the Western world. According to the emerging view of the social contract (perhaps best illustrated by such famous philosophers as Thomas Hobbes and Jean Rouseau), man had originally lived in a state of nature, grace, or innocence, and his escape from this state involved the application of *reason* as a responsible and rational person. In other words, humans were essentially rational people whose reasoning powers placed them far above animals.

Also, this perspective stressed that man has free will and theoretically that there was no limit to what he could accomplish. Furthermore, it was asserted that humans were essentially hedonistic—that humans, by their very nature, will choose, freely, actions that maximize pleasure and minimize pain. More importantly, social contract thinkers claimed that the main instrument of the control of human behavior is fear, especially fear of pain. Thus punishment, as a principle method of operating to create fear, is seen as necessary to influence human will and thus to control behavior. Also, society had a right to punish the individual, and to transfer this right to the state for executing this right. Finally, some code of criminal law, or better, some system of punishment was deemed necessary to respond to crime.[14]

The classical school of thought derives mainly from the work of an Italian publicist known as Cesare Beccaria (1738–1794), who wrote a book called *On Crimes and Punishment,* first published in 1764.[15] For Beccaria and other liberal thinkers the major principle that should govern legislation was that of "the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers" (this supports the view that government should be "of the people, by the people, for the people"), which is the basic philosophical doctrine known as *utilitarianism,* the idea that punishment was based on its usefulness or utility, or practicality. One of Beccaria's most famous statements in his book was as follows: "For a punishment to attain its end, the evil which it inflicts has only to exceed the advantages derivable from the crime." In other words, punishment should not be excessive; *it should fit the crime* (this is a key phrase, most commonly expressed as "let the punishment fit the crime," actually attributed to Bentham, the next author discussed).

Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) was one of Beccaria's contemporaries. He suggested that criminal behavior (like all human behavior) is a rational choice, born of man's free will. In order to prevent crime we must make the punishment (i.e., pain) greater than the criminal act.

Fast-forward to the last half of the 20th century, and we have the reincarnation of the classical approach to crime. However, modern versions have usually learned from the mistakes of the original classical school. The original statements from Beccaria and Bentham erroneously assumed that all humans behave "rationally" all the time, that they 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 but rather are determined by a host of factors. There are constraints on our choices because of lack of information, various moral values, the social context of the situation, and other situational factors. In short, not everyone

customs and institutions and old
development and paralleled the
world. According to the emerg-
strated by such famous philoso-
had originally lived in a state of
his state involved the application
other words, humans were essen-
ced them far above animals.
free will and theoretically that
sh. Furthermore, it was asserted
humans, by their very nature,
sure and minimize pain. More
hat the main instrument of the
ar of pain. Thus punishment, as
is seen as necessary to influence
society had a right to punish the
for executing this right. Finally,
em of punishment was deemed

inly from the work of an Italian
794), who wrote a book called
1764.[15] For Beccaria and other
d govern legislation was that of
rs" (this supports the view that
people, for the people"), which
utilitarianism, the idea that pun-
or practicality. One of Beccaria's
ows: "For a punishment to attain
exceed the advantages derivable
should not be excessive; *it should*
ily expressed as "let the punish-
ham, the next author discussed).
f Beccaria's contemporaries. He
an behavior) is a rational choice,
rime we must make the punish-

entury, and we have the reincar-
ever, modern versions have usu-
al classical school. The original
neously assumed that all humans
fully calculate the pros and cons
his view—including the rational
en not based on pure reason and
t of factors. There are constraints
, various moral values, the social
l factors. In short, not everyone

acts logically and rationally all the time, which may be especially true for young offenders (Bartollas, 2003:111–112).

Modern rational choice theory still makes the assumption that people freely choose to commit crime because they are goal oriented and want to maximize their pleasure and minimize their pain. In short, they are acting mostly out of self-interest. One modern variation, known as routine activities theory, suggests that criminals plan very carefully by selecting specific targets based on such things as vulnerability (e.g., elderly citizens, unguarded premises, lack of police presence) and commit their crimes accordingly. Thus people who engage in certain routine activities during the course of their daily lives place themselves at risk of being victimized, such as being out in high crime areas at night, not locking their doors, leaving keys in their car, working at certain jobs during certain hours of the day (e.g., late-night clerk at a 7–11 store), and so on. Active criminals select such targets carefully, weighing the odds of getting caught accordingly. One flaw, among others, in such thinking is that there is an assumption that people should stay home more often to avoid being a victim when in fact certain groups (especially women and children) seem to be much more vulnerable at home than anywhere else (Maxfield, 1987; Messner and Tardiff, 1985).

As we saw in our discussion on socialization into the gang, there are many logical reasons why a youth may want to join a gang. Thus rational choice theory may be quite suitable in explaining this. On the other hand, however, it does not logically follow that the threat of punishment (e.g., so-called enhancement statutes that increase the penalty for the commission of a crime if a person is a gang member) will deter such a youngster. One of the best comments on this problem comes from one of the most respected gang researchers, Malcolm Klein. Klein used a crackdown on gangs by the Los Angeles Police Department known as *Operation Hammer* to illustrate the problem of deterrence. This operation resulted in mass arrests of almost 1,500 individuals who were subsequently booked at a mobile booking unit next to the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. About 90 percent were released with no charges filed; there were only 60 felony arrests, and charges were eventually filed on about half of these. Klein uses a hypothetical situation of a gang member arrested and booked during such an operation. There are one of two possible scenarios as the gang member, immediately following his release, returns to his neighborhood and his gang. Klein writes as follows:

> Does he say to them [his homies], "Oh, gracious, I've been arrested and subjected to deterrence; I'm going to give up my gang affiliation." Or does he say, "Shit man, they're just jivin' us—can't hold us on any charges, and gotta let us go." Without hesitation, the gangbanger will turn the experience to his and the gang's advantage. Far from being deterred from membership or crime, his ties to the groups will be strengthened when the members group together to make light of the whole affair and heap ridicule on the police. (Klein, 1995:163)

In other words, human behavior is far more complex than the rather simplistic notion that "we all make choices" with our "free will."

Most of the perspectives summarized previously have a tendency not to seriously question the nature of the existing social order (possible exceptions are social disorganization and strain theories, which to some extent provide at least an indirect critique of the existing order). Beginning with the labeling perspective, some recent perspectives have focused on questioning the nature of the existing social order, specifically the social order of advanced capitalism in the late 20th century. One result of the next two perspectives covered here is that instead of focusing on how offenders and potential offenders or at-risk youths can be made to accommodate to the existing social order, these views call for changing the nature of the existing social order so that fewer people will be drawn into criminal behavior in the first place.

THE LABELING PERSPECTIVE

The labeling perspective (also known as the *societal reaction* perspective) does not address in any direct way the causes of criminal/deviant behavior but rather focuses on three interrelated processes: 1) how and why certain behaviors are defined as criminal or deviant (in the case of gangs, why some groups and not others are labeled as gangs and why some crimes but not others are labeled as gang-related), 2) the response to crime or deviance on the part of authorities (e.g., the official processing of cases from arrest through sentencing), and 3) the effects of such definitions and official reactions on the person or persons so labeled (e.g., how official responses to groups of youths may cause them to come closer together and begin to call themselves a gang) (Schur, 1971). The key to this perspective is reflected in a statement by Becker, who wrote, "Social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders" (Becker, 1963:8–9).

One key aspect of the labeling perspective is that the criminal justice system itself (including the legislation that creates laws and hence defines crime and criminals) helps to perpetuate crime and deviance. For example, several studies during the late 1960s and 1970s focused on the general issue of how agents of the criminal justice system (especially the police) helped to perpetuate certain kinds of criminal behavior.[16] In short, this perspective focuses on how gangs and gang-related behavior may be perpetuated by the criminal justice system's attempts to control the problem.

One of the most significant perspectives on crime and criminal behavior to emerge from the labeling tradition was Quinney's theory of the *social reality of crime*. In a truly landmark textbook on crime and criminal justice, Quinney organized his theory around six interrelated propositions, which are as follows (Quinney, 1970:15–25):

1. Crime is a definition of human conduct that is created by authorized agents in a politically organized society.
2. Criminal definitions describe behaviors that conflict with the interests of the segments of society that have the power to shape public policy.

3. Criminal definitions are applied by the segments of society that have the power to shape the enforcement and administration of criminal law.
4. Behavior patterns are structured in segmentally organized society in relation to criminal definitions, and within this context persons engage in actions that have relative probabilities of being defined as criminal.
5. Conceptions of crime are constructed and diffused in the segments of society by various means of communication.
6. The social reality of crime is constructed by the formulation and application of criminal definitions, the development of behavior patterns related to criminal definitions, and the construction of criminal conceptions.

An important component of Quinney's theory is four interrelated concepts, which include 1) process, 2) conflict, 3) power, and 4) action.[17] By *process,* Quinney is referring to the fact that "all social phenomena . . . have duration and undergo change." The *conflict* view of society and the law is that in any society "conflicts between persons, social units, or cultural elements are inevitable, the normal consequences of social life." Further, society "is held together by force and constraint and is characterized by ubiquitous conflicts that result in continuous change." *Power* is an elementary force in our society. Power, says Quinney, "is the ability of persons and groups to determine the conduct of other persons and groups. It is utilized not for its own sake, but is the vehicle for the enforcement of scarce values in society, whether the values are material, moral, or otherwise." Power is important if we are to understand public policy. Public policy, including crime-control policies, is shaped by groups with special interests. In a class society, some groups have more power than others and therefore are able to have their interests represented in policy decisions, often at the expense of less powerful groups. Thus, for example, white upper-class males have more power and their interests are more likely to be represented than those of working- or lower-class minorities and women. Finally, by *social action,* Quinney is referring to the fact that human beings engage in voluntary behavior, which is not completely determined by forces outside of their control. From this perspective, human beings are "able to reason and choose courses of action" and are "changing and becoming, rather than merely being." It is true that humans are in fact shaped by their physical, social, and cultural experiences, but they also have the capacity to change and achieve maximum potential and fulfillment.

It is important to note the distinctions between primary and secondary deviance (Lemert, 1951). **Primary deviance** includes acts that the perpetrator and/or others consider alien (i.e., not indicative, incidental) to one's true identity or character. In other words, an act is "out of character" (commonly expressed by others as "this is not like you"). These acts have only marginal implications for one's status and psychic structure. They remain primary deviance as long as one can rationalize or otherwise deal with the behavior and still maintain an acceptable self-image and an image acceptable to others. **Secondary deviance,** on the other hand, refers to a process whereby the deviance takes on self-identifying features; that is, deviant acts begin to be considered as indicative of one's true self,

the way one "really" is. Deviance becomes secondary "when a person begins to employ his deviant behavior or a role based upon it as a means of defense, attack, or adjustment to the overt and covert problems created by the consequent societal reaction to him" (Lemert, 1951:76).

This perspective eventually led some scholars to begin to question not only the criminal justice system but also the very social structure and institutions of society as a whole. In particular, some research in the labeling tradition directed attention to such factors as class, race, and sex in not only the formulation of criminal definitions (including the definition of *gang*) but also as major causes of crime itself. This in turn led to a critical examination of existing institutions of American society and to a critique of the capitalist system itself. A critical/Marxist criminology emerged from such efforts.

CRITICAL/MARXIST PERSPECTIVES

Quinney and Wilderman place the development of a critical/Marxist line of inquiry in the historical and social context of the late 1960s and early 1970s. They note that

> it is not by chance that the 1970s saw the birth of critical thought in the ranks of American criminologists. Not only did critical criminology challenge old ideas, but it went on to introduce new and liberating ideas and interpretations of America and of what America could become. If social justice is not for all in a democratic society—and it was clear that it was not—then there must be something radically wrong with the way our basic institutions are structured. (Quinney and Wilderman, 1991:72)

In *Class, State, and Crime,* Quinney outlined his own version of a critical or Marxist theory of crime. Quinney linked crime and the reaction to crime to the modern capitalist political and economic system. This viewpoint suggests that the capitalist system itself produces a number of problems that are linked to various attempts by the capitalist class to maintain the basic institutions of the capitalist order. These attempts lead to various forms of accommodation and resistance by people who are oppressed by the system, especially the working class, the poor, and racial and ethnic minorities. In attempting to maintain the existing order, the powerful commit various crimes, which Quinney classified as crimes of control, crimes of economic domination, and crimes of government. At the same time, oppressed people engage in various kinds of crimes related to accommodation and resistance, including predatory crimes, personal crimes, and crimes of resistance (Quinney, 1977:33–62).

Much of what is known as gang behavior, including gang-related crime, can therefore be understood as an attempt by oppressed people to accommodate and resist the problems created by capitalist institutions. Many gang members, as noted in chapter 4, adapt to their disadvantaged positions by engaging in predatory and personal criminal behavior. Much of their behavior, moreover, is in many ways identical to normal capitalist entrepreneurial activity.

A critical/Marxist perspective goes even further by focusing on "those social structures and forces that produce both the greed of the inside trader as

well as the brutality of the rapist or the murderer. And it places those structures in their proper context: the material conditions of class struggle under a capitalist mode of production" (Quinney and Wildeman, 1991:77). The material conditions include the class and racial inequalities produced by the contradictions of capitalism (which produce economic changes that negatively affect the lives of so many people, especially the working class and the poor).

According to Lanier and Henry, there are six central ideas common to critical/Marxist theories of crime and criminal justice. These are as follows (Lanier and Henry, 1998:256–258):

1. *Capitalism shapes social institutions, social identities, and social action.* In other words, the actual "mode of production" in any given society tends to determine many other areas of social life, including divisions based on race, class, and gender plus the manner in which people behave and act toward one another.
2. *Capitalism creates class conflict and contradictions.* Since a relatively small group (a "ruling class" consisting of perhaps 1 to 2 percent of the population) owns and/or controls the "means of production," class divisions have resulted, as has the inevitable class conflict over control of resources. The contradiction is that workers need to consume the products of the capitalist system, but in order to do this they need to have enough income to do so and thus increase growth in the economy. However, too much growth may cut into profits. One result is the creation of a *surplus population*—a more or less steady supply of able workers who are permanently unemployed or underemployed (also called the *underclass*).
3. *Crime is a response to capitalism and its contradictions.* This notion stems in part from the second theme in that the "surplus population" may commit crimes to survive. These can be described as *crimes of accommodation* (Quinney, 1980). Crimes among the more affluent can also result (see next point) in addition to *crimes of resistance* (e.g., sabotage and political violence).
4. *Capitalist law facilitates and conceals crimes of domination and repression.* The law and legal order can often be repressive toward certain groups and engage in the violation of human rights, which are referred to as *crimes of control and repression*. *Crimes of domination* also occur with great frequency as corporations and their representatives violate numerous laws (fraud, price-fixing, pollution, and so on) that cause widespread social harms but are virtually ignored by the criminal justice system.
5. *Crime is functional to capitalism.* There is a viable and fast-growing *crime control industry* that provides a sort of "Keynesian stimulus" to the economy by creating jobs and profits for corporations (e.g., building prisons, providing various products and services to prisons, jails, police departments, and courthouses) (Shelden, 2001; Shelden and Brown, 2001).
6. *Capitalism shapes society's response to crime by shaping law.* Those in power (especially legislators) define what is a "crime" and what constitutes a threat to "social order" and, perhaps more importantly, *who* constitutes such a threat—and this usually ends up being members of the underclass.

Various problems that threaten the dominant mode of production become criminalized (e.g., the use of certain drugs used by minorities rather than drugs produced by corporations, such as cigarettes, prescription drugs, and of course alcohol).

The importance of the capitalist system in producing inequality and hence crime is apparent when examining recent economic changes in American society and the effects of these changes. In recent years particularly, many scholars have begun to seek an explanation of gangs (and crime in general) by examining changes in the economic structure of society and how such changes have contributed to the emergence of what some have called an underclass, which in many ways represent what Marx called the "surplus population" in addition to the "lumpenproletariat."[18] In many ways, this perspective is an extension of some of the basic assumptions and key concepts of social disorganization/ecology, strain, and cultural deviance theories in addition to critical/Marxist perspectives.

SUMMARY

This chapter has reviewed several different theoretical explanations for the question "Why are there gangs?" Several key themes can be discerned from this review. First, with few exceptions (e.g., social learning theory) these theories stress the importance of the external socioeconomic environment in explaining gangs. Beginning with social disorganization/ecology (especially the early work of Thrasher), these theories link gangs to such environmental factors as poverty, social inequality, lack of community integration, and lack of meaningful employment and educational opportunities, along with the larger economic picture of a changing labor market and the corresponding emergence of a more or less permanent underclass mired in segregated communities.

A second theme is that adolescents who grow up in such environments are faced with the daily struggles for self-esteem, a sense of belonging, protection from outside threats, and some sort of family-type structure. These and many other basic human needs are not being met by such primary social institutions as the family, the school, the church, and the community. Clearly, for significant numbers of youngsters the gang fills many of these needs.

A third theme developed in this chapter is that becoming a gang member is a social process that involves learning various roles and social expectations within a given community. It involves the reinforcement of these expectations through various rationalizations or techniques of neutralization in addition to the perpetuation of various lifestyles, attitudes, and behaviors on the part of the significant others in the lives of these youths. Over time a youth (actually beginning at a very early age) becomes embedded in his or her surrounding environment and cultural norms so that it becomes more and more difficult to leave the world of the gang.

A fourth theme is that delinquency in general and gang behavior in particular are shaped to a large degree by the societal reaction to such behavior

and to the kinds of individuals who engage in such behavior. Such a response helps to perpetuate the very problem that the larger society is trying to solve.

A fifth theme is that gang behavior is often a quite rational response to the surrounding social conditions within one's environment. Rational choice theory, however, suggests that such a response might be offset by increasing the risks of being apprehended and punished by the juvenile or criminal justice system and specifically by increasing the degree of punishment. Given the context of gangs in American society, the deterrent effect of punishment is minimal, if not counterproductive. In fact, as punishments have become harsher during the past 20 years, the gang problem has escalated.

A sixth and final theme that emerges in this chapter is that one cannot possibly explain the phenomenon of gangs without considering the economic context of capitalism. As we have discussed in earlier chapters, most criminal activity of gang members is consistent with basic capitalist values, such as the law of supply and demand, the need to make money (profit), and the desire to accumulate consumer goods. And, like the larger capitalist system, there are many failures in the world of crime and gang activity.

NOTES

1. For a more detailed discussion of the work of Guerry and Quetelet, along with the Chicago School, see Lanier and Henry (1998:183–192); see also Quinney and Wilderman (1991:48–50).

2. See Moore (1978, 1991) for documentation of this phenomenon.

3. Lanier and Henry (1998:182). Lanier and Henry also note that the term *social* or *human ecology* comes from the Greek word *oikos* which translates roughly into "household" or "living space."

4. This is especially documented in Shaw and McKay (1972).

5. Vigil concludes that the gang provides many functions a family does. "The gang has become a 'spontaneous' street social unit that fills a void left by families under stress. Parents and other family members are preoccupied with their own problems, and thus the street group has arisen as a source of familial compensation." Vigil notes that about half of those he interviewed mentioned how important the group was to them, that the gang was something they needed, and that it gave them something in return. Close friends become like family to the gang member, especially when support, love, and nurturance are missing from one's real family (Vigil, 1988:89–90).

6. The reader is encouraged to merely browse through any introductory sociology textbook to find numerous references to these two terms. In fact, one definition of *sociology* itself could easily be "the study of culture and social structure."

7. For an excellent discussion of the role of corporate propaganda see the following: Herman and Chomsky (1988), Chomsky (1989), Fones-Wolf (1994), and Carey (1995).

8. For a quick and easy-to-read look at inequality see Heintz, Folbre and the Center for Popular Economics (2000); see also Collins, Leondar-Wright, and Sklar (1999).

9. Messner and Rosenfeld (2001:73) note that the United States lags far behind other countries (whose economic institutions are not nearly as dominant) in paid family leave.

10. A good illustration of this dominance is shown in Derber (1998).

11. Although not mentioned by Hagan, to become embedded in the labor market one also needs social or cultural capital. This term is discussed at length by MacLeod (1987) and is included in the next section. In summary, for those who lack the necessary social or cultural capital, being involved in the labor market with steady employment is quite difficult.

12. The movie *Falling Down* starring Michael Douglas illustrates how one can "lose it" because of some of these instigators.

13. Some illustrations of this approach can be found in Cook (1986) and Cohen and Felson (1979).

14. Social contract theorists based their theories on some unproven assumptions about human nature, yet their views were taken as given by the new bourgeois governments in the 17th and 18th centuries and "social contract" became a convenient ideology justifying a strong central government, or state, that is ultimately concerned with protecting the interests of private property and profits. The social contract theory in turn justified the buildup of police forces and other formal methods of handling conflicts and disputes, in short, a formal criminal justice system (also included a definition of crime as a harm to the "state" and the "people," often used interchangeably). Ironically Rousseau wrote that the ultimate source of inequality was man taking a plot of ground and claiming it as his own; and this is exactly what happened during the infamous Enclosure Movements in England during the 16th century when powerful landlords built fences around common ground (land formally used by all and not legally "owned") and claimed it as their own or charged rent in the name of private property. This resulted in thousands of vagrants (homeless people) literally invading European cities in search of work and eventually being labeled the "dangerous classes" or worse by the privileged. The Elizabethan Poor Laws were passed during the 16th century and declared two kinds of poor: 1) the worthy, which are those who can be reformed and be useful to society, and 2) the unworthy, which are those who are unreformable, useless, and requiring sentence to the poorhouse/workhouse (early forms of jails and prisons). The prevailing view of crime as a *voluntary* violation of the social contract became an essential idea in much of the subsequent thinking about crime, especially classical views. Such a view largely ignored the gross inequalities existing at the time; with such inequality came illiteracy, leading us to question whether "the people" in these new social orders unanimously agreed on the social contract since so few could read or write.

15. This classic book is available in many bookstores and libraries. One edition was published by Bobbs-Merrill in 1963.

16. Examples can be cited endlessly. A few are Chambliss (1975), Chambliss and Seidman (1971), Werthman (1967), and Werthman and Piliavin (1967).

17. The following quotes are taken from Quinney (1970:8–15).

18. It is important to emphasize that Marx did distinguish between these two terms. The "lumpenproletariat" was seen by Marx as the bottom layer of society, the "social junk," "rotting scum," "rabble," and so on. In short, they were described as the "criminal class." The "surplus population" referred to working-class men and women who, because of various fluctuations in the market (caused chiefly by contradictions within the capitalist system), were excluded, either temporarily or permanently, from the labor market.