

DESIGNED TO FAIL: Self-Control and Involvement in the Criminal Justice System

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ABSTRACT: *This study investigates self-control theory using official and self-reported criminal records of 500 adult offenders. Four items derived from rap-sheets (aliases, date of birth, place of birth, and social security number) are used as indicators of the self-control construct. Negative binomial regression models indicate a significant inverse relationship between self-control and escape arrests, failure to appear violations, probation and parole violations, felony convictions, and prison sentences. Since system involvement entails discipline, tenacity, and responsibility, offenders with low self-control are more likely to experience a criminal justice system failure.*

INTRODUCTION

In 1990, Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi published *A General Theory of Crime*, an influential work that has generated tremendous academic response. According to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service, dozens of empirical tests, comments, reviews, and conference presentations have appeared on this self-control theory since its publication. Gottfredson and Hirschi's bold, polemical thesis posits that self-control is the strongest individual-level predictor of crime. In a review of the empirical status of self-control theory, Pratt and Cullen (2000, pp. 951-952) concluded that tests "furnish fairly impressive empirical support for the theory . . . ranking self-control as one of the strongest known correlates of crime." Despite this conclusion and the considerable empirical support in the literature, the accuracy of Gottfredson and Hirschi's theory remains controversial for ideological and methodological reasons (cf., Britt, 2000; Paternoster & Brame, 2000). Many scholars remain intensely critical of self-control theory (e.g., Akers, 1991; Geis, 2000; Tittle, 1991). To this end, the current research examines the theoretical usefulness and empirical validity of self-control by using an offender sample and behavioral measures derived from criminal justice contexts.

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THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) suggest that one must consider the compositional elements of criminal and analogous acts (e.g., cheating, drinking alcohol, gambling, and smoking) to arrive at an accurate conception of the criminal offender. In their view, criminal acts provide immediate gratification that suggest a “here-and-now” orientation. Crimes are easy and simple to commit. They are exciting, risky, and thrilling as opposed to cautious, cognitive, and verbal in nature. Criminal behavior does not require any skill, provides little long-term benefit, and results in pain for the victim. What type of person would engage in such behavior? The common profile of such a person is generally undisciplined, lacking in tenacity, action-oriented as opposed to verbally-oriented, self-absorbed, rude, and insensitive to others. These characteristics contaminate family, school, and work relationships (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990, pp. 89-94). The unifying factor explaining these behaviors is an individual-level construct known as self-control. Persons with low self-control generally lack the diligence and wherewithal to participate successfully in social institutions. However, low self-control is conducive to involvement in crime and other deviant behaviors.

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990, pp. 94-95) recognize that “all of the characteristics associated with low self-control tend to show themselves in the absence of nurturance, discipline, or training.” Low self-control is the outcome of ineffective parenting and familial socialization. Parents who fail to attach to their children, do not supervise them adequately, fail to recognize and punish deviant behavior, and who are involved in crime themselves socialize their offspring for failure. The socialization process is complicated by large family size, single-parenthood, and mothers who work outside of the home (on the latter points, see Miller & Burack, 1993). Once children are subjected to abject parental socialization, low self-control is established and remains relatively stable within the individual throughout the life-course. Self-control is a stable, protean, widely problematic phenomenon (Arneklev, Cochran, & Gainey, 1998; Burton, Evans, Cullen, Olivares, & Dunaway, 1999; Evans et al., 1997; Gibson, Wright, & Tibbetts, 2000). For example, Evans and colleagues (1997, pp. 490-491) found that self-control was:

related in the expected direction to quality of family relationships, attachment to church, having criminal associates and values, educational attainment and occupational status, and residing in a neighborhood perceived to be disorderly. Self-control is also significantly related to quality of friendships

and the analogous behavior measure is negatively related to marriage and positively related to nights out.

Scholars have found that self-control predicts an array of imprudent and criminal acts. These behaviors include involvement in accidents (Junger & Tremblay, 1999), refusal to wear seatbelts (Keane, Maxim, & Teevan, 1993), cutting classes (Gibbs & Giever, 1995), academic dishonesty (Cochran, Wood, Sellers, Wilkerson, & Chamlin, 1998), as well as gambling and substance abuse (Arneklev et al., 1993; Forde & Kennedy, 1997; Paternoster & Brame, 1998; Sorenson & Brownfield, 1995). Self-control predicts both criminal offending (Brownfield & Sorenson, 1993; Burton, Cullen, Evans, Fiftal-Alarid, & Dunaway, 1998; DeLisi, in press; Gibbs, Giever, & Martin, 1998; Polakowski, 1994) and criminal victimization (Schreck, 1999). Finally, contrary to the claims of dissenting researchers (Geis, 2000; Steffenmeier, 1989; Tittle, 1991), self-control similarly predicts criminal acts of "force" and "fraud" (Benson & Moore, 1992; DeLisi, in press; Grasmick, Tittle, Bursik, & Arneklev, 1993; LaGrange & Silverman, 1999; Longshore, 1998; Longshore & Turner, 1998; Piquero & Tibbetts, 1996; Sellers, 1999). What is even more impressive is that this supportive body of research utilized diverse samples by race, sex, and age, incorporated attitudinal and behavioral measures, used cross-sectional and longitudinal research designs, and controlled for competing theoretical perspectives.

Despite its empirical strength, self-control theory is not immune from criticism. While the independent effects of self-control measures are often significant, many times they are not the most important, singular causal force as Gottfredson and Hirschi allege. For example, researchers have found that self-control pales in comparison to measures derived from Baumrind's theory of authoritative parenting (Hay, 2001), strain theory (Van Wyk, Benson, & Harris, 2000), and a variety of developmental life-course perspectives (Bartusch, Lynam, Moffitt, & Silva, 1997; Moffitt, Krueger, Caspi, & Fagan, 2000; Wright, Caspi, Moffitt, & Silva, 1999). Similarly, some criminologists have challenged the grandiose claims of the predictive power of the theory by noting that self-control explains rather low levels of variation in crime-related dependent variables (Arneklev, Grasmick, Tittle, & Bursik, 1993; Brownfield & Sorenson, 1993; Grasmick et al., 1993; Junger & Tremblay, 1999; Longshore, 1998; Longshore & Turner, 1998; Sellers, 1999). Other writers contend that self-control theory has difficulty explaining gender differences in delinquency (Burton et al., 1998; LaGrange & Silverman, 1999; Sellers, 1999), inadequately articulates the role of opportunity in committing crime (Cochran et al., 1998; Grasmick et al., 1993; Tittle, 1991), and is limited to individual-level units of analysis (Herbert,

Green, & Larragoite, 1998; Reed & Yeager, 1996; Yeager & Reed, 1998). However, the potentially most damaging criticism is that self-control theory is tautological.

THE TAUTOLOGY PROBLEM

There is some concern as to whether self-control theory can be operationalized without modeling a tautology. According to Akers (1991, p. 204):

It would appear to be tautological to explain the propensity to commit crime by low self-control. They are one and the same, and such assertions about them are true by definition. The assertion means that low self-control causes low self-control. Similarly, since no operational definition of self-control is given, we cannot know that a person has low self-control (stable propensity to commit crime) unless he or she commits crime or analogous behavior. The statement that low self-control is a cause of crime, then, is also tautological.

Hirschi and Gottfredson have responded to this criticism on several occasions (1993, pp. 51-53; 1994, pp. 8-9; 2000, pp. 56-58). Indeed, they consider the tautological allegation a compliment. The tautology charge, according to Hirschi and Gottfredson, demonstrates that their theory successfully relates the properties of criminal acts to offender characteristics. In their words (1993, p. 52):

we followed the path of logic in producing an internally consistent result. Indeed, that is what we set out to do. We started with a conception of crime, and from it attempted to derive a conception of the offender. As a result, there should be strict definitional consistency between our image of the actor and our image of the act.

Gottfredson and Hirschi stress that behavioral, rather than attitudinal, measures are the best way to operationalize self-control despite critical claims that using behavior to predict behavior is tautological. Recent research suggests that Gottfredson and Hirschi may be correct in preferring behavioral measures. For example, Piquero and his colleagues (2000) used item response theory (IRT) Rasch modeling to validate the most popular measure of self-control, the Grasmick et al. (1993) 24-item scale. Unlike conventional factor analyses, IRT allows researchers to assess the interaction between respondent and survey items. IRT uses survey responses simultaneously to locate the answer and the respondent on the same latent continuum. In the case of self-control theory, IRT models allow the researcher to measure both an

individual's self-control and the level of self-control used in answering the questions. Piquero et al. (2000, p. 922) found that "people score differently on items in the Grasmick et al. self-control scale depending on their level of intensity on the latent trait." This outcome suggests that self-control itself might preclude accuracy among attitudinal data and necessitate the need for other measures.

Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this or any study to reconcile the disagreement between Gottfredson and Hirschi and their critics regarding the tautology debate. On the one hand, critics of self-control theory are rightly concerned that using "like to predict like" is a fundamental flaw in theory construction. On the other hand, Hirschi always has maintained that one could accuse accurate theory of being tautological. Taylor (2001) discussed this very issue in her interview with Hirschi. According to their exchange, "tautologies are at the heart of much of what we do. We can't and shouldn't try and get along without them . . . pure theory is always tautological" (Taylor, 2001, p. 382). Fortunately, the primary independent variable in the present study is conceptually distinct from the crime-related dependent variables employed in this study. While the concepts are similar, they are not so isomorphic as to model a tautology.

THE PRESENT STUDY

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990, p. 232) suggest that self-control is the single-most important individual-level cause of crime. Motivated by this claim, prior research has examined the predictive ability of self-control on criminal or analogous behavior. It is within this context that the current study seeks to make three new contributions. First, this study specifically examines whether self-control influences failure among offenders supervised by the criminal justice system. Securing counsel, appearing in court when ordered, and complying with conditions of bond, probation, and parole entail sobriety, discipline, and tenacity in dealing with long-term responsibilities. Such demands are antithetical to the usual conduct of persons who lack self-control. Second, the current study employs a sample of offenders whom one would expect to be characterized by relatively low levels of self-control. This approach builds on previous examinations of offender samples (Longshore, 1998; Longshore & Turner, 1998) and enables the researcher to ascertain whether self-control is a significant and discerning predictor of deviance within a skewed sample. Third, this study uses DeLisi's (in press) behavioral measure to examine similar, yet conceptually distinct, behavioral outcomes. Reliance upon behavioral, rather than attitudi-

nal, models is Gottfredson and Hirschi's preferred method of testing self-control theory.

METHODS

Database

The data are a simple random sample of 500 arrested adults drawn from a large urban jail in the western United States. A pretrial services unit interviewed all respondents from January to June, 2000. Pretrial interviewers obtain self-reported and official information regarding employment, residence, mental health, substance abuse treatment, and criminal history. This information is used to determine the defendant's risks of flight, recidivism, danger to the community, and bond recommendations.

Every detainee is investigated further through the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) computer database. The NCIC contains arrest and judicial information from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, federal, state, local, and foreign criminal justice agencies. These official records were used in conjunction with offender self-reports of their criminal history. There are several reasons to supplement offender self-reports with NCIC data. First, the majority of criminal offenders are legally intoxicated during the bond interview, potentially undermining the content validity of their self-reported criminal history. Second, defendants are woefully misinformed regarding the status of their criminal case. There is often confusion pertaining to the initial arrest charges, outcomes of plea agreements, duration and conditions of their sentences, and the identity of probation or parole officers. Third, some criminal careers include dozens of arrests and span several decades. The likelihood that an offender will accurately remember the legal outcome of a specific case occurring decades ago is low. Fourth, criminal record is partially used to determine a defendant's bond. More experienced criminal offenders are cognizant of this practice and intentionally obfuscate their criminal past. Fifth, regardless of underlying motivation, offenders lie to criminal justice personnel even when lying constitutes perjury, as is the case in a bond interview. In short, self-reported criminal history data are rife with internal validity biases relating to history, respondent maturation, offender intoxication, and offender duplicity (Cernkovich, Giordano, & Pugh, 1985; Hindelang, Hirschi, & Weis, 1981; Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1993).

Official measures, such as NCIC data, have their own problems regarding validity and reliability (Geerken, 1994; Gove, Hughes, & Geerken, 1985; Hindelang, Hirschi, & Weis, 1981; Maxfield, Weiler, & Widom, 2000). Official data are, at best, a sampling of the true magni-

tude of criminal behavior, commonly referred to as the “dark figure of crime” (Biderman & Reiss, 1967). Critics also maintain that official estimates measure police and system behavior instead of criminal behavior. Officers have a great deal of discretion when effecting an arrest. Criminal behavior that legally warrants arrest charges, such as obstruction of justice, providing false information, or resisting an officer without violence can be ignored if the officer chooses to do so. Thus, NCIC data do not capture the full context of police-citizen interactions. Fortunately, since the pretrial services unit utilizes both self-report and official crime information, some of these data issues are averted.

Sample

Five hundred offenders were randomly selected from a sampling frame of 25,640 defendants processed by the pretrial services unit during this time. The sample is 73% male ($n = 365$) and 27% female ($n = 135$). The average offender age is 33 years with a range of 18 to 72 years. The sample is 61% white ($n = 306$) and 39% minority ($n = 194$). The majority of the nonwhite defendants (31%, $n = 153$) are Mexican American. The average onset of arrest age is 26 years with a range of 10 to 70 years. This delayed onset of arrest is due to state variation in recording juvenile arrest activity on NCIC records.

Criminal offending among sample members is positively skewed. Offenders averaged six arrests over their offending career with a range of one to 72 arrests. Half the sample (51%, $n = 257$) were arrested only once or twice during their criminal career. The “once-only” offenders constituted more than a third of the sample (37%, $n = 185$). Minor recidivists, persons arrested twice during their criminal career, constituted a sizable portion of the sample (14.4%, $n = 72$). The remaining offenders demonstrated considerable variation in their criminal careers, ranging from three to 72 arrests. The most prevalent crimes were drunk driving (DUI), domestic violence (usually third-degree assault, a misdemeanor), and disorderly conduct. Additionally, the sample included an assortment of serious recidivists involved in the most severe forms of criminal violence. For example, five offenders have been arrested for murder, 14 for rape, 10 for armed or strong-arm robbery, six for kidnapping, and 56 felonious assault. Univariate statistics for the crime-related dependent variables (Table 1) demonstrate the skewed criminality among sample members.

Dependent Variables

Five dependent variables are used to evaluate the effect of self-control on criminal justice system status and behavior. These indicators

are felony convictions, prison sentences, arrests for failing to appear for mandatory court dates, arrests for failing to comply with probation or parole, and arrests for escape. Escape arrests are accrued for technical violations, such as walking away from a halfway house, in addition to breaking out of a jail or prison facility. Generally, the responsibilities therein include monitoring court appearances, complying with substance abuse or mental health treatment, abiding by the regimentation of prison life, and accepting the long-term consequences of criminal activity. These items clearly resonate with self-control theory.

Control Variables

Offender age (coded continuously), sex (male = 0; female = 1), race or ethnicity (white = 0; nonwhite = 1), and onset age of arrest (coded 10 to 70) are used as control variables based on their predictive power in the extant literature. This literature is reviewed by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990, pp. 123-153), but warrants a brief mention here. Gottfredson and Hirschi make rather forceful claims about the relationship between age, sex, and involvement in crime. According to their view (1990, p. 145), the inverse age effect and overwhelming male involvement in crime are invariant across time and space. In their words, males and youth simply commit more crime than females and older adults. They also review the abundant evidence demonstrating that blacks are more involved in street crime than whites. Based on their thorough discussion of the role of the family in creating self-control (1990, pp. 97-105), it is not difficult to infer how the dissolution of the black family impacts self-control and crime. Although Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) avoid a detailed discussion of race and self-control, they generally frame racial differences in offending in terms of family structure. Unfortunately, the authors do not advance any claims about Hispanic self-control and crime, thereby precluding a disaggregated ethnic analysis for the present study. Finally, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) interpret the inverse age of onset finding from criminal career research as simply a clear manifestation of individuals with low self-control. Those persons who sorely lack self-control will manifest problematic behavior early in life.

Behavioral Self-Control Measure

The final variable is DeLisi's behavioral self-control measure. According to DeLisi (in press), personal identifiers such as the use of aliases and alternative dates of birth, places of birth, and social security numbers are adequate reflections of self-control. Attempting to deceive a police officer is an example of impulsively forgoing the future

for current benefit since lying provides temporary and meager protection. This relief ends once criminal defendants are fingerprinted during booking. This behavior is also risky because it can result in the filing of additional criminal charges such as criminal impersonation, false reporting, or providing false identification to police. A more damaging indicator of low self-control is that experienced offenders are likely to know that the ruse of an alias or other fraudulent identifiers is temporary and likely to result in further charges. At face value, it would be utterly irrational for a seasoned offender to use an alias. However, low self-control might be so acute that these persons lie regardless. In the words of Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990, p. 41), refusing to cooperate with the police provides “immediate, easy, and certain short-term pleasure” for persons lacking in self-control.

Cautious of the tautology problem, DeLisi (in press) acknowledged that employing aliases and other forms of deception is partially a function of prior criminal record. Although defendants often employ multiple aliases or birth dates during an arrest, NCIC records usually demonstrate that multiple forms of deception increase with the offending career (Gottfredson and Hirschi would suggest that low self-control explains this relationship). These points are critical to the face validity of the self-control measure. Consider these two examples. In the first instance, an offender with only one arrest might employ 20 forms of deception. However, a second offender with 20 arrests might have never deceived the police. Thus, this NCIC record would indicate no aliases and just one (valid) date of birth, place of birth, and social security number. Whichever the case, the more often a defendant is arrested, the more opportunities exist for deceiving the police. To remedy this situation, DeLisi (in press) constructed a self-control measure of the rate of forms of deception (aliases + dates of birth + places of birth + social security numbers) divided by the total number of arrests. This self-control measure is interpreted like onset of arrest in that it is inversely related to crime. Therefore, low scores on the DeLisi measure suggest an offender with acutely high levels of low self-control. All sample members have one valid date and place of birth. Nineteen of the offenders are Mexican Nationals and do not have a valid social security number. All United States Nationals have one valid social security number. The average self-control score is 2.18, with a standard deviation 1.49 and a range 0.09 to 5.

PROCEDURE

Criminal career scholars alternatively employ Poisson or negative binomial regression models to estimate count-data dependent variables.

Poisson models are most appropriate for relatively rare events, whereas negative binomial models are best for higher count totals that cause over-dispersion of the Poisson distribution (Gardner, Mulvey, & Shaw, 1995). Due to the positively skewed and overdispersed offense distributions resulting from the records of the more recidivistic offenders, negative binomial regression models are used for the current study.

RESULTS

The zero-order correlation matrix, displayed in Table 1, contains three important considerations. First, the coefficients suggest that the self-control measure correlates with the crime-related dependent variables in the expected direction. There is a strong inverse relationship between self-control and failing to appear in court ($r = -.47$), failing to comply with sentences ($r = -.29$), escaping from prison or leaving another facility ($r = -.16$), accumulating felony convictions ($r = -.32$), and serving time in prison ($r = -.26$). Second, the correlation coefficients also suggest that multicollinearity is not a fatal problem. Third, the central tendency measures indicate that the sample is heterogeneous in regard to criminality. Indeed, the most chronic offenders were arrested for 18 failure to appear violations, 15 failure to comply violations, and two incidents of escape. The most active offender experienced 18 felony convictions and 17 sentences to state or federal prison.

Table 2 summarizes the negative binomial regression solutions for both the basic and the full models. The full models contain all the variables from the basic models plus the self-control measure. This strategy allows one to compare changes in the coefficients and to observe the independent R^2 contribution of self-control. Unstandardized negative binomial regression coefficients, z -scores (interpreted in the same way as the t -ratio for standard OLS regression) and significance are displayed.

With one exception, no racial differences materialize for the outcome variables in the basic models. Age demonstrates a consistently positive effect on failure and noncompliance with the criminal justice system. Older offenders in the basic models compile more arrests for failing to appear (estimate = .05, $z = 2.56$) and failing to comply (estimate = .12, $z = 3.80$), felony convictions (estimate = .13, $z = 6.21$) and prison sentences (estimate = .16, $z = 5.88$). In other words, older offenders have more opportunities over the course of their criminal careers to accumulate negative marks. Male offenders totaled more arrests for missing court dates (estimate = $-.88$, $z = 3.49$), failing to comply with sentences (estimate = -1.87 , $z = 3.30$), felony convictions (estimate = -1.07 , $z = 2.56$), and commitments to prison (estimate = $-.89$, $z = 2.56$).

TABLE 1
Zero-Order Correlation Matrix ($n = 500$)

	X ₁	X ₂	X ₃	X ₄	X ₅	Y ₁	Y ₂	Y ₃	Y ₄	Y ₅
X ₁ Self-Control										
X ₂ Race	-.01									
X ₃ Age	.03*	.03								
X ₄ Sex	.28*	-.08	.08							
X ₅ Onset	.23*	.01	.81*	.14*						
Y ₁ Fail to Appear	-.47*	-.03	-.08	-.18*	-.20*					
Y ₂ Fail to Comply	-.29*	.05	-.03	-.12*	-.18*	.21*				
Y ₃ Escape	-.16*	.02	-.02	-.04	-.10	.07	.33*			
Y ₄ Felony Convictions	-.32*	.07	.09	-.13*	-.20*	.19*	.62*	.30*		
Y ₅ Prison Sentences	-.26*	.07	.10	-.11*	-.17*	.17*	.49*	.32*	.93*	
Mean	2.18	0.61	33.3	0.27	26.3	1.14	0.27	0.03	0.44	0.28
SD	1.49	0.49	10.1	0.44	9.7	2.54	1.09	0.19	1.59	1.26
Minimum	0.09	0.00	18.0	0.00	10.0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Maximum	5.00	1.00	72.0	1.00	70.0	18.00	15.00	2.00	18.00	17.00

* $p < .05$

= 1.70) than their female peers. Finally, age of onset at the time of the first arrest has a significant inverse relationship with the five dependent variables. Persons who are arrested early in life miss more court dates, violate more conditions of their sentences, escape more frequently, are convicted of more felonies, and spend more time in prison than offenders whose onset occurs later. Overall, the basic models explain small amounts of variation in the dependent variables.

Turning to the full models, the self-control measure substantially bolsters the explanatory power of the equations, reduces the size of most coefficients, and renders quite a few of the previously significant findings spurious. Overall, offenders with lower self-control demonstrate greater criminality and noncompliance than persons with higher levels of self-control. Self-control, the rate of risky and myopic efforts to deceive the police and other criminal justice system agents, is the strongest predictor in all five solutions. Put another way, the z-scores indicate that defendants with low self-control were two to 12 standard deviation units above the mean levels of unconventional outcomes.

DISCUSSION

Numerous scholars have found that offenders with low self-control are more likely to commit a variety of crimes (DeLisi, in press; Gibbs & Giever, 1995; Grasmick et al., 1993; Longshore, 1998; Longshore & Turner, 1998; Piquero & Tibbetts, 1996; Polakowski, 1994; Sellers, 1999).

TABLE 2
Negative Binomial Regression Coefficients and
Z-scores (in parentheses)

Variable	Fail to Appear		Fail to Comply		Escape		Felony Convictions		Prison Sentences	
	Basic	Full	Basic	Full	Basic	Full	Basic	Full	Basic	Full
Race	-0.25 (1.21)	-0.39* (2.36)	0.21 (0.60)	0.03 (0.08)	0.25 (0.34)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.22 (0.77)	0.16 (0.59)	0.46 (1.17)	0.32 (0.85)
Age	0.05* (2.56)	-0.01 (0.53)	0.12* (3.80)	0.05* (2.05)	0.07 (1.50)	0.03 (0.64)	0.13* (6.21)	0.10* (5.41)	0.16* (5.88)	0.13* (5.12)
Sex	-0.88* (3.49)	-0.26 (1.13)	-1.87* (3.30)	-0.78 (1.40)	-0.32 (0.36)	0.75 (0.78)	-1.07* (2.56)	-0.22 (0.51)	-0.89 (1.70)	-0.04 (0.06)
Onset	-0.10* (5.13)	-0.02 (0.99)	-0.21* (5.68)	-0.08* (2.43)	-0.22* (2.71)	-0.13 (1.52)	-0.22* (7.91)	-0.14* (5.14)	-0.27* (6.90)	-0.18* (4.71)
Self-Control	—	-1.20* (11.71)	—	-2.05* (5.13)	—	-1.90* (2.10)	—	-1.92* (6.21)	—	-2.04* (4.59)
Constant	1.46* (3.59)	2.41* (7.23)	-0.57 (0.79)	0.76 (1.11)	-1.12 (0.61)	-0.14 (0.08)	-0.37 (0.61)	0.62 (1.08)	-1.17 (1.42)	-0.25 (0.32)
χ^2	53.87	237.71	55.88	122.73	11.15	23.90	93.07	192.36	75.57	132.58
Pseudo- R^2	.04	.18	.11	.24	.10	.21	.14	.29	.16	.28

* $p < .05$; all χ^2 values $< .05$

These studies formed the basis for the expectation that offenders with low self-control would come into contact regularly with the criminal justice system. The criminal justice system demands that offenders appear in court at prearranged times on specific dates. Court appearances are not scheduled at the convenience of criminal defendants and they most likely conflict with pre-existing work or family responsibilities. The self-discipline needed to adjust one's routine to meet this demand does not bode well for persons whose lives generally lack organization.

Bond, probation, or parole conditions may require criminal defendants to submit to drug and alcohol testing, anger control instruction, domestic violence classes, mental health counseling, group therapy, or any other treatment or aftercare the court deems necessary. Depending on the intensity of the sentence, defendants may have daily or periodic contact with criminal justice personnel either in person or by telephone. This monitoring is costly and devours considerable resources. From a self-control perspective, criminal offenders are thoroughly unequipped to handle such rigors. Moreover, noncompliance with court orders can result in re-arrest, bond revocation, attendant financial liabilities, and incarceration. Defendants who lack self-control

can become further embroiled in the criminal justice system precisely because of their personal deficiencies.

While individual-level deficiencies, like self-control, may make it difficult for offenders to cope with various conditions, other factors also may determine failure. For example, current system practices may hinder offender noncompliance. The pretrial period is a precarious time because the decision to release a defendant under various contingencies is highly contextual, discretionary, and imperfect (Goldkamp, 1993; Jones & Goldkamp, 1991; Maxwell, 1999). Such an environment seems conducive to technical violations, regardless of one's level of self-control. In addition, many defendants engage in high levels of substance abuse during the pretrial period (Britt, Gottfredson, & Goldkamp, 1992; Goldkamp, Gottfredson, & Weiland, 1990). Thus, one should anticipate little, if any, compliance when bond conditions are assigned or explained during a chaotic bond interview in which the offender is most likely intoxicated.

Two tangential areas of research offer some insight regarding the relationship between low self-control and noncompliance. First, many criminal offenders serve multiple sentences concurrently and face a variety of bond conditions that may coincide or conflict with the terms of an already existing probation or parole sentence. This "piling up of sanctions" (Blomberg & Lucken, 1994; Lucken, 1997) may inadvertently create circumstances that facilitate a failure. Consequently, even earnest, disciplined, and self-controlled persons would find serving multiple, overlapping sentences to be difficult, if not impossible.

Second, some offenders may violate the conditions of intermediate sanctions purposively in order to receive a more palatable sentence of incarceration. Some offenders actually fear intermediate sanctions much more than prison time (Petersilia & Deschenes, 1994; Wood & Grasmick, 1999). The responsibilities and demands associated with a community-based sanction are perceived as invasive, expensive, annoying, and onerous. Conversely, prison is easy because it is a passive and largely sedentary sanction. This distinction raises two curious issues about self-control. On one hand, maybe offenders demonstrate high levels of self-control because of their calculated manipulation of the criminal justice system, such as "forcing" the courts to administer a desired punishment. On the other hand, a preference for confinement over community supervision also speaks volumes about the glaring lack of self-control that criminals possess. Reporting to a probation officer, maintaining or seeking employment, remaining sober, and generally living a structured life are anathema to criminals who lack social control. This is precisely what self-control theory suggests. For the short-

sighted, impulsive, and irresponsible individual, prison is an easier and, perversely, more desirable route than conventional adult behavior.

Important caveats surround the behavioral self-control measure used in this study. While the rate of deception is an innovative indicator of self-control, the tautological dilemma of using behavior to predict behavior still lingers. To address this concern, future researchers might wish to examine the relationship between this operationalization and other non-criminal behavioral outcomes theorized by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990). For example, do people who attempt to deceive the police also attempt to deceive their family by participating in extramarital affairs? Are suspects who lie to the police also likely to be substance abusers, drop out of school, and have difficulty maintaining employment? Theoretically, the deception entailed in this measure also should predict negative outcomes in other domains of life. To date, the face validity of this construct has held up with respect to diverse forms of criminal behavior (DeLisi, *in press*) and noncompliance in the current paper. However, this measure has not yet enjoyed the replication or scrutiny that the more conventional Grasmick scale has experienced.

Finally, several researchers (Gottfredson & Hirschi 1990, p. 249; Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1993; Piquero, MacIntosh, & Hickman, 2000, pp. 922-924; Pratt & Cullen, 2000; Wiebe, 2000) have urged investigators to devise new indicators with which to evaluate self-control theory. If the theory is correct, then different types of measures (e.g., attitudinal, behavioral, relationship-based, or criminal justice-based) should arrive at the same general conclusion. Until this triangulation takes place, it is premature to hail or reject the theory with any degree of confidence. Ultimately, refined behavioral measures will help reconcile the debate between self-control proponents and opponents regarding the tautology issue.

CONCLUSION

Due to ineffective parental socialization, the low self-control construct is instilled at an early age. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990, p. 255) assert that it is unlikely that forces occurring later in life will "correct" low self-control, which means that the criminal justice system is unable to alter life outcomes. Such a stance is not promising news for policy makers. Low self-control parsimoniously describes why multiple problems consistently occur among certain individuals. Persons with low levels of self-control are, indeed, destined to fail in a variety of life contexts. Once these individuals become ensnared in the criminal justice system, it is very difficult for them to find a way out.

This situation places the already beleaguered criminal justice system between a rock and yet another hard place. Echoing Lucken's (1997) work, perhaps the criminal justice system needs to pay even greater attention to the resources, life circumstances, and wherewithal of criminal defendants prior to sentencing. Pragmatic observers and criminal justice practitioners readily admit that ordinary community-based restrictions are insurmountable for many offenders. What is the alternative? Should criminal justice system agents accommodate offenders who prefer prison? Should the system rely even more on incarceration to avoid probable failure surrounding intermediate sanctions? Are many criminal offenders designed to fail in life generally because of the low self-control produced by abject parenting? The current analysis offers an affirmative answer to the latter question. Perhaps many criminologists are not sanguine about the rehabilitative potential of the criminal justice system because of this situation.

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