## Beyond Self-Control: Analysis and Critique of Gottfredson & Hirschi's General Theory of Crime (1990)

Some Considerations on Theory Construction and Theoretical Integration in Positivist/Etiological Criminology

Stefan Schulz



## Duncker & Humblot · Berlin

## Contents

1.	Introdu	iction			1
2.	Crimir	nological	heorizing today		5
	2.1	The state	of criminological	theory	5
	2.2	The mut	al relevance of cri	minology and criminal justice	. 16
		2.2.1	Criminology and	the criminal law	. 19
		2.2.2	Criminology and	corrections	. 21
	2.3	The desire	ability of general th	neories of crime: exigencies	. 24
3.	'A Gen	eral The	ory of Crime' (Go	ttfredson and Hirschi, 1990)	. 27
	3.1	Foundatio	ns		. 27
		3.1.1	Aspirations		. 28
		3.1.2	Assumptions		. 29
			3.1.2.1 What is cr	rime?	. 29
				n version of the classical conception of	
	3.2	Theme, st	ructure and propos	itions	34
		3.2.1	Against positivisi	n	35
		3.2.2	Crime, free will,	and choice	36
			3.2.2.1 'Absent' a (crime)	a conception of the dependent variable	38
			3.2.2.2 The agend	ey of the offender	41
			3.2.2.3 The notio	n of crime: acts of force and fraud	. 43
			3.2.2.3.1	Force, fraud, and self-interest	. 43
			3.2.2.4 Self-contr	ol	. 48
			3.2.2.4.1	The theoretical function of self-control	49
			3.2.2.4.2	The descriptive/predictive features of self-control	. 49
			3.2.2.4.3	The formation of self-control	. 51
			3.2.2.4.4	Self-control and criminality	. 52
			3.2.2.5 Opportun	ity	. 53

4.	Towards an anal	ytical framework	54
	4.1 Under foc	us: action, individuals, groups	54
	4.2 The sociol	ogical model of explanation	56
	4.2.1	The 'basic' model	59
	4.2.2	Sociological versus psychological explanations	60
	4.2.3	The definition of the situation and the selection of action	61
		4.2.3.1 The defininition of the situation	61
		4.2.3.2 The logic of the selection (action theory)	64
	4.3 The explic	cative range of self-control theory	65
	4.3.1	The logic of the situation according to self-control theory	66
	4.3.2	The logic of selection according to self-control theory	69
		4.3.2.1 <i>Expectancy x value</i> : the initial (peripheral) conditions	71
		4.3.2.2 <i>Expectancy x value</i> : self-control in operation	72
	4.4 Limits to	generality: What can self-control theory explain?	76
5.	Theory construc	tion	77
	-	theories	
	5.2 Criteria fo	or (methodological) critique	79
6.		ory: a critical appraisal	
	6.1 Reception	of self-control theory by other scholars	82
	6.2 Methodol	ogical criteria (structure)	88
	6.2.1	Axiomatic foundations of 'A General Theory of Crime'.	88
	6.2.2	Hypotheses (theorems)	90
	6.3 Methodol	ogical criteria (content, logic and consistency)	93
	6.3.1	Self-control	93
	6.3.2	Opportunity	99
	6.3.3	Versatility	106
	6.3.4	Stability – crime declines with age	120
		6.3.4.1 The age critique of criminological theories	124
		6.3.4.2 Situational explanations of maturational reform	126
		6.3.4.3 Social theories of crime and the age effect	130
		6.3.4.4 Age, crime, the definition of the situation and human development across the lifespan	131

## Contents

		6.3.4.5 The age effect and action ( <i>expectancy x value</i> ) theory
		6.3.4.6 A lifespan approach to social motivation 135
7.	The empirical st	atus of self-control theory 140
	7.1 Testing se	elf-control theory 141
	7.2 Self-contr	rol theory through the studies: The core propositions 142
	7.2.1	Self-control 159
	7.2.2	Opportunity 159
	7.2.3	Gender differences in delinquency 168
	7.3 A meta-ar	nalysis of low self-control (Pratt and Cullen, 2000) 172
	7.4 Empirical	status: resume
8.	Self-control theo	ory, public policy and ideology
		yields from self-control theory according to
	Gottfreds	on and Hirschi 178
	8.1.1	'Family empowerment' 180
	8.1.2	Incapacitation
	8.2 Ideologic:	al issues in self-control theory 183
	8.2.1	'Important reductions in crime'/' Theoretically derived wants'
	8.2.2	Self-control, gender and power positions 185
9.	Summing up	
	9.1 The challe	enge of criminology 191
	9.2 Self-contr	rol theory 193
	9.2.1	Self-control theory in brief 193
	9.2.2	Effects and operation of self-control 194
	9.2.3	Genesis of self-control 195
	9.3 Limits to	generality 197
	9.3.1	Prevalence and incidence of complex economic crimes 198
	9.3.2	Complex crimes other than economic crimes 201
	9.4 Performa	ance of self-control theory in empirical studies 202
	9.4.1	Measuring self-control in operation 202
	9.4.2	The role of opportunity 203
	9.4.3	Self-control: unidimensional or multidimensional? 205

9.4.4 Self-control theory: confirmed or falsified?					
9.5 Methodological quality 213					
9.6 No redemption: big noise about modest claims? 215					
9.6.1 The interpretation of "generality" 215					
9.6.2 Unexpected spin offs 216					
9.6.3 Self-control theory and post-modernity 218					
10. Looking ahead: on the prospects of theoretical integration					
10.1.Theoretical integration in criminology 221					
10.2.(Back) towards an analytical framework 223					
10.2.1. What should be integrated?					
10.2.2. How to integrate?					
10.3.Levels of explanation 232					
10.4.Macro-, micro- and individual level theories					
10.4.1 Macro-level analysis 235					
10.4.1.1 Anomie theory (Robert K. Merton, 1938) 235					
10.4.2 Micro-level analysis 239					
10.4.2.1 Social learning (Ronald L. Akers, 1998) 239					
10.4.2.2 'Biosocial' criminology 242					
10.4.2.3 Control theory (Travis Hirschi, 1969) 245					
10.4.2.4 Self-control theory (Michael R. Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi, 1990)					
10.5 Fears of reductionism					
10.6 Partial criminological theories and limitation of scope 252					
11. Conclusion					
Epilogue: Beyond self-control					
Appendix 1 Grasmick et al.'s (1993) Self-control Scale Items					
Appendix 2 Pratt and Cullen (2000) Empirical Studies Sample					
List of Tables					
List of Figures					
List of Text-boxes					
Bibliography					