

Lecture 16 Gottfredson and Hirschi: Self-control – The Ability of Resist Crime

- Certain connection between Hirschi's original control theory and the new theory
- 1980s: general control theory
 - They believed that their theory overcome the limitations and weakness
 - Defined "crime"
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 - Why some people have high self-control while some have low self-control
- Crime: "Acts of force or fraud undertaken in pursuit of self-interest." (Gottfredson and Hirschi) – not the legal definition
 - It is a self-interested act
- Criminal behavior is the behavior that breaks the criminal law
- Characteristics of criminology → criminality
 - Easy
 - Murder – gives the person revenge without the trouble of courts
 - Robbery – gives the person money without work
 - Immediate gratification
 - Wanting something and expecting it right now
 - VS. delayed gratification
 - A lot of things you want from life but you put them off
 - No long-term planning is involved
 - Murder is often robbery gone bad
 - Cash provides immediate gratification – that's what burglars are seeking
 - Few or meager long-term benefits
 - Criminal activities interfere with someone's long-term goals
 - Alienates friends and families.
 - Exciting and risky
 - Auto-thefts
 - Crime usually easy
 - Usually cars are stolen for the joy of it. Usually by teenage boys.
It's simply fun
 - Pain or discomfort for the victim
 - The criminal is insensitive
 - Lacks empathy
 - Minimal tolerance for frustration or conflict
 - The trait of criminality
- Analogue activities
 - Smoking
 - Drinking – won't take long
 - Gambling – immediate rewards that they don't need to work for
 - Using drugs - thrilling
 - Illicit sex
 - Illegitimate children
 - Accidents – impulsive, risk taking

- Self-control
 - The differential tendency of people to avoid criminal acts whatever the circumstances in which they find themselves”
 - Social ecology explains that people commit crimes because they live in bad neighborhood
 - Self-control theory explains the versatility of crime
 - Whatever the circumstances are, the person with low self-control will commit crime
 - Gottfredson and Hirschi called their theory “general theory”
 - They believe their theory explains everything including why people commit crime
 - Low self-control will lead to variety crime
 - Criminal behavior is versatile
 - Crime is not a specialization. They are likely to do anything and everything.
 - Crime cannot be a profession.
- Spurious associations
 - Two variables appear to related but they are not. They are related by third variable
 - Drugs → crime (low self-control)
 - They are related only because both reflections of a person’s low self-control
 - Pornography → rape
 - Both expression of same underline trail
- Low self-control has certain costs and these costs go to the family
- Child rearing and self-control
 - Attachment of the parent to the child
 - If the child is not attached to the parents, there is no way for the child to develop self-control
 - The mother is naturally bond to their children
 - Step-parents are less likely to attached
 - Lack of attachment
 - Parental supervision – direct control
 - Direct control leads to indirect control. It trains the child to control himself.
 - Indirect control – self-control
 - Recognition of deviant behavior
 - The parents need to identify the deviant behavior
 - Basic things that a child must be taught to reframe doing
 - By limiting a child television viewing
 - Delay gratification and self-control
 - If children do not learn self-control in the ordinary things, they will not learn self-control in adulthood
 - Punishment of deviant acts
 - Rationality involves costs and benefits
 - Punishment is a cost. Punishment is necessary
 - People respond more to cost than they do to benefits.

- People have anxiety toward punishing children
 - Gottfredson and Hirschi are not promoting cruelty
 - o Problem of Parental criminality
 - Criminals are unable to do any of the thing listed above
 - They are unable to recognize the deviant behavior
 - No direct learning taking place here
 - Children are not learning that they need to obey the rules and laws because parents themselves have problems with obeying the law
 - The punishment is usually sudden and violent
 - Not consistent through time. It's often disproportional.
 - Extreme verbally and physically abusive
 - Reflection of parents' low self-control
 - Crime is concentrated across generations – criminal parents cannot teach their children self-control
 - Criminal parents → delinquent → adult criminal
 - A person's level of self-control is set in a family
 - The most controversy part of the theory: usually a person's level of self-control is set somewhere around 8-10. Once the level of self-control is set, it will not likely to change throughout his/her life. A person's relative level of self-control will remain stable through time. Even if low self-control people gain some self-control through time, they still have lower self-control than the average. They still have relative lower self-control
 - Along people age, they commit fewer crime just because there are somethings harder to do.
- The general theory “incorporates a classical view of the role of choice and a positivistic view of the role of causation in the explanation of behavior”
 - o Positivism
 - Crime is
 - explains why some people have low self-control. They are more likely to choose crime
 - o the old classical school
 - crime is chosen