



## Low self-control and coworker delinquency A research note

Chris Gibson<sup>a,\*</sup>, John Wright<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Department of Criminal Justice, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Durham Science Center 208, 60th and Dodge Street, Omaha, NE 68182-0149, USA*

<sup>b</sup>*Division of Criminal Justice, University of Cincinnati, 600 Dyer Hall ML 0389, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0389, USA*

---

### Abstract

Since the publication of Gottfredson and Hirschi [*A General Theory of Crime*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 1990], a large amount of research has shown a link between low self-control and delinquency. Some research has revealed that low self-control has not been able to account for the strong effects of peer delinquency on delinquency. Criminological literature has, until recently, neglected the interactional relationship between low self-control and delinquent peers in predicting delinquency. This study used a sample of employed high school seniors to assess the interaction between low self-control and coworker delinquency on occupational delinquency. Regression analyses indicated that the interaction term was a strong predictor of occupational delinquency, even after controlling for several established predictors of delinquency. © 2001 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

---

### Introduction

Since the publication of Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) *General Theory*, a large body of research has examined the effects of low self-control on offending behaviors and deviant acts (Arneklev, Grasmick, Tittle, & Bursik, 1993; Burton, Evans, Cullen, Olivares, & Dunaway, 1999; Evans, Cullen, Burton, Dunaway, & Benson, 1997; Gibbs & Giever, 1995; Keane, Maxim, & Teevan, 1993; Piquero & Tibbetts, 1996; Polakowski, 1994; Wright & Cullen, 2000). These studies, overall, have generated moderate support for the hypothesis that low self-control is significantly related to offending and analogous behaviors.

Tests of self-control theory reveal that low self-control has indirect and direct effects on drunk driving and intentions to drink and drive (Keane et al., 1993; Piquero & Tibbetts, 1996), on self-reported juvenile delinquency (Wood, Pfefferbaum, & Arneklev, 1993), on adult criminal and analogous behaviors (Arneklev et al., 1993; Burton et al., 1999; Grasmick, Tittle, Bursik, & Arneklev, 1993), on negative social consequences (i.e., quality of friendships, quality of family relationships, attachment to church, delinquent peers) (Evans et al., 1997), on excessive alcohol consumption and class cutting (Gibbs & Giever, 1995), and on courtship aggression (Sellers, 1999). Other studies have also shown that the interaction between low self-control and opportunity to offend has significant effects on crime and delinquency (Burton, Cullen, Evans, Alarid, & Dunaway, 1998; Grasmick et al., 1993; LaGrange & Silverman, 1999).

While these studies are important and implicate the role of self-control in a wide range of problem

---

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1-402-554-3104; fax: +1-402-554-2610.

E-mail address: gibsonuno@cs.com (C. Gibson).

behaviors and social outcomes, research is only now beginning to understand the complexity of this relationship. Individuals low in self-control likely face a range of interpersonal relationships and situations where their personality differences interact with the expectations and social boundaries established by context of the interaction. The effects of low self-control may “interact” with the social setting in important ways, either by reducing the potentially deleterious effects associated with low self-control, or by exacerbating them. In a recent test of low self-control theory, Evans et al. (1997) found that delinquent peer influences remained a substantial and significant predictor of criminal behavior even after the effects of low self-control were removed. Their findings led them to conclude that self-control and social learning theory may be related in complex, mutually reinforcing ways. “The tendency of persons with low self-control to engage in criminal and analogous behaviors,” state Evans et al. (1997, p. 494), “can be exacerbated, or strengthened, by exposure to criminal associates and criminal values.”

Recognizing the potential interactive effects between measures of individual differences and the social setting, Wright and his colleagues (1998) have recently investigated a “variable effects” model of criminal behavior. They suggest that the impact of explanatory variables, specifically social learning and social bonding variables, are strongest for persons that have a predisposition towards crime such as those with low self-control. They argue that sociological correlates of crime have smaller effects on individuals that do not have individual criminal propensities. In a test of their proposed model, Wright et al. (1998) found that the learning variables (i.e., delinquent associates) that exerted positive effects on crime did so most strongly for individuals with criminal propensities.

Although few studies have investigated interaction effects of low self-control and social variables predicting offending behaviors, there is reason to believe that these effects will manifest across social contexts such as the work environment. In a recent study of occupational delinquency among high school students, Wright and Cullen (2000) found that occupational delinquency was affected both by underlying criminal propensities and by exposure to delinquent coworkers on the job. They found empirical support for an interaction effect between prior delinquency and delinquency of coworkers that, in turn, amplified involvement in occupational delinquency. It is likely that delinquent youths select themselves into poor work environments where they come into contact with fellow delinquents, which increases delinquent behavior within the workplace (Wright & Cullen, 2000).

### *Occupational delinquency*

Modern youths are sophisticated economic actors, often with fairly extensive employment histories established prior to graduating from high school (Wright, Cullen, & Williams, 1997). Even though working appears to be a common experience among in-school youths, numerous studies have found that certain individual differences differentiate youths who work from those who work extensively (Bachman & Schulenberg, 1993; Cullen, Williams, & Wright, 1997; Elliott & Wofford, 1991; Ruggiero, Greenberger, & Steinberg, 1982; Ruhm, 1995; Steinberg & Dornbusch, 1991; Wright et al., 1997). Individual differences such as early school performance difficulties, early drug-use, and early delinquent behavior account for part of the correlation between the average number of hours worked per week and a youth's misbehavior (Bachman & Schulenberg, 1993). Since delinquent youth most likely self-select themselves into premature work roles at a higher rate than conforming youth points to the possibility that the adolescent workplace is an important domain of behavior that mixes youths with varying levels of criminal propensity. This possibility was examined by Ruggiero et al. (1982), who suggested that “occupational deviance” can be attributed to environmental aspects of the job, specifically coworker occupational delinquency and personal characteristics of the individual worker. Using a sample of high school students from Orange County, California, Ruggiero and colleagues found personal characteristics of workers and work environment factors may often reinforce each other, which may produce deviant occupational behavior.

The adolescent workplace, while understudied, appears to be a potentially important context for youth (mis)behavior. While all youths do not participate in work-related deviance, some are more likely than others, some jobs are more likely to provide opportunities for delinquency; and some characteristics of persons and jobs, coupled together, generate more occupational deviance than either alone (Greenberger & Steinberger, 1980). Youth employment thus draws attention to the possible interactive effects between low self-control and variables from other criminological theories.

### *Current study*

This study attempted to build on Wright and Cullen's (2000) investigation. The present study extended their research by assessing the interaction effect of low self-control and coworker delinquency in predicting occupational delinquency. This study addressed shortcomings in the research that has been conducted on the “general theory” in two different

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

**ISI**Articles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات