SELF-CONTROL, SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES, AND CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR: STREET YOUTH AND THE GENERAL THEORY OF CRIME

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Using a sample of 400 homeless street youth, this article examines the role that self-control plays in the generation of crime and drug use as well as its link to negative social consequences. It also explores if these social consequences are themselves related to crime as predicted in strain and differential association theory, or if their impact is eliminated by the presence of low self-control. The results reveal that low self-control predicts a range of criminal behaviors as well as drug use. Consistent with the general theory, low self-control influences the association with deviant peers, the adoption of deviant values, length of unemployment, and length of homelessness. However, the results reveal that a number of social consequences; including deviant peers, deviant values, length of homelessness, relative deprivation, and monetary dissatisfaction; have an effect on criminal behavior and drug use controlling for self-control lending support to other theoretical perspectives. Results are discussed in terms of developing the general theory by incorporating other perspectives.

Keywords: *self-control; strain; social learning; differential association*

A great deal of interest has been sparked by Gottfredson and Hirshi's (1990) *A General Theory of Crime.* In their book, the authors present a theoretical argument that stresses the importance of self-control as the primary cause of crime. They identify six distinct elements of self-control and suggest that people who lack self-control tend to be impulsive, insensitive, physical (as opposed to mental), short-sighted, risk takers with low frustration toler-

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ance, and therefore will tend to engage in criminal acts (Gottfredson and Hirshi 1990:90). While these elements are distinct, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990:90-91) argue that they are established early in childhood and tend to come together in the same people, operate in tandem, and persist over the life span to produce a stable coherent construct.

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) propose that self-control is not only the main cause of crime but is also linked to a range of behaviors and life outcomes (see Evans et al. 1997). They suggest that in addition to crime, low social control influences involvement in behaviors whose nature is "analogous" to crime. These "imprudent behaviors" (Arneklev et al. 1993) have often been viewed as deviant and, like criminal acts, require little planning, provide immediate gratification, and offer a great deal of excitement. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) also argue that low self-control has "social consequences" that shape people's ability to succeed in social institutions and to form social bonds. In fact, they argue that the relationship between social failure and crime is spurious rather than causal.

A growing body of literature has emerged that has empirically assessed the general theory of crime and generally supports the claim that low self-control is significantly related to crime and other analogous or imprudent behaviors (see Pratt and Cullen 2000). However, there are still a number of areas where further work is required and where issues remain to be resolved.

First, the general theory has not been extensively tested in samples with broad criminal histories (although see Longshore, Turner, and Stein 1996, 1998, and Piquero and Rosay 1998). Instead, work has tended to utilize more conventional populations that contain relatively low rates of crime or analogous acts and it often examines restricted domains of illegal conduct (e.g., drunk driving, Keane, Maxim, and Teevan 1993, nonserious offenses, Arneklev et al. 1993; although see Evans et al. 1997; LaGrange and Silverman 1999). In Pratt and Cullen's (2000) meta-analysis of the general theory only 18 of the 82 effect size estimates were drawn from offender samples and although self-control had a significant mean effect on crime in these samples, its effect was significantly lower than those results drawn from community samples. Similarly, these effects were significantly lower in samples of younger populations (Pratt and Cullen 2000). This all suggests that the theory may be somewhat less able to explain the behavior of serious young offenders and more work is needed to determine its generalizability across offending populations.

A second issue concerns the fact that little research has explored if low self-control does produce a range of negative social consequences (although see Evans et al. 1997). Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argue that low self-control produces failure in activities, relationships and social institutions that require planning, delayed gratification, preferences of verbal and cognitive

activities, and so forth. They suggest that those with low self-control will have a greater problem making and keeping friends (p. 158), are more likely to flock together with others who lack self-control and are similarly deviant (p. 158), experience greater job instability (p. 165), and prefer to "gravitate to the street" (p. 157). This issue is important because many of these social consequences have been linked to criminal behavior. In contrast, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argue that self-control leads to these negative social consequences rendering the relationship between these social consequences and crime spurious. Thus, unemployment, taking up with deviant peers, and spending time on the street are simply different manifestations of the factors that cause crime in the first place. Although prior research is limited, existing research suggests that self-control might not fully explain the relationship between some of the social consequences and crime (Burton et al. 1994, 1998; Evans et al. 1997; Nagin and Paternoster 1993; Wood, Pfefferbaum, and Arneklev 1993).

Similarly, previous research has generally not systematically assessed the explanatory power of Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) general theory of crime when other criminological perspectives are taken into account (although see Burton et al. 1994, 1998; Evans et al. 1997; Nagin and Paternoster 1993). Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) are dismissive of other perspectives. For example, in addressing the role of social learning, cultural deviance, and differential association theories, they "deny that a tendency to crime is a product of socialization, culture, or positive learning of any sort" (p. 96). Instead, they argue that crime is the result of ineffective child rearing, particularly the failure to directly monitor children and recognizing and sanctioning misconduct when it occurs. Furthermore, peer group association and supposed criminal definitions are not given any causal weight, as they would be in the learning perspectives. While Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) admit that offenders often commit crimes in groups, and that groups can facilitate acts that would be too difficult or too dangerous to do alone (such as robbery), they argue that offenders do not learn a lack of self-control in these groups. Instead, they contend that "On the contrary, participation in such groups is itself indicative of a lack of self-control or unconcern for long range goals or benefits" (p. 159). Thus, as Evans et al. (1997) point out, Gottfredson and Hirschi are arguing that any relationship between social learning factors and crime is spurious: both are consequences of self-control. However, Pratt and Cullen's (2000) meta-analysis found that in the limited research that did incorporate social learning/differential association theory, deviant peers and deviant attitudes remained significant predictors of crime after controlling for self-control, suggesting the relationship is not spurious. In light of their findings, Evans et al. (1997) argue that self-control and social learning

theories might be considered as complimentary rather than competing theoretical paradigms.

In contrast to the limited empirical attention paid to the social learning/differential association perspectives, research exploring the effects of strain theory in an analysis with self-control is even more sparse (although see Burton et al. 1994, 1998). Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) are as dismissive of the strain perspective as they are of the social learning perspective. They note that strain focuses on forces that produce offenders: the potential delinquent examines the future, sees poor prospects and turns to crime to brighten these prospects (p. 114). For Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990:114), the delinquent in strain theory "is especially future oriented as compared to the nondelinquent," something with which they do not agree. They note that strain theory predicts that offenders will have long-term aspirations and low long-term expectations. They observe that data fail to support this perspective. "The disjunction between aspirations and expectations—the critical causal variable of the strain model has no empirical support" (p. 162).

Extending this critique, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) note that there is little support for the relationship between social class and crime a central component of the strain perspective. While others link deprivation to crime (e.g., Currie 1985), Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) see economic failure as an indication that the person lacked self-control to succeed in institutional domains that required planning, delayed gratification, and a preference for cognitive activity over physical activity. It is Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) view that "the most significant employment-crime fact is the tendency for people who commit crime to have unstable job profiles—that is to have difficulty finding jobs and keeping them" (p. 165). They suggest that the lack of employment stability in the legitimate labor market is "consistent with the absence of persistence in most ordinary obligations, whether they be interpersonal or job related" (1990:165). Similarly, Gottfredson and Hirschi note that low self-control is more likely to lead offenders to spend time on the street. They argue that people who lack self-control tend to dislike settings that require supervision, or discipline, or other restrictions on their behavior. These settings include "school, work, and, for that matter, home" leading those with low self-control to "gravitate to the street" (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990:157).

A number of critics have addressed the issue of the empirical failure of strain theory observing that most of the research on this perspective has tended to utilize high school students instead of examining the hard-core poor living in urban slums. These critics argue that strain theory may be more relevant to those outside of school, to whom the pursuit of money is a more serious matter, and to the urban poor, who face the greater barriers to goal achievement (Agnew 1995; Bernard 1984; Jensen 1995). Furthermore, most

research has focused on minor offending, whereas the theory may be more applicable in explaining serious offenses (Burton and Cullen 1992). Bernard (1984) speculates that weak measures of delinquency and samples lacking serious offenders help to account for the failure to find a relationship between crime and strain or social class and crime.

Moreover, an alternative literature on strain theory has evolved that suggests strain in the "Mertonian" tradition might best be assessed as relative deprivation (Burton and Cullen 1992; Burton et al. 1994; Messner 1988; Passas 1995, 1997). These scholars have asserted that the essence of the "Merton-Cohen-Cloward and Ohlin perspective" is that crime is prompted not by the strain of absolute deprivation brought on by blocked opportunities but from being deprived of what others in society have the opportunity to obtain (Burton et al. 1994; Passas 1995, 1997). Others have argued that a closer reading of the theory suggests that strain should be measured as dissatisfaction with monetary status rather than as the gap between expectations and achievements (Agnew et al. 1996; Cernkovich, Giordano, and Rudolph 2000; Wright et al. 2001). Agnew et al. (1996) suggest that monetary dissatisfaction focuses on the "concrete reality of the moment" rather than an ideal reality suggested by such concepts as aspirations and expectations (see also Cernkovich et al. 2000:145). These alternative, and perhaps more representative, measures of strain have gained more empirical support (see Agnew et al. 1996, Burton and Dunaway 1994; Cernkovich et al. 2000) making Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) dismissal based on empirical evidence more problematic.

Of course, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) might argue that those with low self-control are self-centered. This may leave them more likely to see themselves deprived because they are less likely to take into account the efforts others have exerted in gaining their accomplishments (1990:114). Furthermore, theorists working with the concept of relative deprivation often link it to anger (see Messner 1988:39). This type of response is something also associated with low self-control. Similarly, the low tolerance for "frustration" may mean that those with low self-control will be more easily "frustrated" or dissatisfied with their monetary status, and their preference for "easy or simple gratifications of desires" and "here and now" orientation may leave them more likely to commit crime. Again, both relative deprivation and monetary dissatisfaction may be the result of low self-control making their relationship to crime spurious.

In addition to work reconceptualizing classic strain theory, other work has emerged since the publication of the *General Theory of Crime* that has offered a general strain perspective. In his revised general strain theory, Agnew (1992) adopts a broad approach that emphasizes how negative relations create pressure toward crime and delinquency. These negative relations

include the failure to achieve positively valued goals (unemployment) and the presentation of noxious stimuli (homelessness). In a recent review, Agnew (2001) suggests that labor market problems, unemployment, and the failure to achieve economic goals (Agnew et al. 1996; Baron and Hartnagel 1997; Cernkovich et al. 2000) may be types of strain linked to criminal activity. Furthermore, he believes that youth homelessness will have a major impact on crime. He argues that this type of strain "is likely to be seen as very high in magnitude because it represents a major challenge to a broad range of goals, needs, values, activities, and identities" (Agnew 2001:345). He suggests that homelessness may be perceived as unfair and is strongly associated with low social control and the social learning of crime (see Baron and Hartnagel 1997; Hagan and McCarthy 1997b). Thus, from a revised strain perspective, unemployment and homelessness are direct causes of crime not the result of low self-control.

In the following article, the above issues are explored utilizing a sample of homeless street youth. Hagan and McCarthy (1997a) argue that some of the most serious and persistent problems of crime and economic adversity are found among youth who spend much of their time on the street without a permanent place to live. In their research, they note that crises of day-to-day survival, including problems finding food, shelter, and work were consistently found to be related to crime. Other work reveals that these youth hold values supportive of criminal activities and are involved in networks of criminal peers (Baron, Kennedy, and Forde 2001; Hagan and McCarthy 1997b). Thus, this population provides high rate serious offenders who suffer from a number of the social consequences found to be associated with criminal activity allowing for issues surrounding self-control and its link to social consequences and criminal activities. The analysis begins by examining if self-control is associated with property crime, violent crime, total crime, and drug use. It then moves to examine if low self-control is linked to certain social consequences, including deviant peers, deviant values, unemployment, homelessness, relative deprivation, and monetary dissatisfaction. Finally, it explores if these social consequences have any direct effect on crime as predicted in the social learning/differential association and strain perspectives or if their relationship to crime is spurious and better explained by their relationship to self-control.

METHOD

Street youth usually refers to youths who have run away or been expelled from their homes and/or who spend some or all of their time in various public locations. Past research suggests that the street population is made up of a

heterogeneous group of youths from pre-teens to mid-20s. The street is populated by students and drop-outs, employed and unemployed youths, regulars who "hang out" on the street on a permanent basis, and those whose presence is sporadic. Whitbeck and Hoyt (1999) note that the term *street youth* may be used to refer to people who hang out on the streets and who may or may not have homes to return to at night (see also Shane 1996). They argue that these are largely unsupervised young people who may be essentially on their own regardless of having the choice to return home at night.

Recognizing the heterogeneity of this population, four hundred respondents (265 male, 135 female) were identified based on four sampling criteria: (1) participants must be aged 24 and younger, (2) they must have left or finished school, (3) they must be currently unemployed, and (4) they have spent time without a fixed address or living in a shelter in the previous 12 months. The rationales for these criteria were (1) to cover the age range of those described as street youth (Caputo and Ryan 1991), (2) to eliminate those not eligible for full-time employment, and (3) to obtain a sample of "serious" "at-risk" youth.

Data Collection

Data were collected between May 2000 and August 2001 in Vancouver, British Columbia, a large western Canadian city (Canada's third largest) with a population of approximately 2 million. The study took place in and around the downtown business core of the city bordered by the local skid row and inner city. The area contained a mix of commercial and financial establishments surrounded by bars, pawnshops, sex shops, tattoo parlors, hotels, shelters, detox centers, rooming houses, rundown residential units, and abandoned buildings.

Sample selection began with the interviewer situating himself in geographical areas known to be frequented by street youth. Potential respondents were approached, alerted to the project and screened for study eligibility. Those youth meeting the selection criteria were then provided more information and asked to participate.[1] Additional contacts were initiated by youths who had learned of the researcher's presence and solicited interviews or through introductions from previously interviewed youths. In total, about 470 youths were approached or initiated contact. Of these youths, 45 proved to be ineligible and 21 youths declined to be interviewed. Those who agreed to participate were interviewed in fast food restaurants, parks, in front of store-front social services, in bus shelters, and on the street. Interviews averaged an hour and 10 minutes in length and respondents were awarded 20 dollars in food coupons at a popular fast food restaurant for their participation. As Whitbeck and Hoyt (1999) note, there is a limited amount of productive

interview time with this population. Thus, lengthening the interview process may have stretched the parameters of valid responses. For this reason, there are not multiple indicators for some of the concepts and note the need for caution when interpreting the results.

The 400 youths who were interviewed had an average age of almost 20 ($\bar{X}$= 19.90). The racial make-up of the sample was predominantly Caucasian (83 percent). Aboriginal youth made up the majority of the other respondents (12 percent).[2] The average length of homelessness in the previous 12 months was close to 7 months ($\bar{X}$ = 6.83).

Self-Control

Grasmick et al. (1993) developed 24 items to operationalize low self-control based on themes in Gottfredson and Hirschi's general theory. In this study 23 of the items from Grasmick et al. (1993) were used making some modifications to their wording. One question regarding impulse was reworded so that it explicitly asked people whether they "act on impulse," "spur of the moment" was to be read out only if the respondent asked for an explanation of "impulse." One question regarding impulse was also shifted from a negative ("don't devote") to a positive ("devote much") to provide more variety in the direction of items and to enable a check on whether a response set was present. One question was also clarified, as suggested by Grasmick et al. (1993:17) by adding the word PHYSICAL to "activities." Finally, for ease of presentation, the question "I try to look out for myself first," was shortened by only asking the latter part of the original item (even if it makes things difficult for other people) if the respondent requested more information (see Forde and Kennedy 1997). All questions use four point Likert scales: strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, and strongly disagree. The items, along with the means and standard deviations, are presented in the appendix.

Measuring Crime and Drug Use

Information on a number of measures of criminal involvement was obtained via self-reports (for excellent summaries on the use and issues of this method see Elliott, Huizinga, and Menard 1989:4-9; Hindelang, Hirschi, and Weiss 1981:13-25; Inciardi, Horowitz, and Pottieger 1993; and Johnson 1979:89-93). The respondents were asked how many times in the past year they had done the following: broken into a car, broken into a building, taken something worth less than $50, taken something worth more than $50, broken into a structure to sleep, stolen food, taken a car without permission of the owner, used physical force to get money or things from another person,

attacked someone with a weapon or fists, injuring them so badly they probably needed a doctor, got into a fight, or taken part in a group fight. The respondents were also asked how many times in the past year they had (excluding prescriptions) used marijuana, LSD (or other psychedelics), cocaine, amphetamines, barbiturates, tranquilizers, heroin (or other narcotics), inhalants, or angel dust or PCP (1 = never; 7 = daily).

To examine whether the various measures of crime and substance abuse were part of a single latent variable, a factor analysis was undertaken. This procedure revealed there was more than one single latent crime variable. The procedure indicated that these items broke into 6 factors that generally fell along the behaviors of property crime, violent crime, and drug use.[3] In light of this, it was decided to create single scales reflecting these behaviors. The raw scores of individual crime questions similarly defined by the Canadian Criminal Code were aggregated to create indices of property crime and violent crime and all the crime questions were aggregated across the range of offenses to create a measure of total crime. The drug items were summed to create a measure of drug use. An analysis of the raw frequency distributions for the crime and drug indices suggested a high degree of skewness in the measures. This condition stemmed from most respondents reporting small amounts of the behaviors with a few reporting large amounts (see Table 1). To reduce this skewness the index values were transformed to their natural log values.

Social Consequences

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argue that low self-control has a range of negative social consequences. Many of these "social consequences" would be identified by others as social factors that cause crime. In light of this debate, the analysis presented here first examines these variables as outcomes of low self-control, and they are then utilized as variables competing with low self-control to explain criminal behavior. To explore the effect of self-control on social consequences and their link to criminal behavior, respondents were asked a number of questions having to do with the failure to reach positively valued goals, negative relations, deviant peers, and deviant values.

Beginning with those social consequences associated with strain theory, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) note that strain has commonly been operationalized by assessing the gap between respondents' aspirations and expectations (see also Burton and Cullen 1992). However, previous research has shown that the aspiration expectation gap measures have generally not been related significantly to self reported crime and delinquency (Burton and Cullen 1992; Burton et al. 1998; Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990). However, an

TABLE 1: Descriptives Statistics for Independent and Dependent Variables (unlogged values in parentheses)

	Mean	SD	*Minimum*	*Maximum*
Age	19.90	2.61	13	24
Gender	1.34	.47	1	2
Unemployment	9.80	3.01	1	12
Homelessness	6.83	3.80	1	12
Monetary dissatisfaction	2.91	.78	1	4
Relative deprivation	6.98	2.36	1	10
Deviant peers	3.88	1.11	1	5
Deviant values	2.70	1.22	1	5
Self-control	2.62	.33	1.70	3.87
Drug use	2.97 (20.58)	.34 (7.36)	2.20 (9)	4.14 (63)
Property crime	3.26 (422.78)	2.26 (2,188.99)	0 (0)	10.17 (26,206)
Violent crime	1.56 (25.10)	1.40 (223.35)	0 (0)	8.39 (4,400)
Total crime	3.56 (447.88)	2.12 (2,315.27)	0 (0)	10.19 (26,600)

alternative literature has conceptualized strain as relative deprivation (see Agnew et al. 1996; Burton and Cullen 1992; Burton et al. 1994; Passas 1997). A variation of the Self Anchoring Striving Scale utilized by Walker and Mann (1987) to measure relative deprivation was used here. Respondents were asked "On a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is the worst possible rank in Canadian society and 10 is the best possible rank in Canadian society, where do you stand right now?" The lower the nominated position on the ladder the greater the deprivation. This was then reverse coded so that higher scores reflected greater perceptions of deprivation.

Agnew et al. (1996) have also examined the failure of past measures of strain and argue that a closer reading of the theory suggests that dissatisfaction or frustration with monetary status is the central variable in classic strain theory. The limited research conducted with this measure has shown that monetary dissatisfaction is significantly related to criminal behavior (Agnew et al. 1996; Cernkovich et al. 2000; Wright et al. 2001). The respondent's dissatisfaction with their monetary status was determined by asking them to agree or disagree with the statement: "Right now I'm satisfied with how much money I have to live on" (1 = *strongly agree*; 4 = *strongly disagree*).

The respondents were also asked a number of questions having to do with the role of homelessness and unemployment in the generation of criminal behavior. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) suggest that these are the result of low self-control. People with low self-control dislike activities that require planning, delayed gratification, and cognitive activities and avoid settings that require supervision, discipline, or other restrictions on their behavior. As a result, they tend to be failures in social institutions and tend to gravitate to

the street. In contrast, Agnew (2001) has argued that unemployment and homelessness represent two sources of negative relations, or strain, that can be seen to be linked to criminal activities in an attempt to reduce feelings of strain. To determine the length of homelessness, respondents were asked "How many months in the last year (anchor) did you live in a shelter or have no fixed address?" Length of unemployment was determined by asking the respondents how many months during the past year they were out of work?

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) "deny that a tendency to crime is a product of socialization, culture, or positive learning of any sort" (p. 96). In contrast, the core thesis of differential association theory is that individual's exposure to procriminal values and interaction with criminal associates increases the likelihood of criminal involvement (Matsueda 1982; Matsueda and Heimer 1987). Two differential association variables are controlled for in this analysis: deviant values and deviant friends. Deviant values were determined by asking respondents "How wrong do you think it is to break the law?" (1 = *very wrong*; 5 = *not wrong at all*). To determine youth's deviant peers they were asked "How many of your current friends have been picked up by the police?" (1 = none; 5 = all).

The analysis proceeds by first examining the relationships between self-control and property crime, violent crime, total crime, and drug use. The analysis then moves to examine the effects of self-control on the various social consequences. Finally, total crime, property crime, violent crime, and drug use is regressed on self-control and the social consequences. One-tailed tests are used where the direction of the relationships between independent and dependent variables are predicted.

RESULTS

Table 2 presents the analyses of the impact of low self-control on four different variables. The results show that low self-control is related to property crime, violent crime, total crime, and drug use, controlling for age and gender. Thus, consistent with Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) argument, self-control appears to be a strong predictor of a range of behaviors although it appears to be a somewhat stronger predictor of violent offending than the other behaviors.

Table 3 explores the effects of low self-control, again controlling for age and gender, on various social consequences. The results reveal that there are a number of social consequences associated with low self-control. Those with low self-control are more likely to have deviant peers and deviant values, to be unemployed for greater periods of time, and to be homeless for greater periods of time controlling for age and gender. These results generally

TABLE 2: The Effects of Self-Control on Crime and Drug Use (betas reported)

	Dependent Variable			
Independent Variable	*Property Crime*	*Violent Crime*	*Total Crime*	*Drug Use*
Low self-control	.248**	.330**	.276**	.243**
Gender	–.036	–.197††	–.073	–.014
Age	–.087	–.166††	–.092	.004
R^2	.068	.151	.085	.059

*$p < .05$, one-tailed test. **$p < .01$, one-tailed test. †$p < .05$, two-tailed test. ††$p < .01$, two-tailed test.

support Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) arguments that low self-control can lead to a flocking together with others who probably have low self-control, a gravitation to the street where there is less social control, and long periods of unemployment. However, the 2 variables associated with the classic strain perspective—monetary dissatisfaction and relative deprivation—are not related to low self-control. These findings lead to two questions: First, do the social consequences related to low self-control have any direct influence on crime when low self-control is entered into the equation or is the relationship spurious? Second, do the variables associated with the other perspectives, not linked to low self-control, have any direct influence on crime, or are these activities better explained by low self-control?

Tables 4 and 5 examine the effects of the various social consequences on property crime, violent crime, total crime, and drug use. These analyses allow for the test of whether the social consequences hypothesized by social learning/differential association and classic and general strain theorists to cause crime remain statistically significant when self-control is included in the analysis. The models in the Table 4 provide the results of the social consequences variables on specific crimes without the measure of self-control in the equation. The models in Table 5 include the measure of low self-control.

Table 4 reveals that deviant peers and deviant values are significant predictors of all four offenses and homelessness predicts property crime, drug use, and crime overall. Monetary dissatisfaction is a significant predictor of both property crime and total crime while relative deprivation has a significant effect on violent offending. Thus, as predicted by social learning/differential association and strain theorists, there are a number of social factors that appear to have direct effects on criminal behaviors.

Examining Table 5 where the low self-control measure is added to the equation, the results reveal that low self-control is a significant predictor of all four offenses. However, in contrast to what Gottfredson and Hirschi would expect, variables from other perspectives remain significant predictors of crime and drug use. Deviant peers and deviant values are significant

TABLE 3: The Social Consequences of Self-Control, Controlling for Age and Gender (betas reported)

Dependent Variable	*Low Self-Control*	R^2
Unemployment	.139**	.028
Homelessness	.085*	.015
Monetary dissatisfaction	.063	.024
Relative deprivation	.068	.006
Deviant peers	.238**	.058
Deviant values	.108*	.021

*$p < .05$, one-tailed test. **$p < .01$, one-tailed test.

TABLE 4: The Impact of Social Consequences on Crime and Drug Use (betas reported)

Independent Variable	*Property Crime*	*Violent Crime*	*Total Crime*	*Drug Use*
Unemployment	.059	.001	.052	.022
Homelessness	.169**	.059	.159**	.089*
Monetary dissatisfaction	.097*	.066	.105*	.009
Relative deprivation	.067	.114**	.071	.071
Deviant peers	.142**	.164**	.171**	.215**
Deviant values	.233**	.152**	.230**	.213**
Age	–.064	–.155††	–.072	.014
Gender	–.021	–.195†	–.059	–.011
R^2	.161	.130	.170	.138
n	397	397	397	375

*$p < .05$, one-tailed test. **$p < .01$, one-tailed test. †$p < .05$, two-tailed test. ††$p < .01$, two-tailed test.

TABLE 5: The Impact of Self-Control and Social Consequences on Crime and Drug Use (betas reported)

Independent Variable	*Property Crime*	*Violent Crime*	*Total Crime*	*Drug Use*
Self-control	.171**	.279**	.195**	.175**
Unemployment	.042	–.029	.033	.021
Homelessness	.161**	.049	.150**	.063
Monetary dissatisfaction	.087*	.049	.093*	–.008
Relative deprivation	.057	.102*	.060	.071
Deviant peers	.105*	.108*	.129**	.155**
Deviant values	.225**	.139**	.221**	.216**
Age	–.065	–.156††	–.073	.032
Gender	–.021	–.191††	–.059	–.006
R^2	.187	.203	.205	.160
n	388	388	388	366

*$p < .05$, one-tailed test. **$p < .01$, one-tailed test. †$p < .05$, two-tailed test. ††$p < .01$, two-tailed test.

predictors of all four offenses and homelessness predicts property crime and total crime. Greater monetary dissatisfaction is related to property crime and total crime and relative deprivation is a significant predictor of violent crime. A comparison of the strength of the various predictors indicates that low self-control is the strongest predictor of violent crime. In fact, it predicts this offense better than any other offense. In contrast, low self-control is only the second strongest predictor of property crime, total crime, and drug use. Instead, deviant values, a social learning/differential association variable, is the strongest predictor of these other behaviors. Thus, in this case, Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) argument regarding the spuriousness of the relationship between social consequences and crime is not supported nor is their view that low self-control is the primary cause of crime. Furthermore, it appears that low self-control predicts certain behaviors better than others.

Thus, the results reveal that while low self-control is an important predictor of criminal behavior, and influences certain social consequences, a number of social factors have an impact on crime independent of low self-control, suggesting that the alternative perspectives of differential association/social learning theory, classic strain theory, and general strain theory are important for understanding criminal activity.

DISCUSSION

This article set out to explore the role of low self-control in the generation of crime, drug use, and negative social consequences. The results reveal that low social control is a strong predictor of property crime, violent crime, drug use, and crime overall. These relationships remain significant even when a range of variables from competing theoretical perspectives are included in the analysis. These results support the theoretical perspective offered by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) and are consistent with the previous research, most of which assessed the effects of low self-control on conventional populations without controlling for competing theoretical perspectives (see Pratt and Cullen 2000). However, it is also the case that low self-control appears to predict violent offending better than other types of crime. This is interesting in that some research suggests that self-control is a better predictor of imprudent behaviors than more serious forms of criminal behavior (Arneklev et al. 1993; Forde and Kennedy 1997; Grasmick et al. 1993) while other work suggests the effect is similar across behaviors (Evans et al. 1997; Paternoster and Brame 1998). In this case, examining a range of serious offenses, amongst a group of serious offenders, its effect is stronger in predicting violence. This suggests more research is required to examine the effect of low self-control on different behaviors in different populations.

The results also suggest that Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) argument that low self-control is linked to any number of negative social outcomes has merit. In this research, low self-control left one more likely to hook up with deviant peers and to internalize deviant values. Low self-control also appears to leave these youth less likely to be employed and more likely to be unemployed for greater periods of time. Low self-control also appears to draw youth to the street away from the rules, regulations, and sources of social control that those with low self-control dislike. Of course, as Evans et al. (1997) note, while these relationships are consistent with the theory, the causal implications are not necessarily clear. Evans et al. (1997) note that reciprocal causal effects between low self-control and these consequences is possible as is reverse causal ordering. It might be that long-term unemployment, long-term homelessness, as well as deviant peers, and deviant values undermine a person's self-control. Future work utilizing longitudinal data may uncover alternative causal ordering.

The results also reveal that while low self-control has a number of negative social consequences, these social factors have an independent effect on criminal behavior. This provides evidence against the spuriousness argument put forth by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990). Beginning with those measures associated with the differential association/social learning perspectives, the deviant peers variable was significantly related to all four offenses: property crime, violent crime, drug use, and total crime. The deviant values variable had a somewhat stronger effect predicting all four offense types. In fact, in three of the four models that included both the deviant values measure and the low self-control measure, the former was a stronger predictor than the later. These findings provide support for past research that has incorporated measures from differential association/social learning perspectives into research on low self-control (Burton et al. 1994, 1998; Evans et al. 1997, Pratt and Cullen 2000).

Evans et al. (1997) argue that the tendency of those with low self-control to engage in crime and analogous acts can be increased by exposure to deviant values and deviant peers. For example, they suggest that criminal associates may "activate latent criminal tendencies" (p. 494). Criminal associates might influence people with low self-control to recognize opportunities for crime and define certain crimes and analogous acts as worth pursuing.

The findings also reveal that contrary to the expectations of Gottfredson and Hirschi, homelessness continues to have an impact on crime even when self-control is included in the models. Long-term homelessness increases property crime, and crime overall. As Agnew (2001) argues, homelessness is a type of strain that "is likely to be seen as very high in magnitude because it represents a major challenge to a broad range of goals, needs, values, activities, and identities" (p. 345) and may be perceived as unfair by those suffering

the condition (see Baron and Hartnagel 1997; Hagan and McCarthy 1997b). It appears that the strain of basic needs and absolute poverty can exert an independent influence leading to criminal behavior net of low self-control.

The results also reveal that while low self-control is related to deviant peers, deviant values, unemployment, and homelessness, it has no relationship to the social consequences associated with the classic strain perspective. Thus, low self-control does not make one more vulnerable to feel frustrated about their economic situation, and does not influence one's comparison process leading to feelings of deprivation. The causes of these would appear to lie in the broader economic structure in which these youths are embedded (Agnew 1997; Agnew et al. 1996; Lynch and Groves 1989).

Similarly, the variables from classic strain theory were significant predictors of criminal behavior net of self-control. In particular, monetary dissatisfaction was a significant predictor of property crime and overall offending. Agnew et al. (1996) suggest that this dissatisfaction may be a function of, among other things, the importance placed on monetary success, one's position in the stratification system, and one's expectations for future success. Agnew (1997) notes that it may be the case that certain subgroups, such as the urban underclass living in highly deprived environments, who place a greater emphasis on the goal of monetary success (see Cernkovich et al. 2000; MacLeod 1987; Sullivan 1989). Their structural location may diminish expectations for future success leading to this monetary dissatisfaction and criminal behavior.

It was also the case that those who perceived themselves to be deprived when they compared themselves to others were more likely to engage in violent offending. Agnew (1997; Agnew et al. 1996) argues that strain will be more likely when individuals believe that they are worse off monetarily than others with whom they compare themselves (see Burton and Cullen 1992; Passas 1995, 1997). Strain is not only a function of the failure to achieve, but also a function of the attainments of those in one's comparative reference group(s). Individuals do not determine whether they are strained in isolation; rather, they compare themselves with others, and such comparisons have a major impact on determining their level of strain (Agnew 1997). Passas (1997) notes that there is much pressure for individuals in North America to select nonmembership reference groups. He argues that the "American Dream," and an egalitarian ideology often lead individuals to compare themselves against those higher in the stratification system (see also Agnew 1997).

Past work on strain theory has been criticized for utilizing high school students instead of examining the hard-core poor living in urban slums and administering instruments that measure minor offenses (Bernard 1984). As speculated, strain theory appears to be more relevant to those outside of

school, to whom the pursuit of money is a more serious matter, who face great barriers to goal achievement (Agnew 1995; Bernard 1984; Jensen 1995). The findings suggest that these alternative measures of strain, examined in an "at risk" population are good predictors of crime. It should be noted that these results are also consistent with conflict perspectives that stress the importance of relative deprivation and economic dissatisfaction (Box 1987; Lea and Young 1984; Lynch and Groves 1989) in the creation of crime. Together this suggests that extreme deprivation, along with one's feelings of dissatisfaction and perceptions of unfairness, can have an impact on crime, net of low self-control.

It may also be the case that the deviant peers and deviant values are related to the strain variables examined here. For example, Merton (1968), Cohen (1955), and Cloward and Ohlin (1960) all contend that strain is more likely when individuals have a weak commitment to institutional norms. Furthermore, Cohen (1955), Cloward and Ohlin (1960), and later Merton (1968) argue that the presence of criminal peers can strongly influence whether strained individuals turn to crime (see also Agnew 1992; Agnew et al. 1996). This suggests that perhaps the self-control, differential association/social learning, and strain perspectives need not be viewed as mutually exclusive paradigms (see Evans et al. 1997).

In sum, the findings offer some support for the general theory in that low self-control appears to be a strong predictor of a range of criminal behaviors. Furthermore, it appears that it has a range of negative consequences, including taking up with deviant peers, incorporating deviant values, unemployment, and homelessness. However, contradicting the general theory, the results indicate that not all negative consequences are the result of low self-control and the relationship between various negative consequences and crime is not spurious. These social factors continue to have independent effects net of low self-control lending support to other theoretical perspectives.

Caution should also be taken in interpreting the findings because a number of the key measures are drawn from single items. Future work would do well to incorporate multi-item measures of these variables utilizing this research population. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to make causal inferences. Despite these limitations, the findings are important because they are derived from a difficult-to-reach sample of higher crime-risk youth to whom the general theory had not previously been applied and uses measures of more serious offenses. These were older youths seriously at risk for criminal behavior rather than the traditional high school or representative samples that contain younger, more conventional youths. Furthermore, these results are important because they incorporate other theoretical perspectives using novel measures of strain. Future work should examine in more detail the link between low self-control, differential association/

social learning, and revised and classic strain perspectives. As Paternoster and Brame (1998, 2000) note, evidence suggests that "self-control is not all that matters, and that self-control alone is clearly not sufficient" (Paternoster and Brame 1998:654). It appears that there are factors subsequent to the formation of low self-control that influence people's involvement in crime and other imprudent acts. Including measures from other perspectives to further develop the general theory and testing these on a range of populations is a step toward understanding what these subsequent factors are. Furthermore, longitudinal work could also help unravel the links between the perspectives, allow for the confirmation of causal order and provide the opportunity for the examination of alternative causal ordering.

APPENDIX
Questions on Dimensions of Low Self-Control

	Mean	SD
Impulsivity		
I often act on impulse (spur of the moment) without stopping to think.	2.88	.84
I often devote much thought and effort to preparing for the future.	2.50	.88
I often do whatever brings me pleasure here and now, even at the cost of some distant goal.	2.81	.75
I'm more concerned with what happens to me in the short run than in the long run.	2.74	.80
Simple tasks		
I frequently try to avoid projects that I know will be difficult.	2.47	.79
When things get complicated, I tend to quit or withdraw.	2.53	.82
The things in life that are easiest to do bring me the most pleasure.	2.55	.75
I dislike really hard tasks that stretch my abilities to the limit.	2.33	.77
Physical activities		
I almost always feel better when I am on the move than when I am sitting and thinking.	2.94	.74
I would rather go out and do things than sit at home and read.	2.95	.75
I seem to have more energy and a greater need for physical activities than most people my age.	2.54	.79
If I had a choice, I would always do something physical rather than something mental.	2.39	.80
Self-centered		
I try to look out for myself first (even if it means making things difficult for other people).	2.74	.82
I'm not very sympathetic to other people even when they are having problems.	2.07	.85
If I do things to upset people, it's their problem not mine.	2.47	.84
I will try to get things I want even when I know it's causing problems for other people.	2.37	.75
Risk seeking		
I like to test myself every now and then by doing something a little risky.	2.93	.78
Sometimes I will take a risk just for the fun of it.	2.94	.72
Excitement and adventure are more important to me than security.	2.62	.83

(continued)

APPENDIX (continued)

	Mean	*SD*
Temper		
I lose my temper pretty easily.	2.65	.93
Often when I'm angry at people I feel more like hurting them than talking to them about why I'm angry.	2.44	.92
When I'm really angry, other people better stay away from me.	2.66	.84
When I have a serious disagreement with someone, its usually hard for me to talk calmly about it without getting upset.	2.74	.81

NOTE: Questions are adapted from Grasmick et al. (1993).

NOTES

1. Those who agreed were supplied with informed consent forms outlining study goals and their rights within the interview. Participants were told they were not obliged to answer any of the questions and could withdraw from the interview at any time. None of the youths exercised this power.

2. Aboriginals are drastically overrepresented in the sample. According to Peters and Murphy (1993) only about 1 percent of the youths in the city schools are native.

3. A principal axis extraction method with a varimax rotated solution with Kaiser normalization revealed there to be six factors that explained 48% of the variance. The strongest factor was made up of the four violent crime measures (all more than .8) and the theft of more than $50 measure (.725). Three of the other factors were associated with drug use (psychedelics/angel dust; cocaine/heroin; barbiturates/tranquilizers). The other two factors were composed of property crime measures. The first was associated with car theft and theft under $50 and the second with theft of more than $50.

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