



# The Importance of Parenting in the Development of Self-Control in Boys and Girls: Results from a Multinational Study of Youth<sup>☆</sup>



Ekaterina Botchkovar<sup>a,\*</sup>, Ineke Haen Marshall<sup>a</sup>, Michael Rocque<sup>b</sup>, Chad Posick<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Northeastern University

<sup>b</sup> Department of Sociology, Bates College

<sup>c</sup> Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology, Georgia Southern University

## ARTICLE INFO

Available online 10 March 2015

## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** Using self-report data from a cross-national study of 7th, 8th, and 9th graders ( $N = 67,883$ ) in 30 countries, this study assesses the cultural generality of self-control theory and its predictions linking parenting to self-control. We focus on the relationship between gender and self-control, assess the contribution of various parenting strategies to the development of self-control in males and females, and gauge the importance of parenting as an explanation for the established gender gap in self-control.

**Methods:** OLS regression is used to evaluate these causal links.

**Findings:** Supporting self-control theory, across all country clusters, males demonstrate lower levels of self-control than females. Furthermore, parenting strategies have a modest effect on self-control in both male and female groups in all cultural contexts. However, finding of the statistically significant differences in the parenting of sons and daughters is limited to post-Socialist, Mediterranean, and Western countries, and, in these regions, the contribution of gendered parenting to the gender gap in self-control is minimal.

**Conclusions:** These results suggest that the development of self-control is a complex process likely affected by multiple factors, some of which may be culture-specific.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## Introduction

Perhaps the most ambitious explanation of criminal behavior, self-control theory (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990) has generated more research and theorizing than the majority of other criminological theories. Self-control theory attributes individual involvement in crime to a single factor, self-control, presumably a product of childrearing. According to Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), only those individuals whose self-control is sufficiently high successfully withstand deviant impulses, whereas those with weaker self-control are prone to deviant behaviors. The theory also holds that self-control can explain “all crimes at all times,” (p.117) thus positioning itself as a general theory of crime.

Studies have linked self-control to serious criminal acts (Evans, Cullen, Burton, Dunaway, & Benson, 1997; Longshore, 1998) as well as a variety of risky outcomes, from drunk driving (Keane, Maxim, & Teevan, 1993; Piquero & Tibbetts, 1996), drug use (Ribeaud & Eisner,

2006; Sorenson & Brownfield, 1995; Vazsonyi & Crosswhite, 2004), and excessive alcohol consumption (Morris, Wood, & Dunaway, 2006; Vazsonyi & Crosswhite, 2004) to school bullying (Unnever & Cornell, 2003), dating violence (Chapple & Hope, 2003), software piracy (Higgins, 2005), and criminal victimization (Schreck, 1999). The low self-control-crime link appears to hold in cross-sectional (Grasmick, Tittle, Bursik, & Arneklev, 1993), longitudinal (Polakowski, 1994), and experimental (Muraven, Tice, & Baumeister, 1998) designs, and its effect on criminal behavior persists in non-US samples (Antonaccio & Tittle, 2008; Caspi et al., 1994; Hwang & Akers, 2003; Nakhaie, Silverman, & LaGrange, 2000; Tittle & Botchkovar, 2005; Vazsonyi, Clifford Wittekind, Belliston, & Van Loh, 2004).

Less evidence exists to support some other propositions of self-control theory, including the potential of self-control to account for known correlates of crime. According to Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), group differences in crime can be attributed largely to group differences in self-control. Higher criminal involvement of men relative to women, for example, should be due to gender differences in self-control likely arising from societally-dictated discrepancies in parenting of sons and daughters (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990:144–149). While the literature is still growing, existing studies provide some evidence linking childrearing to self-control (see Cullen, Unnever, Wright, & Beaver, 2008; Brauer, Tittle, Antonaccio, & Islam, 2012; Burt et al. 2006; Gibbs, Giever, & Martin, 1998; Jo & Zhang, 2014; Hay & Forrest,

<sup>☆</sup> This research was supported by the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice Award No. 2006-IJ-CX-0045. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice.

\* Corresponding author at: 400 Churchill Hall, School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Northeastern University, 360 Huntington Ave Boston MA 02478.

E-mail address: e.botchkovar@neu.edu (E. Botchkovar).

2006; Latimore, Tittle, & Grasmick, 2006; Na & Paternoster, 2012; Nofziger, 2008; Özdemir et al., 2013; but see Beaver, Ferguson, & Lynn-Whaley, 2010; Wright & Beaver, 2005 for contrary evidence), but few tests have established the purported gender difference in self-control levels (Botchkovar & Broidy, 2013; Burton, Cullen, Evans, Alarid, & Dunaway, 1998; Gibbs et al., 1998; Higgins, 2004; Higgins & Tewksbury, 2006; c.f. Tittle, Ward, & Grasmick, 2003), even fewer have examined the extent to which parenting may account for these differences (Gibbs et al., 1998; Higgins, 2004; Shekarkhar & Gibson, 2011), and only one study has attempted to investigate the potential of self-control to explain the gender gap in crime in a non-US context (Botchkovar & Broidy, 2013).

Drawing on unique data from the second International Self-Report Delinquency Study (Junger-Tas et al., 2010, 2012), this study puts to test several claims of self-control theory in various cultural settings. First, it investigates the cross-cultural stability of gender differences in self-control and parenting practices. Second, it assesses the effect of parenting on self-control relative to other theoretically important influences, including school and neighborhood environment. Finally, it examines the extent to which parenting may account for the gender differences in self-control in various cultural contexts.

### Gender, parenting, and self-Control

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) trace the origins of self-control to parenting. According to the theory, responsible caretakers – usually parents – monitor children's behavior, recognize, and punish misbehavior when it occurs, thus fostering the development of self-control. Furthermore, because these tasks require much effort, truly effective caregivers must be emotionally attached to their children. The authors also contend that self-control contains multiple elements (e.g., impulsivity, risk-seeking, physicality, present-orientation, self-centeredness, and a preference for simple tasks) and changes relatively little after the age of eight or nine (Hirschi & Gottfredson, 2001).

Because individual differences in criminal involvement, according to the theory, are reflective of the differences in self-control, all known correlates or “facts” of crime (Braithwaite 1989: ch.3) are presumed to be nothing but manifestations of group differences in the strength of self-control (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Specifically, disproportionate involvement of men in criminal activities relative to women must reflect persistent gender differences in self-control. The theory suggests that most parents are inclined to keep girls under strict supervision, whereas boys are allowed slightly more freedom. As a result, girls' transgressions are more likely to be recognized and punished, and boys' misbehavior is often overlooked. Therefore, gendered childrearing patterns may help produce a better capacity for self-control in girls relative to boys (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990:144–149).

Research investigating the relationship between parenting and self-control provides mixed support for the claims of self-control theory. Although childrearing appears to be a statistically significant predictor of self-control (Feldman & Weinberger, 1994; Gibbs et al., 1998; Gibson, Sullivan, Jones, & Piquero, 2009; Hay, 2001; Latimore et al., 2006; Meldrum, 2008; Perrone, Sullivan, Pratt, & Margaryan, 2004; Unnever, Cullen, & Agnew, 2006), the overall contribution of parenting to self-control variation is often modest (Botchkovar & Broidy, 2013; Cullen et al., 2008; Gibbs et al., 1998; Latimore et al., 2006; Vazsonyi & Klanjšek, 2008). The unique contribution of different elements of parenting to the development of self-control also seems uneven. For instance, self-control has been shown to be significantly associated with parental attachment (Cochran, Wood, Sellers, Wilkerson, & Chamlin, 1998; Hope & Chapple, 2005; Hope, Grasmick, & Pointon, 2003), support (Vazsonyi & Belliston, 2007), as well as monitoring and recognition of misbehavior (Hay, 2001; Latimore et al., 2006), whereas parental punishment and discipline do not seem to be

associated with self-control (Hay, 2001; Latimore et al., 2006; but see Nofziger, 2008).

Some studies also suggest that, in addition to childrearing, self-control may be shaped or determined by a variety of social and nonsocial factors including family structure (Perrone et al., 2004;), peer pressure, school (Beaver, Wright, & Maume, 2008; Meldrum, 2008; Turner, Livecchi, Beaver, & Booth, 2011; Turner, Piquero, & Pratt, 2005), neuropsychological deficits (e.g. Jackson and Beaver 2013), neighborhood disadvantage (Teasdale & Silver, 2009), and genetics (Beaver, Connolly, Schwartz, Al-Ghamdi, & Kobeisy, 2013; Boisvert, Boutwell, Barnes, & Vaske, 2013; Wright & Beaver, 2005; see also De Lisi, 2015 for a thorough review of the literature). In fact, research on self-control juxtaposing genetic influences and environmental elements reports significant heritability of self-control (Barnes, Boutwell, Beaver, Gibson, & Wright, 2014; Wright, Beaver, DeLisi, & Vaughn, 2008; Beaver et al., 2013; see also Yancey, Venables, Hicks, & Patrick, 2013) thus identifying parenting as one of the many factors possibly affecting self-control (Turkheimer, 2000). These studies suggest that any association between parenting and self-control is either spurious due to genetic factors responsible for deficient parenting and low self-control levels in children (e.g. Boutwell & Beaver, 2010) or it simply reflects parental adjustment to children's misbehavior produced by low self-control (Beaver & Wright, 2007; Wright et al., 2008; see also Barnes et al., 2014).

Finally, most research evidence linking parenting to self-control draws on U.S. data. A handful of studies assess the role of childrearing in the production of self-control in non-U.S. settings (Botchkovar & Broidy, 2013; Brauer et al., 2012; Jo & Zhang, 2014; Özdemir et al., 2013; Vazsonyi & Belliston, 2007; Vazsonyi & Klanjšek, 2008). Although the findings reported by some of these studies are supportive of the theory (for example Vazsonyi & Klanjšek, 2008), others provide mixed evidence (Botchkovar & Broidy, 2013; Brauer et al., 2012). Furthermore, much of this research draws on data collected in one or two countries (e.g., Botchkovar & Broidy, 2013; Brauer et al., 2012), and its findings are hardly comparable due to significant differences in the demographic characteristics of the samples used in these studies.

The effect of gender on the relationship between parenting and self-control has received even less attention from researchers. A number of studies have confirmed that women have higher levels of self-control relative to men (Boisvert, Vaske, Taylor, & Wright, 2012; Botchkovar & Broidy, 2013; Burton et al., 1998; Cheung & Cheung, 2010; Gibbs et al., 1998; Higgins, 2004; Higgins & Tewksbury, 2006; LaGrange & Silverman, 1999; Shekarkhar & Gibson, 2011; c.f. Tittle et al., 2003). However, only three studies explicitly test whether theorized differences in parenting of boys and girls explain this variation (Botchkovar & Broidy, 2013; Gibbs et al., 1998; Higgins, 2004), and only one of them reports unequivocal support for this claim (Higgins, 2004; see also Shekarkhar & Gibson, 2011). This raises a possibility that similar childrearing practices may lead to differential behavioral outcomes across gender (Baumrind, 1989; Eisenberg et al., 2001; Lytton & Romney, 1991; Rothbaum & Weisz, 1994). Therefore, although Gottfredson and Hirschi suggest that gender differences in the form of childrearing explain gender differences in self-control, it may instead be differences in children's responses to similar forms of childrearing that explain gendered variation in levels of self-control (see Baumrind, 1989 for a similar argument; Botchkovar & Broidy, 2013).

Overall, empirical research investigating the sources of individual and group differences in self-control remains scarce and mostly limited to Western countries. This study offers additional evidence on the connection between gender, parenting, and self-control in various cultural contexts.

### Study hypotheses

Following Gottfredson and Hirschi's theory, we suggest that the gender gap in crime commonly found in the literature (Heimer, 2000)

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/882650>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/882650>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)