

6-8-2010

Testing the Generalizability Claims of Gottfredson and Hirschi's General Theory Using Hirschi's Revised Concept of Self-Control

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TESTING THE GENERALIZABILITY CLAIMS OF GOTTFREDSON AND
HIRSCHI'S GENERAL THEORY USING HIRSCHI'S REVISED CONCEPT OF
SELF-CONTROL

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Criminology

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May 2010

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Title: Testing the Generalizability Claims of Gottfredson and Hirschi's General Theory Using Hirschi's Revised Concept of Self-Control

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The purpose of this dissertation is to empirically examine the generalizability claims of Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) theory. Information was collected on self-control and deviance from two South Korean samples, i.e., high school students and youthful offenders. The samples were compared to each other and the results of the study were examined in light of Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) claim of cross-group generalizability. The measure of self-control used in this study is based on Hirschi's (2004) revised conceptualization. Hirschi redefined self-control as the set of inhibiting or restraining factors one carries with one wherever one happens to go. Hirschi suggested that these inhibiting factors can be identified by social bond theory. A self-report instrument was administered to an availability sample (n=708) of Korean high school students and youthful offenders. The findings generally indicate that the revised self-control scales, which included a general bond-based self-control measure and a specific bond-based self-control measure were sufficiently reliable and unidimensional. The deviance scale representing the dependent or response variable was reliable and unidimensional, as well. In this study, two measures of self-control were developed and included in the models that were tested to examine the cross-group generalizability claim of the general theory. Three bivariate regression models examined the effect of general

bond-based self-control measure on the composite deviance scale for the entire sample, the high school students, and the youthful offenders. The results indicate that general bond-based self-control influences deviance. This supports the general theory and its group applicability. Three additional bivariate regression models were tested for the entire sample, high school students, and youthful offenders to determine the effects of situation specific bond-based self-control on the likelihood of committing the theft in a hypothetical situation. The results confirm that those with lower levels of self-control are more likely to decide to commit theft when presented with a scenario.