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Police Officers Perception of the Validity
of the General Theory of Crime

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of Criminal Justice
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in Criminal Justice

by
William Jaison Giesler
December 2003

Dr. Larry Miller, Chair
Dr. David Holleran
Dr. Michael Braswell

Keywords: Police Perceptions, Validity of General Theory of Crime

ABSTRACT

Police Officers Perception of the Validity of the General Theory of Crime

by

William Jaison Giesler

This study measured police officers perception of the validity of General Theory of Crime. Using a sample of 117 officers and an adapted version of the Grasmick et al. (1993) self-control scale, this study measures the level of agreement officers exhibit that low self-control traits are present in property and violent offenders. Measurement is also performed to determine variation in officers agreement based on the personal characteristics gender, age, education, experience, and rank.

Findings indicate officers show agreement with self-control items across the six dimensions of self control traits, as well as significant variation in agreement with the property offender self-control scale based on gender. Analysis on individual items of the property and violent offender self-control scales indicates significant variation in agreement on several items based on personal characteristics. Conclusions demonstrate the need for further studies measuring police perception of offenders and the validity of criminological theories. Limitations of this study are also discussed.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Don and Betty Giesler. Their love, support, and encouragement have made all my accomplishments possible. They have made me the person I am today, and I am very blessed to have them in my life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I must give a great deal of thanks to Dr. Larry Miller. His support and guidance were invaluable to me in this thesis. Dr. Miller graciously gave his time, encouragement, and suggestions, without giving up on me. I must also thank Dr. Michael Braswell and Dr. David Holleran. They too gave their time, suggestions, and support in order to make this project better.

I would like to thank my friends and family for supporting me both through graduate school, and with my thesis. My family and friends have been very encouraging, and have patiently dealt with my being consumed by this project. I thank them all for their love, patience, and support. Bob Welch must also be given special thanks for his tremendous help with data entry and testing. Thank you Bob, you made a tedious job much better.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A General Theory of Crime by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) introduced an entirely new approach to explaining crime. In the time since its inception, General Theory has spurred a large amount of testing and debate by criminologists. Quite controversially, it proposed a new definition, nature, and causes of crime with arguments and assumptions different from previously offered explanations of criminal behavior.

Similar to Hirschi's (1969) Social Control Theory, Gottfredson and Hirschi's General Theory of Crime assumes that people are hedonistic in nature and will commit crime if controlling forces do not prevent them from doing so. However, unlike Social Control Theory's assertion that external forces, such as ties to family, community, and church constrain individuals from criminal behavior, General Theory argues that internal traits, or personality traits, determine one's propensity toward criminal behavior. These personality characteristics are defined by Gottfredson and Hirschi as self-control traits. In this sense, General Theory is an individual-level theory by contending internal forces influence behavior rather than external or societal forces (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argue that criminal behavior is characterized by features that reflect a hedonistic nature. That is, criminal behavior provides easy, short-term gratifications such as relief from situational aggravations, small amounts of money, and excitement. Thus, General Theory asserts that the nature of crime itself provides important clues to understanding the nature of criminals. Gottfredson and Hirschi suggest that criminals will tend to be impulsive, insensitive, physical (as opposed to mental), risk-taking, short-sighted, and nonverbal (Gottfredson & Hirschi, p.90). The authors suggest these six traits form the construct low self-control, as an element of an

individual's personality that encourages criminal behavior. General Theory argues that people with low self-control are more likely to commit all types of crimes, while people with high self-control are less likely under all circumstances throughout life to commit crime (Gottfredson & Hirschi, p.118).

The core argument of Gottfredson and Hirschi's General Theory of Crime (1990) is that when there is opportunity to commit crime those who are lower in self-control are more likely to be involved in criminal and analogous acts, which are risky behaviors such as drinking, smoking, illicit sexual behavior, etc., explained by Gottfredson and Hirschi as behaviors that although not illegal, are equivalent to crime because they stem from low self-control, involve immediate gratification, and involve a lack of consideration for future consequences. Their theory poses three main assertions. First, those with low self-control will have higher levels of involvement in criminal and analogous acts. Second, those with low self-control will engage in a range of various criminal and analogous acts without specialization. Finally, low self-control traits will tend to come together in the same people and persist throughout the life course, affecting various areas of life.

Self Control

Gottfredson and Hirschi define self-control as the differential tendency of people to avoid criminal acts whatever the circumstances in which they find themselves (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990, p.87). They identify six traits that people who have low self-control will tend to exhibit: impulsivity, insensitivity, physical (as opposed to mental), risk-taking behavior, short-sightedness, and nonverbal. Quite simply, Gottfredson and Hirschi argue that individuals who have these six characteristics will be more likely to commit crime.

As an individual-level theory, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) propose that

criminal behavior stems from internal traits they have labeled low self-control. These traits, according to Gottfredson and Hirschi, are predominantly caused by lack of training or socialization in the early years of life. Once these traits are established, they are unlikely to change and are prone to become stable traits that remain across the life course.

Barlow (1991) explains the concept of how an individual develops low self-control clearly. Low self-control traits are not consistent with long-term interests to individuals, their families, or society. Therefore, low self-control is assumed to be produced by the absence of effective controls or socialization in the early years of life, not caused by cultural values or socialization encouraging criminal behavior. Following the basically hedonistic view of human nature supposed by Gottfredson and Hirschi, people will pursue self-interest in the quickest, easiest ways without restraint through socialization. That is, low self-control is not learned, rather higher self-control is never learned, predominantly because of poor parenting and socialization in the early years of life, leaving low self-control in its absence. This is the only socialization or external effect Gottfredson and Hirschi recognize in General Theory, and they assume people are inherently self-serving and will pursue their own interests unless socialized not to do so (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990).

Statement of the Problem

Gottfredson and Hirschi's General Theory of Crime has broken away from traditional explanations of crime. In doing so, it has created a new avenue of research that has examined self-control traits. Numerous studies have found support for the General Theory as an explanation of crime; however, none have attempted to measure the presence of low self-control traits in offenders from the viewpoint of those who see criminal behavior on a day-to-day basis: police officers. In carrying out their duties,

police officers view more criminal behavior on a first-hand basis than criminologists typically do in a lifetime. Although most police work is reactive in nature, it can be argued that police still have ample opportunity to see low self-control traits in offenders without actually witnessing the criminal act itself. Police officers come into close contact with offenders on a regular basis, see their behavior during arrest and transport to jail, hear and often see personal details about their lives and their living conditions, and frequently see the effects of their criminal acts and details of exactly what took place.

Thus far, however, it appears that researchers have never measured police officers' perceptions of criminals or crime. There has been no research on police officers' perceptions of offenders' behavior from a criminological standpoint. Studies that have been done on police perception have tended to concentrate on job-related factors such as stress, job satisfaction, decisions to use deadly force, and similar areas. Moreover, these studies have largely been done within a theoretical framework based in psychology, not criminology. No research thus far has alluded to assessing police officers' perception of why criminals commit crime, or differences in their level of agreement based on officers' personal characteristics such as gender, age, years of experience in law enforcement, race, rank, or education level. Likewise, no studies have measured police officers' opinion of the validity of any criminological theory.

Purpose of the Study

As an individual-level theory that uses inherent personality characteristics (low self-control traits) as an explanation of crime, General Theory lends itself readily to measurement of police officers' perception of criminal behavior. In their exposure to criminals, police officers have an opportunity to see the behaviors exhibited by offenders on a first hand basis. Therefore, using a questionnaire measuring the six low self-control

traits proposed by General Theory, officers should be able to assess, based on their experience in law enforcement, whether these behaviors are truly seen in those individuals who commit crime.

The purpose of this study is to provide a preliminary examination of the extent to which officers perceive low self-control traits in those individuals who commit crime. In so doing, it may allow a view of whether or not officers perceive that low self-control traits are present in offenders and, therefore, whether Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) suggestion that these low self-control traits are present in offenders is valid. This study also examines differences in officers' level of agreement based on the independent variable characteristics: gender, age, education level, years of experience, and rank. With no previous research of this kind it is questionable, and impossible to estimate without testing, how much variation in officers' level of agreement based on these independent variables exists.

Measurement was performed using a reconfigured version of the Grasmick et al. (1993) self-control scale which has already been established in the criminology field as a valid measure of self-control traits. Two identical 12-item scales measured officers' level of agreement with one scale worded to focus on property offenders and the other on violent offenders. This was done in an effort to detect any differences in officers' level of agreement with the scales based on whether they were asked to consider the behavior of property or violent offenders. From this, officers' level of agreement with the self-control traits on the scale was examined for both property and violent offenders, allowing a preliminary view of whether or not officers see these low self-control traits in both types of offenders.

Hypotheses

This study involved 117 police, public safety, detectives, corrections, and administrative officers gathered from the Johnson City, Washington County, and Elizabethton police departments in the Spring of 2002. This study used demographic-type data on police officers, such as gender, age, and rank, as an exploratory attempt to find officers' level of agreement with General Theory of Crime through testing their perceptions of offenders from the perspective of a revised version of the Grasmick et al. (1993) self-control scale. Officers' perception of the General Theory's validity was tested for both property and violent offenders through the use of two identical scales, one focused on violent offenders and one focused on property offenders. The primary research hypotheses are stated below:

H₁: Male officers will score higher on agreement with violent and property scales than female officers.

H₂: Older officers will score higher on agreement with violent and property scales than younger officers.

H₃: Officers with higher levels of education will score lower on agreement with violent and property scales.

H₄: Officers with more years of experience will score higher on agreement with violent and property scales.

H₅: Officers with lower rank will score higher on agreement with violent and property scales.

Relationships between the independent variables, gender, age, education level, experience level, and rank and violent and property self-control scales were analyzed

using Chi-Square tests to assess the significance of the relationships within the hypotheses proposed by this study. Further analysis employing Chi-Square was conducted to assess the relationships between the independent variables and each item of the violent and property self-control scales. This was completed to ascertain which items officers exhibited significant differences in agreement with, based on their personal characteristics.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations in this study to consider. First is the questionnaire used. The original Grasmick et al. (1993) scale employed four items designed to measure each of the six dimensions outlined by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) that make up low self-control totaling 24 items. This study used only 12 items for each scale, employing 2 items to measure each of the six behaviors. This was done in order to make completing the questionnaire as simple and quick as possible for the respondents; however, it is unknown whether using these shortened versions of the scale may have reduced the ability of the questionnaire to fully measure any or all of the low self-control components.

The second limitation of this study involved the coding of scores on the scales into categories of low, mid, and high agreement categories. Coding the scores from a 5-point Likert-type scale down into categories of low, mid, and high agreement necessitated assigning a point range for officers' agreement to allow grouping into one of the three agreement categories. Thus, scores of strongly disagree and disagree on items were assigned 1 point, scores of neither agree nor disagree were assigned 2 points, and scores of agree and strongly agree were assigned 3 points. For the scale those who totaled 12 points were grouped into the low agreement category, those totaling 13 to 24 points were

grouped into the middle agreement category, and those who scored 25 to 36 were grouped into the high agreement category.

It can be seen, therefore, that grouping of respondents' scores could be skewed somewhat high by the coding system. An officer who scored as strongly disagreeing or disagreeing with each item would be assigned a 1 totaling 12 points for the scale and would be assigned to the low level of agreement group. If an officer, however, scored strongly disagree on each item of one of the scales except one item in which he or she chose the neither agree nor disagree answer choice or the agree or strongly agree choice, the officer would automatically score in the middle agreement category although it could be possible the officer disagreed or disagreed strongly with the rest of the items in the scale. Thus, the possibility of scores being skewed high is possible and worth considering since no scores of low agreement with either the violent or property self-control scales were found.

A third limitation to this study that must be considered is the sampling method that was used. An availability sampling method was used and administered during roll call at the beginning of patrol officers' shifts, while officers in corrections, administrative, and detective positions, due to not being present during shift roll calls for patrol officers, were administered questionnaires by their supervisors and superiors. Due to the focus of this study, an availability sample of this nature was the only practical way to gather an acceptable representation of officers' perception of General Theory. Further, because the sample collected included officers from several work divisions, such as patrol, corrections, investigation, etc., it provided a cross section of officers with differing types and lengths of experience, career goals, and involvement with offenders. Although availability sampling of this type is widely used, it does leave making inferences about findings to the general population hazardous (Kalton, 1983).

Another limitation to the study involving the sample drawn is the sample size. Although 117 officers is acceptable for exploratory research, it is a relatively small sample for most research purposes. This leaves the possibility of causing certain groups, such as female or minority officers, to be underrepresented. It is clear that a larger sample would represent these groups more adequately and could have an effect by better representing police officers in the population. Further, a larger sample would have an effect on the Chi-Square statistic used in this study as the Chi-Square value would increase for each test as sample size is increased. This, in turn, could allow more relationships between variables tested in this study to be found significant.

Definition of Terms

Administrative Officers Officers who are in higher ranking positions consisting of officers holding the rank of lieutenant and captain within this study.

Detectives State certified sworn officers whose duties consist of investigation of crimes.

Line Officers For the purposes of this study, line officers are defined as those officers who fall into the group within the sample of police officers who primarily have lower rank. The officers that fall into this group are patrol officers, public safety officers, K9 officers, and corrections officers.

Police Officers Defined as state certified sworn police officers.

Property Offender Defined as a person who has committed a property (non-violent) crime against the state that is punishable by fine, probation, or jail time.

Public Safety Officers Defined as state certified sworn police officers who also incorporate fire fighting techniques.

Self-Control Traits Six personality traits (impulsive, insensitive, physical (as

opposed to mental), risk-taking, short-sighted, and nonverbal) suggested by Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi as inherent personality traits in individual that contribute to criminal behavior.

Violent Offender Defined as a person who has committed a violent (non-property) crime against the state that is punishable by fine, probation, or jail time.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Following its introduction in 1990, Gottfredson and Hirschi's General Theory of Crime has generated a great deal of interest in the criminology field. Quite controversially, it proposed a new definition, nature, and causes of crime. The arguments and assumptions of General Theory were such a break from current theoretical perspectives they spurred a large amount of research and debate in a relatively short period of time.

As an individual-level theory, General Theory proposes that criminal behavior stems from internal traits Gottfredson and Hirschi have labeled low self-control (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). These traits, according to Gottfredson and Hirschi, are predominantly caused by lack of training or socialization in the first years of life. Once these traits are established, according to General Theory, they are unlikely to change and are prone to become stable traits that remain across the life course.

Barlow (1991) explains this concept clearly. Low self-control traits are not consistent with long-term interests of individuals, their families, or society. Therefore, low self-control is assumed to be produced from negative causes, which is the absence of effective controls or socialization, not socialization or cultural values to commit crime. Gottfredson and Hirschi suggest people will pursue self-interest in the quickest, easiest ways without restraint through socialization. That is, low self-control is not learned, rather higher self-control is never learned, predominantly because of poor parenting and socialization in early school years. Indeed, this is the only socialization or external effect Gottfredson and Hirschi recognize in General Theory, and they assume people will pursue their own interests unless socialized not to do so (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) suggest that the very nature of crime provides the important clues to finding its origin. Specifically, criminal acts provide immediate and easy gratification of desires, are exciting and risky, offer few or meager long-term benefits, involve little planning, and often result in pain or discomfort for the victim (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Therefore, they identify six traits people who have low self-control will tend to exhibit. These people will often be impulsive, insensitive, physical (as opposed to mental), risk-taking, short-sighted, and nonverbal. Quite simply, Gottfredson and Hirschi argue that individuals who have these characteristics, which comprise their concept of self-control, will be more likely to be involved in criminal acts in any given situation. The three claims about self-control made by General Theory are explained succinctly by Longshore et al. (1996). That is, low self-control is a stable trait developed early in life, it is not simply a synonym for criminality, and that it is a major explanatory variable in crime that can be defined independently of crime.

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) also argue that other risk-seeking behaviors will tend to be present in the same individuals. These analogous acts are proposed by General Theory as being analogous to criminal behaviors because they stem from the same low self-control traits. Thus to Gottfredson and Hirschi, these behaviors are also important to research as they stem from the same personality traits, are measurable, and are only different from criminal behavior in that they are not actually illegal behaviors.

Analogous acts are explained by Gottfredson and Hirschi as behaviors that although not illegal are equivalent to crime because they are performed in the pursuit of the same types of benefits criminal acts are. Examples of analogous acts include drinking, smoking, illicit sexual behavior, and virtually any other risky behaviors that involve immediate gratification and a lack of consideration for future consequences. Similarly, even accidents, such as automobile accidents, are included in Gottfredson and

Hirschi's definition of analogous behaviors because such occurrences often involve risk-taking and little consideration for long-term consequences (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990).

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) attribute all crimes and analogous acts to the presence of low self-control, and any distinction between crime types is viewed as irrelevant. Also, Gottfredson and Hirschi claim that no distinction needs to be made between criminal and analogous acts because both are assumed to result from the individual's pursuit of easy and immediate benefits. Further, analogous behaviors are seen as one of the best ways to identify those with low self-control traits and a likelihood of criminal offending (Gottfredson & Hirschi).

From the view that criminal and analogous acts are theoretically the same, the definition of crime is quite straightforward. Gottfredson and Hirschi define all crimes as either acts of force or fraud undertaken by the offender in pursuit of self-interest (1990). As can be seen, this definition of crime is extremely broad. The idea of criminals specializing in crime types, or that specific crime types exist, is explicitly denied by Gottfredson and Hirschi. Therefore, low self-control is seen as the causal factor of both criminal and analogous acts, it is suggested that both will tend to be engaged in by those with low self-control, and there will be a great deal of versatility in criminal and analogous acts the individual will engage in (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

Instead of specialization, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) suggest opportunity to commit a certain crime as significant. The availability of opportunity to commit crime is seen as an important factor in whether or not those with low self-control will commit either criminal or analogous acts at any given moment. The theory suggests that opportunities to commit criminal and analogous acts are virtually limitless; however, opportunities to commit a particular crime can be limited. Therefore, self-control and

opportunity can interact for specific crimes, but are generally seen as independent in most cases (Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1993). In light of this, low self-control is seen as the primary causal factor of criminal and analogous behaviors (Evans, et al., 1997; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Therefore, General Theory suggests opportunity can affect whether or not an individual will be involved in criminal or analogous acts at any given point in time, but the true cause of these behaviors, in fact what they manifest from, is low self-control.

The core argument of Gottfredson and Hirschi's General Theory of Crime is that those who are lower in self-control are more likely to be involved in criminal and analogous acts when there is opportunity to do so. This theory poses three main assertions. First, those with low self-control will have higher levels of involvement in criminal and analogous acts. Second, those with low self-control will engage in a range of various criminal and analogous acts without specialization. Finally, low self-control traits will tend to come together in the same people and persist throughout the life course, affecting various areas of life (Cullen, 1999; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

In sum, General Theory of Crime is very general and broad in its approach. Its concept of low self-control attempts to cover all criminal and analogous acts also including risk-taking and accidental behaviors. It disclaims any need to distinguish between different types of offenses and offenders, asserting that such differences are only differences in opportunities or outcomes (Brannigan, 1997).

Criticisms of General Theory

The broadness and lack of consideration on specific crime types of Gottfredson and Hirschi's General Theory of Crime has also generated criticism from scholars. In that Gottfredson and Hirschi assert that the very nature of crime provides the important clues

to finding its origin (Evans et al., 1997), they are quite clearly suggesting that criminal behavior and the personality trait, low self-control, that leads to crime are quite close in nature. Specifically Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) suggest criminal acts provide immediate and easy gratification of desires, are exciting and risky, offer few or meager long-term benefits, involve little planning, and often result in pain or discomfort for the victim. These characteristics of crime they assert are quite similar to the personality characteristics Gottfredson and Hirschi describe as comprising low self-control.

Tautological

One of the most prominent criticisms of General Theory followed Gottfredson and Hirschi's assertion of the similarity of low self-control traits and criminal behavior. Akers (1991) argued that a major weakness of the theory was that Gottfredson and Hirschi did not define self-control and the tendency toward criminal behavior separately. Through this, Akers suggests General Theory is tautological by not deliberately operationalizing self-control traits and criminal behavior or criminal acts individually. This assertion by Akers suggests the concepts of low self-control and propensity for criminal behavior are one and the same.

Gibbs and Giever (1995) explained this idea well. Gottfredson and Hirschi are accused of empirical tautology because they are thought to suggest that the most valid measure of self-control or criminality is the sum of crime or equivalent events observed for an individual during a certain time interval, and then the most valid measure of crime or equivalent events committed during a subsequent time. If criminality or self-control is considered the independent variable and if crime or an equivalent event is considered the dependent variable, the result certainly resembles an empirical tautology because the independent and the dependent variables are measured by the same events.

Hirschi and Gottfredson (1993) rebutted Akers' argument by suggesting it was actually an indication of the consistency of General Theory. That is, the theory is internally consistent by conceptualizing crime and deriving from that a concept of the offender's traits. Gottfredson and Hirschi suggest they intended to directly show the connections and closeness between the offender's characteristics and the characteristics of the offense itself. As stated by Gibbs and Giever (1995, p. 247) "the character of the actor is immanent in the character of the act". Hirschi and Gottfredson did, however, agree with Akers that to avoid tautology independent measures of self-control should be used that examine self-control separately from the tendency toward criminal behavior. In other words, to effectively test General Theory's ability to explain criminal behavior, a measure that can tap into an individual's self-control traits without including criminal behavior in the measurement should be used in order that a relationship between the two can be assessed.

Limited Perspective

Others researchers have criticized General Theory as well. Polk (1991) leveled several arguments against General Theory, which he considered to have very fundamental flaws. First, Polk argues that if Gottfredson and Hirschi are correct in their assertions that low levels of self-control result in crime and lowered self-control is caused by poor child rearing, then most sociological theories of crime that suggest criminal behavior is spurred by factors such as race, gender, or social class must be wrong. Thus, Polk argues that Gottfredson and Hirschi avoid considering research and data that suggest effects of unemployment, poverty, and quality of inner city life as being significant on criminal behavior.

Second, Polk (1991) questions General Theory's definition of crime. Gottfredson and Hirschi conceptualized all crimes as "either acts of force or fraud undertaken by the offender in pursuit of self interest" (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990, p.15). In examining the extent to which various crimes fit their definition, Polk suggests that Gottfredson and Hirschi ignored evidence that did not fit into their definition and concept of crime. Polk's basis for this argument is that Gottfredson and Hirschi did not offer a general theory of some crime, but a theory to explain all crime (Polk, 1991).

One of Polk's examples of this centers on homicides. Gottfredson and Hirschi suggest there are two types of homicide, basically either "heat of passion" or "miscalculation" (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990, p.33). Polk (1991) argues, however, that based on a great amount of data on homicide it is hard to ascertain exactly what a typical homicide may be, and that less than half of homicides fit into Gottfredson and Hirschi's description of the crime.

Polk (1991) makes a similar argument with white collar crime. Gottfredson and Hirschi urge that contrary to what is often seen in the media, white-collar crime consists mostly of local affairs with limited profits (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). While Polk acknowledges that this is sometimes the case, he also proposes many other instances of white-collar crime such as that in major corporations, insider trading, and the collapse of the Savings and Loan industry which resulted in the loss of billions of dollars in the long run.

From this Polk (1991) argues that along with not explaining all white-collar crime, General Theory also fails to recognize that some of these crimes, such as insider trading, require a certain amount of skill, organization, and long-term planning. Polk also goes on to assert that there is little evidence individuals involved in such white-collar crimes are also involved in other more common criminal acts such as robbery, burglary,

and assault, as Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) suggest these individuals are likely to be because they propose criminal behavior is general, without specialization.

In the area of white-collar crime, a study by Benson and Moore (1992) also provided criticism on Gottfredson and Hirschi's suggestions that white-collar offenders are no different from other offenders, and the theory's ability to apply to all crime. The study tested two propositions made by Gottfredson and Hirschi. Specifically, that those who commit white-collar crimes are as criminally versatile and as prone to deviance as those who commit more common crimes. To test these assertions, the researchers operationalized white-collar crimes as bank embezzlement, bribery, income tax evasion, false claims and statements, and mail fraud in order to use more mundane crimes that could relate more closely to common crimes. Further, this definition of white-collar crime more closely fits what Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) themselves suggest constitutes the majority of white-collar crime. That is, more mundane, common crimes such as tax evasion rather than large celebrated cases of corporate scandals.

Benson and Moore (1992) employed a large sample of 2,492 people sentenced for the previously mentioned white-collar crimes and three common crimes consisting of narcotics, postal forgery, and bank robbery between 1973 and 1978 in eight federal district courts. Presentence investigation data were used to assess prior arrests, drug and alcohol use, academic performance, and social adjustment in high school. From this, the researchers compared whether those convicted of white-collar crimes were versatile, or had committed other types of crimes as often as common offenders, and whether they appeared as prone to deviance as other common offenders on measures of drinking and drug use, academic performance, and social adjustment in high school.

Results from Benson and Moore's (1992) study found that white-collar offenders were significantly less versatile than other offenders. White-collar offenders were also

found to have far fewer prior arrests than those convicted of common crimes. Using different methods of analysis, they also found that white collar offenders were more likely to specialize in white-collar crimes and offend less frequently than those who were convicted of common crimes. Finally, in regard to deviance white-collar offenders were found to be much less likely to use narcotics, receive below average grades in high school, or be below average in social adjustment scores (Benson & Moore, 1992).

From these findings Benson and Moore (1992) found little support of versatility in either offending or deviance in the area of white-collar crime, which Gottfredson and Hirschi suggest should be the same as that found in other criminal offenders. From this, Benson and Moore conclude that there is little explanation given by General Theory as to why white-collar offenders can show some amount of self-control traits, at least more than common offenders, yet commit white-collar crimes at some point. Benson and Moore then go on to suggest that macro social, economic, organizational processes, and opportunities provide motivations to commit white-collar crimes. These factors lead Benson and Moore to contend that self-control and opportunity are more complexly related than General Theory suggests, and that General Theory is not really as general as Gottfredson and Hirschi suggest because it does not acknowledge that self-control may be lessened by situational changes in an individual's environment (Benson & Moore, 1992).

Inadequate Consideration of Social or Cultural Differences

Another well-noted source of criticism for Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) General Theory came from Barlow (1991). In his essay, Barlow suggested several criticisms of General Theory. First, Gottfredson and Hirschi did not expand on the opportunity component of General Theory enough to predict what type of crime or analogous act an individual is likely to commit at any given time, whether the individual

might engage in such an act at a high or low rate, or when the individual might cease committing one crime and begin another, or begin an analogous act in its place. Further, Barlow suggests that General Theory is of little practical use if it cannot predict when crimes will be more or less likely to occur.

Barlow (1991) also raises question to Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) assertion that individuals without employment are more likely to commit crime by arguing there is ample evidence of widespread employee fraud and theft in all work sectors, both inside and outside of the United States. Further, Barlow argues there is evidence of this at both low-levels of employment, even if often mundane forms of theft and fraud, and high-levels of employment, citing many instances of crimes committed in the real estate, health, insurance, and banking fields. From this, Barlow refutes General theory on the grounds that crime within the workforce seems prevalent at all levels, and General Theory does not account for why individuals are involved in crimes in the workplace or how such individuals, who should have low self-control, seem to have high enough self-control to become managers and professionals. This raises the question by Barlow that General Theory, which argues low self-control is a stable trait, does not address whether temptations to commit crime may temporarily overwhelm one's self-control or if self-control is a stable trait, how individuals may commit crimes that suggest low self-control yet gain high-level jobs.

While Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) dismiss that social and cultural factors of an organization generate criminal behavior and suggest low self-control as the cause, Barlow (1991) disagrees. Barlow points out that Gottfredson and Hirschi suggest there would be little social support among fellow employees in favor of committing white-collar crime because committing such crime is detrimental to the workplace and fellow employees. Barlow, however, argues there is a large amount of research showing social

support found within sub groups of employee bodies. Barlow also suggests that social support for committing crimes can be found in accommodating norms and values, and networks of cooperation in which groups of people work cooperatively in such acts.

Finally, Barlow (1991) suggests that Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) are mistaken by rejecting traditional inequality and subcultural theories which address disproportionate minority involvement in crime. Barlow points out that they cite no evidence in doing so and only suggest that separating race and ethnicity into their crime and self-control constructs is not currently possible with available data. Structural conditions such as poverty, community disorganization, and family instability are, according to Barlow, prevalent in inner-city black communities where rates of crime are higher and should be addressed in a theory attempting to explain criminal behavior.

Previous Literature on General Theory of Crime

In the decade since its introduction, there has been a continuously growing body of research finding support for Gottfredson and Hirschi 's General Theory of Crime (Cullen & Agnew, 1999; Evans et al.,1997). One study by Grasmick et al. (1993) examined the extent to which low self-control and opportunity have independent effects on criminal behavior individually and interacting with each other. Through a simple random sample drawn from the general population in Oklahoma City, data were gathered and support for Gottfredson and Hirschi s theory was found. There was a significant effect on criminal behavior found with the interaction of low self-control and opportunity. Also, criminal behavior was found to be more likely when both low self-control and opportunity were present than with the presence of low self-control alone. Most important, the interaction of low self-control and opportunity to commit crime significantly predicted criminal behavior during the previous five years (Grasmick et al.,

1993).

It is also worth noting, however, that while developing their measure of self-control Grasmick et al. (1993) developed a self-control scale that would later be used or replicated in some form by many other researchers studying General Theory of Crime. Grasmick et al. considered the six components of self-control Gottfredson and Hirschi suggest make up self-control and found the self-control subscale of the California Psychology Inventory (Gough, 1975) contained measures designed to tap into the majority of Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) self-control constructs except preference for simple tasks and preference for physical instead of mental activity.

Through pretesting on several samples of college students Grasmick et al. (1993) developed measures for these characteristics and combined them with four measures for each of the other four characteristics already in the California Psychological Inventory that showed sufficient clarity, variances, and reliability alphas based on their testing. From this, Grasmick et al. arrived at a 24-item scale which measured all six components of Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) concept of self-control, with 4 items measuring each personality characteristic.

Piquero and Rosay (1998) assessed the reliability and validity of the Grasmick et al. (1993) self-control scale. Specifically, the researchers used data reduction and factor loading techniques to assess whether the self-control scale was valid and reliable across gender groups and would be related to crimes of force and fraud. Their primary findings showed support for the efficacy of the self-control scale of Grasmick et al. as a measure of self-control. The Grasmick et al. scale was found to be a unidimensional construct that comes together in the same people and to be unidimensional across gender groups, which also further supported Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) concept of self-control being

unidimensional across different groups. Further, the scale was found to be predictive of both force and fraud behaviors.

Similarly, another study (Longshore & Turner, 1998) found support for General Theory. Although primarily testing the interaction between low self-control and opportunity within a sample of offenders they also gathered other findings. Specifically, a statistically significant relationship was found for both male and female offenders between low self-control scores and both force and fraud crimes. Also, involvement in criminal behavior was highest when lower self-control and higher opportunity were present. Finally, the relationship between low self-control and criminal behavior was significant when opportunity was low, but was most significant when opportunity was high. These findings seem to support Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) contention that low self-control is the primary causal factor in criminal behavior and opportunity may simply cause variations in offending.

Another study by Longshore, Turner and Stein (1996) also concentrated specifically on a sample of offenders seeking to assess the construct validity of the self-control scale developed by Grasmick et al. (1993). A secondary data analysis was performed on a data set drawn from a sample of 623 offenders involved in an evaluation of a crime prevention treatment program in 1991 and 1992. The program consisted of drug-using adult and juvenile offenders in the criminal justice system and provided a gender, age, and ethnically heterogeneous sample in which to measure self-control, and the validity of the Grasmick et al. scale.

The self-control scale was revised by reversing the direction of wording on some items and changing response options from four-point to five-point scales. A face-to-face interview format was used to ask each offenders response option on the five-point scale. The respondents were also asked to report the number of crimes of force and fraud they

had committed in each of the previous six months. The number of crimes for each month were then added into an overall crime scale for that six months. Crimes of force included were rape, homicide, assault, robbery of a business, and robbery of a person. Fraud crimes included were arson, burglary, theft, motor vehicle theft, forgery, and larceny.

Results found crimes in both the force and fraud categories to be significantly related to self-control. In analyzing the explanatory power of each of the self-control scale's six subscales, risk seeking and impulsiveness were found to explain crimes of fraud roughly equally to each other and the overall self-control scale. The temper and risk seeking subscales also explained crimes of force approximately equal to the self-control scale as a whole. The self-control scale was found to have a reliability alpha slightly higher than the risk seeking, impulsiveness, and temper subscales, but each subscale had roughly the same predictive power as the total self-control scale.

These findings offer several suggestions. First, support was found for the self-control scale developed by Grasmick et al. (1993) as a valid measure that can predict criminal behavior. Second, the Grasmick et al. self-control scale was found to be just as valid a measure of self-control in criminal samples as it is in general samples. Third, Longshore et al. found that some of the subscales in the Grasmick scale can predict crimes categorized as crimes of force or fraud as well as the overall scale. From these findings Longshore et al. (1996) suggest future research concentrate on testing more extensively which behavioral subscales and measures in the Grasmick et al. scale explain different individual crime types more fully, further developing and refining measures of self-control, and what implications this may have for General Theory.

Similarly, Wood, Pfefferbaum and Arneklev (1993) sought to individually test each of the six personality characteristics, risk seeking, simple tasks, anger, physicality, immediate gratification, and self-centeredness, outlined by Gottfredson and Hirschi to

examine their ability to explain different types of crime. A non-random sample of juveniles ranging in age from 14 to 19 was drawn and participants were asked to voluntarily complete a survey resulting in a sample of 975 completed questionnaires. The self-control measure was a 24-item scale identical to that of Grasmick et al. (1993) with four items measuring each of the six dimensions of self-control. The delinquency measures used included both deviant and marginally deviant acts such as theft, legal substance abuse, vandalism, and imprudent behaviors.

Findings indicated that all of the deviant and marginally deviant behaviors were strongly associated with each of the six self-control subscales. Of the subscales, risk-taking and anger were the most strongly associated with the delinquency measures. Using multivariate analysis, Wood et al. found that while controlling for age, gender, attendance, and attachment, the composite self-control scale predicted imprudent behaviors most strongly, closely followed by theft, and the remaining behaviors about equally. The self-control scale was found to be significant with all of the delinquent variables at the $p < .05$ level or better.

By desegregating the self-control composite scale into each of the six separate behavioral dimensions, Wood et al. found there were differences in which of the six subscales would predict different types of delinquency most effectively. For example, interpersonal delinquency was found to be more likely among males, with higher anger and risk-taking scores. Similarly, theft was found to be influenced most by being male, risk-taking, and self-centeredness. However, illegal substance use revealed no significant preference in gender and was most closely associated with high scores for immediate gratification and temper.

From this Wood et al (1993) found support for Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) conceptualization of self-control. Specifically, the composite self-control scale as a

whole was the most powerful predictor overall for delinquency and imprudent behaviors. Separate from this, differences in each of the six dimensions of self-control to predict different types of delinquency were found, and when they were treated separately the variance in delinquency explained increased for each category. In discussion of this the researchers suggested future research concentrate on testing the six dimensions of self-control separately to allow study of the types of personality characteristics that exist in each dimension and what specific types of delinquency they are most associated with.

Vazsonyi, Pickering, Junger, and Hessing (2001) also analyzed the measurement capabilities of the Grasmick et al. scale employing a large multinational sample (N= 6,085) of respondents between 15 and 19 years of age from the United States, Switzerland, Hungary, and the Netherlands. Exploratory factor analysis was used to examine the dimensionality and predictive power of each item in the six subscales comprising the Grasmick et al. scale. Two items that did not load well were dropped and the remaining 22 items of the scale were used to measure outcomes on a 55-item measure of deviance designed to be independent of cultural definitions of crime and deviance, and concentrated on universally recognized crimes.

Findings of the Vazsonyi et al. (2001) study suggested that the Grasmick et al. scale worked as hypothesized and the self-control trait is multidimensional containing distinct constructs. The scale accounted for an average of 20% of deviance found within the sample while controlling for age and gender. Further, different elements of self-control were found to account for slightly different amounts of variance in different deviant behaviors. Thus, self-control was found to predict deviance in both males and females, and across different cultural and national groups.

Arneklev (1999) also tested the six dimensions of the Grasmick et al.(1993) scale through the use of two samples, one consisted of college students, and the other of adults.

The researchers tested whether or not the six dimensions of the scale would unite into a common low self-control factor in both samples and whether or not the scores would vary significantly because of difference in age or location between the samples. Employing a second-order factor analysis, the researchers found the six dimensions of the low self-control measure loaded very similarly across the two samples, and the six dimensions did appear to represent a final low self-control trait that members of both samples possessed. Further, their findings suggested that low self-control's form was invariant across age in the two samples. In other words, how respondents scored on the low self-control scale and the six dimensions within the scale were not different based on age, lending support to Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) claim that the presence of low self-control will not vary across the life course.

Another study (LaGrange & Silverman, 1999) tested the theory as an explanation of gender differences in delinquency in a large sample (N=2000) of Canadian students. Opportunity was controlled for by measures of parental supervision, which meshes well with Gottfredson and Hirschi's assertion that males will always commit more criminal and analogous behaviors than females and that this phenomenon is largely attributable to differences in parental supervision and socialization (Brannigan, 1997; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). As expected, males were found to be significantly more likely to be involved in delinquent acts than females and more likely to have lower levels of self-control and higher opportunity.

Most important, after controlling for gender the significance of low self-control and opportunity in predicting delinquency was apparent for both males and females. All of the measures of low self-control were statistically significant predictors of offending, with risk seeking forming the strongest measure for both self-reported property and violent offenses. Also, for violent offenses the most significant effects were found with

an interaction of risk-seeking and the opportunity measure of getting together with friends in the absence of adults. Finally, various measures of low self-control and opportunity in interaction were found to significantly predict self-reported drug offenses (LaGrange & Silverman, 1999).

In an effort to assess General Theory's ability to predict analogous acts, Keane, Maxim, and Teevan (1993) studied the relationship between gender and self-control as a predictor of drinking and driving behavior. A secondary data analysis was conducted on a survey data sample gathered in Ontario, Canada and was controlling for gender. Several independent variables related to low self-control traits were used including seat belt use, impulsiveness, and extent of alcohol use. Findings indicated that although males once again were more likely to drink and drive, which is both a criminal and risky behavior, the same risk-taking variables were positive and statistically significant predictors of drinking and driving in both males and females, and across ages (Keane et al., 1993). These findings show support for Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) claims of the broadness and generality of crime, and the explanatory ability of General Theory.

Gibbs and Giever (1995) conducted a similar study testing General Theory's ability to predict analogous acts among college students. Specifically, these were alcohol consumption and cutting class. An availability sample of 237 students enrolled in an undergraduate criminology course was drawn and administered a survey assessing low-self-control traits and frequency of alcohol consumption and cutting class. Basing their self-control scale on the one developed by Grasmick et al. (1993), Gibbs and Giever employed a similar multidimensional scale while dropping the measures of preference for physical rather than mental activity since their sample was comprised entirely of university students, which was the focus population for their study. Due to the attributes and nature of this sample, Gibbs and Giever expected there would be little variation in

scores gathered on physical items among undergraduate students. The completed scale proved to be reliable and internally consistent with a reliability alpha of .88.

The analogous act, or crime equivalent, alcohol consumption was also assessed by a scale consisting of two items. Specifically these ask for respondents to estimate how many drinks they consumed the previous week during their highest consumption on a weekday and the same for their weekend. These scores were then combined into the alcohol consumption variable. Similarly, the class cutting variable was composed of three items measuring absences from class. One item measured excused absences, another asked respondents to estimate their unexcused absences, and the last item asked students to convert their unexcused absences into class hours. This was divided by the number of credit hours they were enrolled for and multiplied by 2. This gave the researchers a measure of class cutting equal to the proportion of class hours missed for unexcused absence during the two weeks prior to the study.

The dependent variables, class cutting and alcohol consumption, were regressed on the independent variables, self-control, gender, and membership in a fraternity or sorority. Results found low self-control to be the independent variable most strongly linked to both alcohol consumption and cutting class. Age and membership in a sorority or fraternity were also found to be statistically significant in relationship to the dependent variables but not as strongly as self-control. Gender was found to have a differential effect on alcohol consumption and class cutting. That is, women were found to be significantly less likely to exhibit higher rates of drinking and class cutting than men. Interestingly, not only do the findings lend support to Gottfredson and Hirschi's conceptualization of low self-control and its influence on analogous acts, but the findings on gender also support their assertion that males, on average, will tend to commit more crimes and analogous acts than women (1990). Gibbs and Giever's (1995) findings show

the same relationships between self-control, gender, and analogous acts as other researchers have found in their studies (Keane et al., 1993; LaGrange & Silverman, 1999).

A longitudinal study by Paternoster and Brame (1998) also sought to assess General Theory's ability to predict analogous acts and whether or not low self-control would be as strongly associated with analogous acts as criminal acts. The goal of the study was to assess four hypotheses based on General Theory's assertions. These were self-control in childhood should be associated with criminal offending during adolescence, associated with behaviors analogous to crime during adolescence, should be equally associated with adolescent involvement in criminal and analogous behaviors, and the residual correlation between criminal and analogous acts should be small when self-control is controlled for.

Using longitudinal data from 369 males enrolled in the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development (Farrington, 1995; West & Farrington, 1973) Paternoster and Brame (1998) identified several variables measured at ages 8 and 9 among participants that were consistent with Gottfredson and Hirschi's concept of self-control and combined them as a scale. These items included ratings of proneness to act out, daring or adventurousness, teacher ratings on laziness, concentration skills, and disciplinary difficulty. Reliability alpha computed for the scale was .69.

Along with this index of childhood self-control, the researchers identified several variables that could be used as measures of criminal and analogous behaviors in adolescence. These were self-reported involvement items collected during an interview when respondents reached age 18. Items measuring criminal behavior included assault, motor vehicle theft, burglary, and larceny. The number of crimes each respondent reported committing during the three years prior to interviewing at age 18 were summed

and scored as an overall score to form a crime index.

Items measuring analogous behaviors during the previous three years were included. These were involvement in a motor vehicle accident, frequent loitering, heavy gambling, heavy drinking, heavy smoking, and number of nights going out. Number of sexual partners during six months prior to interview was also included. Reports of involvement in these behaviors were then summed to form an analogous behavior index.

Findings for three of the hypotheses supported Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) predictions. Those with lower self-control at age 8 or 9 were significantly more likely to report participation in crime at age 18. Similarly, those with lower self-control at age 8 or 9 were significantly more likely to report involvement in analogous acts. Further, the influence of self-control on crime and analogous behaviors appeared to be both general and moderate, and the effect of self-control was comparable for both outcomes.

One inconsistency with Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) theory that Paternoster and Brame (1998) found was a correlation between criminal and analogous acts that was not greatly reduced after controlling for the influence of self-control. In speculation, the researchers gave several possible explanations for this. First, their index of self-control may not have adequately captured different behaviors Gottfredson and Hirschi suggest make up self-control. Second, other time-stable differences that could not be detected or controlled for could have caused variations in measured criminal and analogous acts. Finally, Paternoster and Brame suggest there are factors at work subsequent to formation of self-control that affect involvement in criminal and analogous acts which Gottfredson and Hirschi have not accounted for in their theory.

This finding generated some debate among researchers as to its cause. Britt (2000) commented on this suggesting that Paternoster and Brame (1998) made two errors, one conceptual and the other interpretive. Britt asserted the researchers' conceptual error

was a misinterpretation of Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) theoretical view of the multidimensionality of crime by suggesting criminal and analogous acts should be correlated only through an individual's self-control.

Britt (2000) argues that Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) did not suggest this, but rather that crime is not a distinct type of behavior, and treating crime and analogous acts as distinct behaviors with distinct causes would be an error. According to Britt's interpretation of Gottfredson and Hirschi, criminal and analogous acts are two different measures of a more general behavior trait (i.e., crime) that is correlated with an individual's level of self-control. Thus, Britt (2000, p.966) argues that regardless of whether self-control has been controlled statistically, criminal and analogous behaviors will be correlated with each other because they are measuring two dimensions of the same phenomenon. Britt also suggests that Paternoster and Brame made an interpretive error by wrongly interpreting their findings from the constrained and unconstrained bivariate probit models used to examine the relationship between criminal and analogous acts within their study. Due to this, Britt argues, the correlation found there is actually supportive evidence for General Theory suggesting that each item is measuring the same trait.

Paternoster and Brame (2000) later defended their work quoting statements from Gottfredson and Hirschi's *General Theory of Crime* (1990) that guided Paternoster and Brame to believe the authors of the theory asserted that criminal and analogous behaviors are associated with each other only because they are both consequence of low self-control and, therefore, controlling for the influence of low self-control should eliminate the correlation between criminal and analogous acts. The researchers further went on to use two simulation studies employing bivariate probit models to argue that when there is no additional variable that influences criminal and analogous acts the correlation between

them diminishes. Through this, Paternoster and Brame suggested their interpretations and measurements were sound.

Sorenson and Brow (1995) tested Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) General Theory of Crime as an explanation of drug use through a questionnaire administered to an adolescent sample of high school students. Independent measures related to self-control traits included perception of risk of punishment, parental supervision, school performance, academic effort, and educational expectations. Strong support was found for General Theory. Specifically, all the measures of self-control used were found to be statistically significant predictors of adolescent drug use (Sorenson & Brow, 1995).

Stylianou (2002) criticized research such as Sorenson and Brow's (1995) due to using crime and analogous behaviors as measures of self-control while trying to establish self-control as a cause of crime. Stylianou argued that better distinction must be made between the independent and dependent variables in a causal hypothesis. Thus, measures such as drinking and smoking could be used as outcomes of self-control, and should not be used as measures of self control to strengthen internal validity and avoid tautology. Therefore, Stylianou suggested model attitudes as test variables and behaviors as outcomes to avoid this, and noted various studies which do so.

Stylianou (2002) further urged that researchers should more often rely not only on statistical significance, but also substantive significance. According to Stylianou, a statistically significant finding is only evidence of certainty, the strength of the found effect must also be evaluated. As such, Stylianou suggested the use of unstandardized regression coefficients to allow an estimation of how many units of change the dependent variable undergoes due to a unit change in the independent variable, allowing researchers to know more precisely how much change in the outcome variable is taking place due to the test variable.

Another study (Burton, Evans, Cullen, Olivares, & Dunaway, 1999) examined the relationship between age, self-control, and adult offending. Employing a community sample of adults the study assessed the ability of self-control to account for criminal and analogous behaviors across different age groups. Specifically, the researchers measured whether self-control can explain both criminal and analogous behaviors in adults, and examined the generality of self-control across different age groups ranging from 18 to 30, 31 through 50, and 51 and older.

First, as expected, results indicated an inverse relationship between age and criminal and analogous acts. Also, low self-control was related significantly with overall crime and analogous acts. Further, low self-control was significantly related to self-reported criminal and analogous behaviors in the eighteen through thirty and thirty-one through fifty age groups (Burton et al., 1999). These findings correspond well with assertions made by General Theory. Gottfredson and Hirschi contend that this inverse relationship between age and criminal and analogous behaviors is universal and constant (1990). These findings support Gottfredson and Hirschi 's assertion that their theory can adequately explain criminal and analogous behaviors across age groups.

Pratt and Cullen (2000) conducted a meta-analysis on 21 empirical studies that either directly tested General Theory of Crime or included low self-control measures in their sample. This provided a sample that contained 126 effect size estimates and 49,727 individual cases. Many types of studies were employed including those that used attitudinal measures, behavioral measures, juvenile samples, adult samples, and those seeking to explain criminal or analogous acts or both.

Mean effect size estimates were gathered in weighted, unweighted, and independence-adjusted form. Regardless, results reflected that low self-control was a strong predictor of crime with all three estimates showing an effect size above .20 that

was statistically significant. Opportunity also had a statistically significant effect. Further, the effect size of self-control was unaffected by inclusion of opportunity as a control, or by inclusion of measures assessing other criminological theories. Low self-control, however, did show a significantly weaker effect in longitudinal designs, which is unsupportive of Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) assertion that findings on low self-control's ability to predict crime in cross-sectional studies would approximate its ability in longitudinal studies.

Sellers (1999) evaluated the ability of Gottfredson and Hirschi's theory to explain intimate violence, specifically courtship aggression, and attempted to determine whether the theory could explain behavior that did not specifically mesh with their conceptualization of crime as acts undertaken in pursuit of self-interests (1990). Although Gottfredson and Hirschi did not address domestic violence in their definition of crime, it can be viewed as complying with their description of all criminal acts as being immediately gratifying and unplanned.

A number of independent variables were used including measures of impulsivity, risk-seeking, self-centeredness, and opportunity. Findings indicated that low self-control alone was a significant predictor of the probability of courtship violence. Opportunity was also found to be a significant predictor. Further, the interaction of low self-control, opportunity, and perceived rewards provided the strongest predictor of using violence against a partner, stronger than either low self-control alone, or low self-control in interaction with opportunity (Sellers, 1999). From these findings further support for self-control theory is shown by its ability to predict a form of domestic crime which has not been specifically discussed by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990).

In an effort to expand General Theory to the area of victimology, Schreck (1999) studied the extent to which self-control theory could predict several forms of

victimization. Income, gender, self-control, criminality, violent victimization, property victimization, and overall victimization were measured by a survey administered to a sample of college students. In agreement with observations made by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) in their theory, gender differences in victimization were found. Males were much more likely to be involved in both criminal offenses and be victimized than females. Further, females reported higher levels of self-control than males. Finally, low self-control significantly predicted both property victimization and violent victimization in the sample. Even when criminal behavior was controlled, self-control had a significant effect on victimization.

The vast majority of prior research has concentrated on only two assertions made by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) in their General Theory of Crime. That is, those with lower self-control will have higher levels of involvement in criminal and analogous acts, and those with low self-control will engage in a range of various criminal and analogous acts without specialization. There is a gap in the research regarding the theory's assertion that low self-control traits will have indirect and general effects on various outcome measures and in different areas of life such as making and keeping friends, achievement in school, keeping jobs and achieving in the workplace, entering marriages destined to fail, and tending to end up in the street (Evans et al., 1997; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

One study (Evans et al., 1997); however, sought to extend the research by assessing the degree to which low self-control affects life chances, life quality, and social consequences as well as criminal behavior. This attempt by Evans et al. was the first to work toward expanding General Theory beyond the focus previously kept on more mainstream criminal and analogous behaviors so often studied in criminology. Both attitudinal and behavioral measures were used to assess levels of self-control. Results suggested that low self-control was a significant predictor of quality of family

relationships, attachment to church, having criminal associates and values, educational attainment, occupational status, residing in a disorderly neighborhood, and quality of friendships. Further, both the attitudinal and behavioral measures of self-control were found to be statistically significant, suggesting that low self-control is a significant predictor of both criminal behavior and various life outcome variables (Evans et al., 1997). These findings supported Gottfredson and Hirschi's claim that the effects of low self-control are general and will affect outcomes in various far-reaching areas of life other than crime.

It can be seen that in recent years researchers have begun to test General Theory's ability to explain outcomes in the areas of victimology (Schreck, 1999), intimate violence (Sellers, 1999), and life quality (Evans et al., 1997), which are less mainstream than traditional crimes and criminal behaviors. The findings of such research is a testament to the explanatory power and validity of Gottfredson and Hirschi's theory. Similarly, research is also surfacing that attempts to integrate General Theory with other theoretical perspectives into more comprehensive explanations of crime.

Piquero and Tibbetts (1996) sought to integrate rational choice and self-control into an explanation of crime. While General Theory focuses on the influence of self-control traits on criminal behavior, the rational choice model assumes that offenders are rational and choose whether or not to commit crime based on whether perceived costs, being caught and punished, outweigh perceived gains, pleasure, of the crime. From this, Piquero and Tibbetts formed a theoretical framework that argued when an individual with low self-control enters situational factors which push them toward crime, pleasure of the offense, or away from crime, perceived risk of sanctions, shame, or moral beliefs, the individual with low self-control is more likely to choose crime. Thus, the researchers developed a model that combined low self-control with situational factors that are

congruent with the opportunity construct of General Theory. That is, when opportunity to commit crime and low self-control are present these situational factors influencing the choice of whether or not to commit crime take effect.

Using a self-administered questionnaire, respondents were presented with one drunk driving and one shoplifting scenario and asked to estimate the probability that they would commit the act in the scenario. Respondents also answered items estimating their perceived chance they would be arrested and items that assessed their perceptions of the costs and benefits of committing the offenses and their moral beliefs and possible sense of shame for committing the offense. The Grasmick et al. (1993) self-control scale was used to measure their level of self-control. Prior offending was also measured and used as a control in the model.

Findings were supportive of both Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) assertions of low self-control and Piquero and Tibbetts' (1996) integrative model. Low self-control was found to have a direct significant effect on intentions to shoplift and drive drunk. In both scenarios self-control was found to have a significant indirect effect on shame. That is, the lower one's self-control the less likely they were to experience shame for shoplifting or driving drunk. The direct effect of low self-control on perceived sanctions was insignificant, however, the lower one's sense of shame, which was influenced by self-control, the less likely they were to perceive any threat of sanctions for committing either crime.

In an analysis of divergent theoretical perspectives Polakowski (1994) sought to assess the relationship between Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) concept of self-control and bonds to society such as commitment and involvement in school and family. Longitudinal data from the first six waves of the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development were gathered with a sample of 411 males at ages 8 and 9 during wave one

and age 24 during the sixth wave. Measurement items were employed both during interviews of the respondents and through interviews of parents, teachers, and peers.

The results of Polakowski 's (1994) study were supportive of General Theory s assertions and its relationship to social and societal bonds. Elements of social bond were found to be inversely related to low self-control. Within this, inadequate socialization seemed to foster low self-control and weaken bonds to society. The level of self-control between the ages of 8 and 10 was also found to be a positive predictor of the level of self-control measured at later ages. Also, those who lacked self-control were significantly more likely to experience more criminal convictions than their peers. Finally, those who measured lower in self-control were more likely to report instances of deviant behavior, both criminal and analogous behaviors, than their peers.

As can be seen, research done on Gottfredson and Hirschi 's General Theory of Crime has generated a great amount of interest and debate, not only on the theory s validity and ability to predict crime, but also for many of the assertions the theory makes. While some researchers have regarded elements of General Theory with skepticism (Akers, 1991; Barlow, 1991; Benson & Moore, 1992; Polk, 1991), a large amount of research has supported many of Gottfredson and Hirschi s assertions (Grasmick et al., 1993; Keane et al., 1993; LaGrange & Silverman, 1999; Longshore et al., 1996; Longshore & Turner, 1998; Wood et al., 1993). No previous research has yet focused on measuring the perceptions police officers have of the low self-control traits that General Theory contends explain crime.

Police Perceptions

No previous research is available on police perceptions of offenders behavior from a criminological standpoint. Studies that have been done on police perception have

tended to concentrate on job related factors such as stress, job satisfaction, decisions to use deadly force, and similar areas, without any studies addressing police officers perceptions of crime. Moreover, these studies have largely been done within a theoretical framework based in psychology, not criminology, and pertain to areas of perception that have little relevance to the current study. No research thus far has alluded to police officers perception of why criminals commit crime, much less their opinion of the validity of any criminological theory.

The current study will be the first to attempt to measure police perceptions of offenders behavior through the foundation of General Theory of Crime. This will allow an assessment of the level of support police officers, based on their law enforcement experience, show for the theory by measuring their level of agreement with whether or not the low self-control behaviors Gottfredson and Hirschi contend are present in individuals who commit crime are truly present. Although the extent to which police officers, who primarily work reactively to criminal acts, actually witness many of these low self-control behaviors as commission of crimes is debatable, they do have day-to-day contact with offenders of many types, see crime scenes and the results of crime, and speak with individuals who commit crime about those acts and their lives in general. Further, police officers often see how those who are involved in criminal behavior live, where they live, and their friends and family members. As such, it seems that police officers should be capable of giving a preliminary account of whether or not low self-control traits seem to be present in offenders.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The current study addressed an area that previous research has neglected: police officers' perceptions of offenders' behavior from a criminological standpoint. Studies on police perception have tended to concentrate on job-related factors such as stress, job satisfaction, decisions to use deadly force, and similar areas. Moreover, these studies have largely been done within a theoretical framework based in psychology, not criminology, and pertain to areas of perception that have little relevance to the current study. No research thus far has alluded to assessing police officers' perception of why criminals commit crime, much less their opinion of the validity of any criminological theory or differences in their level of agreement with such a theory.

This study employed demographic data on police officers such as age, rank, and gender as an exploratory attempt to find differences in officers' level of agreement with General Theory of Crime through testing their perceptions of offenders using a revised version of the Grasmick et al. (1993) self-control scale. Officers' perception of General Theory's validity was tested for both property and violent offenders through the use of two identical scales, one focused on violent offenders and one focused on property offenders, to assess officers' level of agreement with the scales for both offender types. The hypotheses for this study were stated in Chapter 1 and are again stated below.

H₁: Male officers will score higher on agreement with violent and property scales than female officers.

H₂: Older officers will score higher on agreement with violent and property scales than younger officers.

H₃: Officers with higher levels of education will score lower on agreement with violent and property scales.

H₄: Officers with more years of experience will score higher on agreement with violent and property scales.

H₅: Officers with lower rank will score higher on agreement with violent and property scales.

Sample

Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire that included items to measure background demographics (e.g., years of experience, rank, age, etc.), and officers' perceptions of offenders self-control traits. Data from three local Tennessee police departments (Johnson City, Washington County, and Elizabethton City) were gathered. Respondents who were police, public safety, detective, corrections, and administrative officers were gathered from the local police departments in Spring, 2002. An availability sampling method was used and administered during roll call at the beginning of officers' shifts. Officers in corrections, administrative, and detective positions, due to not being present during shift roll calls for patrol officers, were administered questionnaires by their supervisors and superiors. During administration of the questionnaires respondents were assured that participation was voluntary and anonymous.

Due to the focus of this study, an availability sample of this nature was the only practical way to gather an acceptable representation of officers' perception of General Theory. Further, because the sample collected included officers from several work divisions, such as patrol, corrections, investigation, etc, it provided a cross section of officers with differing types and lengths of experience, career goals, and involvement

with offenders. Although availability sampling of this type is widely used, it does leave making inferences about findings to the general population hazardous (Kalton, 1983).

Measurement of Variables

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables for this study were developed by revising the self-control scale originally adapted by Grasmick et al., (1993) from the California Psychological Inventory Manual by Gough (1975). Previous researchers investigating the relationship of self-control to various criminal and analogous behaviors have used the Grasmick et al. scale either as a whole, or as components of their own measures (Grasmick et al., 1993; LaGrange & Silverman, 1999; Longshore, 1998; Longshore et al., 1996; Longshore & Turner, 1998; Piquero & Rosay, 1998; Wood, 1993). The validity of the Grasmick et al. scale as a measure of self-control has been well established in the criminological field.

The Grasmick et al. (1993) scale is composed of items designed to tap into the six main constructs suggested by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) to make up self-control (e.g., impulsivity, simple tasks, risk seeking, physical, self-centeredness, and temper). Four items focus on each of the six constructs, combining to give a 24-item scale. Longshore et al.'s (1996) previously noted study focused on evaluating the validity of the Grasmick et al. scale in a sample of drug use offenders. Findings indicated that not only was self-control significantly related to criminal behavior, but that reliability alphas were sufficient for both crimes of force and fraud, .80 and .53 respectively. Further, the subscales tended to produce sufficient alphas as well, while the risk seeking, impulsiveness, and temper subscales each individually had approximately the same predictive power as the overall composite scale did. Impulsiveness and risk seeking were

found to be able to predict crimes of force as well as the total scale, while risk seeking and temper were found to predict as well as the total scale with crimes of fraud. While the preference for simple tasks subscale was not found to significantly predict criminal behavior in their sample, Longshore et al. still found the Grasmick et al. (1993) scale to be an acceptable and valid measure of self-control.

Piquero and Rosay (1998) also assessed the validity and reliability of the Grasmick et al. scale across gender groups, and the scale's ability to predict crime compared to findings by Longshore et al. (1998). Their findings indicated that not only was the Grasmick et al. (1993) scale a significant predictor of crimes of force and fraud, but findings were almost identical to those gathered by Longshore et al. Further, Piquero and Rosay found the Grasmick et al. scale to be a valid predictor of criminal behavior, and equally reliable across gender groups.

Development of Self-Control Scale

It is worth noting the variation of the Grasmick et al. (1993) scale used in this study differed from those previously used. The 24-item scale was reduced to two identical 12-item scales, with 2 items measuring each of the six constructs. The 12-item scale was completed by respondents once measuring officers' perceptions of violent offenders, and once measuring their perceptions of property offenders in an effort to discern any difference in their views of property versus violent offenders. If officers' perceptions follow the assertions made by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) that offenders do not specialize in crime types and will exhibit the same characteristics regardless of what crime they commit, there should be little difference in how they score on the property and violent scales.

Because the focus of the study was to assess police officer's perceptions of criminal behavior from the perspective of General Theory instead of measuring self-reported criminal behavior it necessitates a rewording of the items in the Grasmick et al. (1993) scale to measure officers' views of offenders. For example, in the Grasmick et al. study an impulsiveness measure was worded "I often act on the spur of the moment without stopping to think." In this study the item was worded "violent offenders often act on the spur of the moment without stopping to think" on the violent offenders scale, or "property offenders often act on the spur of the moment without stopping to think" on the property offenders scale. In this way, two 12-item scales were created that were identical otherwise, except one was focused to measure officers' perceptions of violent offenders, and one worded to measure their perceptions of property offenders. Reliability alphas of the property and violent self-control scales were examined after all data were gathered and revealed the scales to be valid, $\alpha = .64$ and $\alpha = .70$ respectively. In order to group scores categorically for the purpose of analysis, scores on the property and violent self-control scales were grouped into three categories: low, medium, and high. On both scales, scores of 0 to 12 were grouped as low agreement with the scale, 13 to 24 as medium agreement, and 25 to 36 as high agreement.

Finally, previous researchers have found that individual subscales of the 24-item Grasmick et al. (1993) scale can be as predictive of criminal behavior as the composite scale as a whole. Longshore et al. (1996) found the risk seeking, impulsiveness, and temper subscales were approximately equal to the composite scale in predicting criminal behavior; however, the composite scale retained a higher reliability alpha than any subscale alone. Similarly, Piquero and Rosay (1998) found the impulsiveness subscale to be a slightly better predictor of crimes of fraud and risk seeking to be equal to the composite scale in predicting crimes of force. Further, previous researchers have dropped

individual items that failed to load significantly or that reduced the composite scale's reliability alpha. For the purposes of this study, 12 items are included in the analysis, and tested both as a scale, either property or violent, and individually. This will be done in an effort to provide evidence of officers' perceptions of each self-control item and give a greater understanding of the behaviors within the scale officers agree with from their work experience.

Independent Variables

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, the independent measures used were gender, age, education, years as a police officer, and current rank. Although variables such as gender and race are often used as demographic or control variables in many studies, they will be employed as measurement items and direct the hypotheses of this study. This will be done in an effort to gather preliminary data showing a general representation of police officers' perception of General Theory of Crime and allow possible variance in their views due to these factors to be visible.

Gender. Gender was coded as either 0 (female) or 1 (male). Studies throughout the criminological field have noted that males in general show more propensity toward criminal behavior and analogous behaviors, and score higher on low self-control (Gibbs & Giever, 1995; Keane et al., 1993; LaGrange & Silverman, 1999). As such, it seems possible that officers' perceptions of General Theory may also vary by gender. Male officers were predicted to score higher on perceptions of low self-control in violent and property offenders than female officers.

Race. Race was coded as either 0 (White) or 1 (Non-White). Although often used as a control in studies and commonly noted for differences in found variance, exploration of what differences in race might have on perceptions of a criminological

theory has never been attempted. It was originally hoped the effects of race on officers scores on perception of low self-control could be examined, but an insufficient number of non-white subjects were included in the sample (115 White, while only 2 Non-White).

Age. Age was presented as an open-ended question allowing participants to write their age in the provided space. The age of respondents ranged from 23 to 64, with a mean age of 36. While no previous studies have examined the effects of age on perceptions of the validity of low self-control, it is predicted that older officers will score higher on their perceptions of low self-control in violent and property offenders than younger officers. For this purpose, age was coded into three groups. Officers 23 to 30 years old were categorized as young, 31 to 40 as middle, and 41 to 64 were coded as old.

Education. Education was measured by an item asking respondents to circle one of six choices that reflected their education level. The choices were high school/GED, some college, associates degree, bachelor of arts/sciences degree, some graduate school, and completed graduate school. Scores were well distributed throughout education categories with 20 showing completed high school or GED, 42 scoring as having some college, 14 having an associates degree, 32 a bachelor of arts/sciences, 6 some graduate school, and 3 completed graduate school. Similar to the other independent variables for this study, previous research gives little guidance or direction in predicting what relationship may exist between officers education level and their perception of General Theory of Crime. There is, however, a significantly varying degree of education levels among officers in this sample.

It does seem plausible that education could have an effect on officers perceptions. Speculation allows that officers with higher education, particularly those with undergraduate or graduate education in criminal justice or criminology, have a more theoretically based understanding of criminal behavior and view it from a more academic

and theoretical viewpoint. Those with less education may view criminal behavior from a more practical and conservative viewpoint, taking less consideration of social factors, societal factors, and theoretical influences on criminal behavior often considered in criminology. From this perspective, the straight forward appearance of General Theory may seem like a correct and practical explanation for criminal behavior because it shows little consideration for social influences, economic and societal strain, and other external and often more abstract influences. Therefore, it is predicted that education level will be negatively associated with level of agreement officers show for perceptions of low self-control in violent and property offenders.

Years of Experience. Years spent as a police officer was presented as an open-ended item allowing respondents to write the number of years they have been officers in a provided space. Scores on experience provided a broad range with officers exhibiting from 0 (less than a year) to 45 years of experience. Scores on experience were then coded into three groups. Scores of 0 through 10 years were grouped as less experienced, 11 through 20 as moderately experienced, and scores of 21 through 45 years as more experienced. Consistent with other independent measures used for this study, no previous studies in any area of policing have employed officers years of experience on the job as a measure in any way which might facilitate forming a hypothesis on how it might influence their agreement with General Theory. Further, a basis of how experience might influence officers perceptions of offenders in general cannot be gleaned from previous research that is available. For the purposes of this study, it is hypothesized that years of experience will be positively associated with level of agreement with General Theory on both violent and property scales.

Current Rank. Officers current rank was measured by an open-ended item asking the respondents to state their current rank. Answers the officers provided were then

coded into either administrative, supervisory, or line-officer categories. The line officer category consist of patrol, public safety, K9, and detention officers. Those categorized in the supervisory group were sergeants and detectives. The administrative category included those who held the rank of captain and lieutenant.

Again, previous research in policing gave little foundation to build a hypothesis on predicting what effect rank might have on officers perception of the validity of General Theory, or on their perceptions of offenders. Consideration does make it seem likely that an officer s rank could have an effect on their view of offenders and perception of General Theory. For the purposes of this study, it is predicted that rank will be inversely related to officers agreement with General Theory on violent and property scales. This is suggested because lower ranking officers, who perform less administrative duties, have more frequent contact with offenders, and may, therefore, see offenders as exhibiting low self-control traits more often.

Analysis

Relationships between the independent variables, gender, age, education level, experience level, and rank and the violent and property self-control scales were analyzed using Chi-Square tests to assess the significance of the relationships within the hypotheses proposed by this study. Further analysis employing Chi-Square will be conducted to assess the relationships between the independent variables and each item of the violent and property self-control scale. This was done in order to ascertain which items officers exhibited significant differences in agreement with, and to further assess their opinion of which behaviors are observed in criminal behavior and, therefore, are predictors of such behavior according to General Theory.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

While Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) General Theory of Crime has received considerable attention and testing within the normal realm of theoretical testing and empirical attempts to explain criminal behavior, the current exploratory study is the first to attempt to measure police officers' opinions of the validity of the theory based on their real world experience. For the purpose of measuring this, a data set was developed by using a self-administered questionnaire which was based on a modified version of the Grasmick et al. (1993) self-control scale. Variables that are typically demographic in nature, such as age and gender, were used as the independent variables for the study in order to ascertain preliminary attributes of police officers which might affect their level of agreement with General Theory. Participants included were all law enforcement officers employed by three local police departments in East Tennessee in the Spring of 2002. Results of the questionnaire were analyzed using Chi-Square tests.

Distribution of Respondents

Respondents were 117 police, public safety, detectives, corrections, and administrative officers gathered from the local police departments in the Spring of 2002. Questionnaires were administered to 140 officers. Only 23 officers declined to participate, leaving a response rate of 83%. All returned questionnaires were included in the analysis. The distribution of demographic characteristics of respondents is depicted in Table 1. The mean age of respondents was 36.5, while the mean years of experience was approximately 9 years. The sample was predominantly white with only two non-white respondents. The sample was also predominantly male (82%). Further, high

school/GED, some college, or associate s degree was the predominant level of education (65%). The sample was also predominantly comprised of patrol (18%) and public safety officers (44%), which both perform patrol duties within their jurisdictions.

Table 1

Distribution of Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Category	Characteristics	N	%
Gender	Male	96	82.1
	Female	21	17.9
	Total	117	100.0
Age	23-30	49	41.9
	31-40	40	34.2
	41-64	24	20.5
	No Answer	4	3.4
	Total	117	100.0
Race	White	115	98.3
	Non-White	2	1.7
	Total	117	100.0
Education	High School/GED	76	65
	Some College or Associates Degree		
	B.A./ B.S. or Some Graduate School Graduate Degree	41	35
	Total	117	100.0
Experience	0-10 years	84	71.8
	11-20 years	17	14.5
	21-45 years	16	13.7
	Total	117	100.0

Table 1, Continued

Distribution of Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Category	Characteristics	N	%
Rank	Line Officer (Detention/K9/ Patrol or PSO)	93	79.4
	Supervisory (Sgt or Det)	15	12.8
	Administrative (Lt or Capt)	9	7.7
	Total	117	100.0
Department	Johnson City P.D.	64	54.7
	Washington County P.D.	39	33.3
	Elizabethton P.D.	14	12.0
	Total	117	100.0

Examination of Findings for Hypotheses

The purpose of this study, as earlier stated, was to gather a preliminary assessment of police officers' perception of General Theory's validity in explaining criminal behavior for both property and violent offenders and attempt to detect any significant difference in officers' perception of the theory based on gender, age, education, work experience, and rank. This was accomplished through the use of a questionnaire containing two identical self-control scales, one focused on violent offenders and one focused on property offenders (see Appendix 1). The reliability coefficients of these scales were found to be acceptable for this study with an alpha of .70 for the violent scale and .64 for the property scale. Table 2 depicts the findings of χ^2 tests for each hypothesis and respondents' scores on the violent self-control scale.

Table 2

Distribution of Scores on Violent Self-Control Scale

Category	Violent Self-Control Score						N	%
	<u>Low</u>		<u>Mid</u>		<u>High</u>			
Gender								
Male	0	0%	4	4.2%	92	95.8%	96	100%
Female	0	0%	1	4.8%	20	95.2%	21	100%
Chi Square= .015 p > .05= not significant df= 1								
Age								
Young (23-30)	0	0%	2	4.1%	47	95.9%	49	100%
Middle (31-40)	0	0%	0	0%	40	100%	40	100%
Older (41-64)	0	0%	3	12.5%	21	87.5%	24	100%
Chi Square= 5.566. p > .05= not significant df= 2								
Education								
High School/GED	0	0%	4	5.3%	72	94.7%	76	100%
Some College								
Associates Degree								
B.A./B.S. Some	0	0%	1	2.4%	40	97.6%	41	100%
Graduate School								
Graduate Degree								
Chi Square= .519 p > .05= not significant df=1								
Experience								
0-10	0	0%	2	2.4%	82	97.6%	84	100%
11-20	0	0%	2	11.8%	15	88.2%	17	100%
21-45	0	0%	1	6.3%	15	93.8%	16	100%
Chi Square= 3.220 p > .05= not significant df= 2								
Rank								
Line Officer	0	0%	4	4.3%	89	95.7%	93	100%
Supervisory	0	0%	0	0%	15	100%	15	100%
Administrative	0	0%	1	11.1%	8	88.9%	9	100%
Chi Square= 1.698 p > .05= not significant df= 2								

Findings on Violent Crime Self-Control Scale

Table 2 depicts which relationships between the hypothetical variables are significant. As can be seen, the relationship between gender and agreement with the violent self-control scale was not significant ($\chi^2 = .015$, 1 df) at the $p = .05$ level. Due to this, further analysis employing Cramer's V was unnecessary. No low scores for agreement with the scale were reported, however, and the vast majority scored high in agreement (95.8% of males and 95.2% of females). These percentages show that male and female respondents scored very similarly in their level of agreement with the violent self-control scale although the distribution of respondents within gender was quite skewed (96 males and 21 females) within the sample.

The age of officers was found to have no statistically significant effect, at the $p = .05$ level, on their level of agreement with the violent self-control scale ($\chi^2 = 5.56$, 2 df). However, this relationship did reach a level of significance ($p = .062$) that approached significance at the .05 level. Again, however, no low scores for agreement with the scale were found, and the majority of scores were high in agreement. In the young (23-30 years old) category 95.9% of officers scored high in agreement, while 100% of respondents in the middle age (31-40 years old) category scored high on agreement with the scale. Similarly, 95.6% of officers in the older (41-64 years old) category scored high in agreement.

Education level of officers was also found to have no significant effect on officers' level of agreement with the violent self-control scale ($\chi^2 = .519$, 1 df). As with the other hypotheses tested, no respondents scored low on agreement. The majority (94.7%) in the lower education category, comprised of high school/GED, some college, or associates degree, scored high on agreement with the violent self-control scale. Similarly, 97.6% of those in the higher education category, which includes those

respondents with a B.A./B.S., some graduate school, and those who completed graduate school, scored high in agreement with the violent self-control scale. Thus, only 5.3% of those in the lower education category, and 2.4% in the higher education category showed moderate agreement with the violent self-control scale.

Similar to findings for the other hypotheses officers' level of experience was found to have no significant effect ($\chi^2 = 3.22$, $df = 2$) on their level of agreement with the violent self-control scale. Again, however, no respondents scored low on their level of agreement. In the 0 to 10 years of experience category 97.6% scored high on their level of agreement. In the 11 to 20 years category 88.2% exhibited high agreement with the scale. Finally, 93.8% of those in the 21 to 45 years of experience category scored high in agreement with the violent self-control scale.

Officers' rank exhibited no significant effect ($\chi^2 = 1.69$, $df = 2$) on outcomes of agreement with the violent self-control scale. Consistent with findings for the other hypotheses, no respondents scored low on agreement with the violent scale. Officers who fell within the line officer group showed a high agreement rate with the violent self-control scale of 95.7%. In the supervisory group all of the respondents (100%) scored high in agreement with the violent scale. In the administrative group 88.9% of respondents score high in agreement with the violent self-control scale.

Findings on Property Crime Self-Control Scale

Results gathered on the property self-control scale closely resemble those found on the violent scale. Overall, officers' level of agreement with the self-control measures on the property crime scale's validity as an explanation of criminal behavior seems to be quite similar to their level of agreement with the violent crime scale. Table 3 depicts the findings for the relationship of each independent variable to the property scale.

Table 3

Distribution of Scores on Property Self-Control Scale

Category	Property Self-Control Score						N	%
	<u>Low</u>		<u>Mid</u>		<u>High</u>			
Gender								
Male	0	0%	4	4.2%	91	95.8%	95	100%
Female	0	0%	4	19%	17	81%	21	100%
Chi Square= 5.896 p < .05 significant at p= .015 Cramer V= .05 df= 1								
Age								
Young (23-30)	0	0%	1	2.1%	47	97.9%	48	100%
Middle (31-40)	0	0%	5	12.5%	35	87.5%	40	100%
Older (41-64)	0	0%	2	8.3%	22	91.7%	24	100%
Chi Square= 3.635 p > .05= not significant df= 2								
Education								
High School/GED	0	0%	4	5.3%	71	94.7%	75	100%
Some College								
Associates Degree								
B.A./B.S. Some	0	0%	4	9.8%	37	90.2%	41	100%
Graduate School								
Graduate Degree								
Chi Square= .808 p > .05= not significant df=1								
Experience								
0-10	0	0%	7	8.4%	76	91.6%	83	100%
11-20	0	0%	1	5.9%	16	94.1%	17	100%
21-45	0	0%	0	0%	16	100%	16	100%
Chi Square= 1.518 p > .05= not significant df= 2								
Rank								
Line Officer	0	0%	8	8.7%	84	91.3%	92	100%
Supervisory	0	0%	0	0%	15	100%	15	100%
Administrative	0	0%	0	0%	9	100%	9	100%
Chi Square= 2.242 p > .05= not significant df= 2								

As can be seen in Table 3, the relationship between gender and agreement with the property self-control scale was found to be significant ($\chi^2= 5.896, 1 \text{ df}$) beyond the $p=.05$ level, reaching the $p=.015$ level. Thus, a significant relationship in officers' level of agreement with the property self-control scale based on gender was found within this sample. Further, no low scores for agreement with the scale were reported, and the vast majority scored high in agreement (95.8% of males and 81% of females). These percentages show the direction of the relationship between the two tested variables. Male respondents scored higher than female respondents in their level of agreement with the property self-control scale, with a statistically significant difference being found.

Similar to findings on the relationship between officers' age and the violent self-control scale, the age of officers was found to have no significant effect on their level of agreement with the property self-control scale ($\chi^2= 3.635, 2 \text{ df}$). Again, however, no low scores for agreement with the property scale were found, and the majority of scores were high in agreement. In the young (23-30 years old) category 97.9% of officers scored high in agreement, while 87.5% of respondents in the middle age (31-40 years old) category scored high on agreement with the scale. In the older (41-64 years old) category 91.7% scored high in agreement. Although no significant relationship was present, these percentages reflect a slight decrease in high agreement with the property scale, predominantly dropping off after the young 23-30 age group.

Education level of officers was also found to have no significant effect on officers' level of agreement with the property self-control scale ($\chi^2= .808, 1 \text{ df}$). As with the other hypotheses tested, no respondents scored low on agreement. The majority (94.7%) in the lower education category, comprised of high school/GED, some college, or associates degree, scored high on agreement with the property self-control scale. Similarly, 90.2% of those in the higher education category, which includes those

respondents with a B.A./B.S., some graduate school, and those who completed graduate school, scored high in agreement with the property self-control scale. Thus, only 5.3% of those in the lower education category, and 9.8% in the higher education category showed moderate agreement with the property self-control scale. From these percentages, it can be seen that a slight reduction in agreement was reported by respondents in the higher education category, which follows the hypotheses suggestion that officers in the higher education category would score lower in agreement, although the difference was not found to be statistically significant.

Similar to findings for the other hypotheses, officers' level of experience was found to have no significant effect ($\chi^2 = 1.518$, $df = 2$) on their level of agreement with the property self-control scale. Again, however, no respondents scored low on their level of agreement. In this test, 91.6% of those in the 0 to 10 years of experience category scored high on their level of agreement. In the 11 to 20 years category 94.1% exhibited high agreement with the scale. Finally, 100% of the 16 respondents in the 21 to 45 years of experience category scored high in agreement with the property self-control scale. These percentages show a slight increase in agreement with the scale as experience goes up.

Officers' rank exhibited no significant effect ($\chi^2 = 2.242$, $df = 2$) on outcomes of agreement with the property self-control scale. Consistent with findings for the other hypotheses, no respondents scored low on agreement with the property scale. Officers who fell within the line officer group exhibited a high agreement rate with the property self-control scale of 91.3%, with 8.7% scoring moderate agreement. In the supervisory group and administrative group all of the respondents (100%) scored high in agreement with the property scale. Although, again, this was not a statistically significant relationship, the percentages gathered suggest that officers who fell within the supervisory and administrative groups actually scored higher in agreement with the

property scale than line officers, which is contradictory to the hypothesis suggestion that officers with lower rank would score higher in agreement with both violent and property scales than officers with higher rank.

Significant Findings on Individual Violent and Property Self-Control Scale Items

Although gender was the only independent variable found to be a statistically significant predictor of officers' agreement with the property self-control scale (see Table 3), and no independent variables were found to be significant predictors of respondents' agreement with the violent scale, in an exploratory study such as this it can still be beneficial to examine how officers scored on individual items of the property and violent self-control scales. Because different items are designed to tap into the six different constructs proposed by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) to be crucial in measuring self-control, such as risk-seeking, physical, and self-centeredness, examination of which independent variables were significant predictors of officers' agreement with individual items may shed light on which constructs and behaviors police officers differ in agreement with. Therefore, the relationship between each of the same independent measures, gender, age, experience, education, and rank, and each individual item comprising the property and violent self-control scales was assessed using Chi-Square tests.

Findings on Significant Violent Self-Control Scale Items

Table 4 depicts all significant relationships found between each independent variable and each item on the violent self-control scale. Coding for the independent variables remained unchanged from that used previously in examining the hypotheses of this thesis. The level of agreement choices ranging from strongly disagree to strongly

agree that was used in testing the hypotheses was collapsed into 3 subcategories for the individual items classifying officers responses on each item as either agree , neither agree nor disagree , or disagree .

Table 4

Distribution of Significant Scores on Individual Violent Self-Control Scale Items

Category	Characteristics	Violent Scale Item Score			N	%			
		<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Neither</u>	<u>Agree</u>					
<u>Gender</u>									
(Active)									
	Male	4	4.2%	35	36.5%	57	59.4%	96	100%
	Female	0	0%	4	19%	17	81%	21	100%
Chi Square= 6.043 significant at p= .049 Cramer V= .05 df= 2.									
(Adventure)									
	Male	9	9.4%	32	33.3%	55	57.3%	96	100%
	Female	6	28.6%	3	14.3%	12	57.1%	21	100%
Chi Square= 7.043 significant at p= .03 Cramer V= .06 df= 2									
<u>Age</u>									
(Easy)									
	Young	3	6.1%	21	42.9%	25	51%	49	100%
	Middle	3	7.5%	14	35%	23	57.5%	40	100%
	Old	8	33.3%	13	54.2%	3	12.5%	24	100%
Chi Square= 19.517 significant at p=.001 Cramer V= .17 df= 4									
(Future)									
	Young	2	4.1%	9	18.4%	38	77.6%	49	100%
	Middle	2	5.0%	8	20%	30	75%	40	100%
	Old	6	25%	1	4.2%	17	70.8%	24	100%
Chi Square= 11.783 significant at p= .019 Cramer V= .10 df= 4									
(Spur of Moment)									
	Young	2	4.1%	2	4.1%	45	91.8%	49	100%
	Middle	3	7.5%	4	10%	33	82.5%	40	100%
	Old	8	33.3%	0	0%	16	66.7%	24	100%
Chi Square= 17.146 significant at p= .002 Cramer V= .15 df= 4									

Table 4, Continued

Distribution of Significant Scores on Individual Violent Self-Control Scale Items

Category	Characteristics	Violent Scale Item Score						N	%
		<u>Disagree</u>		<u>Neither</u>		<u>Agree</u>			
(Want)									
	Young	1	2.0%	1	2.0%	47	95.9%	49	100%
	Middle	0	0%	6	15%	34	85%	40	100%
	Old	2	8.3%	4	16.7%	18	75%	24	100%
Chi Square= 10.203 significant at p= .037 Cramer V= .09 df= 4									
<u>Experience</u>									
(Adventure)									
	0-10	7	8.3%	23	27.4%	54	64.3%	84	100%
	11-20	6	35.3%	6	35.3%	5	29.4%	17	100%
	21-45	2	12.5%	6	37.5%	8	50%	16	100%
Chi Square= 11.844 significant at p= .019 Cramer V= .10 df= 4									
(Excitement)									
	0-10	9	10.7%	18	21.4%	57	67.9%	84	100%
	11-20	4	23.5%	7	41.2%	6	35.3%	17	100%
	21-45	0	0%	9	56.3%	7	43.8%	16	100%
Chi Square= 14.069 significant at p= .007 Cramer V= .12 df= 4									
(Future)									
	0-10	3	3.6%	16	19%	65	77.4%	84	100%
	11-20	4	23.5%	2	11.8%	11	64.7%	17	100%
	21-45	4	25%	0	0%	12	75%	16	100%
Chi Square= 14.428 significant at p= .006 Cramer V= .12 df= 4									
(Physical)									
	0-10	3	3.6%	28	33.3%	53	63.1%	84	100%
	11-20	4	23.5%	8	47.1%	5	29.4%	17	100%
	21-45	1	6.3%	6	37.5%	9	56.3%	16	100%
Chi Square= 11.806 significant at p= .019 Cramer V= .10 df= 4									

Table 4, Continued

Distribution of Significant Scores on Individual Violent Self-Control Scale Items

Category	Characteristics	Violent Scale Item Score			N	%			
		<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Neither</u>	<u>Agree</u>					
<u>(Spur of Moment)</u>									
	0-10	6	7.1%	6	7.1%	72	85.7%	84	100%
	11-20	2	11.8%	0	0%	15	88.2%	17	100%
	21-45	5	31.3%	0	0%	11	68.7%	16	100%
Chi Square= 9.904 significant at p= .042 Cramer V= .08 df= 4									
<u>Rank</u>									
<u>(Adventure)</u>									
	Line Officer	8	8.6%	25	26.9%	60	64.5%	93	100%
	Supervisor	4	26.7%	8	53.3%	3	20%	15	100%
	Administrative	3	33.3%	2	22.2%	4	44.4%	9	100%
Chi Square= 14.451 significant at p= .006 Cramer V= .12 df=4									
<u>(Excitement)</u>									
	Line Officer	9	9.7%	24	25.8%	60	64.5%	93	100%
	Supervisor	4	26.7%	4	26.7%	7	46.7%	15	100%
	Administrative	0	0%	6	66.7%	3	33.3%	9	100%
Chi Square= 11.019 significant at p= .026 Cramer V= .09 df= 4									
<u>(Want)</u>									
	Line Officer	2	2.2%	6	6.5%	85	91.4%	93	100%
	Supervisor	0	0%	2	13.3%	13	86.7%	15	100%
	Administrative	1	11.1%	3	33.3%	5	55.6%	9	100%
Chi Square= 10.802 significant at p= .029 Cramer V= .09 df= 4									

Gender

Preference to be Active. As can be seen in Table 4, the relationship between gender and the preference to be active item on the violent self-control scale was found to be significant ($\chi^2= 6.043, 2 \text{ df}$) at the $p= .05$ level ($p= .049$). Thus, a significant difference was found in officers level of agreement with the violent self-control scale

item #20 Violent offenders like to get out and do things more than read or contemplate ideas. based on gender within this sample. The Cramer V strength test suggested that although the relationship was significant, it was quite weak in strength ($\phi = .05$).

In the male group 4 scores of disagreement were reported (4.2%), while 35 (36.5%) chose neither agree nor disagree. The majority of male respondents (59.4%) scored as agreeing with the item. Within the female group 4 respondents (19%) scored as neither agree nor disagreeing with item #20. No female respondents scored as disagreeing with the item. Seventeen female officers (81%) scored in agreement with the item. These percentages show the direction of the relationship between the two tested variables. Female respondents scored higher than male respondents in their level of agreement with item # 20, with a statistically significant difference being found.

Adventure. The relationship between gender and the adventure item (item #18) on the violent self-control scale was found to be significant ($\chi^2 = 7.043$, 2 df) beyond the $p = .05$ level ($p = .03$). Thus, a significant difference was found in officers level of agreement with the violent self-control scale item #18 Excitement and adventure are more important to violent offenders than security based on gender within this sample. The Cramer V strength test suggested that although the relationship was significant it was weak in strength ($\phi = .06$).

In the male group 9 scores of disagreement with the item were reported (9.4%), while 32 (33.3%) chose neither agree nor disagree. Over half of male respondents (55 respondents totaling 57.3%) scored as agreeing with the item. Within the female group 6 respondents, totaling 28.6% of the female group, scored as disagreeing with item #18. Three respondents (14.3%) scored as neither agree nor disagree. Over half of females (57.1%, 12 respondents) scored in agreement with item #18. Thus, relatively the same percentage of males scored in agreement with item #18 as female respondents, while

more females disagreed with the item (28.6% for females and 9.4% for males). In light of this, a statistically significant difference was found with 90.6% of males scoring as either agreeing or neither agreeing nor disagreeing with item #18 versus 71.4% percent of females, with more females exhibiting disagreement with the item (28.6% of females versus 9.4% of males).

Age

Preference for Easy Tasks. The relationship between age and the preference for easy tasks item (item #16) on the violent self-control scale was found to be significant ($\chi^2= 19.517, 4 \text{ df}$) far beyond the $p= .05$ level ($p= .001$). Thus, a significant difference was found in officers' level of agreement based on age with the violent self-control scale item #16. The things in life that are the easiest to do bring violent offenders the most pleasure. The Cramer V strength test suggested that although the relationship was very significant it was weak in strength ($\phi= .17$).

In the young group (23-30 years old) 3 scores of disagreement with the item were reported (6.1%), while 21 (42.9%) chose neither agree nor disagree. Approximately half of young respondents (25 respondents totaling 51%) scored as agreeing with the item. Within the middle age group (31-40 years old) 3 respondents, totaling 7.5% of the group, scored as disagreeing with item #16. Fourteen respondents (35%) scored as neither agree nor disagree. Over half of the middle age group respondents (57.5%, 23 respondents) scored in agreement with item #16. Finally, in the older age group (41-64 years old) 8 respondents (33.3%) scored disagreement with the preference for easy tasks item, while 13 respondents (54.2%) scored as neither agreeing nor disagreeing with item #16. Three respondents (12.5%) in the older group showed agreement with item #16.

Thus, relatively the same percentage of officers in the young and middle age groups (51% for the young group and 57.5% for middle age group) scored in agreement with the preference for easy tasks item, while significantly less in the older age group (12.5%) agreed with the item. Twenty-one officers (42.9%) in the young group scored as neither agree nor disagree, with 14 officers (35%) in the middle age group and 13 officers (54.2%) in the older age group scoring likewise. Finally, while 3 officers (6.1%) in the younger age group and 3 officers in the middle age group (7.5%) scored as disagreeing with the item, a much higher percentage of 33.3% of officers in the older age group scored as disagreeing with the preference for easy tasks item. Thus, a statistically significant difference was found with 51% of younger officers and 57.5% of officers in the middle age group scoring as agreeing with the item, versus only 12.5% of older officers.

Thought for the Future. The relationship between age and the thought for the future item (item #14) on the violent self-control scale was found to be significant ($\chi^2=11.783$, 4 df) beyond the $p=.05$ level ($p=.019$). Thus, a significant difference was found based on age in officers' level of agreement with the violent self-control scale item #14

Violent offenders do not devote much thought or effort to preparing for the future. The Cramer V strength test suggested that although the relationship was very significant it was weak in strength ($\phi=.10$).

In the young group (23-30 years old) 2 scores of disagreement with the item were reported (4.1%), while 9 (18.4%) chose neither agree nor disagree. The majority of young respondents (38 respondents totaling 77.6%) scored as agreeing with the item. Within the middle age group (31-40 years old) 2 respondents, totaling 5% of the group, scored as disagreeing with item #14. Eight respondents (20%) scored as neither agree nor disagree. The majority of the middle age group respondents (75%, 30 respondents)

scored in agreement with item #14. Finally, in the older age group (41-64 years old) 6 respondents (25%) scored disagreement with the item, while 1 respondent (4.2%) scored as neither agreeing nor disagreeing with item #14. Seventeen respondents (70.8%) in the older age group exhibited agreement with item #14.

Relatively the same percentage of officers in the young, middle, and older age groups (77.6% for the young group, 75% for middle age group, and 70.8% for the older age group) scored in agreement with the preference for easy tasks item, while significantly more in the older age group (25%) disagreed with the item. Those in the younger and middle age category were also more likely to score as neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the item (18.4% for the younger, and 20% for the middle age), while only 4.2% of officers in the older category scored as neither agree nor disagree. A statistically significant difference was found with 4.1% of younger officers and 5% of officers in the middle age group scoring as disagreeing with item #14 versus 25% percent of officers in the older age group exhibiting disagreement with the item.

Impulsive Behavior. The relationship between age and the acting on the spur of the moment item (item #13) on the violent self-control scale was found to be significant ($\chi^2 = 17.146$, 4 df) beyond the $p = .05$ level ($p = .002$). Thus, a significant difference was found based on age in officers' level of agreement with the violent self-control scale item #13. Violent offenders often act on the spur of the moment without stopping to think. The Cramer V strength test suggested that although the relationship was very significant it was weak in strength ($\phi = .15$).

In the young group (23-30 years old) 2 scores of disagreement with the item were reported (4.1%), as well as 2 (4.1%) for neither agree nor disagree. The vast majority of young respondents (45 respondents totaling 91.8%) scored as agreeing with the item. Within the middle age group (31-40 years old) 3 respondents, totaling 7.5% of the group,

scored as disagreeing with item #13. Four respondents (10%) scored as neither agree nor disagree. The majority of the middle age group respondents (82.5%, 33 respondents) scored in agreement with item #13. Finally, in the older age group (41-64 years old) 8 respondents (33.3%) scored disagreement with the item, while no respondents scored as neither agreeing nor disagreeing with item #13. Sixteen respondents (66.7%) in the older age group exhibited agreement with item #13.

Relatively the same percentage of officers in the young and middle age groups (4.1% and 7.5% respectively) disagreed with the item, while significantly more in the older age group (33.3%) disagreed with the item. Those in the younger and middle age category were also more likely to score as agreeing with the item (91.8% and 82.5% respectively), while 66.7% of officers in the older category scored as agreeing, showing a statistically significant decrease in agreement with the item as age increased.

Want. The relationship between age and the want item (item #22) on the violent self-control scale was found to be significant ($\chi^2 = 10.203$, 4 df) beyond the $p = .05$ level ($p = .037$). Thus, a significant difference was found based on age in officers level of agreement with the violent self-control scale item #22. Violent offenders will try to get the things they want even if they know it is causing problems for other people. The Cramer V strength test suggested that although the relationship was very significant it was weak in strength ($\phi = .09$).

In the young group (23-30 years old) 1 score of disagreement with the item was reported (2%), as well as 1 (2%) for neither agree nor disagree. The vast majority of young respondents (47 respondents totaling 95.9%) scored as agreeing with the item. Within the middle age group (31-40 years old) 0 respondents scored as disagreeing with item #22. Six respondents (15%) scored as neither agree nor disagree. The majority of the middle age group respondents (85%, 34 respondents) scored in agreement with item

#13. Finally, in the older age group (41-64 years old) 2 respondents (8.3%) scored disagreement with the item, while 4 respondents (16.7%) scored as neither agreeing nor disagreeing with item #22. Eighteen respondents (75%) in the older age group exhibited agreement with item #22.

Relatively the same percentage of officers in the young and middle age groups (2% for the young group, 0 for middle age group) scored as disagreeing with the item, while more in the older age group (8.3%) disagreed with the item. Those in the younger and middle age category were also more likely to score as agreeing with the item (95.9% for the younger, and 85% for the middle age), while 75% of officers in the older category scored as agreeing, showing a significant decrease in agreement with the item as age increases within the sample.

Experience

Adventure. The relationship between officers years of experience and the adventure item (item #18) on the violent self-control scale was found to be significant ($\chi^2 = 11.844$, 4 df) beyond the $p = .05$ level ($p = .019$). Thus, a significant difference was found based on respondents years as a police officer with the violent self-control scale item #18. Excitement and adventure are more important to violent offenders than security. The Cramer V strength test suggested that although the relationship was very significant it was weak in strength ($\phi = .10$).

In the 0 to 10 years of experience category 7 scores of disagreement with the item was reported (8.3%), as well as 23 (27.4%) for neither agree nor disagree. The majority of lower experience respondents (54 respondents totaling 64.3%) scored as agreeing with the item. Within the 11 to 20 years of experience group 6 respondents (35.3%) scored as disagreeing with item #18. Six respondents (35.3%) also scored as neither agree nor

disagree. Five respondents (29.4%) scored in agreement with item #18. Finally, in the higher experience group (21 to 45 years) 2 respondents (12.5%) scored disagreement with the item, while 6 respondents (37.5%) scored as neither agreeing nor disagreeing with item #18. Eight respondents (50%) in the higher experience group exhibited agreement with item #18.

Relatively the same percentage of officers in the lower (0-10 years of experience) and higher (21-45 years of experience) groups scored as disagreeing with the item (8.3% for the lower experience group, 12.5% for the higher experience group), while more in the middle experience group (35.3%) disagreed with the item. At the same time, those in the lower and higher experience category were also more likely to score in agreement with the item (64.3% for the lower, and 50% for the higher experience), while only 29.4% of officers in the middle experience category scored as agreeing. Interestingly, this shows a significant decrease in agreement with the item in the middle (11-20 years of experience) group of the sample.

Excitement. The relationship between officers years of experience and the excitement item (item #17) on the violent self-control scale was found to be significant ($\chi^2 = 14.069$, 4 df) beyond the $p = .05$ level ($p = .007$). Thus, a significant difference was found based on respondents years as a police officer with the violent self-control scale item #17 Violent offenders sometimes find it exciting to do things for which they might get into trouble. The Cramer V strength test suggested that although the relationship was very significant it was weak in strength ($\phi = .12$).

In the 0 to 10 years of experience category 9 scores of disagreement with the item were reported (10.7%), as well as 18 (21.4%) for neither agree nor disagree. The majority of lower experience respondents (57 respondents totaling 67.9%) scored as agreeing with the item. Within the 11 to 20 years of experience group 4 respondents (23.5%) scored as

disagreeing with item #17. Seven respondents (41.2%) also scored as neither agree nor disagree. Six respondents (35.3%) scored in agreement with item #17. In the higher experience group (21 to 45 years) 0 scored disagreement with the item, while 9 respondents (56.3%) scored as neither agreeing nor disagreeing with item #17. Seven respondents (43.8%) in the higher experience exhibited agreement with item #17.

While most officers in the middle and higher experience groups tended to score in the neither agree nor disagree category (41.2% and 56.3% respectively) the same groups showed lower disagreement rates (10.7% for the lower group and 0 for the higher group). At the same time, those in the middle experience category also showed more disagreement with the item (23.5%) and significantly lower agreement (35.3% versus 67.9% for the lower experience group, and 43.8% for the higher). This shows a significant decrease in agreement with the item in the middle experience (11-20 years) group of the sample.

Preference for Physical Activity. The relationship between officers years of experience and the physical activity item (item #19) on the violent self-control scale was found to be significant ($\chi^2 = 11.806$, 4 df) beyond the $p = .05$ level ($p = .019$). Thus, a significant difference was found based on respondents years as a police officer with the violent self-control scale item #19 If violent offenders have a choice, they will almost always rather do something physical than something mental. The Cramer V strength test suggested that although the relationship was significant it was weak in strength ($\phi = .10$).

In the 0 to 10 years of experience category 3 scores of disagreement with the item were reported (3.6%), as well as 28 (33.3%) for neither agree nor disagree. The majority of lower experience respondents (53 respondents totaling 63.1%) scored as agreeing with the item. Within the 11 to 20 years of experience group 4 respondents (23.5%) scored as

disagreeing with item #19. Eight respondents (47.1%) also scored as neither agree nor disagree. Five respondents (29.4%) scored in agreement with item #19. Finally, in the higher experience group (21 to 45 years) 1 respondent (6.3%) scored disagreement with the item, while 6 respondents (37.5%) scored as neither agreeing nor disagreeing with item #19. Nine respondents (56.3%) in the higher experience exhibited agreement with item #19.

Relatively the same percentage of officers in the lower (0-10 years) and higher (21-45 years) group scored as disagreeing with the item (3.6% and 6.3% respectively), while more in the middle experience group (23.5%) disagreed with the item. At the same time, those in the low and high experience category were also more likely to score as agreeing with the item (63.1% and 56.3% respectively), while only 29.4% of officers in the middle category scored as agreeing. This shows a significant decrease in agreement with the physical activity item in the middle (11-20years of experience) group of the sample.

Impulsive Behavior. The relationship between officers years of experience and the Spur of the moment item (item #13) on the violent self-control scale was found to be significant ($\chi^2= 9.904, 4 df$) at the $p=.05$ level ($p= .042$). Thus, a significant difference was found based on respondents years as a police officer with the violent self-control scale item #13 Violent offenders often act on the spur of the moment without stopping to think. The Cramer V strength test suggested that although the relationship was very significant it was weak in strength ($\phi=.08$).

In the 0 to 10 years of experience category 6 scores of disagreement with the item were reported (7.1%), as well as 6 (7.1%) for neither agree nor disagree. The large majority of lower experience respondents (72 respondents totaling 85.7%) scored as agreeing with the item. Within the 11 to 20 years of experience group 2 respondents

(11.8%) scored as disagreeing with item #13. No respondents scored as neither agree nor disagree. Fifteen respondents (88.2%) scored in agreement with item #13. Finally, in the higher experience group (21 to 45 years) 5 respondent (31.3%) scored disagreement with the item, while 0 respondents scored as neither agreeing nor disagreeing with item #13. Eleven respondents (68.7%) in the higher experience group exhibited agreement with item #13.

A roughly equivalent percentage of officers in the lower (0-10 years) and middle (11-20 years) group scored as disagreeing with the item (7.1% for the lower experience group, 11.8% for the middle experience group), while more in the high experience group (31.3%) disagreed with the item. At the same time, those in the low and middle experience category were also more likely to score as agreeing with the item (85.7% for the lower, and 88.2% for the higher experience), while 68.7% of officers in the higher experience category scored as agreeing, showing a significant decrease in agreement with the physical activity item in the higher (21-45 years) experience group of the sample, while the percentages in the young and middle experience groups are relatively the same (85.7% and 88.2%, respectively) in agreement.

Rank

Adventure. The relationship between officers rank and the adventure item (item #18) on the violent self-control scale was found to be significant ($\chi^2= 14.451, 4 \text{ df}$) beyond the $p= .05$ level ($p= .006$). Therefore, a significant difference was found based on respondents rank with the violent self-control scale item #18 Excitement and adventure are more important to violent offenders than security. The Cramer V strength test suggested that although the relationship was very significant it was weak in strength ($\phi=.12$).

In the line-officer category 8 scores of disagreement with the item were reported (8.6%), as well as 25 (26.9%) for neither agree nor disagree. The majority of line officer respondents (60 respondents totaling 64.5%) scored as agreeing with the item. Within the supervisor category 4 respondents (26.7%) scored as disagreeing with item #18. Eight respondents (53.3%) scored as neither agree nor disagree. Three respondents (20%) scored in agreement with item #18. Finally, in the administrative group 3 respondents (33.3%) scored disagreement with the item, while 2 respondents (22.2%) scored as neither agreeing nor disagreeing with item #18. Four respondents (44.4%) in the supervisor group exhibited agreement with item #18.

In the line officer category percentages lean toward agreement with 8.6% disagreeing with the adventure item, 26.9% neither agreeing nor disagreeing, and 64.5% showing agreement. In the supervisor category the percentages show a tendency for scores to fall in the neither agree nor disagree category (53.3%) while disagreement (26.7%) and agreement (20%) are roughly equal, while in the administrative category scores showed the opposite with a tendency to lean farther toward either disagreement (33.3%) or most likely agreement (44.4%) with less scoring as neither agree nor disagree (22.2%). These percentages show a significantly higher rate of agreement (64.5%) in the line officer group, with lower percentages in the supervisor group (20%), and the administrative group (44.4%).

Excitement. The relationship between officers rank and the excitement item (item #17) on the violent self-control scale was found to be significant ($\chi^2 = 11.019$, 4 df) beyond the $p = .05$ level ($p = .026$). Therefore, a significant difference was found based on respondents rank with the violent self-control scale item #17 Violent offenders sometimes find it exciting to do things for which they might get into trouble. The Cramer V strength test suggested that although the relationship was very significant it

was weak in strength ($\phi = .09$).

In the line-officer category 9 scores of disagreement with the item were reported (9.7%), as well as 24 (25.8%) for neither agree nor disagree. The majority of line-officer respondents (60 respondents totaling 64.5%) scored as agreeing with the item. Within the supervisor category 4 respondents (26.7%) scored as disagreeing with item #17. Four respondents (26.7%) also scored as neither agree nor disagree. Seven respondents (46.7%) scored in agreement with item #17. Finally, in the administrative group 0 respondents scored disagreement with the item, while 6 respondents (66.7%) scored as neither agreeing nor disagreeing with item #17. Three respondents (33.3%) in the supervisor group exhibited agreement with item #17.

In the line-officer category percentages lean toward agreement with 9.7% disagreeing with the item, 25.8% neither agreeing nor disagreeing, and 64.5% showing agreement. In the supervisor category the percentages also show a tendency for scores to fall into the agree category (46.7%), while the neither agree nor disagree and disagreement categories exhibit the same percentage of scores (26.7%). The administrative category scores showed the opposite with scores exhibiting a tendency to fall into the neither agree nor disagree category (66.7%) with less scores of agreement (33.3%), and 0 scores of disagreement. These percentages show a significantly higher rate of agreement (64.5%) in the line-officer group, with lower percentages in the supervisor group (46.7%), and still lower scores in the administrative group (33.3%), suggesting a tendency for agreement with the excitement item to decrease as rank increases within this sample.

Want. The relationship between officers rank and the want item (item #22) on the violent self-control scale was found to be significant ($\chi^2 = 10.802$, 4 df) beyond the $p = .05$ level ($p = .029$). Therefore, a significant difference was found based on respondents

rank with the violent self-control scale item #22 Violent offenders will try to get the things they want even if they know it s causing problems for other people The Cramer V strength test suggested that although the relationship was very significant it was weak in strength ($\phi = .09$).

In the line-officer category 2 scores of disagreement with the item were reported (2.2%), as well as 6 (6.5%) for neither agree nor disagree. The large majority of line officer respondents (85 respondents totaling 91.4%) scored as agreeing with the item. Within the supervisor category 0 respondents scored as disagreeing with item #22. Two respondents (13.3%) also scored as neither agree nor disagree. Thirteen respondents (86.7%) scored in agreement with item #22. Finally, in the administrative group 1 respondent (11.1%) scored disagreement with the item, while 3 respondents (33.3%) scored as neither agreeing nor disagreeing with item #22. Five respondents (55.6%) in the supervisor group exhibited agreement with item #22.

In the line-officer category percentages lean greatly toward agreement with 2.2% disagreeing with the item, 6.5% neither agreeing nor disagreeing, and 91.4% showing agreement. In the supervisor category the percentages also show a tendency for scores to fall into the agree category (86.7%), while the neither agree nor disagree category showing 13.3%, and disagreement category exhibiting 0 scores. The administrative category scores showed the same tendency for agreement with the item, with 11.1% in the disagreement category, 33.3% in the neither agree nor disagree category, and 55.6% in the agreement category. These percentages show that although scores for each group show a tendency toward agreement with the want item, as rank increased agreement decreased, with line-officers and supervisors exhibiting a significantly higher percentage (91.4% and 86.7%, respectively) than those in the administrative category (55.6%).

Findings on Significant Individual Property Scale Items

Table 5

Distribution of Significant Scores on Individual Property Self-Control Scale Items

Category	Characteristics	Property Scale Item Score						N	%
		<u>Disagree</u>		<u>Neither</u>		<u>Agree</u>			
<u>Gender</u>									
(Future)									
	Male	9	9.4%	11	11.5%	76	79.2%	96	100%
	Female	5	23.8%	6	28.6%	10	47.6%	21	100%
Chi Square= 8.806 significant at p= .012 Cramer V= .075 df= 2.									
<u>Education</u>									
(Spur of the Moment)									
	High School/GED Some College Associates Degree	25	32.9%	2	2.6%	49	64.5%	76	100%
	B.A./B.S. Some Graduate School Graduate Degree	17	41.5%	7	17.1%	17	41.5%	41	100%
Chi Square= 10.265 significant at p= .006 Cramer V= .087 df= 2									

Gender

Thought for the Future. The relationship between gender and the thought for the future item (item #2) on the property self-control scale was found to be significant ($\chi^2= 8.806, 2 \text{ df}$) beyond the $p= .05$ level ($p= .012$). Thus, a significant difference was found based on gender in officers' level of agreement with the property self-control scale item #2. Property offenders do not devote much thought or effort to preparing for the future. The Cramer V strength test suggested that although the relationship was very significant it was weak in strength ($\phi= .075$).

In the male group 9 scores of disagreement with the item were reported (9.4%), while 11 (11.5%) chose neither agree nor disagree. The large majority of male respondents (76 respondents totaling 79.2%) scored as agreeing with the item. Within the female group 5 respondents, totaling 23.8% of the group, scored as disagreeing with item #2. Six respondents (28.6%) scored as neither agree nor disagree. Ten of the female group respondents (47.6%) scored in agreement with item #2.

In the male group there was a marked tendency for agreement with the thought for the future item with 9.4% disagreeing, 11.5% choosing neither agree nor disagree, and 79.2% of respondents choosing agree. In the female group this same tendency was found, but to a smaller extent with 23.8% disagreeing, 28.6% choosing neither disagree nor agree, and 47.6% choosing agreement. Thus, a statistically significant difference was found with 79.2% of male officers showing agreement with item #2, versus 47.6% of female officers showing agreement with the item.

Education

Spur of the Moment. The relationship between education and the acting on the spur of the moment item (item #1) on the property self-control scale was found to be significant ($\chi^2 = 10.265$, 2 df) well beyond the $p = .05$ level ($p = .006$). Thus, a significant difference was found based on officers' education level in officers' level of agreement with the violent self-control scale item #1. Property offenders often act on the spur of the moment without stopping to think. The Cramer V strength test suggested that although the relationship was very significant it was weak in strength ($\phi = .087$).

In the lower education group (including high school or GED, some college, or associates degree) 25 scores of disagreement with the item were reported (32.9%), with only 2 (2.6%) for neither agree nor disagree. The majority of respondents in this group

(49 respondents totaling 64.5%) scored as agreeing with the item. Within the higher education group (B.A. or B.S., some graduate school or graduate degree) 17 respondents, totaling 41.5% of the group, scored as disagreeing with item #1. Seven respondents (17.1%) scored as neither agree nor disagree. Seventeen respondents (41.5%) also scored in agreement with item #1.

Within both education groups officers showed a tendency to either agree or disagree with the item, with the smallest percentage of each group to score as neither agree nor disagree (2.6% and 17.1%, respectively). There was, however, a significantly higher rate of agreement with the spur of the moment item in the lower education group (64.5%) than the higher education group (41.5%). Likewise, disagreement was higher with item #1 in the higher education group (41.5%) than the lower education group (32.9%). Therefore, a significant difference in agreement was found with officers in the higher education group exhibiting less agreement with the spur of the moment item on the property scale than those within the lower education group.

Summary of Analysis

As reflected by tables 2 and 3, little support was found for the hypotheses proposed in this study. No significant relationships were found between any of the independent measures and the violent self-control scale. Only the Gender category was found to be significantly related to the property self-control scale ($\chi^2= 5.896$, $p= .015$, 1 df). This relationship was also found to be weak in strength (Cramer $V= .05$).

Analysis of findings on individual items of the violent and property self-control scales exhibited more statistically significant differences in officers responses. Education level was the only independent variable for which no significant difference in scores on any item of the violent self-control scale was found. Analysis between the

independent variables and the individual items of the property self-control scale reflected fewer significant differences in officers' scores. Gender and education reflected significantly different scores of agreement with the individual property self-control scale items, with only one scale item being found significant for each.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study, as earlier stated in Chapter 1, was to provide an exploratory examination of the extent to which officers see low self-control traits in those individual who commit crime by gathering a preliminary assessment of police officers perception of General Theory 's validity in explaining criminal behavior for both property and violent offenders and attempt to detect any significant difference in officers perception of the theory based on gender, age, education, work experience, and rank. In so doing, it may allow a preliminary view of whether or not officers perceive that low self-control traits are present in offenders and, therefore, whether Gottfredson and Hirschi 's (1990) suggestion that these low self-control traits are present in offenders is valid. The primary research hypotheses are stated below:

H₁: Male officers will score higher on agreement with violent and property scales than female officers.

H₂: Older officers will score higher on agreement with violent and property scales than younger officers.

H₃: Officers with higher levels of education will score lower on agreement with violent and property scales.

H₄: Officers with more years of experience will score higher on agreement with violent and property scales.

H₅: Officers with lower rank will score higher on agreement with violent and property scales.

The results of this study were, for the most part, inconsistent with the hypotheses stated in Chapter 1. Only the Gender category exhibited significantly different levels of

agreement with the property self-control scale (see Table 3). None of the independent variables in this study showed significant effects on the violent self-control scale (see Table 2). This chapter will discuss the findings gathered for hypotheses as well as the percentages showing the overall agreement level officers exhibited with the violent and property scales. Further, individual items on each scale found to be significantly related to the independent variables will be discussed. Limitations of this study will also be considered. Finally, suggestions for future research will be stated.

Findings of the Study

Hypothesis 1

The first hypotheses stated that males would score higher on agreement with violent and property scales than females. As can be seen in Table 2, findings did not indicate that a significant difference existed between how male and female officers scored on the violent self-control scale. The percentages indicate that the male and female groups both scored high in agreement (95.8% and 95.2%, respectively) with the violent self-control scale. Interestingly, the relationship between gender and the property self-control scale (see Table 3) was found to be significant ($\chi^2= 5.896, 1df$) beyond the $p= .05$ level, reaching the $p= .015$ level. Thus, a significant relationship in officers level of agreement with the property self-control scale based on gender was found with males scoring higher in agreement with the scale than females, lending partial support to the first hypotheses.

Hypothesis 2

The second hypotheses stated that older officers would score higher on agreement

with violent and property scales than younger officers. Analysis of the data suggests that no support was found for the hypothesis. The age of officers was found to have no statistically significant effect, at the $p=.05$ level, on their level of agreement with the violent self-control scale ($\chi^2= 5.56, 2 \text{ df}$). However, this relationship did reach a level of significance ($p=.062$) that approached significance at the $.05$ level (see Table 2). Again, however, no low scores for agreement with the scale were found, and the majority of scores were high in agreement. In the young category 95.9% of officers scored high in agreement, while 100% of respondents in the middle age category scored high on agreement with the scale. Similarly, 95.6% of officers in the older category scored high in agreement.

The age of officers was found to have no significant effect on their level of agreement with the property self-control scale ($\chi^2= 3.635, 2 \text{ df}$). Again, however, no low scores for agreement with the property scale were found, and the majority of scores were high in agreement (see Table 3). In the young category 97.9% of officers scored high in agreement, while 87.5% of respondents in the middle age category scored high on agreement with the scale. In the older category 91.7% scored high in agreement. Although no significant relationship was present, these percentages reflect a slight decrease in high agreement with the property scale, predominantly dropping off after the young 23-30 age group.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 stated that officers with a higher level of education would score lower on agreement with violent and property self-control scales. Findings provided no support for this hypothesis (see Tables 2 and 3). Education level of officers was found to have no significant effect on officers level of agreement with the violent self-control

scale ($\chi^2 = .519$, 1 df). As with the other hypotheses tested, no respondents scored low on agreement. The majority (94.7%) in the lower education category scored high on agreement with the violent self-control scale. Similarly, 97.6% of those in the higher education category scored high in agreement with the violent self-control scale. Thus, only 5.3% of those in the lower education category, and 2.4% in the higher education category showed moderate agreement with the violent self-control scale.

Education level of officers was also found to have no significant effect on officers' level of agreement with the property self-control scale ($\chi^2 = .808$, 1 df). As with the other hypotheses tested, no respondents scored low on agreement. The majority (94.7%) in the lower education category scored high on agreement with the property self-control scale. Similarly, 90.2% of those in the higher education category scored high in agreement with the property self-control scale. Thus, only 5.3% of those in the lower education category, and 9.8% in the higher education category showed moderate agreement with the property self-control scale. From these percentages, it can be seen that a slight reduction in agreement was reported by respondents in the higher education category although the difference was not found to be statistically significant.

Hypothesis 4

The fourth hypothesis stated that officers with more years of experience would score higher on agreement with the violent and property self-control scales. No support was found for this. Officers' level of experience was found to have no significant effect ($\chi^2 = 3.22$, $df = 2$) on their level of agreement with the violent self-control scale (see Table 2). Again no respondents scored low on their level of agreement. In the 0 to 10 years of experience category 97.6% of officers scored high in agreement. In the 11 to 20 years category 88.2% exhibited high agreement with the scale. Finally, 93.8% of those in the

21 to 45 years category scored high in agreement with the violent self-control scale.

Officers' level of experience was also found to have no significant effect ($\chi^2=1.518$, $df=2$) on their level of agreement with the property self-control scale (see Table 3). Again no respondents scored low on their level of agreement. In this test, 91.6% of those in the 0 to 10 years of experience category scored high on their level of agreement. In the 11 to 20 years category 94.1% exhibited high agreement with the scale. Finally, 100% of the 16 respondents in the 21 to 45 years of experience category scored high in agreement with the property self-control scale. These percentages show a slight increase in agreement with the scale as experience goes up, but not to a statistically significant level.

Hypothesis 5

The fifth hypothesis stated that officers with lower rank would score higher on agreement with the violent and property self-control scales than officers with higher rank. Findings did not support this hypothesis. Officers' rank exhibited no significant effect ($\chi^2=1.69$, $df=2$) on outcomes of agreement with the violent self-control scale (see Table 2). Consistent with findings for the other hypotheses, no respondents scored low on agreement with the violent scale. Officers who fell within the line officer group showed a high agreement rate with the violent self-control scale of 95.7%. In the supervisory group all of the respondents (100%) scored high in agreement with the violent scale. In the administrative group 88.9% of respondents score high in agreement with the violent self-control scale showing somewhat of a decrease in agreement in the highest ranking (administrative) group.

Similarly, officers' rank exhibited no significant effect ($\chi^2=2.242$, $df=2$) on outcomes of agreement with the property self-control scale (see Table 3). Again, no

respondents scored low on agreement with the property scale. Officers who fell within the line officer group exhibited a high agreement rate with the property self-control scale of 91.3%. In the supervisory group all of the respondents (100%) scored high in agreement with the property scale. Likewise, all administrative group respondents (100%) scored high in agreement with the property self-control scale. Although, again, this was not a statistically significant relationship, the percentages gathered suggest that officers who fell within the supervisory and administrative groups actually scored higher in agreement with the property scale than line officers, which is contradictory to the hypothesis suggestion that officers with lower rank would score higher in agreement with both violent and property scales than officers with higher rank.

Findings of Percentages on the Violent and Property Self-Control Scales

The purpose of this exploratory study, as earlier stated, was to gather a preliminary assessment of police officers' perception of General Theory's validity in explaining criminal behavior for both property and violent offenders and attempt to detect any significant difference in officers' perception of the theory based on gender, age, education, work experience, and rank. The results of this study did not show support for the hypotheses proposed, excluding the significant effect of gender on level of agreement with the property self-control scale. The effects of each independent variable on the violent and property self-control scale are worth consideration, however, as a basis for determining the overall level of agreement with the violent and property self-control scales officers exhibited. This will allow a preliminary insight of officers' agreement or disagreement with General Theory as encompassing the behaviors seen in those involved in criminal behavior within each independent variable category, aside from whether or not officers' level of agreement differed significantly by each category.

Findings of Percentages on Violent Self-Control Scale

The percentages reflect a tendency for officers to score high in their level of agreement with the violent self-control scale within each independent variable category (see Table 2). Indeed, no low scores of agreement were found in any of the independent variable categories. The percentages also show that approximately only 2% to 12% of officers across categories exhibited a moderate level of agreement with the scale, while percentages of high agreement with the violent self-control scale range from approximately 87% to 100% across the categories. Thus, it seems clear that within the sample, the majority of officers tended to show agreement with the statements items proposed on the violent self-control scale. This suggests that significant differences in officers' level of agreement with the violent self-control scale were not found because officers tended to exhibit a relatively similar high level of agreement regardless of gender, age, education, experience, rank, and work division.

Findings of Percentages on Property Self-Control Scale

Interestingly, only gender was found to show a significant difference in agreement among officers with the property self-control scale (see Table 3). This lends partial support to the hypothesis proposed in Chapter 1 that males would score higher in agreement with violent and property scales than females. This finding, however, must be viewed with caution with only 21 females in the study versus 96 males, because such a discrepancy in gender groups and underrepresentation of female police officers can skew findings.

Because no officers either male or female scored low in agreement with the scale, this significantly different level of agreement is between the moderate and high level of agreement categories. While 4.2% of males scored moderate in agreement and 95.8%

scored high, 19% of females scored moderate in agreement while 81% scored high. Thus, males were significantly more likely to score higher in agreement with the property self-control scale than females.

Aside from the statistically significant difference in scores of agreement between gender and the property self-control scale, overall percentages of agreement with the property self-control scale for each independent variable are quite similar to those of the violent self-control scale. As Table 3 reflects, the percentages point to a tendency for officers to score high in their level of agreement with the property self-control scale within each independent variable category. Indeed, no low scores of agreement were found in any of the independent variable categories. The percentages also show that approximately only 2% to 12% of officers across categories exhibited a moderate level of agreement with the scale, while percentages of high agreement with the violent self-control scale range from approximately 87% to 100% across the categories, excluding the percentages for the significant relationship in the gender category.

Overall Level of Agreement on Property and Violent Self-Control Scales

The percentages for the property self-control scale are approximately equivalent to those for the violent self-control scale. That is, within this sample the majority of officers tended to show agreement with the statements items proposed on the property and violent self-control scales. This suggests that significant differences in officers' level of agreement with the scales do not tend to exist for any category because officers tended to exhibit a relatively similar high level of agreement within other categories, excluding the relationship between gender and the property scale.

Therefore, the percentages suggest a tendency for officers to agree with both scales uniformly, with little difference found based on personal characteristics. While in

disagreement with the hypotheses set forth for this study, these findings lend support to Gottfredson and Hirschi' s (1990) General Theory in that from officers experience dealing with criminals, they tend to agree with the items in both the property and violent scales as describing the behaviors seen in offenders. Further, agreement on both the violent and property scales suggests officers tend to make no differentiation in crime type. Instead, officers may see the same types of low self-control behaviors in both property and violent offenders, which would support General Theory s assertion that crime types are inconsequential, and that all offenders will exhibit the same types of behaviors.

Findings on Individual Scale Items

Although significant differences in agreement were not found between the independent variables and the violent and property self control scales, excluding the relationship between gender and the property self-control scale, significant differences were found between the independent variables and individual items on both scales. Interestingly, more scores on items in the violent self-control scale were found to be significantly affected by the independent variables than in the property self-control scale (see Tables 4 and 5). Thus, officers exhibited greater differences in level of agreement with items on the violent self-control scale than on the property self-control scale. Although not directly tested in this study, this suggests that officers views may vary more on violent offenders than property offenders based on their personal characteristics.

Violent Self-Control Scale Items

Gender. Within the violent self-control scale gender was found to have a significant effect on agreement with the active and adventure items (see table 4). The

percentages show women much more likely to agree with the active item than men (81% versus 59.4% respectively). On the adventure item females were more likely than males to disagree with 28.6% of females disagreeing and 9.4% of males disagreeing while the same percentage of both (57%) exhibited agreement.

The data for the relationship between gender and the active item of the violent self-control scale are suggesting that females are significantly more likely than males to believe that violent offenders have a preference for being active. The percentages for the adventure item suggest that women are less likely than men to believe that violent offenders prefer adventure to security. While these findings are statistically significant, the strength of the associations of the scale items to the gender variable is very negligible. Further, the ratio of men to women in the sample (95 men versus 21 women) reflect that female police officers are under represented to a great degree for any test using gender as the test variable. Therefore, interpretation of these findings requires caution.

Age. The age item was found to have a significant effect on the easy, future, spur of the moment, and want items on the violent self-control scale (see Table 4). On the easy item, young and middle age groups were significantly more likely (51% and 57.5% respectively) than the older age group to agree, while officers in the older age group were significantly more likely to score in the neither agree nor disagree category (54.2%) or disagree category (33.3%). Thus, in this sample officers in the young and middle age groups were significantly more likely than older officers to agree that violent offenders tend to show a preference for easy tasks.

Similarly, for the future item older officers were significantly more likely to disagree with the item (25%) than officers in the middle (5%) and young (4.1%) age groups (see Table 4). Percentages of neither agree nor disagree were significantly less for the older group (4.2%) than the young (18.4%) and middle (20%) age groups, while

agreement was approximately equivalent for all age groups showing 77.6% for the young, 75% for the middle, and 70.8% for the older group. Therefore, older officers exhibited a greater significantly more likely tendency to dispute that violent offenders give little thought to the future than young or middle age officers.

On the spur of the moment item agreement tended to decrease with age while disagreement increased (see Table 4). In the young group 91.8% of officers agreed with the item, while 82.5% of the middle group, and 66.7% of the older group exhibited agreement. Percentages of disagreement reflected this as well with 4.1% of young, 7.5% of middle, and 33.3% of older officers showed disagreement with the spur of the moment item. Thus, within this sample as age of officers increased agreement with the item stating violent offenders tend to act on the spur of the moment without stopping to think decreased.

On the want item agreement percentages show that agreement dropped as age increased (see Table 4). In the young officer group 95.9% showed agreement with the item on the violent scale, while 85% of middle age officers showed agreement with the item, and 75% of older officers showed agreement with the want item. While disagreement with the category was relatively close across the age groups, 2% of the young group scored as neither agreeing or disagreeing with the item, while 15% of the middle age group and 16.7% of the older age group were likely to neither agree or disagree with the item. Therefore, younger officers were more likely to agree that violent offenders will try to get the things they want even if it hurts others, while middle and older age groups were more likely to neither agree nor disagree with the statement.

From this, it can be seen that within this study, older officers were significantly less likely to agree with the easy, future, and spur of the moment items, and significantly more likely to neither agree nor disagree with the want item on the violent self-control

scale. While these findings are statistically significant, the strength of the associations of the scale items to the age variable is very negligible. As with gender in this sample, police officers in the older age group are under represented to a great degree for testing using age as the test variable. While there are 49 officers in the young group and 40 in the middle age group, only 24 officers fell within the older age group. Therefore, interpretation of these findings again requires caution and generalization of findings as representative is hazardous.

Experience. In the years of experience category analysis showed that an officers years of experience was significantly related to their agreement with the adventure, excitement, future, physical, and spur of the moment items on the violent self-control scale (see Table 4). On the adventure item, officers in the middle experience group were significantly less likely to agree with the item (29.4%) than officers in the lower experience group (64.3%) and the higher experience group (50%) and significantly more likely to score in the disagreement category. On the excitement item agreement was the lowest (35.3%) and disagreement was the greatest (23.5%) in the middle experience group, while officers in the higher years of experience group showed a greater tendency to score as neither agreeing more disagreeing with the item (56.3%).

On the future item, officers in the lower experience group were less likely to disagree (3.6%) with the item while 23.5% of those in the middle experience group and 25% of those in the high experience group scored as disagreeing. Agreement was approximately equivalent for each experience group. Scores for the physical item reflected a tendency for officers in the middle experience group to score significantly less in agreement (29.4% of the middle group) and more in disagreement (23.5% of the middle group) than officers in the lower or higher experience groups, which scored roughly equivalently. Finally, on the spur of the moment item officers in the higher

experience group were significantly less likely to score high in agreement (68.7%) than the lower experience group (85.7%) and middle experience group (88.2%), and significantly more likely to score as disagreeing.

From this it can be seen that in the years of experience category middle experience officers showed less agreement with the adventure item, and greater likelihood of disagreement with the excitement item and physical items. Officers in the lower experience group showed less likelihood of disagreement with future item, and officers in the higher experience group tended to score as disagreeing with the spur of the moment item (see Table 4). Again, in this sample, due to sample size and numbers in the experience groups certain groups are under represented. While there are 84 officers in the lower experience group, only 17 officers fell under the middle experience group, and 16 in the higher experience group making the likelihood that scores on these items are not truly representative of officers in the population within these experience ranges. Therefore, interpretation of these findings again requires caution and generalization of findings as representative is hazardous.

Rank. In the rank category the adventure, excitement, and want items loaded as being significantly affected by officers rank (see Table 4). On the adventure item officers in the supervisor group were significantly less likely to show agreement with the item (20%) and more likely to score as neither agreeing nor disagreeing (53.3%). On the excitement item, officers in the administrative group were significantly more likely to score as neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the item (66.7%) and less likely to score as agreeing with the item (33.3%). Agreement with the excitement dropped as rank increased with 64.5% in the line officer group, 46.7% in the supervisor group, and 33.3% in the administrative group showing agreement. On the want item, officers in the administrative group were significantly more likely to score as neither agreeing nor

disagreeing with the item (33.3%) and less likely to score as agreeing with the item with 55.6% showing agreement in the administrative group versus 86.7% in the supervisor group, and 91.4% in the line officer group.

Again, in this sample, due to sample size and numbers in the rank groups certain groups are underrepresented. While there are 93 officers in the line-officer group, only 15 officers fell under the supervisor group, and 9 in the administrative group making the likelihood that scores on these items are not truly representative of officers in the population within these rank groups. Therefore, interpretation of these findings again requires caution and generalization of findings as representative of the overall population is hazardous.

Property Self-Control Scale Items

Gender. Within the property self-control scale gender was found to have a significant effect on the future item (see Table 5). Specifically, females were less likely to score as agreeing with the item and more likely to score as neither agreeing nor disagreeing than men. While 79.2% of males agreed with the item, only 47.6% of females scored as agreeing. Further, 28.6% of females scored as neither agree nor disagree, while 11.5% of males scored as neither agree nor disagree.

Education. The education variable was found to have a significant effect on the spur of the moment item on the property self-control scale (see Table 5). In the education category those in the lower education group were more likely to score as agreeing with the spur of the moment item (64.5%) than those in the higher education group (41.5%). Those in the upper education group were more likely to score as neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the item (17.1%) versus those in the lower education group (2.6%).

Similar to findings on the individual items of the violent self-control scale, the

findings for the effect of the gender category on the future item and education category on the spur of the moment item of the property self-control scale must be regarded with caution. Due to sample size some groups are again under represented. In the gender group there are 96 males and 21 females. Similarly, there are 76 respondents in the lower education group and 41 in the upper education group, and 98 respondents in the police officer group of work division and only 19 officers in the corrections officer group. Thus, there is possibility that scores on these items are not truly representative of officers in the population that would fall within these groups. Therefore, interpretation of these findings again requires caution and generalization of findings must be cautioned.

Limitations of the Study

As previously discussed in Chapter 1, there are several limitations in this study that require consideration. The original Grasmick et al. (1993) scale employed 4 items designed to measure each of the six traits outlined by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) that make up low self-control totaling 24 items. This study used only 12 items for each scale, employing 2 items to measure each of the six constructs in order to make completing the questionnaire as easy as possible for respondents. Although reliability alphas were still adequate for both scales, .70 for the violent scale and .64 for the property scale, it seems possible using these shortened versions of the scale may have reduced the ability of the questionnaire to fully measure any or all of the low self-control components.

The coding of scores on the scales into categories of low, mid, and high agreement categories must also be considered. Coding the scores from a 5 point Likert-type scale down into categories of low, mid, and high agreement necessitated assigning a point range for officers agreement to allow grouping into one of the three agreement categories. Thus, scores of strongly disagree and disagree on items were assigned 1 point,

scores of neither agree nor disagree were assigned 2 points, and scores of agree and strongly agree were assigned 3 points. For the scale those who totaled 12 points were grouped into the low agreement category, those totaling 13 to 24 points were grouped into the middle agreement category, and those who scored 25 to 36 were grouped into the high agreement category. From this it can be seen, therefore, that grouping of respondents scores could be skewed somewhat high by the coding system. An officer who scored as strongly disagreeing or disagreeing with each item would be assigned a 1 totaling 12 points for the scale and would be assigned to the low level of agreement group. If an officer, however, scored strongly disagree on each item of one of the scales except one item in which he or she chose the neither agree nor disagree answer choice or the agree or strongly agree choice, they would automatically score in the middle agreement category although it could be possible they disagreed or disagreed strongly with the rest of the items in the scale. Thus, the possibility of scores being skewed high is possible and worth considering since no scores of low agreement with either the violent or property self-control scales were found.

The sampling method that was used must also be considered. Due to the focus of this study, an availability sample was the only practical way to gather an acceptable representation of officers' perception of General Theory. Further, because the sample collected was representative of officers from several work divisions, such as patrol, corrections, investigation, etc, it provided a cross section of officers with differing types and lengths of experience, career goals, and involvement with offenders. Although availability sampling of this type is widely used, it does leave making inferences about findings to the general population hazardous (Kalton, 1983).

Using a sample technique of this type, instead of a probability sampling technique, leaves a greater possibility of bias in the sample which can reduce the sample's ability to

be representative of the population. Further, because the sample was drawn from three local police departments, all officers in the study live in the same area, tend to have more similar experiences in lifestyle and at work, and tend to see the same types of criminal behavior in performing their day to day duties. Officers from other areas of the country, however, may have very different life and work experiences, education experiences, and see different types of criminal behavior. These factors further make generalizing findings from this study to officers in other regions of the country and police departments hazardous.

Another limitation to the study involving the sample drawn is the sample size. Although 117 officers is acceptable for exploratory research, it is a relatively small sample for most research purposes. Indeed, certain groups were under represented in the test variable categories as there were only 21 females, 24 officers in the older group, 16 officers in the higher experience group, and 9 officers in the highest rank group. Due to only 2 officers falling into the minority race group, testing with the race variable could not be performed. It is clear that a larger sample would represent these groups more adequately. Thus, a larger sample could have an effect by better representing police officers in the population.

Further, a larger sample would have an effect on the Chi-Square statistic used in this study as the χ^2 value would increase for each test as sample size is increased. This, in turn, could allow more relationships between variables tested in this study to be found significant. Therefore, more hypotheses tested in this study may have been supported, and more individual items of the property and violent self-control scales tested may have been found significant.

Implications of the Results

The results of this study suggest that while General Theory has been given considerable attention and testing from a criminological standpoint since Gottfredson and Hirschi introduced it in 1990, there are still areas that are worth exploring. Foremost, a study of this type measuring police officers' perception of the validity of a criminological theory from officers' real-world experience has never been performed. This leaves a gap in what could be done both in theoretical research, and in studies concentrating on police perception as well.

Although support for hypotheses was lacking, this study identified areas in research that need attention. The hypotheses themselves were established on reasoning alone because no prior research in criminological theory testing or policing has established any groundwork which these hypotheses could have been grounded on. Further, as indicated by the percentages showing level of agreement with the violent and property self-control scales, although few significant differences in officers' level of agreement was found based on personal characteristics, overall level of agreement with the scales was quite high. These percentages reflect a tendency for officers to agree with the behaviors Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) suggest are predictors of low self-control.

Testing the relationships between each of the independent variables and each item of the property and violent self-control scales also revealed that while there were three relationships between items of the property scale and the test variables, there were 16 significant relationships found between individual items of the violent self-control scale and the test variables. This indicates a greater difference in agreement with more items on the violent scale than the property scale based on police officers' personal characteristics (see Tables 4 and 5).

These findings suggest that officers' level of agreement with the behaviors the items presented varied more for violent offenders than property offenders. Therefore, based on their personal characteristics, officers in this sample disagreed more on the individual behaviors seen in violent offenders than in property offenders. From police officers' perspectives, there may be differences in officers' views of violent or property offenders influenced by factors which are unknown, and out of the realm of this study.

Implications for Future Research

An exploratory study of this type leaves several possibilities for future research. One of the foremost suggestions for future studies is replication of the current study. A study undertaken with better sampling methods and a larger sample could gather findings which better support the hypotheses tested in this study. A sample that is more representative of female and minority officers, different age groups, ranks, and work divisions would allow enough numbers in groups for better statistical testing. Further, using variables of a higher level of measurement than categorical would allow the use of more powerful statistical tests. Finally, research testing why officers' scores differed more on items of the violent self-control scale than items on the property self-control scale would be worthwhile in understanding why officers seem to view them differently, and if property and violent offenders do exhibit different behaviors, or if the differences found in this study are simply differences in police officers' perception.

Other criminological theories could be tested in much the same manner as General Theory was in this study to assess the agreement officers exhibit. It would also be beneficial to further expand this study by testing between General Theory and another theory such as Social Learning Theory in order to gauge officers' agreement with both, and if agreement is higher among police officers with one theory than another.

Until this study, there has been no criminological research on officers' views of the validity of any criminology theory. Aside from testing police officers' agreement with a theory, this is also a source of insight into officers' views of criminal behavior itself. Nothing done in research on policing thus far has concentrated on police officers' perceptions of crime, criminal behavior, explanations of crime, or offenders themselves. Studies concentrating on differences in officers' perceptions based on their demographic characteristics would be beneficial in understanding police officers' perceptions of crime, offending, and their work which are, so far, unknown within the research community.

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APPENDIX

Police Survey

Thank you for taking a few minutes to fill out this survey. The following questions are about your beliefs about criminals and why they commit crimes. Please do not put your name or any other identifying information on this survey, all answers are anonymous. Please complete all questions and answer each with only one response.

The first six questions will be about you and your background. Please answer each question by circling a response provided and select only ONE response for each question.

Gender 1. Male 2. Female

Race 1. White 2. Non-White

Age State your age _____

Education 1. High School/GED 4. Bachelor of Arts/Sciences Degree
 2. Some college 5. Some Graduate School
 3. Associates Degree 6. Completed Graduate School

Years spent as a police officer State years as an officer _____

Current rank State current rank _____

Current work division (patrol, detective, etc) State work division _____

Criminologists spend careers studying crime and debating over its causes. Most, however, have very little first hand experience with crime or criminals. As a police officer you are actually in the community dealing with crime and criminals. The next twenty-four questions ask why YOU believe people commit property and violent crimes. Please circle the ONE response that best describes your belief about each.

1. Property offenders often act on the spur of the moment without stopping to think.
2. Property offenders do not devote much thought or effort to preparing for the future.
3. Property offenders frequently try to avoid projects that they know will be difficult.
4. The things in life that are the easiest to do bring property offenders the most pleasure.
5. Property offenders sometimes find it exciting to do things for which they might get into trouble.
6. Excitement and adventure are more important to property offenders than security.
7. If property offenders have a choice, they will almost always rather do something physical than something mental.
8. Property offenders like to get out and do things more than read or contemplate ideas.
9. Property offenders are not very sympathetic to other people when they are having problems.
10. Property offenders will try to get the things they want even if they know it is causing problems for other people.
11. Property offenders tend to lose their temper pretty easily.
12. When a property offender has a serious disagreement with someone, it is usually hard for them to talk about it without getting upset.
13. Violent offenders often act on the spur of the moment without stopping to think.

14. Violent offenders do not devote much thought or effort to preparing for the future.
15. Violent offenders frequently try to avoid projects that they know will be difficult.
16. The things in life that are the easiest to do bring violent offenders the most pleasure.
17. Violent offenders sometimes find it exciting to do things for which they might get into trouble.
18. Excitement and adventure are more important to violent offenders than security.
19. If violent offenders have a choice, they will almost always rather do something physical than something mental.
20. Violent offenders like to get out and do things more than read or contemplate ideas.
21. Violent offenders are not very sympathetic to other people when they are having problems.
22. Violent offenders will try to get the things they want even if they know it s causing problems for other people.
23. Violent offenders tend to lose their temper pretty easily.
24. When a violent offender has a serious disagreement with someone, it is usually hard for them to talk about it without getting upset.

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