

Summary for criminal justice class chapter 6

[Sociology](#)



Summary: Chapter 6 of Criminological Theory Lilly, Cullen, and Ball reviewed two of Travis Hirschi's theories, social bond theory and self-control theory in "Chapter Six: The Complexity of Control" of the book Criminological Theory: Context and Consequences (2011). They noted that Hirschi's theories were further expanded by three significant modern control theories: John Hagan's power-control theory from, control balance theory from John Tittle, and coercion theory, developed by Mark Colvin. Hirschi's social bond theory asserts that in the absence of social bonds or the presence of weak social bonds, deviance occurs. What made his theory controversial is that he challenged the validity of Sutherland's differential association theory and Merton's strain theory. For him, alternative theories cannot co-exist. Hirschi departed from Sutherland and Merton because he stressed that he alone asked the right question, which is what stopped people from breaking laws. Hirschi's social bond theory is based on Durkheim and Hobbes. He asserted that Durkheim explained egoism and anomie as part of deregulation, where deviancy follows from deregulation. As for Hobbes, Hirschi emphasized that it is wrong to assume that people are generally moral or fearful, which is why they follow laws. He stressed that motivations are too subjective and internal to account for conformity, and instead, only when individuals lose social control that they begin assessing the rewards of crime the way criminals do. He clarified that motivation is unimportant to criminality because people tend to see the benefits of crimes equally, whether they are criminals or not. Thus, they have equal motivational sources. Hirschi argued that weak social bonds, not motivation, cause criminality. He determined the four bonds as attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. His views are different from classical school theories because he saw crime as being available to

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everyone and he asserted that weak or absent social bonds specifically drive people to pursue the benefits of criminality.

Hirschi defines attachment as the emotional connection between the youth and adults, especially parents. The youth avoid crime because they do not want to earn the disapproval of their parents, for instance. Commitment pertains to high educational and workplace aspirations. Conformity becomes a higher stake than crime. Involvement pertains to participation in diverse social activities. Lack of involvement creates opportunities for crime. Belief refers to believing in the validity of laws and other conventional norms. Weak moral beliefs can lead to crime.

In the self-control theory, Hirschi worked with Michael Gottfredson to argue that self-control is the primary causal factor in criminality and deviance across a person's life and social groups. They claimed that self-control is developed in early childhood. Hirschi and Gottfredson argue that children who have neglectful or ineffective parents grow with poor restraint. They tend to become delinquents later on in life, where they cannot control their need for immediate gratification. Self-control theory differed from social control because the former asserts that the nature of control is individual and internal, and that it can no longer be changed across one's life.

Several modern control theories expounded on Hirschi's theories. Hagan's power-control theory asserted that people who are risk takers tend to have lower self-control, and that parenting develops self-control. Unlike Hirschi and Gottfredson, Hagan asserts that the balance of power between parents and their children affect the latter's development of social control. He questions gendered parenting that tends to make boys more attracted to taking risks than girls. On the contrary, Tittle focuses on the agency of

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individuals as control agents in control balance theory. He believes that the balance between control that one receives and one exerts affects the probability and type of deviance. If people feel an imbalance in power, they are motivated to conduct deviance to increase their autonomy. Colvin, however, believed that it is coercion that affects deviance and criminality, which he explained in his coercion theory. He depicted the controls that seek social compliance, which can be coercive or non-coercive and consistent or erratic. The worst controls are exercised coercively and erratically. This theory claims that the more that people feel coerced, such as through interpersonal coercion or impersonal coercion, the more that they feel that they must also coerce others through deviance.

Reference

Lilly, J. R., Cullen, F. T., & Ball, R. A. (2011). *Criminological theory: Context and consequences* (5th ed.). SAGE. ISBN-13: 978-1-4129-8145-3.