

# **Fifty Years of *Causes of Delinquency***

The Criminology of  
Travis Hirschi

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## Beyond the Footnote: A Return to the Girls in the Richmond Youth Project

*Stacey Nofziger*

Feminist critiques of criminology have long pointed out that the deviance of women and girls in the development and early tests of many theories was largely ignored (Britton, 2000; Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988). Hirschi's social control theory is no exception. In his 1969 *Causes of Delinquency*, Hirschi provided not only a new theory of crime, but also an empirical test of the theory. For 50 years, social control theory has endured as one of the dominant theories in criminology. However, like many of his predecessors and contemporaries, Hirschi did not consider the delinquency of girls. This is particularly puzzling for two reasons. First, as a neo-classical theory that focuses on what prevents youth from engaging in crime, it is logical to examine populations (such as girls) with low crime rates. Second, the data used in the Richmond Youth Project (RYP) was based on a stratified probability sample that included over 1900 girls. Therefore, from the beginning, the data that provided the first test of social control theory could have been used to determine whether the theory was generalizable to both sexes. In spite of this, there was no analysis of the girls performed. The only discussion of this omission is provided in a footnote where Hirschi writes, "In the analysis which follows, 'non-Negro' becomes 'white' and the girls disappear. . . . Since girls have been neglected for too long by students of delinquency, the exclusion of them is difficult to justify. I hope to return to them soon" (1969/2002, pp. 35–36). He never did. This chapter presents the long overdue return to the girls.

To be clear, this is not the first study to consider whether social control can be applied to girls. In fact, there is a robust literature examining how well the theory explains the deviant and criminal behaviors of women and girls, and other work has compared the relative impacts of social bonds on deviant outcomes by sex. In fact, Jensen and Eve (1976) actually used the RYP to attempt to explain sex differences in delinquency, employing several measures of social control along with multiple other predictors from a range of theories. What is unique about the current study is that it presents, as near as possible, a replication of Hirschi's original work that established social control theory as a viable explanation for boys' delinquency. However, rather than only using the boys from the RYP, this study compares the relationships between social controls and deviance for both the boys and the girls. In particular, I examine whether social control theory addresses two feminist concerns; the generalizability of the theory to girls, and the sex ratio problem.

### **Feminist Critiques and Social Control Response**

With the development of feminist criminology, various critiques of the dominant theories emphasized how the experiences of women and girls have been historically marginalized or outright ignored. Theories largely focused on male criminality, and even more narrowly on lower-class, urban, young males as the primary subjects of interest. Many of the studies that helped to establish these theories were based on samples consisting entirely of men and boys. The historical dominance of male-based theories, and the general lack of attention to the crimes females do commit, have resulted in two specific problems for the field; the generalizability problem and the sex ratio problem.

The generalizability problem asks whether existing theories, predominantly developed by men to explain lower-class boys' crime, can explain crimes committed by girls and women. Most of the hegemonic theories in criminology are structured so that "men's experiences are taken as the norm and are generalized to the population" (Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988, p. 500). Many researchers failed to question whether the same processes that are used to explain offending of boys and men can apply to girls and women. Thus, it is possible that, in spite of a field that is rich with theory and empirical analyses, we really know very little about the etiology of female offending.

Different arguments have been made about the best approach to address this problem (see Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988), and many

feminist criminologists argue there is need to start over, focusing on women's lived experiences and developing theories based on in-depth understandings of gendered structures in society. However, it is also possible to avoid a wholesale dismissal of existing theories, as these may have a great deal to contribute to understanding crime by both sexes. Therefore, a less radical approach is to conduct empirical tests to determine whether existing theories can be applied to girls and women's experiences with crime, and if the key processes relevant to the theory vary by sex.

The second problem identified by feminists for hegemonic theories is the sex ratio of crime (Britton, 2000; Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988). Almost without exception, boys and men commit more crime and participate in more deviant acts than girls and women. This is not only confined to official rates, but to self-report data as well (Brame, Bushway, Paternoster & Turner, 2014; Canter, 1982; Hindelang, Hirschi, & Weis, 1979; Jensen & Eve 1976; Stefensmeier, 1980). However, many theories have made no attempt to explain this difference. This does not inherently make these theories invalid. If the theory is not intended to explain sex differences, then it is not fair to conclude that it is bad theory if it fails to do so. However, it is also reasonable to argue that if the theory is able to explain offending for both males and females, and it is also capable of explaining why females commit less crime, it can be seen as a stronger theory.

Some theories that have addressed the sex gap ultimately devolve into biological essentialism, saying that girls and women are just naturally less deviant than boys and men. Jensen and Eve (1976, pp. 430–433) review a number of issues that demonstrate why this is inadequate, such as cross-cultural comparisons, the role of changing social expectations related to sex roles, and the differences in the social constraints enforced on males and females. They use the RYP data and demonstrate that sex itself explains very little of the difference in self-reported offending when controlling for a number of sociological predictors, including parental supervision, belief in the law and legal structure, and a variety of peer and school related variables. Costello and Mederer (2003) argue that understanding the sex gap in crime requires consideration of constraints on girls' and women's criminal behaviors on individual, interactional, and structural levels. Rejecting any natural explanations of sex differences, Costello and Mederer (2003, p. 78) argue "males and females are by nature equally inclined to commit criminal and analogous acts, but females are more constrained than males in virtually all

explaining sex differences in offending by focusing on the sociological processes related to gendered expectations in families and broader society, as well as institutional and structural constraints that vary by sex (Hagan, Gilles, & Simpson, 1985; Hagan, Simpson, & Gilles, 1988; Messerschmidt, 1993, 1997).

Although social control theory was not developed to address either the sex ratio or generalizability problems, there is nothing inherently limiting this theory from doing both. In fact, there are several reasons to expect why this theory would do well in solving both these problems. Therefore, this paper not only provides for a replication of *Causes of Delinquency*—this time including the girls—but also assesses the ability of social control theory to both generalize to girls and to serve as an explanation of the sex gap in offending.

### *Generalizability of Social Control*

Although Hirschi did not explicitly consider how sex might influence the impact of social controls on crime, his theory is perhaps a good candidate to generalize to both sexes. Based on neo-classical assumptions of hedonistic actors who need to be prevented from engaging in deviance, social control theory proposes that bonds to society are the key prevention for crime. There is nothing inherently linked to masculine culture or what might be sex-specific goals or learning processes. Instead, everyone is naturally inclined to crime and it is only those who have adequate levels of the key bonds of attachment, involvement, commitment, and belief that do not engage in such behaviors. Therefore, the theory should be relevant to explain both girls' and boys' offending as all that is required to be an offender is the absence of social bonds.

A relatively large body of research has tested the applicability of social control theory to girls, examining a wide range of samples and different types of deviance and crime. The types of social controls included in each study have varied with many focusing on attachments (Anderson, Holmes, & Ostresh, 1999; Daigle, Cullen, & Wright, 2007; Heimer & DeCoster, 1999; Huebner & Betts, 2002; Laundra, Kiger, & Bahr, 2002; Payne, Gottfredson, & Kruttschnitt, 2009), and fewer examining the other bonds of commitment, involvement, and/or belief (Dukes & Stein, 2001; Krohn & Massey, 1980; Liu & Kaplan, 1999; Rosenbaum & Lasley, 1990). As might be expected due to the wide range of measures and samples, the results of this body of work are inconsistent. In some

studies, social controls predict some outcomes better for girls (e.g., Heimer & DeCoster, 1999; Liu & Kaplan, 1999; Payne et al., 2009), and in others the same types of social controls predict outcomes better for boys (e.g., Krohn & Massey, 1980; Rosenbaum & Lasley, 1990). Some results indicate that which controls matter for each sex vary based on the types of crime and deviance examined (see Alarid, Burton, & Cullen, 2000; Booth, Farrell, & Varano, 2008; Hart & Mueller 2013). Others find no consistent sex differences, with nearly all the included measures of social control predicting outcomes uniformly for both sexes (Booth et al., 2008; Cernkovich & Giordano, 1992; Chapple, McQuillan, & Berdahl 2005; Hartjen & Kethineni, 1999; Huebner & Betts, 2002; Smith & Paternoster, 1987).

In spite of the complexity of existing findings, as a whole there is reasonable support for the claim that social control theory predicts deviant and criminal outcomes for both sexes and that these effects are fairly uniform. For example, Friedman and Rosenbaum (1988) examined both shoplifting and robbery and found only one significant interaction between sex and social control measures for each crime. Chapple et al. (2005) found both that the items used to measure social control, and the effects of these measures on various forms of crime, did not vary substantially by sex. A study of convicted felons found social control measures predict a range of criminal acts, including drug, property and violent offenses, and with only a few exceptions, that these effects operate similarly for men and women (Alarid et al., 2000). In their study of school deviance, Hart and Mueller (2013) concluded that most their measures of social control predicted lower delinquency for both boys and girls, but that the magnitude of the effect varied for several bonds. Based on the overall body of existing research, it is a reasonable conclusion that social control theory does generalize well to explain both male and female crime and deviance.

#### *Sex Ratio and Social Control*

According to social control theory, individuals are less likely to engage in crime only when their bonds to society are strong. So, if one group has lower rates of participation in crime than another, the supposition is that their bonds are stronger. The sex ratio can therefore be explained by the theory, without the need for any modification, by assuming that girls must have stronger bonds as a whole than boys. This hypothesis is easily testable, and, while not often examined, has been

found to be supported (Chapple et al., 2005). So, the question that may need to be answered is why girls have stronger bonds than boys.

There is no question that the process of gender socialization produces different outcomes for boys and girls in many ways. One persistent difference in studies is that girls are socialized in a way that emphasizes the importance of relationships and empathy (Broidy, Cauffman, Espelage, Mazerolle, & Piquero, 2003; Cernkovick & Giordano, 1987; Gilligan, 1982). Cernkovick and Giordano (1987) found that girls engage in more intimate communication with their parents and are more closely supervised. Broidy et al.'s (2003) work on empathy finds that females are more likely to act in ways that show concerns for others, even though there were no sex differences in respondents' likelihood to report that they think about the feelings of others before they act. These findings of gendered differences in concern for others is consistent with Costello and Mederer's argument that femininity itself is defined as "having strong bonds to family and community, and having self-control" (2003, p. 89). The power control theory (Hagan, Gillis, & Simpson 1985; Hagan, Simpson, & Gillis, 1988) also indicates a gendered process within the family that creates a difference in the importance of attachments for girls and boys. Power control theory argues that girls are socialized to be more passive, and more highly value affective bonds. In contrast, boys are taught to be risk-taking and independent. These gendered patterns around relationships and empathy arguably produce stronger attachments for girls than boys, and thus prevent girls from engaging in crime and deviance.

These differences in socialization not only influence the strength of attachments but other bonds, such as involvement. For example, Block (1984) found significant differences in how parents interact with boys and girls, which influences their involvement in different types of behavior. Parents act in ways that are protective of girls, including limiting where daughters can go and providing clear expectations that they expect "lady-like" behavior from them. In contrast, boys are allowed a much broader range of freedoms and opportunities to try new experiences. In a qualitative comparison of incarcerated boys and their sisters, Bottcher (1995) found clear differences in the autonomy granted the boys in their activities and the extent to which they were able to engage in activities away from home. Specifically, boys enjoyed "fewer social constraints—in a wider geographic exposure, in unspecified locations away from home and during the night, at a faster and freer pace, and in less structured and conventionally regulated activity" (Bottcher 1995, p. 52).



Less research has examined sex differences in beliefs and commitments and the subsequent effects on delinquency. However, Sokol-Katz, Dunham, and Zimmerman (1997) did find that, even when controlling for other social bonds such as attachment to family, boys were less likely than girls to agree it was important to obey the law, indicating lower beliefs. As a whole, the existing work that examines sex or gender differences and different forms of social control indicates that we might expect girls to exhibit higher levels of social control than boys, thus accounting for at least some of the sex ratio in offending.

### Data and Methods

A full description of the sampling process, data collection, and measurements of delinquency is available in *Causes of Delinquency* (Hirschi 1969/2002). In brief, the RYP developed a stratified sample of 5545 junior and senior high school students in Richmond, California. The total number of completed self-report questionnaires generated a final sample that consisted of 2336 boys and 1741 girls. In his original study, it is somewhat unclear from Hirschi's explanation how he categorized the racial groups. In his analyses, Hirschi compared boys in the two groups of Black<sup>1</sup> and White. He argued that White was an appropriate designation because "the few Oriental and Mexican-American boys were removed" from that category (Hirschi 1969/2002, p. 35, footnote 3). However, this does not clarify exactly how these respondents were entirely dropped or put with the Black group. In order to avoid such confusion, for the current analysis I limited the sample to respondents indicating they were either Black or White, which left a total of 1419 girls (614 White and 805 Black) and 2076 boys (1462 White and 975 Black).

### Measures

There are many items in the RYP survey that could be used to measure the different types of social bonds. For example, Costello and Vowell (1999) examined the RYP using a second-order latent model that included many of the same measures used by Hirschi, but with several modifications, particularly to the belief and involvement measures. For this project I wanted to remain as consistent as possible with Hirschi's original measurements of the key concepts. Therefore, the same items used by Hirschi for the different types of attachments, commitment, involvement, and belief are used in this study. Table 4.1 provides the

**Table 4.1**  
**Measurement of Social Control**

Item/Scales
<p><b>Attachment—Family</b></p> <p>Supervision (additive)</p> <p>Does your mother (father) know where you are when you are away from home?</p> <p>Does your mother (father) know whom you are with when you are away from home?</p> <p>Share/Intimacy of Communication A (additive)</p> <p>Do you share your thoughts and feelings with your mother (father)?</p> <p>How often have you talked over your future plans with your mother (father)?</p> <p>Explain/Intimacy of Communication B (additive)</p> <p>When you don't know why your mother (father) makes a rule, will she explain the reason?</p> <p>When you come across things you don't understand, does your mother (father) help you with them?</p> <p>Does your mother (father) ever explain why she feels the way she does?</p> <p>BeLike</p> <p>Would you like to be the kind of person your mother (father) is?</p>
<p><b>Attachment—School (Separate items)</b></p> <p>In general do you like or dislike school?</p> <p>Do you care what teachers think of you?</p>
<p><b>Attachment—Peers (Separate items)</b></p> <p>Would you like to be the kind of person your best friends are?</p> <p>Do you respect your best friend's opinions about the important things in life?</p>
<p><b>Commitment</b></p> <p>Educational Aspiration</p> <p>How much schooling would you like to get eventually?</p> <p>Achievement Orientation (additive)</p> <p>I try hard in school.</p> <p>How important is getting good grades to you personally?</p> <p>Whatever I do, I try hard.</p>
<p><b>Involvement (Separate items)</b></p> <p>On the average, how much time do you spend doing homework outside school?</p> <p>Do you ever feel that "there's nothing to do"?</p> <p>How many hours a week do you spend . . . sitting around talking with friends?</p> <p>How many hours a week do you spend . . . riding around in a car?</p>
<p><b>Belief (Separate items)</b></p> <p>I have a lot of respect for the Richmond police.</p> <p>It is alright to get around the law if you can get away with it.</p>

wording of the items for each measure. For each of the bonds that is made up of multiple items, I followed Hirschi's practice of developing additive scales. However, I did make some modifications to a number of the items.

For example, Hirschi only presented the analysis of the boys' attachments to their fathers, although he did examine attachments to both parents. From his preliminary tests, he concluded that "knowing attitudes toward both parents adds *nothing* to our ability to predict delinquency" (Hirschi, 1969/2002, p. 105, emphasis in original). However, it is possible that same-sex parent-child relationships may operate differently when considering both boys and girls in the analysis. Therefore, for this replication, I measure attachments to both mothers and fathers. Just as in Hirschi's analysis, four measures of attachments to the parent were created, but I included four measures for attachment to fathers, and four for attachment to mothers. The first represents the "virtual supervision" described by Hirschi, the second attachment "intimacy of communication—A" which focuses on sharing thoughts, feelings, and future plans with parents. A second "intimacy of communication—B" created by Hirschi I label "explain" as it emphasizes whether the respondent believes their parents explain things to them that they do not understand, the reasons for rules, or how the parent is feeling. Finally, Hirschi discussed "affectional identification," or whether the respondent wanted to be like their parent, as an important attachment.

In spite of the fact that Hirschi devoted an entire chapter to the importance of attachment to peers, social control has regularly been criticized for downplaying potential impact of the deviance of peers. Many studies have found the influence of parental bonds and other attachments are diminished or even eliminated when controlling for the deviance of peers (Agnew, 1993; Elliott et al., 1985; Massey & Krohn, 1986; Matsueda & Heimer, 1987; Warr, 1993). However, other work finds that the relationship is more complex, with youth who have strong attachments being less susceptible to any influence of deviant peers, and also being less likely to actually have deviant peers (Erickson et al., 2000). Hirschi confirmed the long-acknowledged relationship between delinquency and delinquent peers with his own data but concluded the causal order is misspecified in learning models. Rather than "good" boys being turned bad, or the "one bad apple spoils the barrel" analogy, he argued for a "birds of a feather flock together" view. In other words, "the boy's stake in conformity affects his choice of friends rather than the other way around" (Hirschi, 1969/2002, p. 159). He also concluded from his

analysis that delinquent boys do not have close attachments to each other, and even when they do, stronger attachments still encourage conventional behavior (Hirschi, 1969/2002, pp. 145–152). While the complex paths between social controls, attachments to peers, and both peer and individual deviance are certainly in need of further exploration for both boys and girls, such an analysis is a bit beyond the scope of the current project. Out of curiosity, I do compare the level of peer deviance for boys and girls and whether peer deviance is associated with peer attachments. However, for the majority of the analyses, I focus on peer attachments and use the same two items Hirschi indicated were the indicators of this; whether the youth would like to be the kind of person their best friend is, and if they respect their best friends' opinions.

The measures of belief and commitment did not vary between the original and this study, but involvement was coded in a slightly different way. In his chapter on involvement, Hirschi conceded that he was wrong (one of the few times he admitted to such a failing) in his theoretical argument in assuming that participation in just any activity would be indicative of higher social control (1969/2002, p. 190). Instead, it is necessary to consider what is occurring rather than just the time involved. Hirschi therefore focused on involvement in behaviors in the two categories of "school-related" and "working class adult" activities (1969/2002, pp. 195–196). He argued that a wide range of other activities that do not relate to these two categories would be "generally unrelated to delinquency" (p. 196). Although he discussed a number of types of involvement, he actually used four items related to these two clusters of behaviors (hours doing homework, talking with friends, riding around in cars, and frequently being bored or feeling there is nothing to do).

The same four items are used in the current analysis but I coded each of these to reflect what I believe to be higher social control. In the original survey, talking with friends and riding around in cars were both coded so higher numbers indicated more time doing these activities, and thus presumably higher involvement. But, Hirschi (1969/2002, pp. 194–195) found that spending time talking with friends and riding in cars increased delinquency, so that rather than serving as a protective control, they actually indicated lack of involvement in structured, conventional, behaviors. For my analysis these items, as well as feeling bored, were thus reverse coded. This means higher values indicate less time doing these activities, or less time feeling bored, and therefore presumably less time in unsupervised and unstructured activities, and thus higher social control.

Finally, Hirschi created several different measures of delinquency (see Hirschi, 1969/2002, p. 62 for a discussion of coding), including both self-reports related to an index of different types of behaviors and official involvement based on police reports. Thus he was able to compare the self-reported delinquency with official data. However, he only compiled official police measures for the boys in the sample, thus rendering that option unusable in the current study. Although he did create three measures of self-reported delinquency, he argued that "recency," or how many times the respondent indicated they had committed an act of delinquency within the past year, was the "most appropriate as an operationalization of delinquency in terms of the theory" (p. 62). Therefore, this replication follows this guide and employs the measure of recency in all the analyses.

### *Analytic Plan*

The original analysis examined whether attachment, involvement, commitment, and belief were associated with both self-reported and official delinquency for boys, primarily using a series of cross-tabulations. Thus, Hirschi's analysis was largely bivariate, with some use of partial regressions. He argued that multivariate techniques that place a number of indicators of a similar concept in a model simultaneously could lead to the conclusion that hypotheses are false, when in fact the effects of the independent measures may predict the outcome but mask each other's effects in a regression (Hirschi, 1969/2002, Appendix B). The current study follows this method to a point, but employs a number of different forms of analyses to assess the similarities and differences between boys and girls.

The first step in the analysis is a comparison of the mean levels of delinquency and social control for boys and girls using t-tests (Table 4.2). This is done to establish whether there is a sex gap in offending in the RYP, and if there are significant differences by sex in the mean level of social control measures. Second, I followed Hirschi's practice of using cross-tabulations and examined the bivariate relationships between each measure of social control and the measure of total acts of reported delinquency in the past year (recency) using cross-tabulations and resulting chi-square tests. Rather than displaying every cross-tabulation, I present two exemplar tables (Table 4.3) and combine the results of the rest of the analyses by presenting the chi-square results for all the cross-tabulations in Table 4.4. In addition to testing the key relationships between social

**Table 4.2**  
**Means, Standard Deviations, and T-Tests for Equality**  
**of Social Controls by Sex**

	Girls		Boys		T-Test
	Mean	StDev	Mean	StDev	
Delinquency-Recency	.33	.72	.81	1.16	***
Social Controls					
Attachment					
Mother Supervision	3.56	.74	3.12	.98	***
Mother Share	2.55	1.09	2.27	1.06	***
Mother Explain	7.29	1.40	7.07	1.41	***
Mother BeLike	2.31	1.17	1.95	1.17	***
Father Supervision	3.11	1.18	2.91	1.14	***
Father Share	1.87	1.18	2.12	1.12	***
Father Explain	6.76	1.66	6.83	1.55	
Father BeLike	1.74	1.27	2.10	1.21	***
Like School	2.50	.55	2.40	.60	***
CareTeacher	2.54	.66	2.27	.74	***
BeLikeBestFriend	1.05	.68	1.08	.66	
RespectBFopinion	1.79	.78	1.63	.78	***
Commitment					
EducAspiration	4.61	1.59	4.78	1.52	***
AchievOrient	11.02	2.06	10.46	2.10	***
Involvement					
Homework	4.09	1.40	3.56	1.39	***
NotBored	1.98	.84	2.06	.85	**
TalkFriend	4.26	1.61	4.53	1.56	***
RideCar	5.05	1.62	4.92	1.64	*
Belief					
RespectPolice	3.74	1.12	3.54	1.13	***
AroundLaw	3.89	1.13	3.73	1.14	***

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

**Table 4.3**  
**Cross-Tabulation Results for Father Explain and FatherBeLike**  
**by Recency and Sex**

*Attachment: Want to be like Father*

BOYS (Chi-Square = 48.57, p<.01)					
Recency	Not at all	In just a few ways	In some ways	In most ways	In every way
0	142	149	378	379	148
1	67	92	161	143	63
2	47	31	68	51	21
3	24	20	33	35	13
4	10	9	13	8	5
5	7	2	3	4	2
6	2	1	3	1	0

GIRLS (Chi-Square = 43.78, p<.01)					
Recency	Not at all	In just a few ways	In some ways	In most ways	In every way
0	200	180	296	212	91
1	57	434	43	32	13
2	19	17	7	3	2
3	7	2	7	3	2
4	2	5	0	0	2

*Attachment: Father Explains*

BOYS (Chi-Square = 100.43, p<.001)							
Recency	3 (Low)	4	5	6	7	8	9 (High)
0	25	45	97	172	262	282	175
1	16	21	63	74	116	130	38
2	12	11	21	38	33	42	24
3	5	7	20	23	22	16	9
4	4	4	10	7	7	7	1
5	3	1	3	1	3	2	1
6	0	0	2	3	1	0	0

*(Continued)*

**Table 4.3**  
(Continued)

GIRLS (Chi-Square = 26.82, NS)							
Recency	3 (Low)	4	5	6	7	8	9 (High)
0	41	48	72	174	183	205	138
1	10	7	22	33	40	30	20
2	5	3	4	8	8	9	5
3	2	1	3	2	4	4	2
4	0	2	1	2	2	0	1
5	0	0	0	1	1	0	0

**Table 4.4**  
Chi-Square Analysis of Social Controls on Recency by Sex

Control	Girls	Boys
<b>Attachment</b>		
Mother Supervision	77.45***	154.58***
Mother Share	37.98**	59.42***
Mother Explain	40.86	148.55***
Mother BeLike	36.66*	77.34***
Father Supervision	48.79***	135.04***
Father Share	28.88*	92.80***
Father Explain	26.82	100.43***
Father BeLike	43.78**	48.57**
Like School	78.83***	157.03***
CareTeacher	85.13***	108.44***
BeLikeBestFriend	13.42	30.18**
RespectBFopinion	19.52	61.83***
<b>Commitment</b>		
EducAspiration	71.06***	69.70***
AchievOrient	76.82*	232.13***



Control	Girls	Boys
Involvement		
Homework	53.49***	116.85***
NotBored	25.63*	28.56
TalkFriend	24.02	75.69***
RideCar	59.60***	101.56***
Belief		
RespectPolice	54.11***	214.50***
AroundLaw	91.01***	199.60***

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

control and delinquency, I also conducted a brief examination of the role of peer deviance for boys and girls, and how delinquency of peers may influence attachments to peers. Again using cross-tabulations, these results are presented in Table 4.5.

Finally, a series of ordinary least squared (OLS) regressions are conducted. While Hirschi argued that the effects of each bond on delinquency should be considered separately, I run separate regressions for each cluster of social bonds. While it is possible that this may mask specific effects of individual items that represent the bond, it allows me to assess whether the underlying form of social control provides an explanation of delinquency. For example, rather than regressing mother's supervision on recency separately from sharing with mother, I include all four of the items that are intended to indicate attachment to mothers in one regression. However, I separate attachments to mothers from other forms of attachments to allow for an examination of each type of bond. The first step for each regression series was a combined model for the full sample to determine whether sex was significant. However, as argued by Booth et al. (2008, p. 426), "research on gender and social control to date indicates that mechanisms of social control may not be experienced uniformly" thus pointing to the need for separate models by sex to determine if the processes involved are similar for girls and boys. Hence, a series of 21 regressions were performed, with 7 distinct models focusing on each of the different groups of social controls (see Table 4.6).

**Table 4.5**  
**Relationship Between Peer Deviance, Peer Attachments, and Recency by Sex**

		Friends Picked Up by Police				
GIRLS		No	Once	Twice	Three Times	Four or More
<b>Recency</b> (chi-sq=293.11, p<.001)						
	0	651	92	31	15	65
	1	95	29	10	5	27
	2	12	9	6	0	15
	3	9	4	2	1	3
	4	2	2	1	0	4
	5	0	0	0	2	0
<b>RespectBFOpinion</b> (chi-sq=33.38, p<.001)						
	0	28	3	5	2	5
	1	181	37	14	3	45
	2	369	63	25	12	36
	3	147	25	1	5	19
<b>BeLikeBF</b> (ch-sq=21.10, p<.01)						
	0	117	24	14	3	28
	1	382	70	21	12	58
	2	212	35	7	7	15
BOYS		No	Once	Twice	Three Times	Four or More
<b>Recency</b> (chi-sq=293.11, p<.001)						
	0	557	167	86	41	142
	1	169	78	64	31	123
	2	48	47	21	17	72
	3	19	28	11	16	49
	4	1	5	8	6	30
	5	0	1	1	2	16
	6	0	0	1	3	5
<b>RespectBFOpinion</b> (chi-sq=82.476, p<.001)						
	0	36	21	12	6	45
	1	191	105	74	42	182
	2	422	143	86	45	142
	3	107	33	16	15	38

BOYS	No	Once	Twice	Three Times	Four or More	
BeLikeBF (ch-sq=74.15, p<.001)	0	91	57	32	24	111
	1	406	173	105	50	229
	2	256	71	46	28	62

**Table 4.6**  
**OLS of Social Controls on Recent Delinquency by Sex**

Model Variable	Full Sample		Girls		Boys		z-score
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	
<b>1. Attachment to Mother</b>							
Male	.209***	.038	.				
M_Supervision	-.213***	.022	-.162***	.030	-.223***	.030	1.44
M_Share	-.039*	.019	-.043	.023	-.037	.027	-.17
M_Explain	-.012	.015	.008	.018	-.027	.021	1.27
M_BeLike	-.094***	.017	-.061**	.021	-.113***	.025	-2.63**
R-Square	.114		.067		.078		
<b>2. Attachment to Father</b>							
Male	.416***	.039					
F_Supervision	-.134***	.019	-.082***	.022	-.164***	.027	2.35*
F_Share	-.056**	.020	-.020	.024	-.080**	.029	1.59
F_Explain	-.025	.015	.006	.018	-.045*	.022	1.79
F_BeLike	-.019	.019	-.012	.021	-.019	.027	-.20
R-Square	.092		.037		.070		
<b>3. Attachment to School</b>							
Male	.425***	.035					
LikeSchool	-.318***	.029	-.175***	.036	-.391***	.041	3.96***
CareTeach	-.204***	.024	-.169***	.030	-.211***	.033	.94
R-Square	.120		.066		.081		
<b>4. Attachment to Peers</b>							
Male	.452***	.036					
BeLikeBF	-.046	.027	.016	.033	-.083*	.040	1.91
RespOpinBF	-.140***	.023	-.049	.029	-.189***	.034	3.13**
R-Square	.063		.018		.026		

*(Continued)*

Table 4.6  
(Continued)

Model Variable	Full Sample		Girls		Boys		z-score
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	
5. Commitment							
Male	.438***	.038					
EducAsp	-.064***	.012	-.048***	.013	-.079***	.018	1.40
Achieve	-.122***	.009	-.058***	.010	-.155***	.013	5.91***
R-Square	.120		.069		.091		
6. Involvement							
Male	.443***	.037					
TalkFr	-.022	.012	.012	.014	-.043*	.018	1.36
RideCar	-.099***	.012	-.079***	.014	-.112***	.017	1.50
HomeWork	-.116***	.013	-.072***	.015	-.136***	.018	2.73**
NotBored	-.051*	.021	-.050*	.024	-.049	.030	.03
R-Square	.113		.076		.074		
7. Belief							
Male	.420***	.035					
RespPol	-.164***	.015	-.065***	.018	-.215***	.021	5.42***
AroundLaw	-.159***	.015	-.096	.018	-.201***	.022	3.69***
R-Square	.126		.054		.104		

\*p&lt;.05, \*\*p&lt;.01, \*\*\*p&lt;.001

The final step in the analysis was to rebel against Hirschi's recommendations and include all the indicators of social control in two regression models; one for boys and one for girls (Table 4.7). This allowed me to assess whether the individual effects would indeed be masked in such an approach. In addition, it provided an assessment of how well the theory as a whole predicts recent involvement in delinquency for each sex.

### Findings

*Bivariate Relationships: Means, Standard Deviations, T-Tests and Chi-Square Analyses*

Table 4.2 provides the means and standard deviations for the measure of crime used in this study as well as each measure of social control

by sex along with the t-test of equality of means. As expected, boys in this sample report a higher mean recent delinquency than girls. Thus, as with most studies, there is a statistically significant sex gap in offending. When considering the mean level of social control by sex, in all but two of the measures (FatherExplain, BeLikeBestFriend), there are significant sex differences. In addition, for nearly all the measures, girls have higher levels of social control, but there are a few exceptions to this pattern.

The measures of attachment to parents show a clear gendered relationship for all but the measure for whether the father explains things, which was not significantly different by sex. Girls report higher mean attachment for all measures related to mothers, and for being virtually supervised by fathers. However, boys reported higher mean attachment for the two items of sharing with and wanting to be like their fathers. Consistent with past work, girls experience a higher level of supervision by both parents than boys. In addition, unlike Hirschi's contention that which parent the child is attached to does not matter, this analysis shows that it matters very much in terms of how strong the attachment is. Boys are more strongly attached to fathers and girls to mothers.

For both measures of school attachments, girls report significantly higher mean attachment than boys, being more likely to report that they like school and that they care about what their teachers think about them. Girls are also more likely to respect the opinions of their best friend. As a group, these indications of higher mean levels of attachments reported by girls may be an indication of why girls commit less crime.

The results for commitment and involvement are more mixed. Girls have a higher mean level of commitment as indicated by achievement orientation, but boys have a slightly higher mean for educational aspirations. This may of course be related to social expectations for boys and girls in the late 1960s, as this was prior to the big increases in young women earning college degrees which took place in the 1970s. Indicators of involvement also show variation by sex. For hours doing homework and less time riding around in a car, girls have a higher mean level of social control, but boys report higher levels of control related to hours talking to friends and reporting a lack of boredom.

It is important to reiterate that the coding for the involvement items were intended to indicate an increase in social control in the form of more time that was presumably under direct adult supervision and fewer opportunities for getting into trouble. Thus, for the girls, they appear to be strongly controlled as they both spend less time riding around in cars, and more time doing homework. For the boys, they spend less time

sitting around talking to friends than girls, and report being bored less often than girls. When I coded these items, I assumed that time sitting around talking to friends would be largely unsupervised time with peers, and thus lower social control. So this item was reverse coded with higher numbers indicating *less* time talking to peers. On further consideration, it is unclear if time talking to friends would be a hindrance or help for controlling behavior uniformly for both sexes. The item specifically asks about “time sitting around talking with friends” but it is not clear if that would include time at school, or even time spent talking on the phone, or if this is only interpreted by respondents as time in face-to-face interactions away from adults. Talking with friends at school is still supervised by numerous adults and also within a setting that makes deviance less likely. Since this was the era long before cell phones, or even cordless phones, if girls are talking with friends on the telephone, it is being done from their homes, and most likely in a shared space within the home on a corded phone that is limited in the range of movement. So, not only are they physically confined, but any of their conversations may be overhead by parents or other family members. Thus, it is unclear whether less time spent sitting around and talking to friends would actually predict higher or lower opportunities for delinquency for boys and girls in the same way. The fact that boys report significantly higher means on this measure (indicating less time doing this) may not actually mean they experience higher social control. Similarly, there is potential ambiguity in the meaning of the “not bored” measure. Reporting that you do not regularly feel bored may be an indication that your days are full of conventional activities, or that you find ways to entertain yourself—including deviant ways. Since boys report feeling bored less often than girls (higher control as coded), this may indicate they are more free to find activities that amuse them than are the girls. Again, this may not actually truly mean they have higher involvement in conventional activities. Such questions may be answered with the later analyses.

The next set of analyses, presented in Table 4.3 and Table 4.4, are the cross-tabulations and chi-square statistics of individual measures of social control on the measure of recent delinquency. Rather than presenting every cross-tabulation divided by sex, which would require a book at least the size of the original, Table 4.3 presents two examples of these cross-tabulations and Table 4.4 presents the chi-squares of the full set of analyses.

The selection of the items for Table 4.3 was purposeful, with one item having significant differences by sex (FatherExplain) and one without

sex differences (Father BeLike). The cross-tabulations first make it clear that most of the students in the RYS were not heavily involved in recent delinquency. Only 7% of the girls and 19% of the boys report more than one recent act of delinquency. While those with very low delinquency reported a range of relationships with their fathers, as youth delinquency increased, the strength of the attachment diminished. For example, just under 25% of the girls and 26% of the boys who had committed four or more acts of delinquency indicated that they wanted to be like their fathers in “most” or “every” way. For the measure of “FatherExplains” 15% of girls and 13% of boys report the highest level of attachment to their fathers on this index. Of these highly attached youth, 17% of the girls and 29% of the boys report at least one act of recent delinquency. In comparison, for those reporting the lowest levels of attachment, 29% of the girls and 62% of the boys report at least one act of recent delinquency. Thus, it appears that low levels of attachment on this index are more influential for boys than girls. Indeed, as demonstrated by the chi-square, the relationship between this form of attachment and delinquency for girls is not significant.

As shown on Table 4.4, for boys, nearly every type of social control is significantly related to delinquent offenses in the past year. The only exception is for the involvement indicator of “NotBored.” For the girls, 15 out of the 20 measures of social control are significantly related to recent offending. For girls, attachments to parents are significant, other than having mothers and fathers explain things. School attachments and both measures of commitment are also significant but neither of the measures of peer attachments reach significance. For involvement, the one measure that is not significant is talking with friends. Finally, both forms of belief are significant for girls. Therefore, while it is clear that for boys, the theory as developed and tested by Hirschi works very well, the picture is somewhat less uniform for girls. The majority of the measures of control are significantly related to delinquency for girls, but several forms of social control do not appear to be related. Most notable is the lack of importance of peer attachments for girls. This indicates that the theory as a whole may be a slightly less accurate predictor of delinquency for girls.

Given the differences between the peer attachments and delinquency for boys and girls, I next examined whether peer deviance influences those relationships, and how closely it is associated with self-reported delinquency. The results are shown on Table 4.5. First, as expected, boys are more likely to report having deviant peers than girls. A full 70% of

the girls but only 45% of the boys indicated their friends had never been picked up by the police and 23% of the boys but only 10% of the girls reported having peers picked up four or more times. By itself however, simply having more or less deviant peers does not necessarily influence either a sex gap in offending or assess whether social control is relevant to girls and boys equally.

Thus, the next step is to compare the delinquency of the respondent and their peers. This finds that 85% of girls and 70% of boys who reported no delinquency also reported their peers had never been picked up. This supports the assumption that both boys and girls who are non-deviant have non-deviant friends. The corollary, that highly delinquent youth will have delinquent friends, is not as clear. This seems to work for boys, with 39% of boys who have highly delinquent friends reporting at least two recent acts of delinquency themselves but fewer than 9% of boys who report having no friends picked up by police reporting two or more recent delinquent acts. However, having deviant friends does not automatically lead into deviance. For boys, 32% reporting highly deviant friends still indicated they committed recent delinquent acts. Thus, not all these boys are being pulled into deviance, even if they are in contact with deviant peers. This lack of peer influence is more pronounced for girls. A total of 57% of the girls who reported they had highly deviant peers still indicated they were not themselves involved in any delinquency. Since it is not possible to disentangle causal order with these data, I cannot say whether these girls are resisting the deviance of their friends, or simply choosing not to associate with deviant peers. What I can say is that less than 8% of girls who reported no delinquency themselves reporting having highly deviant peers, compared to 14% of the non-deviant boys. This may indicate that girls "flock" with similar others to a greater extent than boys, or simply reflect the fact that if boys have larger friendship networks than girls, they may have a few more friends who are trouble makers than girls.

The remainder of the analysis of peer influences examines the relationship between peer deviance and attachments to peers. It is important to note that very few youth reported no respect for their friends' opinions regardless of sex or peer deviance. For girls only 4% reported no respect for their best friends' opinions, which was fairly evenly divided across levels of peer deviance (3.8% of those with non-deviant peers and 4.8% of those with highly deviant peers indicating they did not respect their friends). For boys the pattern was similar. Only 8.6% reported not respecting their peers, with 4.7% of the group with non-deviant



peers and 11% of the boys with highly deviant peers indicating lack of respect. For both girls and boys, the highest level of respect was most reported for less deviant peers. For boys, 51% of respondents who indicated the highest level of respect for their peers were for non-deviant peers but only 18% for peers who had been picked up four or more times. For the 197 girls who indicated the strongest level of respect for peers, 75% indicated their peers were not delinquent and less than 10% at the highest deviant level. Thus, highly deviant peers garner less respect, thus indicating the attachments to deviant peers are lower for both boys and girls.

Finally, similar patterns by sex are apparent for whether youth want to be like their best friend. For all the girls, only 27% report the highest level of attachment (wanting to be like best friend), with the vast majority (77%) represented by those who have non-deviant peers. Of girls with the highest attachment on this measure, only 5% indicated that their friends were highly deviant. The findings for boys are similar. Again approximately 27% of the sample reported the highest level of wanting to be like their best friend, with 55% of these cases being in the category of non-deviant friends, and only 13% of the boys reporting high respect for peers, indicating they have peers that have been picked up by police four or more times. While there is clearly much more to be examined in the relationship between peers and juvenile delinquency, the primary conclusion from this analysis is that the importance of peers who are deviant operates in similar ways for boys and girls.

Table 4.6 presents the results of seven separate OLS regressions for each group of social bonds. While it could be argued that even this level of grouping may be problematic due to possible multicollinearity between the included measures, I felt it was useful to focus on each type of bond as a group, or in the case of attachment several key groupings, to determine the relative impacts by sex. To check for the potential for collinearity, I did conduct a correlation analysis and there did not appear to be any concerns of high correlations between items within each of the groupings presented. For example, the belief measures were only correlated at .274 ( $p < .001$ ). There were actually higher correlations across the groups of bonds, such as between the items for supervision by mother and supervision by father (.653,  $p < .001$ ), and for sharing with mother and father (.630,  $p < .001$ ). In addition, the VIF and tolerance levels from collinearity diagnostics indicated no problems. In any model, the lowest tolerance was .54 and the highest VIF 1.8, both well within acceptable levels. The models did include controls for age and race, and these were

occasionally significant. However, there were no consistent patterns and so for the sake of space, they were omitted from the table.

Based on the series of regression analysis on each type of control, three general findings are evident. First, in every model with the full sample, being male significantly increases delinquency even when controlling for the specific bonds. Thus, the process of running separate models to determine whether the processes are similar by sex is warranted. The second broad finding is that in most of the models, the r-square for the boys is higher than the r-square for girls, indicating social controls explain a greater proportion of delinquency for boys. The only exceptions to this is the model for involvement. In this model, the r-square is slightly higher for girls (.076 versus .074). The third general finding is that the bonds identified by Hirschi that predict delinquency of boys, with a few exceptions, also predict delinquency for girls.

Two groups of bonds that require further discussion are the attachments to mothers and to fathers. For both boys and girls, the attachments to mothers that significantly prevent delinquency are virtual supervision and wanting to be like her. Thus, attachments to mothers exert the same prohibitive effect on delinquency for both boys and girls. In contrast, the effects of attachment to father do differ by sex. For girls, only supervision by fathers decreases delinquency, whereas for boys, all the predictors but wanting to be like their dad decrease delinquency. Thus, while girls are predominantly prevented from delinquency through attachments to their same-sex parent, attachments to both parents matters for boys.

The two indicators of attachment to schools are significant for both boys and girls, indicating schools are important for preventing delinquency in a sex-neutral way. However, attachments to peers shows marked differences by sex. While both wanting to be like their best friend and respecting their friend's opinion decreases delinquency for boys, neither of the attachments to peers are significant for girls. Thus the relationship between peer attachments and delinquency is not relevant for girls, at least in these data.

Commitment operates in the same direction for both sexes, with higher aspirations for education and working hard decreasing delinquency. For beliefs, one measure is significant for both sexes (respect for police) but disagreeing that it is OK to get around the law only predicts lowered delinquency for boys.

The results for the regressions with involvement indicate that while involvements are important, they are inconsistent by sex. Less time riding in cars and more time doing homework decreases delinquency for both boys and girls. However, talking to friends is significant for boys but not girls. Spending less time sitting around talking to friends decreases delinquency for boys. This may indicate that when boys are socializing in these ways, they are doing so in circumstances that are not supervised and hence open invitations for delinquency. A quick check did in fact find a correlation between time talking to friends and riding with friends in cars ( $r=.371$ ,  $p<.001$ ) but this relationship also existed for girls ( $r=.381$ ,  $p<.001$ ). So for both sexes, less time spent riding in cars is associated with less time talking with friends. However, since the measure of talking with friends fails to reach significance for girls, this may be an indication that these experiences are actually qualitatively different for boys and girls, and that they occur under different circumstances. Unfortunately, the data do not allow for a more nuanced understanding of the circumstances under which girls and boys are talking with friends. The last form of involvement, how often the respondent is bored, predicted delinquency for girls but not boys. Girls who did indicate boredom was not a problem for them were less likely to report delinquency.

The last column in Table 4.6 presents the calculated z-scores to determine if there are significant differences in the coefficients between boys and girls. This test is based on the formula presented by Pateroster, Brame, Mazerolle, and Piquero (1998) and is expressed as the following:

$$\frac{b_1 - b_2}{\sqrt{se_1^2 + se_2^2}}$$

In the z-score comparison, only eight individual items are significant, indicating that fewer than half the effects of measures of social control on delinquency vary by sex. Most indicators of parental attachment do not vary by sex, with only wanting to be like one's mother and the effects of supervision by father being different by sex. The importance of peers did vary by sex, with respecting the opinion of the respondents' best friend producing a significant negative effect for boys but not girls in the regression model. The final attachment that varied by sex was attachment to schools. While liking school decreased

delinquency for both sexes, the magnitude of the effect was stronger for boys.

For both commitment and belief, all but one of the effects of the indicators of these bonds are statistically different, with the magnitude of the effects being greater for boys than girls. However, it is important to remember that this does not mean these effects are not predictive of girls' delinquency, just that the bonds have more of an impact on boys. Finally, only one of the effects of involvement varied by sex; that of hours spent doing homework. More time spent on homework decreased delinquency for both sexes but the magnitude was nearly double that for boys than girls.

As a final step in my analysis, all measures of social control were included into one model and regressions were performed for both boys and girls (see Table 4.7). While this may obscure individual effects of the controls, as cautioned by Hirschi, it is useful to assess whether this actually occurs, and whether social controls as a whole have similar predictive power for boys' and girls' delinquency. The first clear finding is that Travis was right. Putting the various forms of social control together in one model masks the individual effects. Specifically, in the full model only four measures of social control were significant in the model for girls as opposed to the 11 that were significant in separate models. The only items that retained significance were for wanting to be like their mother, the two involvement measures of riding in cars and doing homework, and the belief that it is not OK to get around the law. With the small number of significant items, it is not surprising that only 14.7% of the variance in girls' recent delinquency is explained. The boys fare somewhat better, with seven of the social control measures remaining significant (as compared to the 16 in the individual models). The form of control that took the biggest hit was attachment, with only sharing with father and liking school reaching significance. The bond of commitment, measured by achievement orientation, the two forms of involvement of riding in car and doing homework, and both forms of belief decrease delinquency for boys, and this model explains a total of 26.3% of the variance. The failure of many of the items in this full model to reach significance indicates that studies must carefully consider the construction of their measures so they are not masking the individual effects of different forms of social control.

**Table 4.7**  
**Full OLS Regression of Effects of Social Controls on Recency by Sex**

Variable	Girls		Boys	
	B	SE	B	SE
<b>Controls</b>				
Constant	2.053***	.245	4.658***	.253
Age	-.028	.016	-.033	.018
AfricanAmerican	-.125*	.055	-.050	.069
<b>Attachment</b>				
M_Supervision	-.086	.048	-.069	.047
M_Share	.017	.035	.070	.041
M_Explain	-.031	.030	-.021	.033
M_BeLike	-.062*	.027	-.051	.030
F_Supervision	-.059	.032	-.073	.040
F_Share	.028	.034	-.112**	.042
F_Explain	.021	.029	.022	.032
F_BeLike	.014	.027	.034	.032
LikeSchool	-.031	.049	-.165**	.055
CareTeachThink	-.035	.044	-.011	.045
BeLikeBF	.049	.041	.018	.048
RespectOpinBF	.049	.036	-.079	.041
<b>Commitment</b>				
EducAspiration	-.009	.018	-.015	.022
AchieveOrient	-.020	.014	-.088***	.017
<b>Involvement</b>				
TalkFriends	.033	.017	-.015	.020
RideCar	-.053**	.017	-.072***	.019
HomeWork	-.045*	.020	-.058*	.023
NotBored	-.059	.031	-.033	.034
<b>Belief</b>				
RespectPolice	-.028	.025	-.141***	.029
OKAroundLaw	-.076**	.025	-.139***	.029
R-Square	.147		.263	
N	719		1175	

\*p<.05. \*\*p<.01. \*\*\*p<.001

### Discussion

This study utilized the RYP data to examine if the processes laid out by Hirschi in his social control theory operate in similar ways for boys and girls. The expectation was not for a perfect match, but that the basic arguments of the theory would be supported. For the most part, this expectation was satisfied.

Attachments to parents and school are important for both girls and boys but there are some same-sex effects of bonds to parents, with delinquency being controlled by attachments to fathers for boys more so than girls. Boys are less likely to engage in delinquency when they have more intimacy with their fathers, regardless if they actually want to be like them or not. Sharing emotions and ideas with their fathers, and having fathers that take the time to explain rules and other things the child does not understand, creates stronger bonds and prevents delinquency. Consistent with nearly every study that examines supervision of youth, girls are more carefully supervised by both parents. However, the type of indirect supervision measured in this study similarly predicts delinquency for both sexes. This may indicate that to bring boys' delinquency down to levels more similar to girls, parents should start treating boys more like girls, sharing thoughts and feelings and demanding more accountability for the movements of their sons.

In much past work in delinquency, peers stand out as a key in either preventing or encouraging delinquency. In this study, the effects of peers are sex-specific. For girls, their bonds to peers have no effect, but for boys both measures of peer attachments are important. One interesting consideration is that girls report a higher mean level of respect for their best friend's opinion. This could be an indication that it is important to consider whether girls have peers who are more worthy of their respect, and presumably less deviant, or that girls seek out the opinions of their friends more frequently than boys. This is somewhat supported in the brief examination of peer deviance and attachments. However, there were many similarities in the attachments boys and girls had for their peers. In his analysis of deviant peers, Hirschi concluded that attachments to parents (specifically fathers in his analysis) override the negative effects of such peers (p. 99), that delinquent boys generally do not have close attachments to each other (p. 159), and that boys with "high stakes in conformity are unlikely to have delinquent friends" (p. 157). In future work, it would be useful to use the RYP to further examine how the effects of attachments to peers on delinquency depend on the

deviance of peers one has, and whether these effects vary by sex. In addition, such an analysis could go beyond examinations of gender differences in peer relationships and delinquency to also assess whether race and class influence how peers matter for the delinquency of youth.

Another sex difference warranting further study is the relative impacts of commitment and belief. While these bonds predict delinquency for both sexes, the magnitudes of the effects are significantly greater for boys. It would be interesting to examine if other types of commitments, such as to career aspirations, work in similar ways. The two measures of belief in the current study focus exclusively on respect of law and local police. Since the boys reported higher delinquency, their beliefs about the law and police may have been influenced by their interactions with the legal system to a greater extent than those of the girls. In addition, there are a wider range of items that could be argued to be related to belief in conventional norms in the RYP. These include items such as thinking that "most things that people call delinquency don't really hurt anyone" or that "suckers deserve to be taken advantage of" as well as leaving one's future to fate as opposed to the belief in the value of hard work. Hirschi used some of these as a comparative test of the theories of neutralization and subculture of poverty in his analysis, but some research has identified many of these items as indicative of self-control. Such measures not only indicate a belief in the value or work, or following the rules, but tap into self-centeredness, insensitivity to others, and willingness to bend or break rules when they interfere with immediate gratifications (e.g., Gibbs & Giever, 1995; Nofziger, 2008). Thus, it would be interesting to pursue whether a more complex understanding of commitments, beliefs, and potentially self-control within the RYP differentially predict delinquency for boys and girls.

One final set of findings indicates an important avenue for preventing delinquency in both sexes, but particularly with boys. Attachments to school and doing homework negatively affected delinquency for both boys and girls, but the strength of these relationships was stronger for boys. In fact, even in the full model that controlled for the effects of every other measure of social control, spending more time doing homework and liking school still remained significant for boys. Thus, finding ways to engage boys who are at risk for delinquency in school activities is a crucial piece of preventing problem behavior.

In a strict sense, this analysis shows social control theory is a better explanation for the delinquency of boys than girls. However, this does not eliminate the theory from being generalized to girls.

Most of the same measures of social bonds significantly predicted girls' and boys' delinquency, but the effects, and predictive power of the models, were higher for boys. Given that the mean levels of controls were higher for girls, this indicates that if we are successful in creating greater bonds with boys, their delinquency would be considerably reduced.

### Conclusion

This study shows that the key bonds of attachment, involvement, commitment, and belief, with very minor exceptions, operate to predict the delinquency of both boys and girls, lending additional support for the claim that social control theory is generalizable to both sexes. In addition, it finds that almost every measure of social control is higher for girls, implying that the sex gap in offending can at least be partially explained by this theory. This study is not an attempt at any breakthrough methodology, or groundbreaking advancement of social control theory. It is at heart a replication of the original work that established Hirschi's theory. By providing a long-overdue return to the girls in the Richmond data, this study brings us back to the start and confirms that social control theory should continue to hold a dominant position in the field of criminology.

### Note

- 1 Technically, since he was writing in the late 1960s, he used the terms Negro and Non-Negro but I have adopted Black and White in my analysis.

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