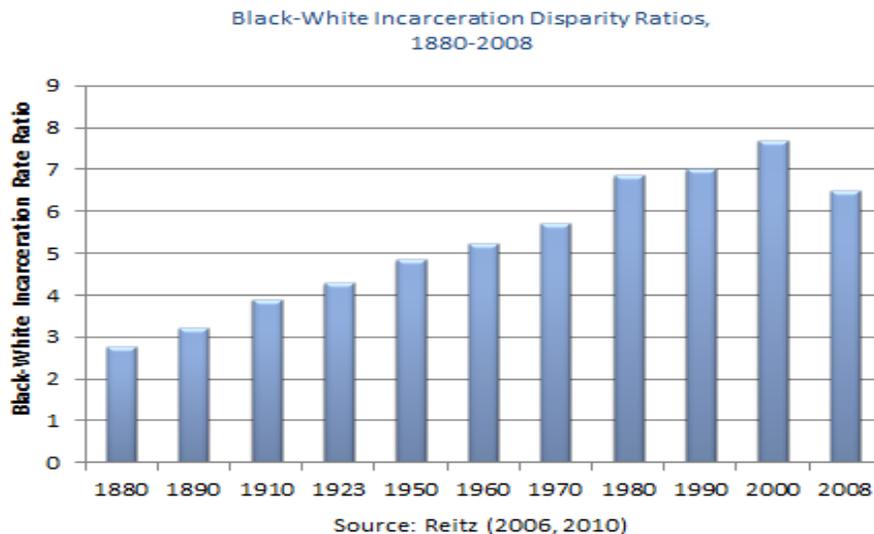


**Theory Comprehensive Exam
Fall 2012**

Instructions: For this exam, you are to select any four (4) of the following questions. All responses are to be turned in at 4:00 p.m. You may contact Margarita if you have any problem requiring faculty attention.

1. There is a growing literature seeking to understand the victim/offender overlap. Which theories or theoretical framework best explain(s) the above association? Please cite relevant literature and studies.

2. Aggregate-level statistics show substantial racial disparities in rates of imprisonment. For example, consider the following figure, which shows black-white incarceration ratios since the late 1800s. Describe the theoretical perspective(s) that best explain this disparity.



3. Choose any **one** of the following theories of crime/delinquency and discuss whether there has been adequate testing of the theoretical propositions to bolster the claim that theoretical progress has been made: differential association/social learning, social control, self-control, social disorganization, Merton's strain theory. In your discussion please give a definition of what you mean by theoretical progress. Discuss how and the extent to which the theory you choose has been advanced (or perhaps hindered) by the methods and data available to researchers.

4. Criminological theories have been advanced to explain both stability and change in antisocial behaviors over the entire life course. Present a detailed discussion of the research examining behavioral stability and change as it relates to criminological research. Then, provide two explanations from the literature that can be used to explain behavioral stability and/or behavioral change.

5. The nature versus nurture debate has occupied a central position in explanations of human behavior in general. Review the evidence related to this debate as it applies to criminal behavior. Be sure to discuss contemporary research that focuses on the intersection of genetic and environmental factors.

6. Deterrence and labeling offer contradictory expectations concerning the potential effects of legal punishment. Briefly describe the development and principal contributions to those expectations and assess the current state of empirical evidence in relation to them.

7. Social disorganization has been an important and seemingly “timeless” concept informing criminological inquiry. Discuss the origins and uses of the concept up to the present and briefly assess its current empirical status.

8. Tittle (1995:35) has critiqued criminological theories as being too simple, in part because too often they fail to “identify the contingencies that influence the strength with which the causal processes operate.” In short, they fail to identify conditioning (“moderating”) factors.

Identify a theory that matches this description, and show how it could be amended to better incorporate conditional effects. Briefly review the basic arguments of the theory and the overall empirical evidence, but give primary attention to (a) amending the theory to identify key conditioning factors, (b) discussing the empirical evidence supporting your suggested changes, and (c) considering any theoretical limitations to your proposed changes.

9. Criminological theory has long considered the link between immigration and crime. Show how theoretical positions on this issue have evolved over time, and systematically describe the relevant empirical evidence and conclusions.

10. A debate has emerged over whether or not the gender gap in violence has declined during the past three decades in America. Describe the theoretical perspectives that have been offered for why the gender gap may have declined during this period. Next, outline the contours of the debate about the empirical evidence on the matter, drawing a conclusion about whether the gender gap has or has not changed significantly.