

Theory Comprehensive Exam
Spring 2007

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. Several faculty members have been assigned to monitor the exam and their designated hours are listed below. You may contact them in their offices if you have any problems requiring faculty attention.

8:00 - 10:00 am	Bruce Bullington	Room 316 until 8:30, then Conference Room
10:00 - 12:00 pm	Ted Chiricos	Conference Room
12:00 - 2:00 pm	Carter Hay	Room 320
2:00 - 4:00 pm	Kevin Beaver	Room 322A

1. Discuss the development of strain theory from Merton to Agnew. In doing so, be sure to explicate the main propositions of each theory. How did Agnew expand and build off of Merton's work? Discuss the empirical literature testing both of these theories. Are they supported empirically?
2. The feminist critique of criminological theorizing claims that extant theory is male-centered and generally does not account for female experiences (including participation in crime and delinquency). Briefly summarize the main points of the critique; assess the empirical evidence around these claims; identify and evaluate a "new" theory that purports to account for gender differences in crime and/or delinquency. What are the implications of your assessment for future theory and research?
3. The United States experienced dramatic reductions in crime rates during the 1990s. Describe the theory or theories that are most useful for explaining this drop. Then, review the empirical research that has been conducted on this issue and assess the extent to which it supports the relevant theories.
4. The well known Chicago School of sociology thrived during the period of 1915-1935 or so and then slowly lost its prominence as other sociology departments came to the forefront of the discipline.. What were the unique contributions of the Chicago School researchers and theorists to our understanding of crime and crime related issues? To what extent have these ideas informed what we do and how we approach criminal behavior – that is, what were the lasting contributions of these early Chicago academics?
5. Social threat / racial threat explanations of social control have achieved increased attention in recent years. Discuss the roots of that perspective, its more recent formulations and some of the empirical evidence that relates to it.

6. An important debate in criminology relates to whether individual involvement in crime and deviance is best explained by a *social causation* or *social selection* (i.e. *latent trait*) model. Discuss this debate by (a) describing the two positions thoroughly; (b) reviewing the recent research that has sought to examine the merits of the two models and © indicating whether you feel that one position is more intellectually defensible than the other (being sure to thoroughly discuss the rationale for this).

7. Social class has been one of the central variables in criminology for over 75 years. Discuss two theories that are distinctly class-based theories of crime and delinquency and two theories that do not need to employ social class as an important component of the theory. Defend the role of social class in either of these groups based on the empirical status of social class in the criminology literature.

8. While crime rates continue to drop in the United States, rates of incarceration continue to rise. What best explains the latter phenomenon.

9. Just last week, three young boys were arrested for taunting and beating a homeless man with a brick in Florida. One of the boys was 17, and two were aged 10. According to the account of the crime, the homeless man was simply walking through a neighborhood when the boys appeared on their bikes and began taunting him, ultimately attacking and severely injuring him. Neighbors reported that these boys were known locally as “terrors.” The mother of one of the 10 year old boys told police officers that she was doing all that she could and that he wasn’t really a bad boy.

Using this case as an example, describe how contemporary juvenile crime theorists might go about explaining these events. Specifically choose at least two current theories that might be used to account for the involvement of ten year old boys in the commission of such a serious crime and review some of the most salient research evidence that would support your choice.