

**Theory Comprehensive Exam
Spring 2008**

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 problem requiring faculty attention.

8:00am – 12:00pm	Sarah Bacon	Room 322
12:00pm – 2:00pm	Ted Chiricos	Conference Room
2:00pm – 4:00pm	Eric Stewart	Room 310

1. Labeling theory was once declared dormant. There has been something of a re-birth of interest in the perspective. Discuss the intellectual origins of labeling, some of the major conceptual contributions (and contributors) to its development and the state of empirical evidence in relation to this approach.
2. Discuss sex differences in crime by describing the extent of those differences and being sure to note how the magnitude of differences may vary according to such things as the data source and the type of crime being considered (and other factors that you see as important). Then identify the theory or theories that best explain crime differences between males and females. Be sure to provide a detailed description of empirical research that bears on this issue.
3. Assess the empirical evidence regarding racial threat and formal social control. What are some ways researchers have attempted to test this hypothesis and in what ways is the threat hypothesis supported or not supported? What limitations do you see in the existing empirical literature and what directions would you suggest for future research?
4. Criminologists have offered both structural and cultural explanations for the uneven social distribution of homicide in the U.S. Discuss the thinking behind and the evidence for these two types of explanation. Do you find one of them more persuasive than the other? Are structural and cultural explanations fundamentally incompatible? If so, please explain. If not, how might they be usefully combined?
5. There are at least two strategies for theory development: theoretical integration and theoretical competition. Using Hirschi's (1969) theory of social control as your example in which you adopt one of the following two strategies:
 - A. Argue that the theory of social control is inadequate and should be integrated with another theory to improve its explanatory power. Which other theory would you integrate it with and why do you think this integration would be promising?

OR

B. Argue that Hirschi's theory is fully developed, conceptually clear and empirically promising and that integration with another theory would only detract from it. Pick an example of another theory to illustrate your thinking on this point.

6. The United States experienced dramatic reductions in crime rates during the 1990s. Describe the theory or theories (not just the variables) 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.

7. In 1987, Wilbanks declared that racism in the US criminal justice system was a "myth." Discuss the last 20 years of research on this issue. Does the empirical research support Wilbanks' claim. Please cite empirical evidence to support your answer.

8. The relationship between social class and crime has been a source of considerable debate within the discipline. Describe the contours of the debate and assess the state of evidence in this regard. Then describe what you consider to be the most useful theoretical perspectives that might be used to make sense of what is known about that relationship.