

**Theory Comprehensive Exam  
Spring 2014**

**Instructions:** For this exam, please select any four (4) of the following questions. All responses are to be turned in no later than 4:00 p.m. You may contact Margarita if you have any problems requiring faculty attention.

1. Please assess the empirical evidence regarding social/racial threat and social control. In your discussion address each of the following questions. How have researchers attempted to test the social/racial threat hypothesis in the social control literature and in what ways is it supported and not supported? What limitations do you see in the existing empirical literature and what directions would you suggest for the future?
2. Nagin and Paternoster (1991) brought attention to the distinction between *persistent heterogeneity* and *state dependence* approaches to explaining crime over the life course. Discuss these two approaches, identifying the important theoretical perspectives to which they are connected. Then discuss empirical evidence that evaluates the two approaches.
3. Biosocial research has underscored the role of non-shared environmental influences on crime and delinquency. Discuss what is meant by the non-shared environment and how it differs from the shared environment. Then discuss the literature bearing on the influence of the non-shared environment versus the shared environment. Finally, discuss the various ways that the non-shared environment could be integrated into criminological theory and research.
4. Imprisonment has been tied to several adverse life outcomes. Identify two such outcomes, tracing the theoretical arguments for how imprisonment can be detrimental and summarizing the state of existing empirical knowledge relevant to those arguments.
5. Choose TWO of the following topics in the field of criminology and discuss a central debate within that area. Make sure to cite the major theoretical and empirical research to support your answer
  - A. Peers and Crime
  - B. Race and Crime
  - C. Family and Crime
  - D. Age and Crime
6. Discuss the ways that theory and the real world are related and provide specific examples of each.
7. Empirical research is at the heart of criminological research. At the same time, criminology rarely falsifies a theory based on empirical data, though theories and methods are sometimes attacked on ideological grounds. Identify one theory that should have been discarded because of empirical-based findings based on a body of quantitative research. Defend your position by discussing and citing these empirical studies that show no support for the theory.

8. Many explanations have been offered to explain reductions in U.S. crime rates since the 1990s. However, these explanations generally have not made significant use of theory. They have instead emphasized single variables or a small set of variables that are treated in isolation from theory.

For this question, describe the relevant trends in U.S. crime rates and then use a prominent criminological theory to explain these trends. Last, discuss empirical research that is relevant to the theoretical arguments you have made

9. Several neighborhoods in a depressed section of Miami, Florida have been experiencing a rash of robberies, assaults and homicides. These crimes have drawn attention from news media, and the mayor is very concerned. You have been asked to advise the mayor about the factors that lead to reduced crime rates. Include in your discussion, the role of collective efficacy in reducing crime. In what way has this factor been used to explain crime reduction across collectivities. Be certain to use empirical research in your discussion.