

**Theory Comprehensive Exam  
Spring 2015**

**Instructions:** For this exam, you are to select any four (4) of the following questions. All are 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. One of the fastest growing bodies of research concerned with criminal justice controls is informed by the perspective that is variably called “social threat,” “racial threat,” or “minority threat.” Discuss the theoretical origins of that perspective and describe the kinds of research that has been undertaken in relation to it.
2. What are some of the most important theoretical approaches that have been taken to explain intimate partner violence (IPV)? Also, assess the level of empirical support that may exist in relation to those approaches.
3. What is the best theoretical explanation for criminal desistance? Systematically describe this theory, the relevant empirical evidence, and the key issues to be addressed in future research.
4. Select one of the following topics and discuss the major developments and their specific conceptual and/or theoretical contributions. Assess the merits and shortcomings of these developments in furthering the field of criminology. In addition, please discuss what future developments you believe would be most fruitful.
  - A) Strain theory
  - B) Control theories
  - C) Genetics, IQ and crime
5. Self-selection into environments represents a serious threat to research and theory that focuses on the causal role that environments play in the etiology of crime and delinquency. Discuss what is meant by self-selection and explain how it threatens claims of environmental causality. Identify and explain at least two selection factors that are often overlooked in criminological research. Lastly, describe a study that could be implemented that takes into account these selection factors.
6. Though the persistent increase in rates of incarceration observed since the early 1970s has stalled, many communities are experiencing unprecedented numbers of returning ex-prisoners. Drawing from the theoretical literature, describe how large influxes of released prisoners could affect community crime levels. Next, summarize what the empirical research has revealed about the impact of released prisoners on community crime rates.
7. There is now an emerging consensus that many nations across the globe have experienced significant reductions in lethal violence since the early-to-late 1990s. Drawing from the theoretical and empirical literature, why might this be the case?
8. Describe the evolution of social disorganization theory.
9. A substantial amount of empirical research has focused on understanding the relationship between crime and the demographic correlates of age, gender, social class, and race/ethnicity. Choose two of these correlates of crime and discuss the empirical evidence examining the relationship between them and various types of crime and delinquency. What are some unanswered questions in the literature and how could we go about pursuing answering these questions?