

Theory Comprehensive Exam
Fall 2017

Day One

Instructions: For this section of the exam, answer any two (2) of the following four questions. If more than two answers are submitted, the committee will read only the first two and the third will not be counted in any way. All responses are to be turned in no later than 12:45.

Once a student takes possession of the examination, this will be regarded as an attempt to take the exam regardless of whether the student completes the exam, hands in any answers, or remains for the full exam period.

1. Travis Hirschi has advanced two influential criminological theories. Discuss each of his theories in detail. Are the theories supported by empirical research?
2. Discuss two theoretical interpretations of the link between formal legal sanctions and offending. In doing so, specify the origins of those interpretations as well as the distinctive mechanisms by which they are presumed to operate. Which of these interpretations is better supported by empirical evidence?
3. The bulk of victimization research is conducted at the individual level and demonstrates that the distribution of violent victimization varies across gender, age, marital status, race, ethnicity, and income. Using the empirical literature, summarize the current knowledge of how an individual's risk differs based on these individual characteristics. In addition, please provide a discussion about the limitations of work that is restricted to the individual level, and how these limitations affect our knowledge of victimization.
4. The relationship between immigration and crime is frequently described by claims-makers as strongly positive, but the increasing weight of evidence contradicts that assertion. What theoretical perspectives from criminology best explain the pattern of claims on the one hand and the pattern of evidence on the other? Cite any relevant research that helps to support your argument.

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Day Two

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1. Why is inequality important to the study of the race-crime relationship? What empirical evidence exists to suggest that inequality is a relevant factor in understanding the race-crime relationship? In your discussion, please discuss and cite relevant research.
2. 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.
3. What makes a “general theory of crime” “general”? Why is it reasonable to anticipate that one theory could equally explain all types of crime? If a theory cannot explain all types of crime equally well, then on what basis can we view the theory as “general”?
4. Biosocial research has underscored the role of nonshared environmental influences on crime and delinquency. Discuss what is meant by the nonshared environment and how it differs from the shared environment. Then discuss the literature bearing on the influence of the nonshared environment versus the shared environment. Finally, discuss the various ways that the nonshared environment could be integrated into criminological theory and research.