

Theory Comprehensive Exam  
Fall 2018

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. Certainty, celerity, and severity are all thought to contribute to specific deterrence in some way. (1) Is it possible to test each dimension separately? (2) If so, how? If not, why not? (3) Assume that they must be modeled simultaneously—what are the implications of this for conceptualizing and testing specific deterrence?
2. Criminologists have long recognized that crime varies in important ways both across and within communities. Present a detailed discussion of the research examining community factors and crime. Then, provide three theoretical explanations from the literature that can be used to explain the community and crime link. Finally, consider areas where future theoretical accounts can improve explanations of community dynamics on criminal behavior.
3. The nature versus nurture debate has occupied a central position in explanations of human behavior in general. Review the evidence related to this debate as it applies to criminal behavior. Be sure to discuss contemporary research that focuses on the intersection of genetic and environmental factors.
4. Compare and contrast the black criminal threat, political threat, and economic threat models in the formation of law and its application in the criminal justice system. Include in your answer a discussion of the major empirical works that you believe best represent each of the models and evaluate the relative validity of the models.

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Day Two

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1. In her 2011 Sutherland Address, Professor Ruth Peterson argued that race and ethnicity should occupy a centralized position in the study of crime and justice. Do you agree or disagree with Professor Peterson's argument? Explain and justify your position based on theoretical and empirical research.
2. Much criminological research examines the effects on crime of pivotal life events. Pick two of the events below and address each thoroughly by describing the relevant theoretical arguments and the state of empirical evidence.
  - a. marriage
  - b. formal criminal justice system involvement
  - c. criminal or physical victimization
3. Describe a theory of "procedural justice." How does procedural justice differ from other "types" of justice? What empirical support, if any, exists to support the theory? What potential implications does the theory have for policy?
4. Most theories say nothing about the functional form of an X-Y relationship. Researchers typically assume that a relationship is linear. However, the relationship might be curvilinear. Select a theory and describe how the theory anticipates a linear  $X \rightarrow Y$  effect. Next, identify and describe a potential curvilinear effect that involves the  $X \rightarrow Y$  relationship. What relevance, if any, would evidence of a curvilinear effect have for the theory?