

Florida State University College of Criminology and Criminal Justice
Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination in Theory, Fall, 2019
Day One of the Exam, November 4, 2019: 8:30am to 12:45pm

INSTRUCTIONS

Answer two questions. Please notify the proctor when you are finished. Please note: Once a student takes possession of the examination at the start of the exam period, this constitutes an attempt at taking the exam, regardless of whether the student completes the exam, hands in any answers, or remains for the full exam period.

1. Select two substantive issues from the following topics as they relate to crime: criminal careers, gender, race/ethnicity, or age. Identify and describe a point of controversy in the literature pertaining to your choice. Discuss any relevant research, debates, varying theoretical perspective(s) and how the controversy could be resolved (if you think it could).
2. Much research indicates that having delinquent friends is one of the strongest correlates of offending. However, questions about measurement, causal order, and spuriousness have introduced doubts about whether this relationship reflects causality. Describe the theoretical arguments that present delinquent friends as a cause of offending, and then assess the empirical evidence. What ultimate conclusions should be reached?
3. Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are receiving significant attention in research on the causes of offending. Describe this research and elaborate on the criminological theory that you see as most useful for explaining this relationship. Then, describe the empirical evidence that could conclusively demonstrate this theory's success in explaining a causal effect of ACEs on offending.
4. The United States has the highest incarceration rate among industrialized democracies in the world. What two theoretical perspectives might best account for this and what empirical support might warrant your support?

Florida State University College of Criminology and Criminal Justice
Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination in Theory, Fall, 2019
Day Two of the Exam, November 5, 2019: 8:30am to 12:45pm

INSTRUCTIONS

Answer two questions. Please notify the proctor when you are finished. Please note: Once a student takes possession of the examination at the start of the exam period, this constitutes an attempt at taking the exam, regardless of whether the student completes the exam, hands in any answers, or remains for the full exam period.

1. Scholars have well documented that violent crime rates tend to be higher in neighborhoods with higher levels of poverty. Despite more than a century of research, the true meaning of this association remains ambiguous. Summarize three theoretical interpretations of the link between neighborhood poverty rates and levels of violence. In your discussion, please assess which of these interpretations has the most support in the empirical literature.

2. Describe a theory that you believe has the greatest implications for policy. Defend your selection, including reference to empirical research, and show how it is superior to at least two other theories in its policy relevance. Explicitly identify how the theoretical underpinnings of your theory provide guidance to those who must design policies.

3. Most criminological research does not take into account genetic effects. There is a body of research outside of criminology that has addressed this issue for more than a century. What has this line of research revealed about the importance of environmental and genetic influences? What do these findings mean for criminological research, particularly for criminological research that uses standard social science methodologies (SSSMs)? Be sure to discuss the assumptions and the shortcomings of SSSMs as it relates to criminological research.

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.