

Theory Comprehensive Exam
Spring 2019

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. There is a sizeable body of scholarship exploring the victim/offender overlap. Discuss two theories that have been used to explain the overlap. Which theoretical approach is most effective for understanding the overlap? In your response, please cite relevant empirical research.

2. What two books have most informed your awareness of and appreciation for criminological theories and why? For each one: What does the book argue? What evidence does it present to support the argument? What makes the book important?

3. (a) Identify and discuss at least three theories, or lines of theorizing, that have been influenced by ideology. (b) What are several ways in which ideology harms scientific progress? (c) What are several ways in which it may help scientific progress?

4. Describe the current state of labeling theory, including the relevant empirical evidence. Be sure to emphasize the definition of labeling, the factors that should increase exposure to labeling, the mechanisms through which labeling should affect crime, and the factors that may condition its effects on crime.

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Day Two

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1. Falsification is key to the advancement of science and yet criminology rarely falsifies and discards theories. Discuss two theories that, based on empirical evidence, should have been discarded but have not. Support your position by citing and discussing the empirical evidence bearing on these theories.
2. Does the available criminological evidence support a conflict interpretation in the application of formal social control? Why or why not? What limitations in the empirical evidence must be addressed in order to answer these questions more conclusively? Be sure to cite relevant empirical research.
3. What explains (1) the extraordinary disproportionality of male involvement in crime and (2) the apparent narrowing of the gender gap in this regard in the past twenty years? And what evidence supports your choice of explanations?
4. Discuss the role of the brain/neuropsychological functioning in relation to serious violent behavior. Then discuss how research from the neurosciences could be integrated into at least two existing criminological theories.