**Florida State University College of Criminology and Criminal Justice**

**Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination in Theory, Spring 2024**

**Day One of the Exam, April 1st: 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. Involvement in crime tends to increase in early adolescence, peak in middle to late adolescence, and then fall steadily thereafter, but this generalization requires clarification and leaves much unaddressed. Please fill in the gaps by providing a comprehensive and clear assessment of the empirical research in this area, being sure to address relevant theoretical perspectives.
2. Describe developments in social disorganization theory, from its original articulation to the present. Discuss and evaluate the state of research on the theory. Identify an important direction for advancing research on the theory and explain your reasoning.
3. Describe the history, theoretical arguments, and state of empirical evidence for the social/racial threat perspective.
4. Discuss the development of strain theory from Merton to Agnew. In doing so, be sure to explicate the main propositions of each theory. How did Agnew expand and build off Merton’s work? Discuss the empirical literature testing both of these theories. Are they supported empirically?

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**Day Two of the Exam, April 2nd: 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. Prior offending tends to be the strongest predictor of future offending. Discuss both the persistent heterogeneity and state dependence approaches to explaining this pattern, along with the relevant empirical evidence.
2. Young, black, poor, urban males are disproportionately at a greater risk for violent offending and victimization relative to other subgroups in the population. Choose two different theoretical perspectives in criminology and explain how each would attempt to account for this pattern. Evaluate how well each of those positions is supported by recent research.
3. Warr argued that there are three criminological facts that we can state with relative certainty: (1) criminal behavior is disproportionately committed by young people; (2) criminal behavior is more common among men than among women; and (3) criminal behavior is often committed with peers (i.e., with co-offenders). Choose a theoretical perspective in criminology and explain how it would account for each of these patterns, supporting your argument with available evidence and recent research.
4. Deterrence theory and labeling theory offer two contradictory positions on the effects of legal punishment. Please describe these two positions, and for each one, systematically review the empirical evidence and assess which theory most accurately captures the effects of legal punishments on future criminal behavior.