

**Doctoral Qualifying Examination
Theory Exam
Department of Criminology**

Fall 2019

Exam Rules:

The student's personal items will be kept in the office of the graduate director during the exam. The student will be provided with a writing pad, computer, pen, and exam.

During the examination period of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., the student must not utilize any outside resources. The student may not confer with any people or refer to any books, articles, etc. Students are on their honor to produce their own work on their exams. The University subscribes to a document-checking service that can be used to assess plagiarism; the Department of Criminology reserves the right to submit any examination to this service for evaluation.

Responses to exam questions may be typed; student should double-space and use a 12-point font. Students who use computers will save their exam as a single MS Word document to the notebook computer provided by the Graduate Director. **Clearly indicate which questions you are answering by providing the question number or quoting the text of the question on the exam. Indicate at the top or bottom of the exam how many pages in total your document is.**

Students may not withdraw from the exam after receiving it; if the student does not complete and turn in the exam, it will be recorded as a failure. Exam responses must be submitted to the Exam Proctor by 5 p.m.

Security: The exam computers have been stripped. The computers were checked before the exam. All non-program files were removed, Internet access has been blocked, and the computers were locked up until exam time.

After the exam, the computers will be checked to determine if any flash drive has been inserted or if the internet has been accessed. **DO NOT ACCESS THE INTERNET FOR ANY REASON.** The Graduate Director will have visual/audio contact with the room for the exam period.

There is a single Word file on the desktop with the exam. Write your answers IN that document. You, your computer and your exam have a number that identifies you. Do not change the name of the file; do not include your name IN the exam file.

If you would like to print your exam, bring your computer to the Graduate Director or Graduate Coordinator.

When you are finished, submit your completed exam to the Graduate Director or Graduate Coordinator.

Exam Instructions: You must pick at 4 questions from the 8 questions listed below. In total, you will answer 4 questions. For each, write an essay the scientific style of which resembles that found in scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles. Students should provide in-text citations to the best of their abilities; a reference list is not required. There are no minimum or maximum page limits.

- 1) Rational choice theory suggests that individuals are influenced by the costs and benefits of a choice. Yet, research on rational choice theory has primarily focused on the *risks* or *costs* of offending with very little attention to the rewards of crime. Why do you think this is? Explain by drawing on the theory's historical development and components. Then, describe existing evidence which suggests that individuals are influenced by the rewards of crime. Finally, do you think this issue has limited the usefulness of rational choice as a theory of offending? Explain.
- 2) Research has found that a small number of juvenile and adult and offenders account for over 50% of crime attributable to a birth cohort and 80% of the violent crime. Pick which theory you think best explains this relationship and write an essay in which you discuss and apply that specific theoretical explanation for these "chronic" offenders. Be sure to fully explain the theory, describe the theoretical foundations of your theory, and identify the empirical literature that supports your use of this theory to explain chronic delinquent and criminal behavior.
- 3) Many criminological theories can be drawn on to make a hypothesis surrounding the relationship between work and crime. Choose three criminological theories to help you demonstrate how theory can be used to propose alternative relationships (competing hypotheses). First, choose a theory that most strongly suggests a negative association between work and crime (those who are employed commit less crime). Second, choose a theory that can be used to suggest no causal association because work and crime (a spurious relationship – work has no effect). Third, choose a theory that can be used to suggest a positive association between work and crime (working increases crime). Strong answers will demonstrate detailed understanding of each theory's propositions, assumptions, and empirical evidence.
- 4) General theories of crime tend to ignore the importance of crime correlates widely reported in the criminological research literature. More specifically, general theories do not address, nor have they been modified to examine, variations in crime that related to gender, race or social class – three factors which have been established as major crime correlates. Examine how race, class and gender might be incorporated into one of the general theories listed below, why this would be an improvement, and whether or not significant theoretical refinements might be required. Moreover, if such theoretical modifications are needed, can it still be claimed that the theory is a general theory? (Fall 2015, Fall 2017, Spring, 2019)
 - General Strain Theory
 - Self Control (Hirschi and Gottfredson or Grasmick)
 - Social Learning
 - Developmental Criminology
 - Life Course
 - Control balance

- 5) Robert Sampson and Lydia Bean (2006) ["Cultural mechanisms and killing fields: A revised theory of community-level racial inequality," in *The many colors of crime: Inequalities of race, ethnicity and crime in America*] argued that the field of criminology is rediscovering the relevance of (sub)culture for offending. In doing so, they reviewed classic ("first generation") (sub)cultural theories, the development of "second generation" (sub)cultural theories, and identify promising directions for "third generation" theories. First, identify and describe the core components of prominent subcultural theories below. Second, evaluate the empirical evidence for each of these theories. Based on this evidence, discuss the relative merits of cultural theories in criminology and how these theories may benefit from refinement and/or future research (i.e., "where do we go from here?").
- Albert K. Cohen (1955)
 - Walter B. Miller (1958)
 - Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin (1960)
 - Elijah Anderson (1999)
- 6) A growing body of research suggests that genetic factors play an important role in the etiology of criminal behavior. Briefly summarize what we have learned to-date about the link between genes and crime, describe the theoretical processes thought to explain this link, and discuss the implications of the existing empirical evidence for individual-level theories that omit genetic differences.
- 7) Some criminologists have argued that criminological theories should not be integrated because the theories being integrated are based on opposing assumptions, while others have argued that theory integration is essential for the betterment of the field. You have been appointed by the President of the American Society of Criminology to prepare an essay investigating the issue. In this essay you have been asked to (1) discuss the main arguments given by criminologists for and against theory integration; and (2) write up your opinion of whether criminologists should integrate theories or not. In doing so, provide evidence based on theoretical works to support your opinion.
- 8) The debate over gun violence in the United States has been ongoing for years and once again is a main issue in the political arena. In particular, debate has surrounded how to best prevent mass shootings in schools. Identify and apply two theoretical perspectives that you think best explain mass shootings. Be sure to fully explain the theories, describe the theoretical foundations of these theories, and identify any empirical literature that supports your use of these theories. Based on the theories you propose, provide policy and/or program recommendations to reduce gun violence in schools.