

**Doctoral Qualifying Examination
Department of Criminology
Fall 2012**

Theories of Crime

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, grading information, and exam.

During the examination period from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, 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.¹ Students may hand write their exams; the exams will be typed up by a staff person and the committee will receive both the typed and hand-written copies. 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 graduate director by 5 p.m.

There is a single Word file on the desktop with the exam. Write your answers IN that document (which includes the exam questions). 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. You may print to the printer in SOC 351.

When you are done. Bring the computer and cord to me in my office.

Security: The computers have been stripped. After the fact, 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.** I will have visual/audio contact with the room for the exam period.

Pick any four of the following nine questions. For each, write an essay the scientific style of which resembles that found in scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles. Provide in-text citations to the best of your ability; a reference list is not required. There are no minimum or maximum page limits. Be sure to consider the grading rubric as you write your responses.

- 1) Pick a theory that you think can explain the crime drop that started in the early 1990s and continues to this day. Describe that theory and set forth your arguments for how this theory accounts for this crime trend. Additionally, report on what this theory would predict about crime trends as a result of the economic downturn starting in 2008.

¹ The exam computers are checked before the exam. All non-program files are removed, Internet access is blocked, and the computers are locked up until exam time. After the exam, software is used to detect use of USB ports.

- 2) Theories of criminality have been faulted on the basis that they appear to have little to do with many forms of white-collar and corporate criminality. Using examples of individual white-collar offending and organizational lawbreaking: 1) Explain which theories best account for these forms of crime; and 2) Which major theories are most lacking and in which ways? Be sure to delineate the basic tenets of the theories you discuss, what the theory is and is not able to explain, and your own assessment of the theory as it relates to white-collar and corporate criminality.
- 3) Use theory to explain the mass looting and violence following Hurricane Katrina. Identify the elements (i.e., concepts and propositions) connected to the theory, as well as what the theory would predict in terms of empirical findings. Finally, discuss the limitations of the theory to explain the post-Katrina crime.
- 4) Travis Hirschi, Robert Agnew, and Robert Sampson were stranded together in an airport one evening (probably JFK in New York). They gathered in the coffee shop around a table and the conversation turned quickly to a discussion of the particularly high violent crime rate in Chicago. Each individual shared how he explains this phenomenon and supported his own arguments with empirical evidence. As the coffee flowed, the discussion became ever more animated. Fortunately enough, you were also stranded in the airport, were seated at the adjacent table, and were able to overhear the entire discussion. Laptop ever at-the-ready, you captured the conversation. Please describe it here, to the best of your recollection.
- 5) Select one of the following types of crimes: intimate partner violence, serious and violent juvenile offending, drug offending, white-collar crime, or homicide. Choose one criminological theory that you believe best explains the type of crime you selected and discuss why you consider it to be the best explanation. Illustrate in detail how the theory you selected accounts for this crime and cite relevant research that supports your argument. Identify at least two weaknesses in your theory.
- 6) Developmental/life-course criminology has witnessed substantial growth in recent years. Two of the more recognized theoretical frameworks are that of Moffitt (1993) and Sampson and Laub (1993). Specifically, Moffitt (1993) has provided a typology where she describes adolescent-limited and life-course-persistent offenders. Comparatively, Sampson and Laub (1993) have proposed an age-graded theory of informal social control. For this essay, (a) discuss the central propositions of each of the two theoretical frameworks, (b) highlight the distinctions between the two, (c) review the evidence in support of or against their central propositions, and (d) indicate which one of these theoretical frameworks you think is most promising as an explanation for crime and explain why.

Moffitt, T.E. (1993). Adolescent-limited and life-course-persistent antisocial behavior: A developmental taxonomy. *Psychological Review*, 100, 674-701.

Sampson, R.J., & Laub, J. (1993). *Crime in the making: Pathways and turning points through life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- 7) Criminology theorizing is criticized for being male-centered and unable to account for female experiences (including participation in crime and delinquency). Briefly summarize the main points of this critique, assess the empirical evidence around these claims, and describe and evaluate one

theory in particular that purports to account for gender similarities and/or differences in crime. Discuss the implications of your evaluation for future theory and research.

- 8) There is now a sizable literature seeking to understand the victim/offender overlap. Which theoretical framework(s) best explain(s) the above association? Please cite relevant literature and research. Identify and discuss at least one area where the framework you selected has difficulty or otherwise falls short in accounting for the overlap between offending and victimization.
- 9) Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) self-control theory (and Hirschi's 2004 revised version of self-control theory) and Akers (1973) social learning theory are classic criminological theories. Describe the similarities and differences between these two theories (including Hirschi's 2004 revised self-control theory) with regard to how they would explain crime and delinquency. In addition, make an argument whether or not these theories could be integrated, and if so, how.