

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

**Fall 2016**

**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.<sup>1</sup>

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 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. 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 (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 finished, submit your completed exam to the Graduate Director.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

**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) 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 and assess the empirical evidence around these claims. Also describe and evaluate one theory in particular that purports to account for gender *similarities* in crime and another theory that purports to account for gender *differences* in crime. Discuss the implications of your evaluation for future theory and research.
- 2) Contemporary social disorganization theory identifies several structural correlates of crime rates across communities but acknowledges that additional factors mediate the relationship between these structural factors and crime. Discuss in detail both the exogenous structural conditions of disorganization necessary for crime as well as the factors that mediate the effects of disorganization on crime rates. Review the research that tests the relationships proposed by contemporary social disorganization theory and take a position on whether or not variation in crime rates across communities can be explained by variation in the community's level of disorganization. Be sure to defend your answer thoroughly.
- 3) Control theory has undergone several changes, especially since Hirschi's (1969) proposal and test of "social bonding" theory. Describe in detail the evolution of control theory since 1969 and highlight the similarities and differences among the various iterations of this theoretical tradition. Finally, evaluate the degree to which this evolution in control theory has produced meaningful improvement, from both a logical and empirical standpoint, in our understanding of crime and delinquency.
- 4) The U.S. experienced dramatic reductions in crime during the 1990s. Describe the theory or theories that are most useful for explaining this drop. Then review the empirical research that has been conducted on this issue and assess the extent to which it supports the relevant theories.
- 5) There has been a growing interest among criminologists in explaining the causes of terrorism. Among other things, Rosenfeld (2004) argues that "grievances" or "strains" are a major contributing factor to terrorism. This belief has been echoed by other criminologists including LaFree & Dugan (2008) and Agnew (2010). Notwithstanding this burgeoning area of research, there are a number of criticisms associated with using his approach (i.e., strain theory). First, identify and outline the merits and limitations of using strain theory to explain terrorism. Second, discuss how and in what ways strain theory may or may not be better suited to explain terrorism than alternative perspectives, such as cultural, instrumental, or organizational theories.

- 6) Some criminologists argue that differences in neighborhood crime rates simply represent the tendency for individuals with certain social, psychological, and demographic characteristics to live in different parts of the city. From this perspective, it is not necessary to consider the role of neighborhood structures and dynamics at all, for they are simply aggregated proxies for processes that actually unfold at the individual level. That is, for example, observed relationships between the level of community deprivation and the crime rate actually represent the relationships between the economic status of individuals and the level of their criminal involvement. Do you agree or disagree with this proposition, and what theoretical and empirical evidence can you provide to support your position?
- 7) 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.
- 8) Developmental/life-course criminology has witnessed substantial growth in the 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.

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.