

Criminology Comprehensive Ph.D. Exam
Department of Sociology
May 2017

PART I

Answer one question from the Theory section and the question from the Special Interest section for a total of two questions for Part I. Be sure to answer all parts of the questions. It is suggested that you take about one hour per question, and about one hour for editing and reviewing your answers, for a total of about 3 hours of exam time. Once you have completed Part I of the exam, turn in your materials and take your lunch break. Once you have completed your lunch break, you may pick up Part II of the exam.

Theory Section: (select and answer one)

1. Travis Hirschi and Robert Agnew were stranded together in an airport one evening flying out from an ASC conference. They gathered in the coffee shop around a table and the conversation turned quickly to a discussion of crime—how it should be understood and what the implication is for theory. The points of view were crisply stated and points of difference and similarity among them sharply emerged, including the form of evidence each used to bolster their respective views. 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.

2. Choose **one** of the following theoretical traditions in criminology and outline its evolution noting the major weaknesses and criticisms of the earlier theories in this tradition. Then discuss the most recent theoretical and empirical advances in this tradition and whether any of those help overcome the weaknesses that you have noted earlier. Finally, describe what major directions could be taken to develop this tradition further and what kinds of research you would suggest to accomplish this.

- a. strain
- b. social learning
- c. social control

Special Interest Section: Racial Disparities in Policing Outcomes (answer this question)

1. Describe our current empirical and theoretical knowledge about the topic of racial disparities in policing outcomes at both the micro and macro levels. Be sure to address what we think we know, what the main pieces of theory and research are, and what the theoretical and methodological limitations in our knowledge base are. What research and theorizing need to be done in the future to close gaps in our knowledge about this topic and make improvements in this area?

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PART II

Answer two questions from the section on Research in Crime and Delinquency for a total of two questions for Part II. Be sure to answer all parts of the selected questions. It is suggested that you take about one hour per question, and about one hour for editing and reviewing your answers, for a total of about 3 hours of exam time.

Research in Crime and Delinquency: (select and answer two)

1. Discuss the most important research findings concerning the relationship between individual involvement in crime/delinquency and **one** of the following variables. Be sure to include in your discussion the most recent developments/debates in this area of study as well as the theoretical implications of the results from the past and current research. Also note theoretical and empirical weaknesses of this field of research and possible ways of advancing further this line of inquiry.

- a. gender
- b. biological/genetic factors

2. The ASC Executive Board recently put out a statement (http://www.asc41.com/policies/ASC_Executive_Board_Statement_on_Trump_Administration_Crime_and_Justice_Policies.pdf) about the Trump administration's crime and justice policies. In their statement, they note that Trump's "executive orders demonstrate an incongruity between administrative policy efforts and well-established science about the causes and consequences of crime." They highlight a few areas where this occurs, including:

- a. Immigrants do not commit the majority of crime in the United States: This research conflicts with Trump's executive orders that reflect the assumption of immigrants as criminogenic, and that threaten cities receptive to immigrants (i.e., sanctuary cities).
- b. The proposed travel ban is not empirically justified and targets the wrong countries: This research conflicts with Trump's decision to ban citizens of six majority-Muslim countries from travel to the U.S. in the name of preventing terrorist infiltration.
- c. The U.S. is not in the midst of a national crime wave: This research conflicts with Trump's executive order empowering the federal government to make fighting violent crime wave a top priority.

Review research that supports ONE of these statements. Discuss the most important research findings in this area, including any central debates within the area, as well as the theoretical implications of the results from the past and current research.

Part II, continued

3. Innovations in research methods and statistical techniques offer opportunities for the advancement of theory and research (Merton, 1948). Select one of the following research approaches/statistical techniques that has become more widely used in criminology. For your selection, discuss what that approach/technique entails. Then, discuss some of the extant literature that makes use of that technique. Be sure to highlight the major contributions of that technique/method to increasing our understanding of criminological processes and factors, as well as the way that the approach contributes to theory.

- a. Hierarchical linear modeling
- b. Experimental designs
- c. Social network analysis