University of Florida
Criminology, Law and Society
Tool Comprehensive Exam—Sept. 2007

You are to answer four questions. One theory question and one research question will be required. You may answer any two of the remaining questions posed. You will have up to 9 hours to complete the exam. Good luck.

Required Theory Question:
1. Theories often "compete" in terms of how they explain crime and delinquency. Pick two theories that contradict and dispute each other. (1) Summarize each theory, enough so we can understand why they are in dispute. (2) Thoroughly discuss their disagreements. (3) Make a reasoned argument, incorporating empirical findings and other appropriate criteria for assessing the relative adequacy of theories, for why you believe that one of the theories is likely more "correct" than the other.

Required Methods Question
2. Your assignment is to compare and contrast two different ways to design original research (e.g., experiment or quasi experiment, survey, focus groups, qualitative interviews, participant observation) on a research problem of your choice. Lay out the problem clearly. Develop the first design and discuss such basics as the study population and sampling strategies, measurement approach, and analysis strategies. Then develop a second design to collect data on the same problem. Discuss its study population and sampling, measurement approach, and analysis strategy. Compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses of the two designs.

Choose any two of the following questions to answer.

3. Criminological theories of crime causation have varying implications when applied to thinking about or doing something about crime prevention. Choose two theories of crime and address the question of what similar or different insights these theories suggest about crime prevention. Which do you think would be more effective and practical? Be sure to explain how prevention strategies follow from the logic of the theories.
4. Two scholars agree to debate the death penalty. One is a retributivist and the other believes in deterrence. What arguments are each likely to make, and how might the other side try to rebut each of the points raised by his/her opponent?
5. One criterion used to assess theoretical perspectives is conceptual clarity. Select two theoretical perspectives that, in your judgment, fall at opposite ends of the continuum with respect to this criterion. In other words, select one perspective that you feel is characterized by relatively clear concepts, and one that is characterized by relatively vague concepts. Be sure to identify the key concepts associated with each perspective, and explain the basis for your judgment concerning the clarity or vagueness of these concepts. Finally, discuss the ways in which conceptual clarity has advanced the development of one of these perspectives, and conceptual ambiguity has hindered the development of the other.
6. Select a construct from your favorite theory. How has it been measured in the research literature? Discuss the validity of that measure or measures and how its validity has been established or challenged. If you conclude that the validity of the measurement is questionable, how would you measure it and what steps would you take to establish the validity of that measurement?
7. What do you consider to be two important methodological and/or statistical developments that have appeared in the recent past in the field? Justify your selections with explicit reference to the kinds of substantive problems that can be better addressed as a result of these developments, and identify the main contributions of research that has incorporated these developments.
8. Identify or propose a crime control program. Lay out its basic features and then design an evaluation research project that could assess both how well it is being implemented and how successful it is. Be sure to provide your reasons as you answer the following: What methods would you employ? What would you need to measure to assess both its implementation and its

outcome?   What kinds of controls would you need to incorporate? Would you seek to control for these through design or statistically? What statistical strategy would you employ?