

University of Florida
Criminology, Law and Society
THEORY AND METHODS COMPREHENSIVE EXAM QUESTIONS
SPRING 07

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REQUIRED THEORY QUESTION

Three key 'facts' of crime include the age effect, the sex effect, and the neighborhood effect. Which theory (if any) is best apt to explain these facts? In your answer, be sure to indicate what the facts are (i.e., what is the age effect), and how the theory you have chosen best accounts for it. If you think that no criminological theory can account for these facts, please state so and defend your position.

REQUIRED METHODS QUESTION

There is one point of view in criminology that argues that the race/ethnicity differences in crime are a function of differential processing of minorities, while another view contrasts this one by arguing in favor of differential involvement by minorities in certain kinds of crimes. After reviewing the evidence on both sides of this debate, design a study (sky is the limit) for which you can definitively answer this question.

PICK TWO FROM THIS LIST

- 1) Juvenile offenders have been the focus of hot debates in recent decades. Some argue that they are much more like adults and therefore should be sent to adult court—that juvenile courts should be abolished. Others argue that they are simply misguided children that need the help available to them in juvenile court. Which side do you think is right? Support your argument with research evidence and ground it in a theoretical perspective. Be sure to describe the theory, its tenets, and make an argument for why you believe this theory better explains juvenile crime than others might. (Theory)
- 2) In your mind, what is the most important theoretical development to have emerged in criminology in the past 30 years? What does the theory say, what does the research show, and what next steps are needed with regard to the theory? Also, be sure to indicate your criteria for why you deemed that theory 'important'. (Theory)
- 3) The Governor is faced with a major budget crisis but also faces a public that is hungry to lock up offenders due to some high profile child abductions that recently made the news. She is trying to make tough decisions about how to save money while also protecting the public from crime. Some of her key advisors in the Department of Corrections have told her that intensive supervision may be as effective as incarceration for certain offenders, but she

wants proof and she wants to know WHO she should allow to remain in the community. She gives you a database with all people convicted in the state during the last ten years. The database contains statistics on the offenders' personal characteristics, their sentences, and whether or not they were later rearrested for any felony. Because judges vary in their sentencing philosophies, the sentences for offenders convicted of identical crimes are very different—some went to prison, some were on intensive probation, and some were on routine probation. Design a study that would tell the governor whether incarceration made a significant difference in rearrests for these offenders. Define the independent and dependent variables as well as the study design and analysis plan. (Methods)

4. Identify a criminological issue that has been researched in two methodologically distinct ways that generated divergent findings. By referring to the methodological differences between the specific studies, identify and explain why they arrived at different conclusions. Evaluate the relative credibility of the findings. (Methods)