

TOOL COMP (THEORY AND METHODS) APRIL 2008
Criminology, Law & Society
University of Florida
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REQUIRED THEORY QUESTION

1) Some theories emphasize social structure; others focus on social processes. More theories now attempt to integrate across the levels of analysis. Select a social structure theory and a social process one. Compare and contrast what they can tell us about crime or other legally relevant behaviors. Do they hold similar or different implications for interventions and social policy? Then select an integrated theory to discuss how it adds to (if at all) what we learn about crime or legally relevant behavior and how we think about policy.

REQUIRED METHODS QUESTION

2). Because this is a tight budget year and the inmate population continues to increase, the Governor is interested in seeing if prisons “work” to reduce recidivism and improve other outcomes. He has asked you to help him design a study to see if prisons are worth the money he’s putting into them. You are to write for him a brief but clear summary of the (1) sampling design, (2) research methodology, including subjects, variables, and analytic plan, as well as (3) the specific outcomes you plan to measure. Be sure to justify why each of the choices you make for this project are the right ones (e.g., why this method? Why these variables?). Also, indicate the limitations of the design as well as how you plan to overcome any anticipated challenges you will face in implementing the design (such as getting data, cooperation, etc.). Remember, it is your job to specify the questions this study will address and convince him that your project will give him the answers he needs.

PICK TWO OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

3) Theories may be different or even rivals, but often make the same predictions about criminal or delinquent behavior. Some predictions from the different theories, however, clearly are opposite and incompatible. For each pair of theories listed below indicate at least one prediction each theory would make about crime or delinquency that is directly opposed to the prediction from the other theory. Explicate the predictions and why the theory would make them. For each pair evaluate which theory’s predictions have been more supported by research.

Labeling vs. Deterrence

Social learning vs. Social bonding

Conflict vs. Consensus

- 4) There are many theoretical perspectives that attempt to explain why youths turn to crime. Many of them address childhood experiences, such as those related to family, peers, schools, and neighborhoods. First, pick two of these factors to discuss. Second, for each factor describe prior research (including citations) regarding what aspects of these experiences may or likely lead to crime. Third, pick the theory that you believe best explains research findings to date. Describe the tenets of the theory and make an argument for why this theory is better than others at explaining the connection this factor and one's likelihood of committing crime.
- 5) Discuss the pros and cons on cross-sectional v. longitudinal research. Which approach is better at answering causal questions, and why? What can you learn from cross-sectional research that longitudinal studies cannot answer, and why? What can you learn from longitudinal research that cross-sectional studies cannot answer, and why?
- 6) Select a central concept in criminology. Compare and contrast qualitative and quantitative approaches to the study of that concept. Please discuss a set of approaches in terms of their epistemological assumptions, data quality (reliability and validity), generalizability, and the capacity of each set to develop causal explanations.