

TOOL COMP (THEORY AND METHODS) JANUARY 2008
Criminology, Law & Society
University of Florida
Committee: Jodi Lane (Chair), Lonn Lanza-Kaduce, and Ron Akers

REQUIRED THEORY QUESTION

1) Choose a contemporary theory relevant to the study of crime/deviance or law and society. Identify that theory in a way that would be recognizable to contemporary scholars. Trace its modern intellectual history and development (including any significant modifications or revisions up to the present time) and major proponents. Critically analyze its central concepts, propositions, scope, testability, and empirical support. To what extent does it have policy implications?

REQUIRED METHODS QUESTION

2) One of the fundamental questions for criminologists is “why do people commit crime or fail to comply with the law?” First, design a quantitative study that might help answer this question. What type of study would it be? Who would you choose to study? How would you study them and why? Be sure to address the study design, variables of interest, analysis approach, and expected results (what would you be able to answer with this particular study?). Also, address the reliability, validity and generalizability of the study. Second, design a qualitative study to answer the same question, being sure to cover the same details requested above regarding the design and approach. Third, make an argument for why, in your opinion, one of them would be better able to answer the question than the other one would. (JL/Jan 08)

PICK TWO OF THE FOLLOWING OPTIONAL QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

3) You have invited two established professors who have fundamental disagreements in the literature about criminological or law and society theories. Their job at the lunch is to try to convince the other and the audience that their theory is "right" or "better" than the other one's. Who did you invite? What did each of them argue? As a member of the audience, which one convinced you and why?

4) How do we judge whether one criminological or law & society theory provides a better explanation than another? Identify and discuss criteria for evaluating theories in our field. Which criterion do you consider to be most important, and why? Use examples from theories (plural) to illustrate your points.

5) Distinguish among populations, sampling frames, sampling units, and samples. Review at least four basic approaches to sampling. Discuss their respective strengths and weaknesses. Provide an appropriate research example that shows us that you understand how each can be put to good use. Conclude by discussing samples and sampling distributions and address how these relate to the use of tests of statistical significance.

6) Define and discuss the different types of validity and reliability one should be consider when designing a study. How does a researcher know if their studies have these types of validity and reliability? Use an example study to show how one might determine the validity and reliability of their study and discuss the problems and strengths related to that particular study.