

Criminology Comprehensive Exam Questions
Spring 2010

Theory (required for Major and Minor)

1. What is the best theory in the field of criminology? For this question you must do the following:
 - A. Develop a clear set of criteria that you believe are important to evaluate theory. Be clear on what your criteria are and why these are appropriate.
 - B. Evaluate criminological theory based on your criteria.
For this second part of your question you need to do one of the following:
 - 1) Justify why the theory you select is the “best” in the field based on your criteria; or,
 - 2) Make an argument that there is NO “best” theory based on your criteria.

Methods (required for Major and Minor)

2. In criminology, the majority of the empirical findings are generated from the UCR, NCVS, or self-report studies. For this question you need to address the following:
 - A. What are the merits and limitations of these data sources for understanding crime? In your answer to this part, you must include among your points a discussion of measurement reliability and validity as well as external and internal validity for ALL THREE of these sources of data.
 - B. What is one specific improvement you would argue could be made to each of these sources of data? How would this change address some of the existing limitations?

Questions for students Majoring in Criminology (answer 2 of 3)

1. A relatively new argument in criminology is that an adequate theory of crime must be capable of explaining not only how persons enter into criminal activity but how they desist from crime as well. For this question you must do the following:
 - A. Using your knowledge of criminological theory, discuss how two different theories would predict or explain desistance from crime.
 - B. Drawing on both theoretical and methodological considerations, is this trend in the field focusing on developmental patterns justified or otherwise desirable?
2. The vast majority of criminological inquiry is focused on street crimes.
 - A. Critique this focus from both a critical theory AND a crime control perspective.
 - B. Taking the other view, pulling from both theoretical and empirical findings, defend this emphasis in the field.
 - C. Adjudicate this debate. (i.e. Is there a stronger side? Is either side of the argument adequate?)

3. Select a specific type of crime or correlate of crime that you believe you are building an expertise in. Discuss this crime or correlate both empirically and theoretically. In your answer you should address the following:

- A. What are the major relevant findings to your topic?
- B. What are the questions that still need to be answered relating to this topic?
- C. How does our understanding of this area contribute to the field of criminology (in other words, "Who cares?")