

GRADUATE QUALIFYING EXAMINATION

CRIME, LAW, AND DEVIANCE

August 28 2006

The doctoral preliminary examination in Crime, Law, and Deviance is organized into three components - theory, methods, and substantive problems and issues. The aim of the examination is to determine the student's command of this specialization within the constraints of time and space. No such examination can test exhaustively the extent of your knowledge but it should demonstrate your general familiarity with major theories and methods as well as contemporary issues in the specialization.

Please allocate your time over the next 24 hours as efficiently as possible. Each major section of the examination is weighted one-third and thus should be allocated approximately 5 double-spaced typed (printed) pages for a total of 15 pages for the entire examination. Make sure you write answers that will not be duplicated across examination questions. You should follow a journal format (e.g. American Sociological Review) for references and citations.

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PART I: THEORY

This section of the examination samples your knowledge of a major theoretical approaches and concerns within the specialization of crime, law, and deviance. Select any one (1) of the two questions below and answer as thoroughly and specifically as possible within the space and time allotted. All questions require specific citations to literature as illustrations and specifications of your response.

1. Discuss the current state of the general theory/self-control theory of delinquency/crime today. What are some recent significant empirical studies that have evaluated control theory and what are their findings? Do you think this is a viable theoretical perspective that should be further developed and applied? Give reasons. Are there empirical and/or theoretical developments in other areas of sociology that are, or could prove to be, useful in addressing the concerns and problems of strain theory?

2. What is the state of deterrence theory with respect to the explanation of crime rates and the guidance of social policy? Take the following problem as a point of departure. Overall, crime rates in the U.S. steadily declined nationwide from about 1993 through 2004, especially in certain locations like New York City.

Is this due to deterrence? Or is it due to other factors? What has happened to crime rates in other countries such as the United Kingdom during this same time period? Have other countries used tough sentencing/deterrence to a similar extent as the U.S. during this time period? Have their crime trends similarly been down?

Have any other criminological theories/research been used as a guide to police and criminal justice officials with respect to engineering the recent declines? What studies have addressed these questions and how have they been applied? Are there empirical and/or theoretical developments in other areas of sociology that are, or could prove to be, useful in addressing the concerns and problems of deterrence theory?

PART II: METHODS

This section of the examination consists of two questions about methodological considerations in this area. Answer one (1) of the questions below.

1. Recent years have seen advances in the development of mathematical/statistical approaches to the modeling of delinquent/criminal careers, especially state-dependence, population heterogeneity, and latent class Poisson regression models. These modeling approaches have enabled researchers to address the age-crime debate and the control theory versus life course perspectives thereon. Describe these developments and their empirical applications. Have these empirical applications produced substantive results that have implications for the development of theories about crime over the life course and if so how?

2. The National Crime Victimization Surveys and the FBI Uniform Crime Reports are two different data bases for the study of crime prevalence and trends therein the U.S. Describe these two data sources and their strengths and weaknesses. Illustrate your points by reference to specific research studies that have used one or the other data source and/or made comparisons.

PART III: SUBSTANTIVE PROBLEMS

This section consists of one substantive problem for you to answer and respond to as specifically as possible.

1. A good deal of theorizing and empirical research has been devoted to the development of a new subfield of criminology, often termed “developmental criminology,” “delinquent/criminal careers,” or “life course criminology,” over the past two decades. There also have been a number of studies of prison sentencing, prison violence, and recidivism. What are some major studies and findings in these areas of research? How can life course criminology be usefully intersected with theories and research on prison sentencing, prison violence, and recidivism?