

**Theory Comprehensive Exam—January 19-21, 2023**  
**Exam Committee: Abby Fagan (Chair) and Becca Hanson**

**Select TWO of the following questions; remember that your responses to the two questions must be substantially different**

1. Criminological theory largely seeks to explain juvenile delinquency and blue- and white-collar crime. Often left out of these theories are actions and activities that are criminal but could also be categorized as collective and/or political crime and violence. A few examples of these include the January 6, 2021 attacks on the US Capitol, similar attacks against Brazil's capitol on January 8, 2023, or the Watts Riots in Los Angeles in 1965. Select two criminological theories that you think are best suited to explain collective acts of violence. Provide a brief summary of each theory, a discussion of how each theory might help us to understand these events, and a discussion of how these theories should be adapted to best explain these events. Make sure to identify conceptual or empirical problems that arise when applying a theory whose unit of analysis is different from the phenomenon you are explaining (for example, moving from explaining individual to group behavior).
2. In recent years several unarmed African American and Latinx men have been killed by police officers, which has sparked outrage, protests, and even violence in several cities across the U.S. Criminological theories most often seek to explain the criminal or violent behavior of civilians but can also be used to explain behavior by members of an organization should as the police. Identify and summarize one criminological theory that could be used to explain police violence and describe how it can be used to help explain violence committed by police officers. Your response should also include the following:
  - a. The theory's original unit of analysis
  - b. Conceptual or empirical problems that arise if you are applying a theory whose unit of analysis is different from the phenomenon you are explaining (for example, moving from explaining individual to group behavior)
  - c. Strengths of this theory in explaining police violence
  - d. Weaknesses of this theory in explaining police violence
  - e. How the theory might be used to guide efforts to reduce police violence

The theory you choose does not have to explicitly engage with race, but if it does not, your answer should address this as a weakness of the theory and provide suggestions for how to adapt the theory to explain police violence against men of color.

3. Social (dis)organization theory has a long history in criminology. In this essay, trace the development of this perspective, beginning with Shaw and McKay's theory and moving to the present day. Your response should describe the main tenets and processes that the main theories sharing this perspective consider important in influencing crime. Also, identify how the theoretical perspective's core concepts and propositions have changed and/or remained the same over time. In the last part of your response, identify two critiques the perspective must address moving forward so that social disorganization theory continues to help explain crime at the neighborhood or community level.
4. Proponents of theory integration highlight several benefits of doing so, including consolidating theories with similar concepts and propositions and improving the ability of theories to explain crime. In this essay, identify the **three theories** (from three different criminological perspectives) you believe should be integrated to improve criminological theorizing and practice. In doing so, 1) identify the main components and tenets of each theory, 2) evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, and 3) provide a compelling case for why an integrated theory that combines these three theories will improve the ability to describe criminal offending and/or the criminal justice system.