

JUSTICE ORGANIZATIONS, ADMINISTRATION, AND LEADERSHIP

Comprehensive Exam Questions

October 27, 2007

Instructions: This examination is to be typed on a computer in Bull Run Hall, room 252. The proctor will ensure that the computer is not connected to the internet. A faculty member will proctor the exam. The exam period lasts eight hours. To accommodate lunch and bathroom breaks, we will provide an extra 30 minutes. The exam will begin at 9 a.m. and end at 5:30 p.m.

Please answer the following question

1. Criminal justice agencies struggle to balance fairness and effectiveness. Some might argue that this struggle is rooted in key characteristics of criminal justice organizations. What are the most salient characteristics of criminal justice organizations that prove to be obstacles to becoming simultaneously fair and effective? Support your arguments with available evidence.

Please answer one of the following two questions:

2. Criminal justice officials work in a world with many laws and rules designed to limit discretion, but they still exercise a considerable amount of it. Choose an important situation, process, or circumstance in which a criminal justice decision maker exercises discretion. Identify the most useful theoretical propositions and perspectives that attempt to account for variations in how that form of discretion is exercised. Discuss what the empirical research suggests about these propositions. Then discuss the utility of this theoretical and research literature for criminal justice policy or practice.

3. What matters more in affecting the behaviors, accomplishments, and failures of a criminal justice organization – the decisions of key leaders or the structure of the organization? Draw upon theory and research in formulating your answer.

Please answer one of the following three questions.

4. Plea bargaining in American courts is a common, but much criticized practice. Why is plea bargaining so common, and what, if anything should be done to change this situation? Support your answer with reference to relevant research and theoretical literature.

5. American police have nearly always been under pressure to change, so the pressure to reform is by-and-large a constant, although the direction reform movements take is not. Consider the range of police reforms that have been active for at least a decade in America. Select the reform that in your view has had the most impact on the practice of

policing in America and the one that has had the least impact. Support your selections with references to relevant research and offer what insights you can as to the reasons for success or failure as reforms. Based on this comparison (and any other insights you might wish to draw upon), what generalizations can you make about what influences the success of police reform in America?

6. Implementation is usually the “Achilles heel” of innovation in American correctional agencies. Identify one type of correctional innovation and discuss how researchers could learn something of value for practitioners and policy makers about what to do and what not to do to achieve successful implementation of that innovation. Be as explicit as possible in describing the nature of the research methods and measures you would recommend, and draw upon the appropriate theoretical and empirical literature to support your points.