

Topic 1 (theoretically important): Offender decision-making, emotionality, and burglary (with theft/material gain as the end).

While an analysis of criminal behavior under the lens of the rational choice perspective considers the intuitive notion that offenders weigh costs against benefits when committing crimes, not all criminal actions reflect a rational, instrumental process. For instance, crimes of passion involve reactive violence, which manifests due to intense emotional arousal, confounding notions of an exclusively cold, criminal calculus. With respect to the limitations of the rational choice perspective, the minimization or exclusion of the analysis of the influence of affectivity on offender decision-making permeates existing research. Such a dearth of research surrounding emotions and decision-making, particularly regarding how emotions may interfere with the cost-benefit analyses of offenders, precludes a true apprehension of the intricacies of offender decision-making in various offense contexts. Further compounding this deficiency, studies surrounding the influence of emotionality on offender decision-making throughout the crime-commission process are scarce, as is the variety of crimes included in the topic's probing (sex offenses and robbery are the only crimes discussed). Considering such a gap, a need to expand on existing literature is clearly discerned, which the current proposal wishes to do so by understanding how emotions, both positively and negatively valenced, influence the decision-making involved in burglary before, during, and after crime-commission; the topic will be probed by way of in-person, semi-structured interviews in a correctional setting.

Topic 2 (practically important): An exploration of the training needs of officers conducting digital forensic examinations.

The utilization of technology presents as a proliferating and multi-faceted aspect of daily, contemporary life. Reflective of its ingrained nature in many elements of contemporary life, even those that are unconventional, technology has inevitably become a fruitful source of inculpatory and exculpatory criminal evidence. In fact, digital evidence is identifiable in every type of investigation conducted by local, state, and federal authorities. Given the adaptability and amplitude of digital evidence, the identification, collection, analysis, and storage of such data is paramount to efficaciously and successfully administering justice. Unfortunately, there is currently no training standard to which digital forensic examiners conduct analyses, confounded by the fact that local police departments are notably understaffed and under-resourced to rise to the challenges that arise from the processing and storage of digital evidence. The extent to which local police officers are undertrained needs to be indicated in order to fully understand the needs of local police departments with respect to digital evidence, which few studies have explored. The current proposal wishes to explore the training needs of officers conducting digital forensic examinations of evidence by way of survey. The survey will enable that officers convey the areas of expertise that they have obtained through experience and/or training, thus shedding light on areas of proficiency and deficiency.

assumption or fact?

Both topics are good. I (w/o surprise) find the first topic more interesting, but it's clearly more long term. The 2nd option might be good to get a line on your CV if you have an "in"/easy access

x I feel like I have a lot to say about what you should consider -> but those could be addressed in your proposal