

GRADUATE PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION

ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY -  
ORGANIZATIONS, MARKETS, OCCUPATIONS, AND WORK

August 19, 2002

**Part I: Methodology.** *Required*

1. Select a specific area of research in economic sociology -- organizations, markets, and work. Identify one unsolved problem that involves competing theoretical arguments in the literature. State the main theoretical issues involved, contrast the two theoretical logics, and derive their empirical implications. On this basis, propose a research design to adjudicate empirically between these competing arguments. The research design should consider the following:

- a) Operationalization of key concepts
- b) Formulation of hypotheses that can be empirically verified
- c) Description of evidence/data to be used for empirical examination

The research design can be either a qualitative or quantitative study, or a combination of both. Provide justification for your choice.

**Part II. Labor/Work/Occupations.** *Answer one of the three questions.*

2. Literature on work increasingly concludes that unlike their parents, young people today on entering the labor force are faced with uncertainty. "The social contract that promised steadily increasing wages and secure employment" has unraveled. Draw on the literature to comment on forces that are reshaping employment and work lives. Should we expect uniformity in the trend across the labor force, or industrial and occupational variations? Cite literature to support your contention.

3. Work is not an isolated activity, closed off in separate organizations. Rather its boundaries are interconnected with the larger society. It is affected by and in turn affects the larger society and its institutions. Draw on literature to comment on these mutual effects of work and society.

4. During the past century conventional wisdom, particularly the popular and policy press, suggests that computerization and more broadly digital technologies are fundamentally transforming the nature of work and occupations. Do you agree? Why or why not? Review the major theoretical perspectives and cite empirical research that supports your position.

**Part III. Organizations/Markets.** *Answer one of the two questions.*

5. Much of the recent discussion in network research has centered around Granovetter's concept of "embeddedness." Discuss the substantive implications of this concept for research and how this concept has been operationalized in empirical studies. Compare and evaluate their contributions to the literature.

6. Some would suggest that population ecology and institutional approaches are converging in recent years. Do you agree or disagree? Identify at least three areas, issues, or questions for which you see convergence, divergence, or no change. Cite specific literature.