

GRADUATE QUALIFYING EXAMINATION

SELF SELECTED SPECIALIZATION: RACE AND ETHNICITY

AUGUST 28, 2008

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1) Do not cite the work or ideas of Bonilla-Silva. We want your answers to reflect your “sociological imagination.”
 - 2) In most questions we suggest you include a number of references in your answers. However, feel free to incorporate more as you see fit.
 - 3) Scholarship, organization, good-writing, and creativity will count and probably in that order.
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ANSWER ONE OF THE FOLLOWING THREE QUESTIONS

- 1) In 5-6 pages, answer the following question and make sure you cite at least 10 references from the list.

In 1963, Glazer and Moynihan stated: “The point about the melting pot is that it did not happen.” More recently, Samuel P. Huntington has argued that, “The cultural division between Hispanics and Anglos could replace the racial division between blacks and whites as the most serious cleavage in U.S. society.” Yet from the early studies on “Americanization” to the work of Gordon and, more recently, the work of Alba and Nee, many social scientists have stressed immigrants’ potential for assimilation. Review the arguments for and against the concept of migrant assimilation to a host society. Make sure you address whether immigrants have not melted, have assimilated, or whether some have assimilated while others have experienced segmented assimilation in the USA? Showcase your knowledge of the immigration history by using data from the experiences of white ethnics, Asians, and Latinos in your answer.

- 2) Over 40 years ago, Daniel Patrick Moynihan produced the highly controversial Moynihan Report which identified high joblessness among Black men as a principal cause of poverty and family instability among low African Americans. Was Moynihan right? Is the amelioration of male employment the magic bullet for curing the “ills” of African American males and their families? Why yes or why not? (5-6 pages, 10 references)

ANSWER ONE OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ON RACIAL THEORY

- 1) The area of race and ethnicity has been marred by conceptual confusion, theoretical weakness, and, recently, by enormous debate. Some theorists deny the relevance and validity of race and racism as concepts and suggest replacing them with concepts such as “class,” “ethnicity,” or “identity.” Other theorists claim race is (almost) all and do not wish to cede terrain to “class” or “gender” as potential sites of social action and analysis. Lastly, an increasing number of theorists

preach intersectionality and contend one cannot do “correct analysis” of almost anything unless one is cognizant of all sources of inequality and oppression. In short, we have a theoretical mess.

Write a 5-6 page critique of the current state of racial theory and develop an outline of an alternative theory that flows from your critique. Make sure you address (even if briefly) the ideas mentioned above and that you cite authors in all these traditions. Also make sure your theoretical alternative is not American-centric (i.e., that your theoretical approach has international applications).

- 2) Drawing on the conceptual and empirical literature on whiteness and principles of symbolic interaction, what domains of interactive processes (e.g., defensive othering) would you deem as critical to examine in a study of how inequalities among poor whites and African Americans are created and reproduced? Please select, discuss, and justify the importance of these domains in one context of inequality of your choice (e.g., employment/labor markets; religious settings; education/schools; social services; health care systems; organized sports; marriage market; community political arenas).
- 3) In what ways does within-group colorism influence opportunities for social mobility among African Americans in the United States? Do these same paths of influence hold true for recent Latino or East Asian Indian immigrants to America? In answering this question, begin with a review of the literature of colorism and pigmentocracy, follow-up this review with a discussion of classical studies on these matters in the USA, and end with a review of contemporary data on the group of your choice.

THE QUESTIONS BELOW ARE TARGETED, THAT IS, THEY WERE PREPARED WITH THE SOCIOLOGICAL CONCERNS OF EACH YOU IN MIND. WE HOPE EACH OF YOU ANSWERS THE QUESTION THAT FITS YOUR INTERESTS, BUT YOU ARE FREE TO ANSWER ANY OF THEM. YOUR ANSWER SHOULD BE AT LEAST 6 PAGES LONG AND INCLUDE AT LEAST 10 REFERENCES.

1) Black scholars explore the ways in which the experiences of African American women are disempowered and ignored by white feminist theorists. Many of them urge sociologists to approach all research with a black feminist perspective.

(a) Define and discuss the concept of black feminist perspective, naming some of those who have influenced this train of thought.

(b) Assess the claim that white feminist scholars have ignored this perspective.

(c) Do you think that all scholarship in sociology should take the black feminist perspective? Why or why not?

(d) Are other minority feminisms out there validating, expanding, and/or criticizing the black feminist perspective? How do they expand (or limit) the sociological discussion?

2) Increasingly, scholars argue race and racial stratification are world-systemic. However, many still believe racial stratification is most salient in the USA and South Africa and insist that other

countries have “racial problems” but are, for the most part, racial democracies. Write an essay where you (a) discuss the views of authors in each of these traditions, (b) propose a “theory” (an explanation) of world-systemic racial formation—or of the lack of it, (c) use material from at least three countries to illustrate your “theory,” and d) assess if your “theory” explains more of the “variance” in world-systemic racial and ethnic affairs (you may illustrate your answer by highlighting areas of disparity—such as economic, educational, occupational, or residential—between groups).

3) The sociology of racial and ethnic stratification relies heavily on quantitative methods to examine residential and occupational segregation, racial attitudes, health outcomes, and many other race-related matters. Discuss work on two specific areas of analysis that have relied on quantitative methods and indices and (a) describe the quantitative formulas and perspectives in the areas, (b) examine the methodological critiques of these approaches, (c) articulate a methodological alternative to the examination of racial affairs in the two areas and explain (with data if possible) why your approach would be an improvement over the approaches on the two areas, and (d) take a stand on the debate about whether quantitative *or* qualitative analyses of race matters are more productive (you may have done some of this on (c)).