

GRADUATE QUALIFYING EXAMINATION

SOCIAL NETWORK

August 25, 2008

This doctoral exam in Social Networks is organized into two parts. The question in Part I is mandatory, and you must select two of the questions from Part II. Please allocate your time over the next 24 hours as efficiently as possible. Each question of the examination should be allocated four to six double-spaced, typed pages, and the completed exam can have a maximum of 15 typed pages of text (excluding references and analytical charts). Please use standard one-inch margins, and a reasonable font size. You may consult your notes and readings but you may not discuss any aspects of the examination with others until after all exams have been completed. Return your completed exams to Claudette Parker.

Part I:

1) Network Theory: The field of social networks is often criticized as being overly methodological and lacking coherent social theory. Briefly describe a substantive social network research project which you believe is well informed by sociological theory, and another which is not. Discuss concisely the positive and negative features of each. Now, draw some conclusions about the preponderance of the sociological research on social networks which you have read in preparation for this prelim: how much theory is there? Is there a trend over time? Name some examples to flesh out your claim about the trend. Most importantly: How is your work going to push this trend in the right direction?

Part II:

2. Recently, the two dualities of (1) homophily versus heterophily and (2) bonding versus bridging have gained much salience in sociology. What are some of the relevant theoretical or substantive issues associated with them, as discussed in the literature? From a network perspective, how can these notions be operationalized? What contributions would a network approach make in articulating or advancing their sociological significance?

3. With the rapid rise in popularity of network ideas, departments across campuses are offering courses in (social) networks. Please describe how you would organize a 1 semester course in the study of social networks. This would be a graduate level course that must balance between substance and methods. Your description should reflect the goals of the course, justify key divisions and highlight the essential readings.

4. Compare and contrast Ron Burt's model(s) for structural holes with Granovetter's strength of weak ties. At one point, Burt claimed to be specifying the mechanisms behind Granovetter's paper -- is this justified? What does Burt's work add to the original conception by Granovetter? Draw from the literature some (two or more) examples which you think justify or do not justify Burt's claim.

5. Are network models useful in the study of social stratification? Pay particular attention in this answer to the tension between positional models (centrality, structural equivalence, etc.) and connective models (reachability, diffusion, etc.) as they relate to stratification.

6. Looking forward 5 to 10 years, what do you think are the 3 frontier problems that social network research must solve? Pick one and describe in detail the nature of the problems faced and the avenues that future work should take to solve them.

7. What should every sociologist know about networks? Do not answer this question if you answered number 3 above.

8. Review some approaches to simulating social networks, discuss their procedures and features, including strengths and limitations, and provide an example of how the technique has helped to clarify an important issue in social network analysis.

