

GRADUATE QUALIFYING EXAMINATION

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY (SELF-DIRECTED)

August 28, 2003

This examination has three sections. You must answer questions I and II. In Part III, you may select any one question. Your answers should be as complete as possible. They should not exceed a total of fifteen (15) double-spaced pages, excluding the references. You should follow a journal format (e.g., American Sociological Review) for references and citations. You have 24 hours from the time you pick up/receive your exam to return it to Claudette Parker. A hard copy of the examination is preferred, but you also may return a disk copy to be printed with assistance from Claudette.

Please sign below at the time you pick up this examination and again when you return it. No discussion of any Qualifying Examination with any other person is permitted until after August 29, 2003, when all examinations have been completed.

Date and Time of Pick-Up: _____

Signature: _____

Date and Time of Return: _____

Signature: _____

Social Psychology Qualifying Examination

August 28, 2003

Answer both questions I and II. Answer one of the remaining questions.

- I. In a recent review article in the Annual Review of Sociology, Stolte, Fine, and Cook described social psychology as “sociological miniaturism, or seeing the big through the small.” They elaborated this by stating that social psychology is “a way of interpreting social processes and institutions that is micro-sociological more than it is psychological.” Select a topic in social psychology (it may be as broad as symbolic interactionism or more bounded, e.g., trust, affect control theory, attribution theory). Summarize the major theoretical foundations of this topic. Explain the ways that this topic helps sociologists to see “the big through the small” – i.e., how it informs us about broad-scale social processes or institutions at work. Use empirical studies to buttress your argument.
- II. Several methodological approaches have a rich histories in social psychology – observational studies, experiments, survey research, ethnographic research, etc. Select a social psychological topic or concept. Describe ways of studying this topic/construct using two different methodological approaches (e.g., survey and experiment). That is, provide the research questions and basic research designs that could be used to study this topic/construct from two methodological approaches. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each approach? Could the research questions be investigated using other methodological approaches?

Answer one of questions III - V.

- III. Social psychological constructs often have been used as predictors of health outcomes (e.g., self-esteem, mastery). But social psychological perspectives also are directly implicated in definitions of health/illness and the experience of illness. Describe the ways in which social psychological processes have been studied in relation to the definition and/or experience of illness. What theoretical perspectives inform these studies? Provide examples of relevant empirical studies. Provide rationales for your selections.
- IV. Much research has focused on the self as the product of social interaction and other social forces. Other investigators urge increased attention to the proactive role of the self, including Thoit's view of the self as “psychological activist” and George's notion of the self as “protagonist.” Undoubtedly both perspectives are accurate – the self is both a product of social forces and a vehicle for human agency. Review studies that you believe to be methodologically rigorous that support both of these perspectives. Provide rationales for your choices. Are these contradictory hypotheses about the self? If not, how can they be reconciled to permit a richer understanding of the self?

- V. Comparative social psychology includes both emic and etic approaches. Define these approaches and what they imply for social psychological research. Identify topics for which each has proven to be valuable and provide examples of studies that support your conclusions. Provide justifications for your selections. What are your assessments of the extent to which each approach has contributed to our understanding of social psychological phenomena?