

GRADUATE QUALIFYING EXAMINATION

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

August 31, 2006

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 receive your exam to return it to Claudette Parker as an email attachment.

No discussion of any Qualifying Examination with any other person is permitted until after September 1, 2006, 5pm, when all examinations have been completed.

Answer BOTH Questions I and II.

I. One could argue that a focus on the relationship is the distinctive feature of sociological social psychology. Consider three broad perspectives in sociological social psychology: (1) social structure and personality, (2) symbolic interactionism, and (3) group process (experimental sociological work on groups and networks). Select two of these metatheoretical traditions and identify a theoretical tradition within each. First, state the central premises and propositions of that theory. Then tell how the relationship is conceptualized and expressed within that theoretical structure.

II. One characteristic of useful theories is that their propositions can be tested using a variety of methods. Nonetheless, many – perhaps most - theories tend to be tested using either quantitative methods or qualitative methods, but not both. Research testing affect control theory illustrates this pattern; it has been tested almost exclusively using a variety of quantitative methods. Your task is to design a study in which affect control theory will be tested using qualitative methods. Because of space limitations, you will not be able to develop a complete and detailed research design. It is essential, however, that you explicate your research question and how it tests affect control theory, the method and content of data collection, and how those data will permit you to test affect control theory

Answer one of the following questions (III-VI).

III. Religious conversion is a relatively common occurrence. Most research on this phenomenon has been conceptually grounded in either "religious switching," which focuses on the push and pull factors that predict changes in religious affiliation, or social movements. Much less attention has been paid to the implications of religious conversion for identity. In what ways can identity theories contribute to our understanding of the causes and consequences of religious conversion? We anticipate your answer will be based on both research to date and explication of potential contributions that have not yet been subjected to empirical test.

IV. There has been much argument over the years about the extent to which Blumer is representing Mead's original theoretical ideas. Review the McPhail and Rexroat claim that Blumer and Mead take fundamentally different positions with regard to the idealist and realist conceptions of social phenomena. If asked to write a theoretical opinion piece about the McPhail/Rexroat vs. Blumer debate, which side would you take? Why? How would your essay be structured.

V. Mayhew's "Structuralism vs. Individualism" essays in *Social Forces* argue for a sharp contrast between the two metatheoretical perspectives. Summarize his argument briefly, and state your own position in the structuralism vs. individualism debate. Who would be your closest theoretical allies in your position (i.e., which theories most accurately capture your metatheoretical assumptions about the nature of social actors and social action)?

VI. Identity control theory and affect control theory have rather different views of the relationship between identity and emotion. Experimental evidence fairly consistently supports the affect control theory view. In recent work, however, Burke has argued that survey evidence shows support for the identity control theory view. Outline the differing theoretical predictions. Then summarize the survey evidence that Burke argues supports identity control theory. Taking the role of an affect control researcher, how would you respond to his findings (e.g., how do you think his evidence and analysis should be viewed, as a challenge to affect control theory's view of the identity-emotion relationship)?