

Duke University

Department of Sociology

**GRADUATE QUALIFYING EXAMINATION
STRATIFICATION AND MOBILITY**

August 23, 2004 – August 24, 2004

This examination has three sections. You must answer questions I and II. In Part III, you may select one question. Your answers should be as complete as possible. They should not exceed a total of 15 pages, excluding the references. Please follow a journal format for references and citations (e.g. American Sociological Review). You have 24 hours from the time you receive your exam to return it to Claudette Parker as an email attachment.

No discussion about any Qualifying Examination with any other person is permitted until after August 27, 2004.

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1. THEORY: Answer one of the two questions (A or B) below. Your answer should emphasize theoretical arguments and supporting empirical evidence.

- 1A. One of the salient dialectics in social stratification research has been between institutional/structural approaches and individual/agency approaches. Summarize major elements of these two approaches, citing core literature, and then describe in detail how such approaches have been employed recently in two specific areas of stratification research. Evaluate the usefulness of these approaches as they have been applied in these areas.

- 1B. “Class” has long been used as a competing theoretical framework in the study of stratification and mobility. Review its theoretical foundations for stratification/mobility research and describe its application and measurement in two specific areas of stratification research. Compare studies employing a class framework to other studies that have adopted alternative or competing frameworks. Summarize the alternative framework. How do these alternative explanations contradict or differ from each other?

2. METHODS: Answer the question below.

Select a specific area in social stratification. Identify one major unsolved or controversial problem in this literature. Briefly explain the problem. Then, propose a conceptual model and research design that might resolve the problem and suggest a study that can empirically support the utility of this approach. For your proposed study, please be sure to do the following:

- a. Formulate hypotheses that can be empirically verified;
- b. Operationalize the key concepts;
- c. Describe the evidence/data to be collected;
- d. Justify the analytic to be used in the research.

The research design can utilize qualitative and/or quantitative methods and you should justify your choice of methods.

3. **SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES:** Answer one question (A, B or C) below. This topic must be different from the one addressed in Question 2.

3A. Select one topic from the following list: education, race, gender, poverty.

- a. Describe the theoretical relevance of the topic to social stratification and/or mobility;
- b. Review the key issues related to this topic, citing the appropriate literature;
- c. Summarize a major controversy in this area;
- d. What is an important recent development (theoretical or methodological or empirical) in this area that should motivate future research on this topic?

3B. Comparative research, whether it is historical or cross-national, is gaining prominence in social stratification. Select a body of comparative stratification (mobility) research and summarize its current state of knowledge. Summarize key studies. What value is added to this area by conducting comparative analyses that is otherwise not possible with single nation and/or single period studies.

3C. Assess the current state of research on social networks and social capital as it specifically pertains to stratification and mobility. The discussion should include: (1) a review of research in this area, (2) a summary of current knowledge about the relevance of social networks and social capital to social stratification and mobility, (3) major unresolved or controversial issues, and (4) two or more areas or topics that deserve future research attention.