

Duke University  
Department of Sociology

Graduate Preliminary Examination  
Stratification, Mobility, and Labor Force Behavior  
September 24, 2001

PART I

Answer each of the following two questions:

1. In the study of social stratification, perhaps more than any other area of inquiry, the interaction between theory and methodology has played a crucial role in advancing knowledge. As Blau and Duncan observed in *The American Occupational Structure*, “the truth of the matter is that many an issue ordinarily considered to fall exclusively within the province of theory turns out to hinge on principles of methodology as soon as we consider how the issue could conceivably be resolved by empirical inquiry” (1967:194). Choose an area within social stratification research and discuss how theoretical ideas and methodological considerations interact in order to generate fruitful progress in knowledge accumulation.

2. Now select a different specific area in social stratification and mobility research. Identify one unsolved problem that involves competing theoretical arguments in the literature. Explain the main theoretical perspectives and derive their empirical implications. Then, propose a study that can empirically adjudicate between the competing arguments. Be sure to focus your discussion on:

- a. formulating hypotheses that can be empirically verified;
- b. operationalizing the key concepts;
- c. describing the evidence/data to be collected;
- d. explaining the methods used to conduct the research.

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

PART II

Answer one of the following questions:

3. There has been a long debate on the use of class-based analysis versus an approach based on occupational gradations in the study of intergenerational mobility. What are the main theoretical issues involved in this debate? How have empirical studies using these different schemes advanced this debate? Take a stand in this debate and substantiate your arguments with specific details from the research literature.

4. What are the theoretical foundations of social capital? Describe and compare the various research perspectives that utilize this concept (e.g., civic engagements, social networks, embedded resources, trust). Evaluate the current and potential contribution of one of these research perspectives to the study of stratification and mobility.