

**RACE/ETHNICITY COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS
SPRING 2008**

CORE (BOTH REQUIRED)

RAC-C1. One critique of the sociological study of race and ethnicity in the US is that the field is myopically focused on the black/white divide. Discuss the historical origins of this focus on black/white relations. What are the theoretical consequences of this approach? Who in the field has challenged this myopia? In what way does their work push the subfield beyond black and white? Please make reference to specific authors and theories when constructing your answer.

RAC-C2 Race studies have become largely process oriented. That is, a majority of contemporary studies no longer seek to establish the relationship between race and some outcome (e.g., poverty), but rather the mechanism that links race to the outcome in question. Why have scholars turned to this process orientation? Does qualitative versus quantitative work attend to this process orientation differently? Are there times when one method (qualitative versus quantitative) is more appropriate to understanding race and race related outcomes?

**RACE/ETHNICITY COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS
SPRING 2008**

***EXTENDED* (Answer two of the questions below)**

- RAC-E1. Compare and contrast Bonilla-Silva's "color-blind racism" and structural perspectives with two other dominant contemporary theories of racial inequality. Do you think Bonilla-Silva advances our understanding of the field? Why or why not? Please make reference to specific authors and theories in your response.
- RACE-E2 How has the traditional "race relations" perspective of race/ethnicity been revised by the recent development of the concept of privilege and whiteness studies? In your answer, summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the two concepts of privilege and whiteness, and assess the contributions of these concepts to the "race relations" perspective.
- RAC-E3 How appropriate and effective is the assimilation perspective for understanding race/ethnic relations and experiences in the 21st century in the United States? In your answer trace the revisions in the assimilation perspective since its initial development, and apply the assimilation perspective to at least three racial/ethnic groups.
- RAC-E4 Recent scholarship on African American and Latino families has begun to pay particular attention to the context (e.g., neighborhood studies) in which these families live. For example, Wilson (1996) concludes that the neighborhood context sets the stage for how African American men and women interact, including whether they marry, the quality of their relationships, and levels of fertility. There seems little doubt that context is important, but in what ways may it be particularly salient for racial and ethnic minorities in determining their life chances, compared to whites? What conclusions can we draw about shared experiences in minority versus dominant group families and what are some significant differences? How can this research be extended?

**SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION
SPRING 2008**

CORE (BOTH REQUIRED)

- SP-C1 Using two of the following social psychological theoretical frames – social structure and personality, symbolic interactionism, structural social psychology – what metatheoretical assumptions does each perspective make about actors, about social structure, and about the relationship between the two? In terms of these approaches, highlight any major points of agreement and disagreement between each perspective. Remember to use and cite specific theories to support your points.
- SP-C2 A broad range of methodological approaches have a long tradition within social psychology – observation, surveys, experiments, ethnographies, etc. Select a social psychological topic or concept. Describe ways of studying this topic/concept using two different methodological approaches. In so doing, be sure to provide the research questions and basic research designs that could be used to study this topic/concept from the two methodological approaches. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, including issues of reliability and validity? Could your specific topic/concept be examined using other methodological approaches? Explain.

**SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION
SPRING 2008**

EXTENDED QUESTIONS – 2 SELECTED ACCORDING TO INSTRUCTIONS BELOW

Answer either #E1 or #E2

- SP-E1 Until fairly recently sociological social psychology has been dominated by cognitive orientations, reflecting the predominantly cognitive perspectives within sociology and psychology. Recently, however, sociological social psychologists have “rediscovered” emotion. Using the writings of contemporary social psychologists, discuss what is to be gained by including emotion in our theories and studies of the self and social behavior.
- SP-E2 What causes someone to be angry and what leads someone to mask his or her anger? Select 2 different theoretical approaches to emotion and address these two questions.

Answer either #E3, #E4, or #E5

- SP-E3 Kohn and his colleagues (e.g., Kohn and Schooler 1983) were instrumental in outlining how structural location (e.g., class status) is a powerful determinant of socialization, family functioning, and individual behavior. In terms of this line of research, detail how structural location is a determinant of the social psychological functioning of families and individuals. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this perspective? Describe one other social psychological perspective (e.g., symbolic interaction) and explain how this framework would differently (and/or similarly) make the connection between structure and the individual?
- SP-E4 Two theories that dominate much of the research in structural social psychology are exchange theory and expectation states theory. Compare and contrast these two theories in terms of their fundamental concepts, basic assumptions, and scope conditions. Finally, argue whether you believe these theories are (a) fundamentally different or (b) are more similar than traditionally recognized. For example, is there any way to think of expectation states theory in exchange-theoretic terms?
- SP-E5 It is fair to say that the concept of the self has “invaded” or been incorporated into a wide variety of social psychological theories, even some that might not be thought to be hospitable to such a concept. What is the “self”? What are some of the various conceptions of the self? Why are these conceptions formed as they are; that is, what are the issues which lie behind these conceptions? To what theoretical problems does the concept of “self” address itself? Why is the concept of “self” important to a sociological social psychology?

CRIMINOLOGY COMPREHENSIVE EXAM
Spring 2008

CORE (BOTH REQUIRED)

CRM-C1 Over 70 years ago, Jerome Michael (a lawyer and faculty member at Columbia University Law School) and Mortimer Adler (a philosopher and a faculty member at the University of Chicago) published a now-infamous report criticizing the state of criminology in the early part of the 20th century. They reached three main conclusions:

- "...criminological research has not achieved a single definite conclusion."
- Criminology is characterized by "raw empiricism...an exclusive emphasis upon observation [or variable analysis] to the total neglect of the abstraction of analysis [i.e., general and abstract theory]."
- Social scientists (namely sociologists and psychologists), "because of their misconception or inadequate conception of the nature of an empirical science and of the methodology of the empirical sciences, have shown themselves utterly incompetent to construct a science of criminology."

Drawing on pertinent theoretical and empirical work from criminology that has taken place since the days of the Michael-Adler report, develop an essay explaining how the report would be received if it were published today. Thinking about the current state of criminology, are there no "definite conclusions"? Is criminological research characterized by atheoretical variable analysis and "kitchen sink" models where researchers throw every variable into their models in willy-nilly fashion to see what happens (i.e., "stepwise close your eyes")? Are contemporary criminologists, as a whole, "incompetent" when it comes to the methodology of the empirical sciences?

CRM-C2. Research on neighborhood effects on criminal activity and deviant behavior has enjoyed a renaissance over the past 15 years, along with social disorganization theory. What is it about neighborhoods that criminologists find important to our understanding of crime? How does social disorganization theory tie into neighborhood effects? What are the critiques, both theoretical and methodological, of this line of research? Finally, select at least one other theory and assess how well it explains neighborhood effects on crime compared to social disorganization theory.

CRIMINOLOGY COMPREHENSIVE EXAM
Spring 2008

EXTENDED (Answer two of the questions below)

- CRM-E1. There are important debates in criminology surrounding the issue “How do we define crime?” Discuss this issue using at least two different types of crime as examples. How does this definitional issue impact our understanding of crime’s correlates?
- CRM-E2. In what ways have critical criminologists extended the theoretical and empirical knowledge of criminology by focusing on crime control? How does this differ from mainstream criminology; and what are the primary issues/debates in this literature?
- CRM-E3. Discuss the relationship between your chosen correlate and crime. Be sure to explain the relationship (between your chosen correlate and crime) based on both theoretical and empirical research. In your opinion, what is the single most important correlate of crime? Discuss why other correlates, while important, do not impact rates of criminal offending to the same degree.
- CRM-E4. Select a specific type of crime on which you believe you are an expert. Discuss this crime both empirically and theoretically. What are the major findings relating to your crime? Discuss how at least two theoretical perspectives would explain this crime. What are the questions that still need to be answered relating to this crime?

**FAMILY COMPREHENSIVE EXAM QUESTIONS
SPRING 2008**

CORE (BOTH REQUIRED)

FAM-C1. Choose an area of research within the sociology of families. Summarize the major findings in this research area and then describe the general characteristics of a study you plan to conduct in the area. What methodological and theoretical deficiencies or shortcomings of this literature is your study designed to remedy?

FAM-C2. It is becoming clearer that the 1950s American family was not, at all, "traditional". What evidence is there that the 1950's prototypical family does not reflect the experiences of families from different racial-ethnic backgrounds and how has family research helped to dispel the image of the 1950s prototypical family? Be sure to defend your answer with reference to the literature and be specific.

GENDER COMPREHENSIVE EXAM QUESTIONS
Spring 2008

CORE (BOTH REQUIRED)

GEN-C1 What are the strengths and weaknesses of various conceptualizations of the concept of gender used by sociologists over the last four decades? In your answer, compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses of at least three (3) distinct conceptualizations of gender which developed at different times since 1970, and assess the likelihood of each conceptualization to be an effective basis from which an intersectional theory of gender, race, and class can be developed.

GEN-C2 What are the consequences and implications of the shift from predominately quantitative research to primarily qualitative research in Gender & Society since its inception in 1987? In your answer, compare and contrast the extent to which quantitative and qualitative research approaches qualify as “feminist methodology” using specific research examples from at least two (2) of the following topical areas: family, work, sexuality, violence.

**MEDICAL SOCIOLOGY COMPREHENSIVE EXAM QUESTIONS
SPRING 2008**

CORE (BOTH REQUIRED)

- MED-C1 Pick one of the following two important issues medical sociologists have devoted considerable energy to addressing. For that issue summarize, in detail, our current state of understanding. Then provide a detailed discussion of the direction in which you think that sub-field should move.
- A. The effect of early life course health status on later life health,
 - Or
 - B. The power of the medical profession in determining the delivery of health care in America.
- MED-C2 The “fundamental cause” perspective has become an important cornerstone of medical sociology and is partially responsible for the renewed interest in stratification and health that is evident in medical sociology. Chose any one of the following dimensions of stratification- age, race/ethnicity, social class, gender- and provide a detailed summary of the empirical evidence regarding its relationship to health.

**DEVIANCE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM QUESTIONS
SPRING 2008**

CORE (BOTH REQUIRED)

DEV-C1 Deviance scholars are divided into two major camps: those who opt for a constructionist (sometimes called a subjectivist approach) and those who prefer an objectivist approach. Drawing on readings from the Core Reading List, explain the differences between these approaches and provide examples of important research studies within each tradition. Then defend the approach that you find to be superior for understanding deviance.

DEV-C2 Using readings from the Core Reading List, discuss the most important contributions that the study of deviance has made to the discipline of Sociology. Divide your response equally between methodological and theoretical contributions.

**CLASS COMPREHENSIVE EXAM QUESTIONS
SPRING 2008**

CORE (BOTH REQUIRED)

- CLS-C1 Compare and contrast Marx's and Weber's conceptualizations of "class." How have these conceptualizations been used by contemporary sociologists and how have contemporary sociologists modified (e.g., synthesized) the original concepts? Please provide a critical assessment/evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of these contemporary followers of Marx and Weber. Which perspectives do you find more persuasive, and why?
- CLS-C2 A significant amount of research has focused on status attainment and occupational mobility. This research has been heavily methodological, and indeed has had a significant influence on the ways in which sociologists in various areas analyze data. Although not always explicit, this research also is grounded in important theoretical concerns. How do the basic methods and statistics used in this research relate to these underlying theoretical questions? To what degree have the methods shaped the important questions in this research? What conclusions has this research reached regarding these theoretical questions? How has other research (and the research methods used) challenged these conclusions?

**CLASS COMPREHENSIVE EXAM QUESTIONS
SPRING 2008**

EXTENDED QUESTIONS – 2 SELECTED ACCORDING TO INSTRUCTIONS BELOW

Answer either #E1, #E2, or #E3

- CLS-E1 How different would the scholarship on economic inequality be if sociologists had studied wealth as fully as they have studied income? In your answer compare and contrast what is known about the distribution of wealth and income, and assess the positive and negative consequences of sociology's almost exclusive focus on income.
- CLS-E2 An economist once said that "mainstream economics is about how people make choices while sociology is about how people have no choices to make." Is this an accurate portrayal of the "structural approach" that sociologists take in explaining social inequality? If yes, why? If no, why not?
- CLS-E3 The American educational system is often referred to as the "great equalizer," one that creates and reinforces the impression of the United States as a "classless society." Is this line of thinking supported by sociological research? Be sure to rely heavily on the relevant literature in your discussion of this question.

Answer either #E4, #E5, or #E6

- CLS-E4 How is race and/or gender inequality created via work? In your answer (a) identify and use research to illustrate the known processes or mechanisms that create and maintain inequality at various micro-to-macro levels of work activity [i.e., jobs, firms/organizations, occupations/industries, labor markets, economic sectors], and (b) develop an argument [with rationales] about which mechanism or combination of mechanisms have to be included in any viable explanation of work inequality.
- CLS-E5 Explanations of inequality involving class, race and gender have increasingly become overlapped in recent sociological analyses. Discuss how this approach has modified thinking and research around various forms of social inequality. Take any research domain in inequality and show how the "linear" thinkers of the past could have benefited by considering the intersection of these three systems of oppression.
- CLS-E6 The work of William Julius Wilson, particularly his important trilogy of *The Declining Significance of Race*, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, and *When Work Disappears*, refocused sociology's attention on urban poverty, the effects of neighborhoods, and issues of race and class. Critically evaluate the contributions of Wilson's work and the research that it inspired, drawing on both quantitative and qualitative findings.

**MENTAL HEALTH COMPREHENSIVE EXAM QUESTIONS
SPRING 2008**

CORE (BOTH REQUIRED)

MH-C1 Sociological analyses of mental illness often focus on the distribution of psychological disorders across the demographic characteristics of age, race/ethnicity, gender, and social class. One possible way to judge the adequacy of a theory is to ask how well it explains these findings. Select one demographic characteristic and compare the ability of two theories to explain its distribution of psychological disorders. Specifically, you need to a) discuss the major findings related to your selected demographic characteristic; b) select two theories (e.g., Labeling, Social Stress, or Identity) and describe each; c) discuss how well or poorly the theory explains one of the following: age, race/ethnicity, gender, or social class pattern.

MH-C2 Name three methodological issues in studies that focus on mental health outcomes. In your review of these issues, be sure to state how these issues manifest themselves in the research literature. How have scholars attempted to resolve the issues that you named. What do you believe are the necessary steps needed to move forward in further resolving these issues?