

12 October 2001

DOCTORAL EXAMINATION IN SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

Answer 4 questions total as indicated in the options below. If you have questions, you may contact Rachel Rosenfeld (2-1008, 967-6845, rachel_rosenfeld@unc.edu).

A. Answer the following question.

1. One way that U.S. society has attempted to reduce inequality by race, ethnicity, gender, national origin, and other ascribed characteristics is through affirmative action legislation and policy.

(a) What is meant by affirmative action? To what kinds of inequality does it apply?

*Now think about gender, race/ethnic, and gender*race/ethnicity inequalities in particular.*

(b) Why (or to what extent or for whom) would you expect affirmative action to work ?

(c) Why (or to what extent or for whom) would you expect it not to work?

(d) What is the evidence with respect to the impact or lack of impact of affirmative action sorts of approaches to reducing inequality?

B. Answer any 3 of the questions below.

2. Following publication of *The American Occupational Structure* (1967), there was an explosion of work on social mobility between and within generations, using mobility tables and status attainment models.

(a) What questions were these studies trying to answer?

(b) What theories, if any, were they using? What assumptions were involved in this research?

(c) What were the major things we learned from social mobility research over the last 3 decades, about inequality in the U.S. and in other countries?

(d) Where, do you think, this research should go? Or should it just go away?

3. In his book Choosing the Right Pond: Human Behavior and the Quest for Status, the labor economist Robert Frank presents the following two tables of public opinion data. Table 2.1 shows the cross-sectional relationship between income (in 1970) and happiness. Table 2.2, in contrast, shows trends in happiness over time in the US between 1946 and 1970. Frank notes that between 1946 and 1970, per capita income rose from \$2,500 in 1946 to \$3,890 in 1970 (both numbers are in inflation adjusted 1970 dollars).

When you interpret these two tables together, what do they suggest? Interpret this evidence in light of what you have read regarding stratification and social class.

4. There is a high level of income and wealth inequality in America today. In answering the questions below, be sure to represent the diversity of opinions in the literature.

- (a) Describe the level of income and wealth inequality in America.
- (b) Discuss the various explanations for why such inequality exists (including those based on cognitive abilities) and evidence for these explanations.
- (c) Is this level of inequality the result of a fair or meritocratic process?
- (d) How would you define exploitation? Is the current level of inequality in America the result of exploitation?

5. Gerry Lenski, in *Power and Privilege*, proposed a grand theory of the evolution of inequality.

- (a) Briefly describe his theory relating inequality with the level of subsistence technology.
- (b) Is it possible to use parts of this theory to describe inequality between countries today? What insights would this give?
- (c) What would be the limits of applying the theory to current international inequality? What else would you need?

6. Consider the large waves of immigration to the U.S. about 100 years ago and now. At the time of the earlier influx, the main ideology among progressives was assimilation or the melting pot. Today, in discussions of current immigration, these ideologies have become very unpopular among intellectuals. Instead, their major ideological stance involves such goals as diversity and multiculturalism.

- (a) Why is there this difference?
- (b) To what extent do you think multiculturalism without hostility among diverse groups is possible? What would you predict will happen in the next decade with respect to differences and relationships among different national-origin groups? Draw on the literature about immigrants=achievement, on relationships among ethnic groups and between majority/minority groups, and about interest groups more generally.