DOCTORAL EXAMINATION IN SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

Fall 2005

Answer a total of 4 questions among the following 6. If you have any question during the exam you may contact Philip Cohen at pnc@unc.edu.

1. How do the family and labor market interact with regard to gender inequality? Discuss contrasting theories of gender within households and families, and how these theories might explain such questions as the levels and historical trends in women's labor force participation, occupational specialization by gender, and the gender division of housework and care work. Finally, how might these mechanisms differ across either (1) types of societies in an evolutionary-comparative perspective, or (2) modern industrial societies, or (3) race/ethnic/class groups within the United States, and might we learn from further analyzing that variation?

2. Do classes exist? Giddens, in *The Class Structure of Advanced Societies*, proposes the term “structuration” to discuss the relationship between social class and “life-chances”. As part of a larger debate on the existence of classes in contemporary industrial countries, Kingston (2001, *The Classless Society*) uses this concept to evaluate whether social classes exist in the United States or whether we live in a society characterized by “nongalitarian classlessness”. Discuss the following issues, citing relevant literature.
   1. Review the debate on the existence of social class
   2. Link the debate to Giddens' and Kingston's use of the concept of “structuration” and empirical evidence on social mobility, class culture, and class identification
   3. Present and motivate your own opinion of whether or not classes exist.

3. This question is about poverty in the United States. Discuss the following issues, citing the relevant literature as necessary.
   1. How is poverty measured in the U.S.? In your opinion, is this a good way to measure poverty?
   2. What have been the principal trends in poverty in the U.S. over the last half century? What processes of social change might be behind these trends?
   3. Discuss the impact of the welfare reforms of the 1990s on poverty in the U.S.

4. Design a study to address an important existing debate or unanswered question relating to the development of economic inequality in modern industrial societies in recent decades. In your proposed design, assume an unlimited budget. Address the following issues.
   1. Describe the existing debate or unanswered question. Be specific about why the question is important and the relevant literature, including weaknesses in existing literature if applicable.
   2. What hypotheses would you test? With what measures and methods?
   3. Finally, explain how the conclusions you could draw from your study would help resolve the important unanswered question you specified at the beginning.
5. One of the most comprehensive attempts to understand the nature of stratification systems over the full range of human societies is the ecological-evolutionary theory of Gerhard Lenski. Discuss the following points.
   1. What are the bases and the main categories of the typology of human societies that Lenski uses to explain the nature of stratification systems?
   2. What are the main social mechanisms that Lenski evokes to explain the nature of the stratification systems in relation to the type of society?
   3. What predictions does Lenski make regarding the evolution of social inequality in the course of socio-cultural evolution, and how successful have these predictions been?

6. In 1967 Blau and Duncan inaugurated a tradition of research on social stratification and mobility that came to be known as status attainment research. In 1994 Herrnstein and Murray’s *The Bell Curve (TBC)* attracted considerable attention for emphasizing the role of cognitive ability in the attainment process. Do the following, citing relevant literature as appropriate.
   1. Provide a brief overview if the evolution of research on social stratification and social mobility; what are the dependable findings (if any) of that tradition of research.
   2. Describe the main arguments/findings of *TBC*.
   3. How did *TBC* relate to the existing literature on social stratification and mobility, particularly the status attainment tradition?
   4. Assess the current state of knowledge on the role of cognitive ability in the attainment process.