1 Instructions

Answer a total of 4 questions among the following 6. If you have any question during the exam you may contact François Nielsen at francois_nielsen@unc.edu. Although the Committee is not currently imposing a pages limitation on doctoral exams, we request that you try keeping the length of your answers within reasonable limits, such as the equivalent of 10 double-spaced pages per question at most. A bibliography or list of references is not needed. Instead identify cited literature informally in the text of your answers (e.g., Marx and Engels in Communist Manifesto, Hout and DiPrete (2006), Ganzeboom et al. in ARS, etc.).

2 Questions

1. Compare and contrast the analyses of social revolutions in a capitalist society proposed by Marx and Engels (as examplified, say, in Manifesto), on one hand, and of Vilfredo Pareto, on the other. Discuss the following points.

   (a) How do the two perspectives describe the conditions under which a social revolution is likely to occur (nature of class relations, characteristics of the stratification system, etc.).

   (b) How do the perspectives describe / predict the unfolding of events in the course of a social revolution (role of the proletariat, the bourgeoisie, the intellectuals, alliances, ideologies, etc.).

   (c) What trends of social evolution do the two perspectives predict in the aftermath of a social revolution (possibility of a classless society, etc.).

   (d) Which perspective provides the best description of events and social trends that have taken place in at least one social revolution taking place after 1916 (the year of publication of Pareto’s Treatise).

2. A number of social scientists have noted that despite the Fair Housing Act of 1968 residential segregation on racial / ethnic lines has remained high in the U.S. – particularly among blacks and whites. The three most common explanations proposed by social scientists are: (1) individuals’ preferences to
live with their own group, (2) affordability constraints among race / ethnic
groups, (3) and institutional discrimination on the part of real-estate agents
and lenders. What is your view on the reasons why black-white segregation
persists? Support your argument using existing sociological research, pay-
ing special attention to the quality of data and methods, and the inferences
drawn from existing evidence.

3. Sociologist Joan Huber has argued that until late in the nineteenth century
women’s activities in their most vigorous years had been constrained by a
nearly continuous pattern of pregnancy and lactation, a pattern that that was
poorly understood until late in the twentieth century and remains virtually
unknown among sociologists:

Most moderns are surprised to learn that until about 1900, in-
fants typically were nursed on demand, every 15 minutes on av-
erage during the day for about two years, and less often for an-
other two or more years. A mother toted her child or parked it
nearby. The pattern had evolved among our primate ancestors be-
cause it maximized infant survival. If a forager mother gave birth
before the older child could follow her in the daily food search, it
died. Only very frequent suckling could prevent ovulation. Owing
to the danger of spoiled food, the cycle persisted in settled soci-
eties till about a century ago when the invention of sterilization
and provision of safe drinking water enabled caregivers to provide
substitutes for maternal milk.

Discuss the implications of these biodata (if any) on gender stratification in
historical periods and today.

4. Paula England engaged in a debate with economists on gender inequality in
earnings. Please summarize the issue debated and the evidence she provided.
In your judgment, which side seems to be winning the argument, and why?

5. One of the most comprehensive attempts to understand the nature of strat-
ification systems over the full range of human societies is the ecological-
evolutionary theory of Gerhard Lenski. Discuss the following points.
(a) What are the bases and the main categories of the typology of human
societies that Lenski uses to explain the nature of stratification systems?
(b) What are the main social mechanisms that Lenski evokes to explain the
nature of the stratification systems in relation to the type of society?
(c) What predictions does Lenski make regarding trends of social inequality
in the course of socio-cultural evolution, and how successful have these
predictions been?

6. Major goals of research on social stratification and mobility from the middle
of the 20th Century to the present have included
(a) Understanding how individuals in society achieve occupations associated
with various levels of status and economic rewards.
(b) Understanding how the social origins of individuals (i.e. characteristics of their family of origin) affect the status they eventually achieve.

(c) Understanding how the level of industrialization of a society and other structural characteristics of the society (e.g., different levels of emphasis on “meritocracy”, different configurations of mechanisms of “social reproduction”, different political institutions, etc.) affect the process of inter- and intra-generational achievement.

To answer this question analyze the main theoretical assumptions that have motivated social stratification research on these issues; discuss the extent to which this research has succeeded, or failed to succeed, in reaching these goals; identify emerging perspectives (if any) that might help social scientists achieve these research goals.