

Theory Area Exam Questions

THEORY EXAM DAY 1

Please include the question with your typed answer, and number the pages.

Classical

What is the relationship between the individual and society according to Durkheim, Marx, Weber, and Simmel?

Space/Place

Different theorists advance their own definitions of place, specifying different factors that separate places from spaces. For instance, Gieryn (2000) emphasizes that places are separated from spaces by virtue of their geographic location, material form, and investment with value. While others (e.g. Paulsen 2004, Gans 2002) underscore the practical use of the place as a defining feature. Still others (e.g. Tuan 1977) argue that places become visible through a variety of techniques: “rivalry or conflict with other places, visual prominence, and the evocative power of art, architecture ceremonials and rites.” (178). Discuss the key theories of place and space, considering, in particular, the process through which spaces become places.

Theory Area Exam Questions

THEORY EXAM DAY 2

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Urban

Beginning with the earliest sociological theorists, cities have been seen as sites of anomie, social disorganization, and unconventionality (e.g. Durkheim 1933 and Simmel 1957). Building on these theories, early urban sociology has considered the ways that urban life affects social life in and outside of the city, paying special attention to whether there exists a distinctly urban way of life (e.g. Wirth 1938). However, this theory has been met with criticism for being overly simplistic (e.g. Fischer 1975, Gans 1994). Describe these theories of urbanism. In particular, explain how they account for the increased prevalence of social problems (as well as innovation and creativity) in cities.

Collective Memory

What are the leading sociological theories of collective memory? Theories of collective memory have typically had to contend with issues of whether memories are collective or collected (in the terminology of Olick 1999) as well as the difference between commemoration and collective memory (Conway 2010). Describe the different terminology. Consider issues such as: Is collective memory an individual or collective process? How do these different understandings lend themselves to different subject matter?