

SUBSTANTIVE AREA: Sociology of Education

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OVERALL SCOPE OF AND EXPECTATIONS FOR THE EXAM

Sociologists of education are fundamentally interested in how education functions as an institution within and across societies. Below are some broad questions that researchers in this area seek to answer with theories and empirical research:

- What effects do schools have on individuals and the society as a whole?
- Why are the historical and systemic causes of school expansion? What implications does school expansion have for society?
- Why do some students learn more and go further in school than others?
- How are school resources (as related to learning opportunities) allocated to students? Which school resources affect student achievement and attainment?
- How does the socio-demographic and academic composition of the school affect (a) the learning opportunities that students receive and (b) student achievement and attainment?
- How do peers and friendships affect student outcomes?
- How do families affect student outcomes?
- How do ascriptive factors such as race and gender affect students' learning opportunities, achievement, and attainment?
- How does the educational system sort individuals into different places in the labor market? How does schooling affect labor market outcomes?
- How do schools work as organizations and with what consequences for students, teachers, and school administrators?

Students will be expected to be familiar with the dominant theoretical perspectives and the latest empirical research in the field. Researchers from other fields (e.g., economics, anthropology, psychology, education policy) focus on many of the same questions that sociologists of education study. This exam focuses on *sociological* perspectives and research on education. However, while students are not expected to master the relevant literature in these fields, they should be familiar with research from other disciplines when it clearly intersects with the

research of sociologists. Finally, students should understand important methodological innovations and debates within our field of study. Examples includes: debates about the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to studying the same questions; debates about internal validity; debates about external validity; debates about measurement; etc.

EXAM PREPARATION

USE OF READING LISTS

The committee provides a general reading list for students interested in taking this area. (See attached at the end of this document.)

REQUIRED/RECOMMENDED COURSES

The department offers a two-semester overview of the field on a regular basis. (Sociology of Education I and Sociology of Education II – SOC 63239, sections one and two.) While the committee does not require that students take these two courses before taking the exam, we strongly recommend doing so.

EXAM FORMAT

The exam consists of two types of questions: short-answer “identifications” of authors and books, and “long” essay questions that test students’ knowledge of the field. Long answer questions will ask you to provide a well-elaborated essay in which you demonstrate knowledge of both abstract sociological principles as well as concrete examples of research. Questions from past exams may appear again on future exams (perhaps with modifications), in addition to new questions. Students will not be asked to write possible exam questions.

On the first day, student will be asked to identify two of four authors and two of four books (see lists below). Students will also be asked to answer ONE REQUIRED long essay question on day one. For day two, students will be asked to select and answer TWO of four possible long essays.

EXAM SCHEDULING

The committee will write and offer ONLY ONE EXAM per semester. If students fail the exam, they must wait until the next semester before they may retake this exam.

EXPECTATIONS REGARDING CITATIONS

The committee prefers that students follow ASA guidelines regarding citations: author(s) and year of publication are preferable. Students need not memorize the titles of articles, but citing book titles is recommended.

MISCELLANEOUS

N/A

EXAM RESULTS

POLICIES REGARDING RE-WRITES

Students will be assigned one of three grades for their exam: pass with distinction, pass, or fail. Students will **not** be allowed to rewrite parts of their exams in order to change a failing grade to a passing one.

FEEDBACK

After the committee renders its decision, the student will be notified of the results by e-mail. The student will then be asked to schedule a meeting with the committee chair to discuss both strengths and weaknesses of the students' performance. This meeting will be scheduled for all students, regardless of whether they pass or fail the exam. Other committee members may provide written feedback to each student, or they may set up a separate meeting to discuss the students' exam performance. This decision will be left at the discretion of faculty on the committee.

STUDY GUIDE FOR THE SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION AREA EXAM

REQUIRED BOOKS: Students will be asked to write about the main contribution and enduring impact of (some of) these books on the exam.

Barr, Rebecca, Robert Dreeben, and Nonglak Wiratchai. 1983. *How schools work*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bryk, Anthony S., Valerie E. Lee, and Peter Blakeley Holland. 1993. *Catholic schools and the common good*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Cuban, Larry. 1993. *How Teachers' Taught: Constancy and Change in American Classrooms 1890-1990*. Teachers College Press.

Durkheim, Emile. 1961. *Moral education: a study in the theory and application of the sociology of education*. New York: Free Press of Glencoe.

Entwisle, Doris, Karl Alexander, and Linda Olsen. 1997. *Children, Schools, & Inequality*. Westview Press.

Fischer, Claude, Michael Hout, Martin Sánchez-Jankowski, Samuel R. Lucas, Ann Swidler, and Kim Voss. 1996. *Inequality by Design: Cracking the Bell Curve Myth*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Jencks, Christopher and Meredith Phillips. Eds. 1998. *The Black-White test score gap*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institute Press.

Kerckhoff, Alan C. 1993. *Diverging pathways: social structure and career deflections*. Cambridge Eng.: Cambridge University Press.

Lareau, Annette. 2000. *Home advantage: social class and parental intervention in elementary education*. Lanham, Md: Rowmann & Littlefield Publishers.

Lareau, Annette. 2003. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. University of California Press.

Magnuson, Katherine A. and Jane Waldfogel (2008). (Editors). *Steady Gains and Stalled Progress: Inequality and the Black-White Test Score Gap*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Rosenbaum, James. 2004. *Beyond College for All: Career Paths for the Forgotten Half*. Russell Sage Foundation.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS: Students will not be asked to write about these books on the exam, but they will be helpful in preparing for the exam.

Berends, M. Springer, M. G., Ballou, D., & Walberg, H. J. (Eds.) (2009). *Handbook of research on school choice*. New York: Routledge.

Bowles, Samuel and Herbert Gintis. 1976. *Schooling in capitalist America: educational reform and the contradictions of economic life*. New York: Basic Books.

Carter, Prudence. 2007. *Keepin' it Real: School Success beyond Black and White*.

Collins, Randall. 1979. *The Credential society: an historical sociology of education and stratification*. New York: Academic Press.

Coleman, James Samuel. 1961. *The adolescent society: the social life of the teenager and its impact on education*. New York: Free Press of Glencoe.

Coleman, James Samuel and Thomas Hoffer. 1987. *Public and private high schools: the impact of communities*. New York: Basic Books.

Dreeben, Robert. 1968. *On what is learned in school*. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co.

Eckert, Penelope. 1989. *Jocks and Burnouts: Social Categories and Identity in the High School*. Teachers College Press.

Jencks, Christopher. 1972. *Inequality: a reassessment of the effect of family and schooling in America*. New York: Harper & Row.

Lortie, Dan Clement. 1975. *Schoolteacher: a sociological study*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Oakes, Jeanie. *Keeping Track*. Yale University Press.

Powell, Arthur G., David K. Cohen, Eleanor Farrar, Robert L. Hampel, Theodore R. Sizer, National Association of Independent Schools, Commission on Educational Issues, and National Association of Secondary School Principals. 1985. *The shopping mall high school: winners and losers in the educational marketplace*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Rosenbaum, James. 1976. *Making Inequality*

Tyack, David B. 1974. *The one best system: a history of American urban education*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

REQUIRED AUTHORS: Students will be asked to write about the scholarly contributions of some of these authors on the exam.

Karl Alexander	Maureen Hallinan	John Ogbu
Charles Bidwell	Robert Hauser	James Rosenbaum
Pierre Bourdieu	Christopher Jencks	William Sewell
Anthony Bryk	Alan Kerckhoff	Aage Sørensen
James Coleman	Robert Mare	
Adam Gamoran	John Meyer	

Recommended Authors: Students will not be asked to write about the scholarly contributions of these authors on the exam, but it will be helpful to know about them and their work.

Elizabeth Cohen	Barbara Schneider	Ralph Turner
Robert Dreeben	Yossi Shavitt	Pam Walters
Mary Metz		

JOURNALS

Required (1975-Present)

Students should become intimately familiar with the studies published in the following journals. While we do not expect students to know every detail in every article, students should be able to identify the most influential articles and be familiar with the main findings of most studies. In addition, students should be aware of how different studies in a given area (e.g., school effects) relate to and build upon one another.

Sociology of Education

*American Sociological Review**

*American Journal of Sociology**

*Social Forces**

(* Education related articles only)

Suggested (1985-Present)

These journals are not sociology journals, but sociologists of education, and other scholars who examine questions related to our subfield, often publish in them. While most of what is published is beyond the ken required for the exam, students will still find many relevant articles worth reading and citing.

American Journal of Education

American Education Research Journal

Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis

Review of Research in Education

Teachers College Record