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Preliminary Exam–Sociology of Education
April 4, 2008

Part I – Morning

ANSWER QUESTION 1 AND EITHER QUESTION 2 OR 3 (Devote about 1.5 hours to question 1 and 1.5 hours to either question 2 or 3.)

(1) [REQUIRED]
For each of **EIGHT (8)** of the following concepts or terms, provide a definition, discuss the significance of the concept or term in the sociology of education, and cite the principal sources in which the concept or term figures prominently.

> (a) social capital
> (b) de facto tracking
> (c) voluntary minority
> (d) MMI
> (e) *habitus*
> (f) contest mobility
> (g) education transition
> (h) correspondence principle
> (i) tight coupling
> (j) education aspiration
> (k) opportunity cost
> (l) heritability

AND

Question 2
Using the sociological literature, and evaluating multiple, distinct, socio-demographic dimensions, critically discuss the evidence bearing on the following proposition:

> Segregation is never equal.

OR

Question 3
Compare and contrast the education systems of **two** of the following: a)the United States; b)Mexico; c)the Czech Republic; d)Slovakia; e)China; f)Saudi Arabia; g)Israel; or h)South Africa. Draw on the sociological literature to point to both critical differences and enduring similarities between the two countries. Finally, stepping back from those particulars, discuss the merits of two theoretical perspectives of your own choosing for making sense of the pattern of commonality and difference across the two countries.

Part I – Afternoon

ANSWER TWO (2) OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS (Devote approximately 1.5 hours to each question.)

(1) Write an essay in which you critically evaluate the evidence bearing on the relationship between socioeconomic background and educational attainment. Be sure to identify the key theories that have attempted to explain the patterns of the educational attainment/socioeconomic background relationship, the evidence for and against those theories, and the critiques and responses concerning that evidence and its methodological basis.

(2) Education is associated with earnings. Several explanations for the association have been offered. Please list, then relate, 4 major theoretical explanations for the association. Relate and critically evaluate (on substantive and methodological grounds) the evidence that has been generated to support each of these theories. Finally, critically evaluate the claim that education has a causal effect on earnings.

(3) Sociologists of education have offered policy prescriptions on the basis of their research. Select **two** of the policy areas below and, for each, describe the sociological research that might inform policy development and convey how that research might link to policy. As you proceed, be sure to critically assess the strength of the evidence and to note the major methodological threats to reaching conclusions in the empirical research bearing on the policy area.

a) Class size and achievement
b) Tracking and achievement
c) High school drop-out prevention
d) Bilingual education
e) Magnet schools