Sociology of Health Comprehensive Exam.
Spring 2006. Wei-Pang Wang

General

Answer three (3) of the following questions.

1. Socioeconomic status differences in mental health or physical health. (Choose one focus).
   What are the patterns of socioeconomic status and physical/mental health? What aspects of
   socioeconomic status (education, earnings, family income, and various aspects of jobs) are
   associated with psychological or physical well-being? What types of psychological problems
   (depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, etc.) is socioeconomic status associated with? What types
   of physical problems (chronic, acute, infectious, noninfectious disease) is socioeconomic status
   associated with? What are the explanations for these patterns? Discuss possible explanations of
   the effects of SES on mental health or physical health, including but not limited to the sense of
   control versus powerlessness; social support; economic hardship, or characteristics of jobs.

2. Can access to medical care explain the association of socioeconomic status and health? Some
   argue that the poor or poorly educated have worse health than those of higher SES because of
   access to health care. What do they mean by this? What, specifically, differs? Does medical
   insurance influence health? Can medical care explain historical patterns of increases in life
   expectancy, decreases in mortality, and decline in disease rates? Do you think that medical
   care can have an effect on current day social inequalities in health? How, specifically, might it if
   you think it does?

3. How is physical health measured in surveys? In your opinion, what is the most
   methodologically rigorous method for assessing health status using surveys? Justify your
   answer with examples of different sorts of measures. Discuss the potential sources of bias or
   error in comparative studies of health status using survey methodology. Discuss the
   methodological difficulties inherent in assessing the prevalence of chronic health conditions,
   such as heart disease or diabetes, among different cultural, education, and income groups using
   survey methodology. On the basis of what we know of the measurement of health generally,
   what are the methodological characteristics of “better” or “worse” measures of health?

4. Do neighborhoods influence the physical health of residents who live there? What,
   specifically, about neighborhoods affects health? What types of studies are needed to answer
   the question of whether neighborhoods affect well-being over and above the characteristics of
   the individuals who live in the neighborhoods? If neighborhood characteristics affect physical
   health, why do they; that is, what are the mediators?

5. Summarize the gender differences in mental health that appear in the literature. What types
   of problems do women have more than men; and what types do men have more than women,
   such as depression, anxiety, paranoid schizophrenia, etc.? What are some explanations for the
   differences in distress? Could these differences reflect methodological artifacts in the
   measurement of affective states? Argue for or against this possibility.