

**Qualifying Exam
Race and Ethnicity Exam
Spring 2026**

The questions below constitute the qualifying exam for Race and Ethnicity in Sociology. To complete the exam, you must answer one question from each of the three sections below in an essay format. Each answer should be a self-contained essay approximately 8–10 pages long (i.e., 2,000–2,500 words). Although you must cite to referenced work in each essay, one comprehensive bibliography for all three questions will be sufficient. You may consult materials from the reading list you've been provided, as well as any other scholarly sources you've read during the exam period.

A. Choose one of the Following Questions

1. Within the sociology of race, a significant portion of the research has emphasized experiences of discrimination and racism. Explain how sociologists have come to conceptualize and operationalize racism over time?
 - a. Be sure to include critical examinations of racism and related concepts such as colorblindness, microaggressions, etc.
 - b. Additionally, establish how the study of racism is related to and situated within the study of race.
2. Much of the sociology of race and racism has focused on Black-white racial dynamics. How has the sociology of race and racism critically engaged the experiences of non-Black people of color?
 - a. Explain major trends and theories of race and racism that have been developed from and centering the experiences of non-Black people of color.
 - b. Consider how understandings of race and racism was advanced theoretically and conceptually by theorizing beyond the Black-white binary. In what ways do these efforts expand, complicate, disrupt, and critique what we already knew about race and racism?

B. Choose one of the Following Questions

1. Race, Racialization, and Racism: Draw on the works from Ann Morning's *The Nature of Race*, Omi and Winant's *Racial Formation in the United States*, and at minimum five other works from the Race and Ethnicity exam list, answer this prompt in three parts.

- 1) What is "race", who gets to define it, and what does it achieve? What is the role of racialization? Where do we see historical and contemporary evidence of racialization?
- 2) How has racism been theorized in sociology? What key theoretical features distinguish race and racism scholarship from one another, and is there overlap?
- 3) Finally, argue whether health disparities are a manifestation of race or racism.

2. Movement: As a species, humans moving around the planet is a practice that is as old as humanity itself. However, how and why humans move reveals much about race, racialization,

and racism. People move to new places for safety or opportunity. Humans are moved by other humans, whether it is through chattel slavery or genocidal displacement. People move to other places to extract resources. Humans try to prevent other humans from moving through the creation of borders and immigration policies.

Identify the central works that reveal sociological insights on movement, race, and racism in the following bodies of scholarship: immigration, assimilation, settler colonialism, and gentrification. Theoretically, where are these fields “in conversation” with one-another? Where are these fields dissimilar to one another? Be sure to define all relevant key-terms and theories.

C. Choose one of the Following Questions

1. Analyzing Structural Racism: In their seminal works, Massey and Denton's "American Apartheid" and Rothstein's "The Color of Law," the authors highlight the insidious nature of structural racism in U.S. housing policies. Using both texts, analyze how governmental actions and policies have perpetuated residential segregation and economic disparity. Discuss the historical context, sociological implications, and how these policies contribute to ongoing urban segregation and systemic inequality. Reflect on the persistence of these structures and their impact on social equity today. What solutions or reforms do the authors propose? Support your analysis with examples and relevant theoretical frameworks.

2. Wealth Inequality and Its Implications: Analyze the relationship between racial wealth disparities and societal mobility as explored in Oliver and Shapiro's "Black Wealth/White Wealth" and Shapiro's "Toxic Inequality." Discuss the ways in which these texts address the historical and contemporary factors contributing to wealth disparities among different racial groups. Make sure to include how housing policies and the growth of suburbs have shaped these disparities. Describe the specific solutions the authors suggest for reducing wealth inequality, and explain how they think these changes could affect social mobility for future generations. Finally, reflect on how wealth inequality influences social stability, opportunity, and the prospects of future generations, based on the authors' arguments.