

## **GENDER AREA EXAM, March 2017**

Committee: Elizabeth McClintock, Amy Langenkamp, Erika Summers-Effler

### **DAY ONE: Foundations, Theory, Methods**

#### **Foundations: Answer one of the following two questions (1 hour each)**

1. Joan Acker describes sociological understandings of gender as evolving from “from sex roles to gendered institutions” (Acker, 1992). What is meant by this? What is the current sociological understanding of gender and to what extent does this understanding remain controversial and in flux?
2. Within any time and culture, gender is a central axis of difference and of inequality. Gender is ubiquitous and, across cultures and eras, male advantage over women is nearly ubiquitous. What explains the universality of gender and the near-universality of male dominance?

#### **Theory: Answer one of the following two questions (1 hour each)**

1. How have theoretical perspectives on gender evolved over time? How has this influenced research on gender? What do you envision as the future trajectory of gender theory/theories, and how might this influence research?
2. Although the various theoretical perspectives on gender can be seen as competing perspectives, they can also be seen as complementary. How do social structural, social constructionist, postmodern, and biosocial perspectives contradict and/or complement each other?

#### **Methods: Answer question one and either question two or question three (2 hours total)**

**You must answer question one:**

1. As Sandra Harding notes, traditional social science theories have been applied “in ways that make it difficult to understand women’s participation in social life, or to understand men’s activities as gendered (vs. as representing ‘the human’).” [Harding. 1988. *Feminism and Methodology*. p.3]. What is meant by this critique and why is it not enough to simply “add women” to these existing social theories? *Your answer should not rely solely on Harding.*

**You may choose between question two and question three (answer one of them):**

2. How have the concepts of “feminist method,” a “feminist methodology,” and/or a “feminist epistemology” shaped research on gender and on the intersections of gender with race, class, and sexuality? How might these concepts be useful to you in your own work? *Your answer should differentiate between these terms.*

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3. In her essay, “The Master’s Tools Will never Dismantle the Master’s House,” what does Audre Lorde mean by this metaphor? In what ways does she extend the feminist critique of science as androcentric and falsely “objective”?

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### **DAY TWO: Masculinities; Sexualities**

**Masculinities: Answer question one and either question two or question three (2 hours total)**

*You must answer question one:*

1. How does masculinity create inequalities among men? Your answer should address race, class, sexuality, and homophobia.

*You may choose between question two and question three (answer one of them):*

2. Schrock and Shwalbe (2009) advance the field of masculinity through their conceptualization of manhood acts. In what ways does this idea conform to, as well as rebut, the tenets of hegemonic masculinity? Specifically, how does the interpretation of “multiple masculinities” differ between a manhood acts framework, and a hegemonic masculinity framework?
3. Actions and interactions can be interpreted as masculine, not because they universally signify masculinity, but because the acts are imbued with meaning. How do individuals interpret (inter)actions as masculine or non-masculine? How can alternative theoretical perspectives (e.g., structural, social constructionist, etc.) provide insight into the process by which (inter)actions come to be labeled as (non)masculine?

**Sexualities: Pick two questions to answer (1 hour each)**

1. Explain the tension between biological essentialism and social construction in the sexualities literature. How does the literature negotiate these divergent understandings of sexualities? What are the theoretical and political implications of this debate?
2. How has queer theory and other lines of sociological research on sexual orientation, attraction, behavior, and identity undermined and/or reinforced dichotomous understandings of sex, gender, and sexuality?
3. However conceptually distinct, sex, gender, and sexuality are frequently concordant—for example, across place and time, the majority of male persons identify as masculine and pursue primarily heterosexual unions. How does the sexualities literature explain (or fail to explain) the interdependence of sex, gender, and sexuality?