

Chapter 1 : The Social construction of gender - Judith Lorber - Google Books

The social construction of gender is a notion in feminism and sociology about the operation of gender and gender differences in societies. According to this view, society and culture create gender roles, and these roles are prescribed as ideal or appropriate behavior for a person of that specific sex.

The Social Construction of Gender "Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. Get yourself ready for a special day To be born a man or a woman in any society is more than a simple biological fact. It is a biological fact with social implications. Women constitute a distinct social group, and the character of that group, long neglected by historians, has nothing to do with feminine "nature. The biological sexes are redefined, represented, valued, and channeled into different roles in various culturally dependent ways. An American anthropologist has put it well: Before we can see how women thought of themselves and of their relations with men, we must find out how they were seen by men. The masculine conception of woman gave rise to idealizations and norms that strongly influenced the behavior of women, who lacked the power to challenge the male view of their sex. Rubens, *The Judgement of Paris*, c. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is style accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness According to the principles of the ruling ideology and the psychical structures that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification. Man is reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like. The man controls the film fantasy and also emerges as the representative of power in a further sense: As the spectator identifies with the main male protagonist, he projects his look onto that of his like, his screen surrogate, so that the power of the male protagonist as he controls events coincides with the active power of the erotic look. Excerpts from John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* p. To be born a woman has to be born, within an allotted and confined space, into the keeping of men. The social presence of women is developed as a result of their ingenuity in living under such tutelage within such a limited space. A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself. Whilst she is walking across a room or whilst she is weeping at the death of her father, she can scarcely avoid envisaging herself walking or weeping. From earliest childhood she has been taught and persuaded to survey herself continually. And so she comes to consider the surveyor and the surveyed within her as the two constituent yet always distinct elements of her identity as a woman. She has to survey everything she is and everything she does because how she appears to men, is of crucial importance for what is normally thought of as the success of her life. Her own sense of being in herself is supplanted by a sense of being appreciated as herself by another One might simplify this by saying: Men look at women. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: Thus she turns herself into an object -- and most particularly an object of vision: Tintoretto, *Susanna and the Elders*, Like the mirror in the paintings of Titian and Rubens above, what the young girl sees in the mirror is not her own reflected image, but that of the viewer looking at her. She is thus looking at herself being looked at. The sunflower was a motif employed by Anthony Van Dyck in a self-portrait. Like the sunflower seeks the sun, so does the court painter seek the favor of his patron. In the context of the domestic world of the early twentieth century, the sunflower would follow the patriarch of the family. The mirrored image thus acts like painting in purifying vision. We are born male or female, but not masculine or feminine. I consider three categories of such practice: I shall examine the nature of these disciplines, how they are imposed and by whom. I shall probe the effects of the imposition of such discipline on female identity and subjectivity. In the final section I shall argue that these disciplinary practices must be understood in the light of the modernization of patriarchal domination, a modernization that unfolds historically Styles of the female figure vary over time and across cultures: The current body of fashion is taut, small-breasted, narrow-hipped, and of a slimness bordering on emaciation; it is a silhouette that seems more appropriate to an adolescent boy or a newly pubescent girl than to an adult woman. Since ordinary women have normally quite different dimensions, they must of course diet. The reader is now addressed in the

imperative mode: Jump into shape for summer! Shed ugly winter fat with the all-new Grapefruit Diet! There are significant differences in gesture, posture, movement, and general bodily comportment: In her classic paper on the subject, Iris Young observes that a space seems to surround women in imagination that they are hesitant to move beyond: The "loose woman" violates these norms: In an extraordinary series of two thousand photographs, many p. Women sit waiting for trains with arms close to the body, hands folded together in their laps, toes pointing straight ahead or turned inward, and legs pressed together. The women in these photographs make themselves small and narrow, harmless; they seem tense; they take up little space. Men, on the other hand, expand into the available space; they sit with legs far apart and arms flung out at some distance from the body. Feminine faces, as well as bodies, are trained to the expression of deference. Under male scrutiny, women will avert their eyes or cast them downward; the female gaze is trained to abandon its claim to the sovereign status of seer. Women are trained to smile more than men, too. Feminine movement, gesture, and posture must exhibit not only constriction, but grace and a certain eroticism restrained by modesty: Here is field for the operation for a whole new training: While she must walk in the confined fashion appropriate to women, her movements must, at the same time, be combined with a subtle but provocative hip-roll. But too much display is taboo. Here, especially in the application of makeup and the selection of clothes, art and discipline converge. Hair must be removed not only from the face but from large surfaces of the body as well. Are we dealing in all this merely with sexual difference? The technologies of femininity are taken up and practices by women against the background of a pervasive sense of bodily deficiency: In the regime of institutionalized heterosexuality, woman must make herself "object and prey" for the man: In contemporary patriarchal culture, a panoptical male connoisseur resides within the consciousness of most women: Woman lives her body as seen by another, by an anonymous patriarchal Other. Excerpts from Rosalind Coward, *Female Desires* p. For looking is not a neutral activity. In this culture, the look is largely controlled by men. Privileged in general in this society, men also control the visual media. The film and television industries are dominated by men, as is the advertising industry. The photographic profession is no less a bastion of the values of male professionalism. The camera in contemporary media has been put to use as an extension of the male gaze at women on the streets. Here, men can and do stare at women; men assess, judge and make advances on the basis of these visual impressions. The ability to scrutinize is premised on power. But not wanting to risk male attention turning to male aggression, women avert their eyes and hurry on their way. Those women on the billboards, though; they look back. Those fantasy women stare off the walls with a look of urgent availability. But it is in these media where the definitions are tightest, where the female body is most carefully scripted with the prevailing ideals. Women internalize the damage created by these media; it is the damage of being the differentiated and therefore the defined sex. Women become the sex, the sex differentiated from the norm which is masculine. Women are the sex which is constantly questioned, explained, defined. And as the defined sex, women are put to work by the images. After all these images of women looking at their images in mirror, consider the one myth with the male looking at his own reflection: Narcissus as exemplified in this painting by Caravaggio: A youth who, having spurned the love of Echo, pined away in love of his own image in a pool of water and was transformed into a flower which bears his name. Narcissism- sexual excitement through admiration of oneself. On the basis of the preceding discussions, compare the following two images: Velazquez, *The Rokeby Venus*.

Chapter 2 : Social constructionism (video) | Khan Academy

Gender as a social construct generates its own prevalence. Saying gender is a social construct doesn't mean it's only a projection or somehow unreal, but that far reaching projections impose on individuals, that social pressure encourages conformity in that matter just like in any other.

Sexuality describes sexual identity, attraction, and experiences which may or may not align with sex and gender. This includes but is not limited to heterosexuality, homosexuality gay or lesbian , bisexuality, queer and so on. Sex and gender do not always align. Just as gender is a social construction, so too is sexuality. Queen Victoria wanted to stop male aristocrats from having sex with other men, something that was not openly talked about, but still practised. There was no word for men having sex with other men, and Queen Victoria charged her physicians with studying this phenomenon. This history shows that by its very invention of the word, homosexuality was set up as the Other of heterosexuality. This history stays with our laws in the present day, and it explains why homosexuality is largely outlawed in British colonial states it is illegal in 41 of 53 Commonwealth nations. Queen Victoria refused to believe that women would have sex with other women, which is why the laws today reflect more leniency though not necessarily social acceptance. Heterosexuality quickly became welded to ideas of sex categories "to be a man was to be a heterosexual man; to be a woman was to be a heterosexual woman. Heterosexuality " an idea that has only existed since the late s " became normalised in the early s. The alternative was to be legally punished. In many cases as I show below, homosexuality was permissible only for elite groups, or controlled for certain periods of time. In one way or another, all societies restrict the expression of sexuality, but the idea that heterosexuality is the mechanism by which this happens is false. Sexuality is historically and culturally variable. Sexuality in Australia Nationally representative surveys in Australia, the USA, and other nations show that human sexuality is diverse in its expression. Thus the sample over-inflated certain figures. Sexual Identity in Australia. More women overall report same sex attraction that they have acted upon. Men have slightly lower same-sex attraction in comparison to women. Men are also less likely than women to act on this attraction. This is likely due to the additional stigma placed on gay men, which stems from the historical policing of male homosexuality. More men report psychosexual disturbance " a sense of confusion about their same sex attraction. Again this may be possibly due to the cultural stigma about gay men which either causes heterosexual-identified men to experience anxiety about same-sex attraction, or perhaps they are reticent to act out on their same-sex desire. Male-to-male sex is less visible; it occupies a separate space in the sex industry, and gay relationships are largely de-sexualised in popular culture. Sexual Attraction in Australia. Amongst men who identify as heterosexual, Almost three times as many heterosexual women have experienced attraction towards women that they had not acted upon 6. Heterosexual people who are tertiary educated and working in white collar or professional jobs are most likely to have had a same-sex experience. Higher education lends itself to greater tolerance for experimentation and access to diverse experiences not withstanding prevailing prejudice and homophobia. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, this means dealing with exclusion and racism as well as homophobia. They have had sex before, but perhaps never; they may be in romantic relationships or in aromantic relationships with people of various genders, but not have sex. One commonality is that asexual people are often met with confusion or rejection when they come out to their families and friends. People misunderstand how people could reject sex altogether. It is tempting to describe these as examples of either homosexuality or transgenderism, but I note that cultural and historical context matters. For example, in my analysis of Two Spirit practices amongst Navajo groups, I noted that social scientists have used this tradition as an example of transgender experience, but some Native American scholars dispute this position. While some Native American activist groups are embracing the Two Spirit label, they do so with stronger respect for this as a spiritual position, rather than simply as a sexual identity. It is important to be careful when discussing the sexual and cultural practices of Others given the history of violence amongst colonised and minority groups. For these groups, gender identity is also about spirituality and connection to culture and Country. Most of the documented examples of non-binary practices

of sexuality involve high-status men. Undocumented examples may reveal other patterns, as I briefly show. Still, note that power, gender and class underscore these historical examples. It involves an adult male initiating a sexual relationship with an adolescent boy, but these relationships were not always constructed as romantic in the sense that Western cultures see this word today. Many people know these relationships were found amongst the upper classes of Ancient Greeks and Romans; perhaps most famously are the Spartans. Some Ancient Celtic groups also engaged in this practice, as did Ancient Persians, and in some cases this might involve castrating young boys. The Nanshoku Japan Wikimedia The Nanshoku were a class of Buddhist monks who were allowed to take young monks-in-training as lovers in a relationship that was considered serious and binding until the young boy grew up or left their training at the monastery. These practices were eventually eradicated as more women emigrated into the cities and because the government clamped down on male sex workers. They entered into a monogamous male relationship, though they were both free to continue having sex with women. Love, trust, mutual appreciation and sacrifice underscored these bonds. This practice is meant to cement loyalty between men who fought alongside one another. Young boys and girls live with their mothers separated from the men. At around age six to ten, boys are taken to live with the men. Ingesting semen is seen as a way to strengthen their masculinity and purify them from their feminine influences. Younger boys fellate older boys who are in their mid-to-late teens, and as they grow up, they become the fellated. Once they reach marriage age and have children, sexual contact between men and boys is prohibited. Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Women Other than the Two Spirit tradition amongst some Native American cultures, there are few well-documented examples of societies allowing classes of women to engage in same-sex or bisexual behaviours. Yet these cases are generally not socially sanctioned, ritualised or institutionalised to the same extent as same-sex relationships that have been allowed for elite men. This is an outcome of most societies being patriarchal, and conferring special rights and privileges to men over women. Adrienne Rich documented this historical pattern using the idea of compulsory heterosexuality, which has been forced upon women for much of history, in many though certainly not all cultures. This shows how much culture shapes sexuality. The map below illustrates more cultures that similarly recognise gender roles beyond male-female and sexual orientations beyond heterosexuality [click to enlarge](#). Sexual orientation gender map through history. Me I am, understand? Probably got, confused along the way. All of this Straight, Bi, Gay. I mean, how do I dignify how I identify? How is it I find my place in a race that graces the face of this Earth. And what is my individuality worth? I am me yet bound by commonality are we! Australian, Aboriginal, Man, Human, Gay! It is not labels. Names do not make me who I am. Who I am is someone so profound that words can never define.

Chapter 3 : Sociology of Gender – The Other Sociologist

The Social Construction of Gender This is crossposted at The Feminist Agenda. I've been involved in a number of conversations lately about the social construction of gender, and it occurs to me that what it means for gender to be a social construct, along with the implications of a social construction theory of gender, is not clear to a lot.

Gender identity can be affected by, and is different from one society to another depending on the way the members of society evaluate the role of females and males. Our gender identity can be influenced from the ethnicity of the group, their historical and cultural background, family values and religion. Often people confuse or misuse the terms gender and sex. To make the distinction clearer one could consider that we inherit the sex but we learn our gender. Gender is a structural feature of society and the sociological significance of gender is that it is a device by which society controls its members. Gender like social class and race can be used to socially categorize people and even lead to prejudice and discrimination. Prejudice is a set of attitudes, more likely unfavorable, towards members of a group. Discrimination is overt negative behaviors towards a person based on his or her membership in a group. When there is differential treatment of people based on their sex the term sexism defines this behavior. Gender discrimination is another way one could define sexism and in particular this is associated with discrimination and stereotyped beliefs against women. Stereotype ideas and beliefs regarding women, although they have been changed and improved, are still evident in our country and in other modern cultures. Unfortunately in several countries around the world such as Arabian countries, Africa and India things have not changed much and women are still considered a minority and do not have equal access and rights in their societies as do males. This variation regarding gender around the world makes prominent that gender identity is influenced by social variables and has little to do with biological variables. There are many different processes by which the expectations associated with being a boy or a girl is passed on through society. I recently attended a baby shower party and I was shocked first by the amount of items a baby needs and even more about the color choice of each item. Everything was pink, as a baby girl was expected, and honestly I never imagined how many different shades of pink actually exist for products such as baby clothes. The house decoration was pink, people were wearing pink or pastel colors, all the gift wrappers pink as well as the gifts themselves. My gift was one of the few items of a different color, as I chose yellow and light purple items, which was actually a challenging task to find as most of the items in the store I shopped were blue or pink. The social construction of gender could be further seen by the way parents behave to their children, by their expectations about how their children should behave and act, and by the toys they buy for them. For example girls are supposed to play with dolls and be sweet and emotional and boys are supposed to play with action figures and be aggressive and rational. Therefore clothes, toys, and even the language used with young children follow the trend of stereotyping gender. Children learn by modeling and the messages they receive and act accordingly. An example similar to the dress code we have for children can also be seen with adults, particularly in the colors, fabrics and designs specific to each gender. Another example is the situation of a female working in the business field that is expected to dress in a masculine way in order to be considered successful and to be taken more seriously. This could demonstrate again how social influences affect gender expectations and shape behaviors and norms regarding gender. Apart from the family, which is the first agent of socialization and learning gender identity, children learn from other sources such as school. Starting from the first years of school, including day care center years, children learn their gender identity from playing and interacting with other children and care providers. By visiting a child care program one may notice that the environment is arranged in ways to promote gender identity. Most likely there will be an area staged as the housekeeping corner where girls play and there will be another area with building blocks and tool kit items where the boys play. However it is believed by several that the kind of toys and roles children play affect their future and the skills they learn. Playing with blocks is considered giving experience in spatial relations and in mathematical concepts, where playing with dolls and dramatic role playing is associated with learning to be a nurturer. As children grow more stereotyped ideas

are involve regarding which subjects are favorable and suitable for each gender. For instance the most obvious example is math and probably all of us have heard the notion that boys are better in math than girls. Therefore one could see that again social influence affects perception about gender identity and roles. Furthermore the media also affects and influences gender identity. Children interpret these messages as "real life" which shapes their reality, behavior, and expectations of their gender role. However, the social construction of gender does not happen only once and does not stop with children. It continues throughout the rest of our lives and influences our perspective and the way we view things and situations. Regarding the media one is able to see an example of gender stereotyping by observing the messages of advertisements. Recently I had conversation with my husband relating to the issue of sexism regarding a car show he was watching on TV where standing next to the new cars were beautiful female models. My comment was that is an example of benevolent sexism. My husband did not want to accept this and he argued that male models are sometimes used as well. We end up watching the car show for over an hour in order to find a male model next to a car but we did not see any. Additionally cultural and religious beliefs and attitudes have a serious impact on gender identity and in many cases promote stereotype beliefs against women and lead to gender discrimination. When it comes to culture and religious influences in a society regarding the view of gender I believe the concept of institutionalized sexism is appropriate to describe this situation. When a society has specific norms people living within the society will adapt to them and they will do the same even for discriminatory norms. For instance when a society, due to religious and cultural reasons, view women as weak or inferior people living within the society will develop the same views and will act accordingly. One can see this for example in many Muslim countries and also with different religious groups, even in our own country. Society constructs our gender and categorizes its members similar as it does with age, ethnicity, race, social class and status. However the categorization according to gender is another way of manipulating members of a society and to promote inequalities. There are obvious biological and anthropological differences between the two sexes but we cannot use these differences to infer conclusions and provide stereotyped models about gender. As mentioned in the beginning sexism is the term that accounts for gender discrimination and has different forms. One of them already mentioned is benevolent sexism characterized by positive but stereotyped views of women. Contrarily another form is hostile sexism which is characterized by negative stereotypical views towards women. For instance hostile sexism views of women are centered on beliefs that women are inferior to men due to superficial views that one can hold again women. However no matter the form, sexism has overall negative consequences and results in stereotyping women, and even prejudice and discrimination. The United States of America and other developed countries have come a long way in trying to eliminate discrimination against women but there is still a room for improvement. Gender as mentioned above results from sociocultural influences. Research and theory derived from social psychology could be able to develop appropriate interventions that could target a vast range of individuals and institutions in order to promote equality of genders and eliminate gender discriminations.

Chapter 4 : The Social Construction of Gender - Applied Social Psychology

Full Text Social Constructionism. The social construction of gender comes out of the general school of thought entitled social constructionism. Social constructionism proposes that everything people "know" or see as "reality" is partially, if not entirely, socially situated.

This is crossposted at The Feminist Agenda. In other words, we all act as if they exist, and because of our intersubjective agreement, they do. The classic example of a social construct is money. Various cultures utilize paper, gold, silver, or other items as a medium for trade. To do this, we invest the object with value that we all acknowledge we act as if it has value, and this informs our practices when it comes to money. But money is not a thing that occurs independently of human activity in the natural world. Thus it is a social construction. But its existence is dependent on our culture and our practices. This means that its definition, use, meaning, value, etc. As our culture changes, so do our constructs. Some constructs come into being and then fall into disuse and thus go out of existence. Others remain but change from one culture and historical period to another. Gender is one such construct. And this variation and adaptation to conditions and social pressures reinforces the idea that gender is a social construction rather than some sort of essence that arises from biology. Instead, gender varies with cultural change. Generally speaking, gender is assigned at birth according to physical sex. And most of us get to be pretty darn good at acting out the appropriate script. For transgender and genderqueer individuals, performing the other script, or a different script altogether, is the only way to make life livable. So this description raises a number of questions. Why are there only two scripts, when bodies seem to come in more than two shapes? Why do we need these scripts at all? Why are we so committed to the idea that there must be a one-to-one correspondence between the two scripts we have and the two kinds of bodies we insist on believing people are born into? These are all good questions, and all things that feminists should be pushing on and tugging at the loose strings. A few brief answers: Hierarchy depends on difference, so you choose some physical differences, like genitalia and skin color, and invest them with significance. Once you have groups which are thought to be essentially different, you can build up and justify your hierarchy on the basis of them. Making them essential, or biologically grounded, gives them immutability and God-ordainedness. So then we need to maintain the one-to-one correspondence in order to maintain the stability and essential nature of the distinctions. And we especially must maintain the gender-sex link because of heteronormativity. As an outward marker of physical sex, gender allows us to identify which individuals are potential mates for us, and avoid the oh-so-horrifying experience of being attracted to someone with gasp! So what follows from the view of gender as a social construction? First, it reveals that gender is not immutable or set in stone. Harmful aspects of our construction of gender can and should be discarded. But beyond that, if gender exists to support hierarchy, then gender, as it is viewed and practiced in our culture, is not only uncomfortable for many people, but a tool of oppression. So at the very least, driving a wedge between sex and gender, and putting pressure on the notion that everyone has to fit into some kind of neat binary or follow some kind of carefully delineated script, benefits everyone and serves to weaken patriarchal structures. Second, the view is inconsistent in that it condemns one group trans folk for performing gender, but ignores the fact that all of us are performing gender all the time. If trans people reify gender by adhering to a script, then so do cis people. And even if this view was coherent, it shows a profound lack of compassion and understanding of the individuals. We are all of us born into a system that is already gendered, and our social survival depends on our learning how to perform the script. So this is an instance where we ought to hate the game, but not the player. The loosening of these strict categories and binaries can at least result in a view of sex and gender which is far more fluid and flexible, allowing more breathing room for everyone. This post was written by a Feministing Community user and does not necessarily reflect the views of any Feministing columnist, editor, or executive director.

Chapter 5 : Sociology of Sexuality – The Other Sociologist

The idea of social construction of gender sees society, not biological sex differences, as the basis for gender identity (Anderson, Logio & Taylor,). There are many different processes by which the expectations associated with being a boy or a girl is passed on through society.

Sorry, might have been better if that was a proper link. My views about sex and gender are here: November 2, at 9: That being said, I do think a lot what you said in your article is inaccurate and caricatured. People who are into talking about social identities tend to be fairly anti-essentialist, in my experience, though of course not universally so. A man who gets his dick chopped off is actually inflicting an extraordinary act of violence on himself. That being said, I stand by the claim that your post was misleading. However, the term is generally used in ways that suggest something much deeper and more fundamental than this. Gender identity seems to refer to some quasi-metaphysical property or essence that is fixed, unchanging, and may not be challenged. As I say in the OP, gender identity as I typically hear it discussed is widely thought to be socially constructed, dependent on socialization, contingent, and fluid. But to me, they really do seem like straw men. I am accurately reporting how it is frequently used in political discourse. You might not like that usage. But I did not make this up. The idea that gender identity is essential and innate is widespread now, and is being used to support the idea that one can be a woman without any social or medical transition of any kind. The fact that she expressed her views rudely, bluntly and offensively does not entail that they are intended to incite violence or hatred, and whether or not you like those views, she has a right to express them. She just wants to go to Cardiff and give a talk about women and power, and only keeps saying these things because she is being repeatedly interrogated on it by people who demand that she capitulate to their conception of womanhood. And the people who have bought tickets to hear her speak have a right to that, too. November 2, at Some people identify with neither binary gender role. If so, then what is the sense in which feminist trans women do identify with the gender role assigned to natal women? I have never thought about these things before. It seems to me that there was absolutely no need for Greer to express her views in the way she did, and the way she expressed those views was completely unhelpful. And I believe this is not the first time. Is the problem the way Greer expressed things and the perceived underlying motivating trans misogyny. Or is the criticism that the very view that Greer so crudely expressed, namely that trans women are not women, is itself a trans misogynistic claim? When we talk about people identifying with a given social role, I think the intent is to talk about people identifying with a role qua occupiers of that role, rather than thinking that the role entirely appropriate or fitting for them. To me, those are separate issues. Whether to call it transmisogynistic is I suppose a matter of terminology. Finally, just regarding the issue of how common it is outside academic discourse to view gender identity as socially constructed and related to socially constructed gender roles, here are a few quick examples. Again, my sense is that this is very common, and also that much of the pressure for trans people to say otherwise comes from gatekeeping mechanisms for transition therapies.

Chapter 6 : Social Construction of Gender

Feminist Understandings - Gender and Power. The social construction framework explains that there is no essential, universally distinct character that is masculine or feminine - behaviours are influenced by a range of factors including class, culture, ability, religion, age, body shape and sexual preference.

Among the most popular variations of the social constructionist theories is the gender role theory, considered by Alsop, Fitzsimons and Lennon as an early form of social constructionism. Social constructionism, briefly, is the concept that there are many things that people "know" or take to be "reality" that are at least partially, if not completely, socially situated. Examples include money, tenure, citizenship, decorations for bravery, and the presidency of the United States. Social constructionism is a theory of knowledge. Social constructionism focuses on how meaning is created. Emerging from the criticism of objectivity, social constructionism challenges concepts of knowledge put forward by positivism, which postulates the externality of reality and that empirically-proved truths are mind-independent. Knowledge is a social product. Power and hierarchy underlie social construction. This focus results in showing how individuals differ in status, entitlement, efficacy, self-respect and other traits based on the kind of interactions one is involved in and subjected to. Language is at the core of knowledge. Language is considered the building block of culture; it conveys meaning and creates the system of knowledge humans participate in. Ultimately, language has a huge influence on how humans perceive reality and, as a result, is the creator of this reality. Social construction is a dynamic process. Social constructionists emphasize the complexity of how knowledge is created in social interactions. Knowledge and meanings are not stable or constant; they are co-constructed in interactions with others, negotiated, modified and shifted. People are active in their perception, understanding and sharing of knowledge acquired from their social milieu. It is prudent therefore to consider this process when explaining the social construction of knowledge, including knowledge concerning gender. The individual and society are indissoluble. Social constructionists question the Western idea of an autonomous individual who can draw a clear line between the self and the society. According to social constructionism, individuals can create meaning only in relation to what they are exposed to in their environment. Paradoxically, the same individuals co-create the meanings that are available in this environment. They also argue that both the materialist and discursive theories of social construction of gender can be either essentialist or non-essentialist. This means that some of these theories assume a clear biological division between women and men when considering the social creation of masculinity and femininity, while others contest the assumption of the biological division between the sexes as independent of social construction. Gender, according to West and Zimmerman, is not a personal trait; it is "an emergent feature of social situations: Contemporary constructionist perspective, as proposed by Fenstermaker and West, proposes treating gender as an activity "doing" of utilizing normative prescriptions and beliefs about sex categories based on situational variables. These "gender activities" constitute our belonging to a sex as based on the socially accepted dichotomy of "women" and "men". It is noted, however, that these activities are not always perceived by the audience as being either "masculine" or "feminine", they are at constant risk of being assessed as more or less "womanly" or "manly"; ultimately, any behavior may be judged based upon its "manly" or "womanly" nature. This in turn points to the situational nature of gender rather than its inherent, essentialist and individual nature. Gender roles[edit] Gender roles are often centred around the conceptions of femininity or masculinity. In our society today, women are socialized as being the caretakers of the house, who nurture the children, cook and clean. With men, they "should" be the workhorse, the provider, protector, a leader, and a teacher to his family. Levant and Kathleen Alto write: A recent synthesis of meta-analytic studies of gender differences provides strong evidence for a social construct understanding of gender. Ethan Zell and colleagues examined more than 20, findings from 12 million participants comparing men and women on topics ranging from risk-taking to body image. The authors found that the majority of effects were very small to small, indicating far more similarities than differences between genders. Intersectionality theorizes how gender intersects with race, ethnicity, social class, sexuality, and nation in variegated and situationally contingent ways". A certain gendered patriarchy turns abstraction

into material reality. This reality is negotiated into each interaction we have. Diamond argues that gender identity is not a stable, fixed trait – rather, it is socially constructed and may vary over time for an individual. Social conformity has been widely studied on adolescents. Results showed that 6-year-old children tend to conform to choices that their peers find more popular. They begin labeling objects as "for girls" or "for boys" and conform to what is expected of them. Hermann-Wilmarth and Ryan acknowledge this rise in representation, while critiquing the way that the limited selection of books present these characters with an eye towards popularized characterizations of homosexuality. Heterosexuality is assumed for those individuals who appear to act appropriately masculine or appropriately feminine. If one wants to be perceived as a lesbian, one must first be perceived as a woman; if one wants to be seen as a gay man, one has to be seen as a man. LaFrance, Paluck and Brescoll note that as a term, "gender identity" allows individuals to express their attitude towards and stance in relation to their current status as either women or men. Gender, race, class, and other oppressions are all potential omnirelevant categories, though they are not ALL identically salient in every set of social relationships in which inequality is done. Although West and Fenstermaker do not elaborate on exactly how intersectionality can be incorporated into social constructionist theory, they do say that intersecting social identities are constant "interactional accomplishments". Hurtado argues that white women and women of color experience gender differently because of their relationship to males of different races and that both groups of women have traditionally been used to substantiate male power in different ways. White women are accountable for their gendered display as traditionally subservient to white men while women of color may be held accountable for their gendered performance as sexual objects and as recalcitrant and bawdy women in relations with white men. Gender is an accomplishment: The performance of gender varies given the context: The enactment of gender roles is context dependent – roles are "situated identities" instead of "master identities". In other words, individual perceptions of "knowledge" or reality In other words, by doing gender, we reinforce the essential categories of gender – that there are only two categories that are mutually exclusive. The idea that men and women are essentially different is what makes men and women behave in ways that appear essentially different. Though sex categorization is based on biological sex, it is maintained as a category through socially constructed displays of gender for example, you could identify a transgender person as female when in fact she is assigned male at birth. Institutions also create normative conceptions of gender. In other words, gender is simultaneously created and maintained – "both a process and a product, medium and outcome of such power relations". This can be said for constructions of any identity in certain contexts e. They are aware that others may evaluate and characterize their behavior. This is an interactional process not just an individual one. Social constructionism asserts that gender is a category that people evaluate as omnirelevant to social life. This is the basis for the reasoning that people are always performing gender and that gender is always relevant in social situations. Accountability can apply to behaviors that do conform to cultural conceptions as well as those behaviors that deviate – it is the possibility of being held accountable that is important in social constructionism. For example, Stobbe examined the rationale that people gave for why there were small numbers of women in the auto industry. Men cited the idea that such dirty work was unsuitable for women and women were unable to train because of family duties. Stobbe argues that the male workers created a machismo masculinity to distinguish themselves from women who might have been qualified to work in the auto shop. Women who do work in male-dominated professions have to carefully maintain and simultaneously balance their femininity and professional credibility. For instance, gender is maintained before the woman enters the male-dominated group through conceptions of masculinity. People have preconceived notions about what particular racial groups look like although there is no biological component to this categorization. Accountability is interactional because it does not occur solely within the individual. It is also institutional because individuals may be held accountable for their behaviors by institutions or by others in social situations, as a member of any social group gender, race, class, etc. Gender is created in different ways among uneducated and educated African Americans. The criteria for classification can be genitalia at birth or chromosomal typing before birth, and they do not necessarily agree with one another". She claims that there is at minimum five sexes but probably more; this is based on the vast range of ways bodies show up in nature. She points out that, "recent advances in physiology and surgical technology

now enable physicians to catch most intersexuals at birth West and Zimmerman also give a definition for sex category: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. This outdated perception, according to Butler, is limiting in that it adheres to the dominant societal constraints that label gender as binary. In scrutinizing gender, Butler introduces a nuanced perception in which she unites the concepts of performativity and gender. In chapter one of the text, Butler introduces the unification of the terms gender and performativity in stating that "gender proves to be performance" that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed". In doing so, Butler states in an interview: We act and walk and speak and talk that consolidate an impression of being a man or being a woman—we act as if that being of a man or that being of a woman is actually an internal reality or simply something that is true about us. Actually, it is a phenomenon that is being produced all the time and reproduced all the time. In fact, rather than an individual producing the performance, the opposite is true. The performance is what produces the individual. Although a seemingly difficult concept to grasp, gender performativity is realized throughout many aspects of our lives, specifically in our infancy and young childhood, our teen years, and finally our adult lives. Rather, Butler suggests that what is performed "can only be understood through reference to what is barred from the signifier within the domain of corporeal legibility". Children learn at a very young age what it means to be a boy or girl in our society. Individuals are either given masculine or feminine names based on their sex, are assigned colors that are deemed appropriate only when utilized by a particular sex and are even given toys that will aid them in recognizing their proper places in society. According to Barbara Kerr and Karen Multon, many parents would be puzzled to know "the tendency of little children to think that it is their clothing or toys that make them boy or girl". Similar to Butler, Eckert is hinting to the fact that gender is not an internal reality that cannot be changed. What Eckert is instead stating is that this is a common misconception that a majority of the population unknowingly reinforces, which sees its emergence during infancy. One of the sources that demonstrate how successful performance is acted out is magazines, specifically magazines targeting young girls. According to Eckert, "When we are teenagers, the teen magazines told girls how to make conversation with boys". This idea that gender is constantly shaped by expectations is relevant in the online community. Queer Identity[edit] The Butlerian model presents a queer perspective on gender performance and explores the possible intersection between socially constructed gender roles and compulsory heterosexuality.

Chapter 7 : The Social Construction of Gender

"SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION THEORY: PROBLEMS" I domains, presenting the possibility of a truly social inquiry as well as suggesting that human actions have been and continue to be subject to.

Definition[edit] A social construct or construction concerns the meaning, notion, or connotation placed on an object or event by a society, and adopted by the inhabitants of that society with respect to how they view or deal with the object or event. A major focus of social constructionism is to uncover the ways in which individuals and groups participate in the construction of their perceived social reality. It involves looking at the ways social phenomena are developed, institutionalized , known, and made into tradition by humans.

Origins[edit] In terms of background, social constructionism is rooted in " symbolic interactionism " and "phenomenology. More than four decades later, a sizable number of theory and research pledged to the basic tenet that people "make their social and cultural worlds at the same time these worlds make them. Therefore, it represented one of the first attempts to appreciate the constructive nature of experience and the meaning persons give to their experience. Over the years, it has grown into a cluster of different approaches, [19] with no single SC position. This way of conceptualizing this relationship is a logical result of the circumstantial differences of their emergence. In subsequent analyses these differences between PCP and SC were framed around several points of tension, formulated as binary oppositions: On the other hand, the reframing contributes to PCP theory and points to new ways of addressing social construction in therapeutic conversations. Social constructivism has been studied by many educational psychologists, who are concerned with its implications for teaching and learning. For more on the psychological dimensions of social constructivism, see the work of Ernst von Glasersfeld and A. Communication studies[edit] A bibliographic review of social constructionism as used within communication studies was published in It features a good overview of resources from that disciplinary perspective. There are opposing philosophical positions concerning the feasibility of co-creating a common, shared, social reality, called weak and strong. Searle does not elucidate the terms strong and weak in his book *The Construction of Social Reality*, [33] but he clearly uses them in his Chinese room argument, where he debates the feasibility of creating a computing machine with a sharable understanding of reality, and he adds "We are precisely such machines. But this computer is a society of creative thinkers, or people albeit posthuman transhuman persons , having debates in order to generate information, in the never-ending attempt to attain omniscience of this physicsâ€™"its evolutionary forms, its computational abilities, and the methods of its epistemologyâ€™"having an eternity to do so. Strong social constructivism says "none are able to communicate either a full reality or an accurate ontology, therefore my position must impose, by a sort of divine right , my observer-relative epistemology", whereas weak social constructivism says "none are able to know a full reality, therefore we must cooperate, informing and conveying an objective ontology as best we can. Brute facts are all facts that are not institutional facts e. The skeptic portrays the weak aspect of social constructivism, and wants to spend effort debating the institutional realities. Harvard psychologist Steven Pinker [35] writes that "some categories really are social constructions: Examples include money, tenure , citizenship , decorations for bravery, and the presidency of the United States. The existence of language is itself constitutive of the social fact 37 , which natural or brute facts do not require. Natural or "brute" facts exist independently of language; thus a "mountain" is a mountain in every language and in no language; it simply is what it is. X counts as Y in C. Furthermore, because the physical features brute facts specified by the X term are insufficient by themselves to guarantee the fulfillment of the assigned function specified by the Y term, the new status and its attendant functions have to be the sort of things that can be constituted by collective agreement or acceptance. Therefore, there is doubt that society or a computer can be completely programmed by language and images, because there is a programmable, emotive effect of images that derives from the language of judgment towards images. Finally, against the strong theory and for the weak theory, Searle insists, "it could not be the case, as some have maintained, that all facts are institutional [i. To suppose that all facts are institutional [i. In order that some facts are institutional, there must be other facts that are brute [i. This is the consequence of the logical structure of

institutional facts. John Searle [] argues vehemently and in my opinion cogently against universal constructionism. Linguistic idealism is the doctrine that only what is talked about exists, nothing has reality until it is spoken of, or written about. His book is titled the Construction of Social Reality, and as I explained elsewhere [Hacking,], that is not a social construction book at all. Hacking observes that his simplistic dismissal of the concept actually revealed to many readers the outrageous implications of the theorists: Is child abuse a real evil, or a social construct, asked Hacking? His dismissive attitude, "gave some readers a way to see that there need be no clash between construction and reality," [39]: The disagreement lies in whether this category should be called "socially constructed. To understand how weak social constructionism can conclude that metaphysics a human affair is not the entire "reality," see the arguments against the study of metaphysics. This inability to accurately share the full reality, even given time for a rational conversation, is similarly proclaimed by weak artificial intelligence. History and development[edit] Berger and Luckmann[edit] Constructionism became prominent in the U. Berger and Luckmann argue that all knowledge, including the most basic, taken-for-granted common sense knowledge of everyday reality, is derived from and maintained by social interactions. When people interact, they do so with the understanding that their respective perceptions of reality are related, and as they act upon this understanding their common knowledge of reality becomes reinforced. Since this common sense knowledge is negotiated by people, human typifications , significations and institutions come to be presented as part of an objective reality, particularly for future generations who were not involved in the original process of negotiation. For example, as parents negotiate rules for their children to follow, those rules confront the children as externally produced "givens" that they cannot change. Narrative turn[edit] During the s and s, social constructionist theory underwent a transformation as constructionist sociologists engaged with the work of Michel Foucault and others as a narrative turn in the social sciences was worked out in practice. This particularly affected the emergent sociology of science and the growing field of science and technology studies. In particular, Karin Knorr-Cetina , Bruno Latour , Barry Barnes , Steve Woolgar , and others used social constructionism to relate what science has typically characterized as objective facts to the processes of social construction, with the goal of showing that human subjectivity imposes itself on those facts we take to be objective, not solely the other way around. A Sociological History of Particle Physics. Davis , and philosophers including Paul Ernest have published social constructionist treatments of mathematics. Postmodernism[edit] Social constructionism can be seen as a source of the postmodern movement, and has been influential in the field of cultural studies. Some have gone so far as to attribute the rise of cultural studies the cultural turn to social constructionism. Within the social constructionist strand of postmodernism, the concept of socially constructed reality stresses the ongoing mass-building of worldviews by individuals in dialectical interaction with society at a time. The numerous realities so formed comprise, according to this view, the imagined worlds of human social existence and activity, gradually crystallized by habit into institutions propped up by language conventions, given ongoing legitimacy by mythology , religion and philosophy, maintained by therapies and socialization , and subjectively internalized by upbringing and education to become part of the identity of social citizens. In the book The Reality of Social Construction, the British sociologist Dave Elder-Vass places the development of social constructionism as one outcome of the legacy of postmodernism. He writes "Perhaps the most widespread and influential product of this process [coming to terms with the legacy of postmodernism] is social constructionism, which has been booming [within the domain of social theory] since the s. Consequently, critics have argued that it generally ignores biological influences on behaviour or culture, or suggests that they are unimportant to achieve an understanding of human behaviour. In , to illustrate what he believed to be the intellectual weaknesses of social constructionism and postmodernism, physics professor Alan Sokal submitted an article to the academic journal Social Text deliberately written to be incomprehensible but including phrases and jargon typical of the articles published by the journal. Philosopher Paul Boghossian has also written against social constructionism. He then states that social constructionists argue that we should refrain from making absolute judgements about what is true and instead state that something is true in the light of this or that theory. Countering this, he states: But it is hard to see how we might coherently follow this advice. Given that the propositions which make up epistemic systems are just

very general propositions about what absolutely justifies what, it makes no sense to insist that we abandon making absolute particular judgements about what justifies what while allowing us to accept absolute general judgements about what justifies what. But in effect this is what the epistemic relativist is recommending. He states that instead of believing that any world view is just as true as any other cultural relativism, we should believe that: If we were to encounter an actual, coherent, fundamental, genuine alternative to our epistemic system, C2, whose track record was impressive enough to make us doubt the correctness of our own system, C1, we would not be able to justify C1 over C2 even by our own lights. Following this point, Thibodeaux [52] argued that constructionism can both separate and combine a subject and their effective environment. To resolve this he argued that objective conditions should be used when analyzing how perspectives are motivated. Social constructionism has been criticized by psychologists such as University of Toronto Professor Jordan Peterson and evolutionary psychologists, including Steven Pinker in his book *The Blank Slate*.

Chapter 8 : Social constructionism - Wikipedia

Social constructionism is one of the key theories sociologists use to put gender into historical and cultural focus. Social constructionism is a social theory about how meaning is created through social interaction - through the things we do and say with other people.

Processes of doing gender are not only carried on in our society by individuals, but also through socially-standardizing practices such as legislation or the institutions of the family and marriage. At the latest after birth, and often even before, people are divided into two sex categories – boy or girl. From these categories, gender characteristics are derived, like blue and pink. What is noticeable is that conceptions of women and men are subject to change over time. What is supposed to be feminine or masculine is historically defined. What is more important, however, that the one same difference is put forward time and again, and for this reason alone becomes important. The differentiation into two sexes is politically relevant, because evaluations are linked with it, which assign different modes of action to the genders. On the other hand, it is often the case that it is not the one difference between the sexes which is most decisive, but that other social differences are far more important. It can be assumed today that women and men are not homogeneous groups, but that differences within the groups of women and of men can often become relevant. For instance, the social status or ethnic origin or skin colour can be a deciding factor for people who then also differentiate according to gender. On the other hand, clear-cut inequalities between women and men are hardly effective any more. In other words, it is not a matter of two colours, but of the entire colour spectrum. Modern medical definitions of gender are also multidimensional. Gender is defined in the standard German medical work in five dimensions; chromosomal, genital, mental and social. It is pointed out that there is a broad area of overlap in behavioural tendencies between the genders. People affected by these conditions, however, experience the unambiguous classification into woman or man as social compulsion and discrimination. Intersexuals, previously called hermaphrodites, possess both male and female physical attributes. In one out of every two thousand births, the sex of a new-born baby cannot be unambiguously determined. Since the s gender assignment operations have been carried out on infants and children in which ambiguous genitals are changed surgically to fit in with traditional conceptions of female or male genitalia. Transsexuals have unambiguous physical attributes, but do not feel that they belong to the gender represented by their bodies. Queer Theory sets itself the task of analyzing and questioning social discourses of normality concerning sex, gender and sexuality. The beginnings of Queer Theory are closely connected with movements in social politics which have the aim of de-pathologizing people with a transgender identity and are fighting for diversity in gender lifestyles. Metzler Lexikon Gender Studies – Geschlechterforschung. Wie Geschlechter gemacht werden. Die soziale Konstruktion der Zweigeschlechtlichkeit und ihre Reifizierung in der Frauenforschung, in: Gender and Society 12, , S.

Chapter 9 : Feminist Perspectives on Sex and Gender (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

forms of social constructionism that have proven particularly relevant for the sociological study of both gender and sexuality: 1 historicism, ethnomethodology, symbolic interactionism, and materialist feminism.

The hapless Max Padilla was duly recalled "Nicaragua is a poor country vulnerable to economic coercion. This malleable view of gender and the expansion from two sexes to five genders was most clearly expressed in the writings of Marta Llama at the Regional Conference and Non-Government Organisations Forum prelude to the U. Biology shows that outwardly human beings can be divided into two sexes; nevertheless, there are more combinations that result from the five physiological areas which determine what is called the biological sex of a person: World Conference on Women in , feminists claimed that the sexuality of multiple genders found expression as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, asexual, hermaphrodite, transvestite and transgendered, the latter group being further sub-divided into those who were awaiting surgery, those who had surgery, and those who had surgery but now wished to revert back to their original condition. The views of Llama and other gender feminists has dominated the United Nations agencies for the past decade, requiring the U. To adopt a gender perspective is. Biological sex is not determined by external organs but by genetic structure. Every cell of the human body is clearly marked male or female, and the human brain, which is the primary sex organ, is masculinized or feminized in the fetal stage of development by the presence or absence of testosterone. Furthermore, human beings do not exist on a continuum between male and female. The occurrence of some rare abnormalities does not require the re-assignment of the entire human race. Nurture In Australia the nature vs. Sex differences are apparent not only before birth but even before conception. I was troubled by the belief of the other Committee members " and of feminists in general " that human nature is completely malleable, and that babies arrive as lumps of soft playdough on which society can imprint whatever they choose. John Money, who received his Ph. His influence throughout the academic and scientific world would define the scientific landscape for decades to come. His theories on the psychosexual flexibility at birth of humans forms the cornerstone of an entire medical specialty " pediatric endocrinology. Due to a circumcision procedure which went terribly wrong. They were referred to Dr. John Money at John Hopkins. The parents did not realize that the procedure Money recommended " castration and the construction of external female genitalia, followed by hormone treatment when the child was eleven " was experimental. It had never been attempted on a child born with normal genitals and nervous system. She failed to bond with her female school mates, and despite several changes of school, and referral to counseling and psychiatrists, had disciplinary and academic problems; she just did not fit in. Money stipulated that the parents with both Brenda and her twin, pay yearly visits to his Psychohormonal Research Unit at John Hopkins in Baltimore. These trips were an ordeal for the family and exacerbated the fear and confusion Brenda was experiencing. Despite all the indications that the experiment was a massive failure and that Brenda was having major psychological and behavioral problems, in December , Dr. Money wrote that as planned experiments on humans are ethically unthinkable, one can only take advantage of unplanned opportunities. The twins seemed to embody an almost miraculous division of taste, temperament and behavior along gender lines, and seemed the ultimate proof that boys and girls are made not born. It was seized on by the feminist movement, which had been arguing for years against a biological basis for sex differences. She was rebellious about taking the estrogen pills intended to make her develop breasts, and she was totally resistant to the planned second stage of her vaginal reconstruction surgery. In May when Brenda insisted to her Winnipeg endocrinologist and psychiatrist that she did not want to be a girl, they advised her father to tell her the truth. With a pioneering team of endocrinologists at the University of Kansas in the s, working on guinea pigs, biophysics researcher Dr. Milton Diamond established that prenatal sex hormones played a significant role not only on the development of the reproductive system and external genitalia of a fetus, but also on the masculinization or feminization of the brain. The results were published in a issue of Endocrinology. Diamond stated that prebirth factors set limits on how far culture, learning and environment can direct gender in humans. Citing evidence from biology, psychology, psychiatry, anthropology and endocrinology, he argued that gender identity is

hardwired into the brain virtually from conception. A long and acrimonious academic debate spanning decades ensued. However, when a BBC reporter began investigating, he heard rumors that the case was not all it seemed to be. A BBC documentary was produced. There were other media articles as well as the on-going debate in the scientific literature. By his fifteenth birthday he was living socially as a male. He began receiving injections of testosterone. Before his twenty-second birthday he had a successful phalloplasty in a stage operation. His new name was symbolic of his struggle against the Goliath represented by John Money and the medical establishment, and of his courage in giving permission for his personal identity and medical details to be revealed. Thus in Australia, Accreditation Guidelines for Child Care Centres forbid caretakers from telling a girl her dress is pretty. Reality A dose of reality eventually pervaded the medical establishment, at least in the U. The brain is the primary sex organ, and our brains are programmed before birth to be male or female. Psychology and the Construction of Gender, both published by Yale University,