

Social Constructionism

“While much of education teaches students what is real and not real, sociology contributes to education by teaching students to understand how things came to be understood as real.” (Roy 2001)

We live in two worlds: physical world and the world of meaning (Loseke)

People act toward things based upon the meanings those things have for them.

We attach meanings to things in the physical world by categorizing, naming and typifying.

Typifications are characterizations, pictures in our heads about what a typical X looks like.

Culture, including gender, is a human production that appears to exist independently of us but requires us to constantly “do” it.

Three social construction stages (Berger & Luckmann)

Internalization	Learning about social reality	Gender socialization
Externalization	Acting on the basis of that reality	“Doing gender”
Objectivation	Social reality acting back on us	Gender as a social institution that organizes life through stratification, social control, etc.

Some socially constructed categories

Colors

Animals (food, pets, endangered, vermin, etc.)

Time (weeks, linear, cyclical, clock time, time as commodity)

Social problems (e.g., domestic violence, stalking, sexual harassment, acquaintance rape)

People

Races (white, black, Asian, American Indian, etc.)

Sexes (women, men, etc.)

Moral/legal/medical labels

Juvenile delinquent, gifted, felon, sexual predator, mentally ill, sinner, pardoned

Sexual orientations (e.g., heterosexual, gay, lesbian, etc.)

Types of women as characterized by college men (Gilmore)

Sluts, teases, bitches, good girls