

Gender identity disorder from a social constructionist perspective



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From social constructionist perspective how do you think Gender Identity Disorder could be explained and how could one explain (GID) from a purely biological experimental viewpoint.

The main goal of this document is to investigate through the case of Gender Culture and Identity how Gender Identity Disorder (GID) is explained by multidisciplinary approaches. Social Constructionist approach and biological experimental approach have enlightened our thinking about the diversity of gender and encouraged us to be critical about our judgments. An attempt was made to explore GID and its relevance to socio-environmental and biological factors related to the several cases described in the article, which demonstrate the dilemma and ambiguity of parents towards their children.

According to American Psychiatric Association (2000) Gender identity disorder is a mental disorder in which gender identity is dissimilar with anatomical sexual characteristics. As a result individuals with gender identity disorder experience varying degrees of dissatisfaction with their determined anatomical birth sex. Gender identity discomposure is often obvious in early childhood (Zucker, 2005). The child may continually express a desire to be the opposite sex, or insist that he or she belongs to the opposite sex. Boys may stimulate female clothing and reversely girls may adopt male clothing through their games or sometimes they create imaginative roles being the opposite sex. A lot of these children illustrate aversion of their genitals and are trying to hide them as they grow older. In both genders there is a desire to play with children of the opposite gender rather than children of their gender. In the case a pediatrician named Ilona Bendefy stated that our society is much more accepting of girls being tomboys which involves

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dressing like boys and do boyish activities and as a result parents realize gender disorder in their son much sooner than for their daughter. Accurately, Bradley and Zucker (1997) in their "social threshold hypothesis" proposed that society is more permissive of cross gender behavior in girls than in boys, which results from a causal social devaluation of femininity and that parents are more likely to predict homosexuality in feminine boys than in masculine girls. Besides men with GID may accept cruel social treatment than women with GID, which adds more pressure on male to female transsexuals to "decide" a sexual category and successfully "pass" as that preferred sex. The social threshold hypothesis is also supported by research that indicates that participants are inclined to give more negative evaluation of boys who display cross gender behavior than they do of girls (Wilson et al., 2002)

According to Butler (1990) there are several intersex individuals dejected in their allocated gender role and their experiences are used to damage the reputation of a purely social constructionist account of gender identity development. In the binary model where there exist two sexes and two genders, gender should comply with sex and normality and this is described as congruence between sexual anatomy and gender identity. In the case that the gender is opposite to sex then a disorder is generated, regardless that sex and gender are analytically distinct. Biological models of GID recommend that biological treatments should be the most important approach. Constructionists argue that gender is not the effect of essential biological sexual difference, but support that to a certain extent gender is an elaborate social construct within which biology is interpreted. Colapinto,

(2000) alleged that gender is seen as causality prior to biological sex differences. These studies highlight the social practices that strengthen a specific culture's gender classification and see nothing inherent and permanent regarding a binary gender system. Social constructionists may perhaps not see the role for individual involvement and argue, for the reason that they see more social flexibility in the interpretation and elucidation of gender. In fact, the majority of parents of an intersex child, supports some intervention or involvement, and find it hard and complicated to raise their child when feel unsure about gender. The social constructionists' regards knowledge about social phenomena s rooted in history and culture.

According to Burr (1995) constructionists observes social knowledge as historically and culturally specific. This knowledge is perceived not as collective and linear, but as being in steady flux. Gender dissimilarities are varying from culture to culture and in different historical contexts. In addition Constructionists believe that social knowledge is sustained by the social process. The social world is planned and prearranged through previous social interactions. Immediately when an individual enter the social world as male or female there are patterns of behavior and thinking which are dispensable to us. Parents are able to decide to dress their baby daughters in red and baby boys in blue. They usually give to their boys cars and aero-planes to play while to girls give dolls and cooker staff. Besides, sons usually are encouraged to follow engineering courses and daughters to follow languages or secretarial studies. These choices that parents make for their children give emphasis to differences between genders. In consequence when the child grows up, the chances and experiences he /she had will be ingredient of the background which determine future experiences and choices. Thus, <https://assignbuster.com/gender-identity-disorder-from-a-social-constructionist-perspective/>

the social constructionist view argues that our identities are not prearranged by nature and we develop our identity through our interactions with our social environment. The complications and meanings of our gender identity are not immutable but steadily changing, however this does not signify that identities change illogically. Constructionist believe that modifications follow other patterns of the structure of a given society such as socioeconomic, religion, ethnicity and class and will operate to decide the meaning and implications of gender identity and reversely the gender influence the meaning of religion, ethnicity and class (Skjelsbæk & Smith & International Peace Research Institute, 2001).

Berger and Luckmann (1967) suggested that society is considered to be socially constructed through human interpretation. When people interact they do so with the understanding that their individual perceptions of reality are related and, as they act upon this understanding, their common knowledge of reality becomes reinforced. Biological models observe GID as an effect of abnormal brain sex differentiation, with subsequent gender development occurring along predesigned lines and in conflict with the assigned gender role. The investigation for biological determinants has recently focused on the conduciveness of genetic factors in the development of sexual direction, as one element of gender identity. For instance, studies have indicated high consistency rates of homosexuality among monozygotic Vs dizygotic twins (Bailey & Pillard, 1991). The famous study of Hammer, Hu, Magnuson, Hu, & Pattatucci (1993) revealed that a distinct pattern of maternal gene transmission was discovered in a selected sample of male homosexuals. The investigators found the same particular gene in the

majority of male homosexual siblings. Even if the study was criticized for its methodological procedure by Baron (1993) and King (1993) it still signifies a major application of molecular genetics to the development of gender identity. However, research not yet discovered specific biological contributions to GID, though it is estimated that a biological predisposition will be discovered. Coolidge, Thede, and Young (2002) found that genetics contributed about 62% to creating a vulnerability to experience gender identity disorder in their twin sample and 38% of the vulnerability derived from non shared environmental events thus our environment clearly include both male and female influences. Collaer and Hines (1995) studied females with innate adrenal hyperplasia caused by high levels of androgens prenatally and they found that possibly there is an association between this type of disorders and gender identity problems. This study leads us to understand that more research is required to be done in this area. Despite the biological explanations, research findings in this matter have been inadequate and conflicting. Even though Taneja, Ammini, Mohapatra, Saxena and Kucheria (1992) found that there are rare case reports of sex chromosome abnormalities in GID individuals, it was founded by Green (1976) and most recently by Chazan (1995) that the majority have normal sex chromosomes. Other studies have found decreased levels of testosterone in male transsexuals and abnormally high levels of testosterone in female transsexuals, however these findings have been inconsistent, and the studies from which they were obtained were not well controlled (Hoenig, 1985).

During the school years gender roles become the measure by which children are judged by their peers. According to Blakemore (2003) children who infringe sex type play are frequently discarded by their peers. This especially occurs in boys who experience more refusal from their peers when they infringe gender stereotypes than girls do. The classroom can also powerfully strengthen gender stereotypes. Even if teachers assert that they demonstrate equal attention to boys and girls, research indicated that teachers spend more time with boys, give them more attention and make them more questions (Duffy et al., 2001). Girls are also guided away from math and science courses and both boys and girls use prejudiced textbooks that reinforce gender stereotypes (Keller, 2002). Gender identity disorder is one of the most controversial issues and there are a lot of debates around this matter. Psychologist Daryl Hill argues that GID is not a mental disorder by any means and that it is mainly a diagnosis intended to reduce the stress experienced by parents who cannot admit a child's exploration of gender roles and expectations that do not formed in prescribed groups (Hausman, 2003). This analysis is not accepted by supporters of the diagnosis and they assert that gender is a biological fact. They also believe that the diagnostic category is valid due to the fact that gender-congruent roles and behaviors are an expectation of the society. Therefore if individuals do not recognize with the gender they are born into, it is a dysfunction and should be assigned and treated as such. In the case Dr Di Ceglie is not assured that GID during childhood can be elucidated by a simple causal model but by a combination of factors. He said that a boy grew up with his aunt from the age of six months until the age of eight. His aunt encouraged him to help her with the house works. After the unexpected death of the woman the boy developed

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GID he played with dolls and imagined himself being a mother. After several months of treatment it was disclosed that this was his method of dealing with his loss and the symptoms disappeared. This example shows us that gender identity is socially constructed, and that psychological and environmental factors are linked to the development of the disorder.

Researching gender identity disorder from social constructionist perspective enables us to understand better the socio-cultural and environmental factors which contribute to gender identity disorders. Social constructionist theory is based on the epistemological understanding that our social worlds are continuously changing. They keep investigating gender identity not within the individual but in the transaction between individuals (Bohan, 1993). As a result the disagreement is not about biological findings, social constructionists do not deny that individuals have body, internal functions, feelings or brains. They confute the hypothesis of many biologists, neuroscientists and evolutionary psychologists that biology is one way or another, the most fundamental and important method to give a significant explanation, upon which learning and culture are simply cursory annotations. Constructionists do not face biology as the end of the discussion but face it as the start. They believe that biological research is not the complexity however they request us to think the elucidations, practices, and ignorance of research (Bernstein, 1999). For instance Bailey (1993) studied the possible genetic rudiments in homosexuality and he stated that a confirmation that homosexuality has a biological element can be used to diminish homophobia and create an illegal discrimination against gay men and lesbians, or it can be used as confirmation of a biological imperfection to be corrected. On the

other hand biological studies should not be stopped or ignored by researchers, since they might inform us and enrich our knowledge regarding the etiology of gender identity disorder in children and adults.