

Soc 101 study guide

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Notes for "What Makes You Who You Are" A counter-intuitive idea — That our genes and our experiences interact with, and have an impact on the development and/or functioning of, each other. How do our genes impact our experiences? They predispose us — but don't cause us — to experience, respond to our environment in a certain way. Text example (p. 32): "What we inherit is not a fear of snakes but a predisposition to learn a fear of snakes — a nature for a certain kind of nature." How do our experiences impact our genes? Our genes are designed to (p. 32): "...take their cues from everything that happens to us from the moment of our conception." What are hox genes and what do they do? Hox genes are a small group of genes that set up the body plan — how the body will be physically formed. This applies to every creature, from flies to human beings. What are genomes? (P. 33): "The genome is not a blueprint for constructing a body. It is a recipe for baking a body...the development of a certain human behavior takes time and occurs in a certain order, just as the cooking of a perfect soufflé requires not just the right ingredients but also the right amount of cooking and the right order of events." How do our genes operate? They are switched on and off in various parts of our bodies at different times, by segments of DNA called promoters. How does the makeup of promoter affect our mental or physical development? Promoters are made of strings of DNA that can be longer or shorter and can vary to a greater or lesser degree in substance, as represented by geneticists with strings ("paragraphs") of letters of the alphabet. Just a small difference in the makeup of a promoter can cause a huge difference in the expression of a hox gene — on how, when and where they are switched on and off in the body. Human learning, it turns out, (p.

32): "...consists of nothing more than switching genes on and off. " Why we turn out the way we do — Examples: - Language — Specific genes open and close on a critical window of time, during which human beings can learn to speak. However adults must be talking to the child during this critical interval; just having the right genes, alone, is not enough. If no one talks to the kid during that critical learning interval, (s)he will always struggle with speech. - Love — We humans have a specific chunk of DNA, about 460 letters long, that gives us the potential to fall in love after having the " right" experience (if any of you figure out what that is, please let me know!) - Antisocial behavior — Childhood maltreatment is not enough to cause people to act criminally. The other essential ingredient = a promoter that regulates the activity of a particular gene, called the " monoamine oxidase A" gene. People in whom that gene is highly active are virtually immune to the criminogenic effects of maltreatment. People in whom the gene is " low-active" developed into much more decidedly antisocial individuals if maltreated — and — even if they were not mistreated at all, they still became antisocial, but to a slightly lesser degree. In the research sample, the men with low-active genes who were mistreated as kids were responsible for 4X their share of rapes, robberies and assaults. Ergo: maltreatment is not enough; you've also got to have the low-active gene. And, having the low-active gene is not; you also have to be maltreated. (Research from Terrie Moffit, of London's King's College, on a group of 442 New Zealand men followed since birth.) - Homosexuality — Gay men are more likely to have older brothers than are hetero men or lesbians. The investigator who did the study hypothesizes that some sort of immune reaction develops in the

mother with each male pregnancy; growing stronger with each male birth, which affects certain key genes during the fetus' brain development — and this in turn boosts the boy's potential to be attracted to his own sex. A lot of answered questions here — but — with further research we come to fully understand how everyone develops their sexual preferences, whether for the same sex or other sex. The Bottom Line: Neither genes nor environmental influences, alone, cause us to develop in a certain way; become the individuals we are. Genes are active all through our lives; switching on and off; responding to the environment. In response to our experiences they dismantle and rebuild what they had previously made. Genes are both the cause and consequence of our actions, of how we experience and interact with the environment. Rethinking Gender - Estimated number of transgender individuals in the U. S., per National Center for Transgender Equality — 750, 000 to 3 million - Number of Americans who get sex-changing surgery each year — 1-2 thousand - Boy-to-girl ratio, of kids who say their anatomy doesn't match their gender (the gender they feel they are) — It's a 5-to-1 ratio — 5 times as many boys as girls feel that way. What IS "gender"? - ... compared to anatomy (genitalia, etc.)? — the 2 are not the same thing, per article - ...compared to sexual orientation? — the 2 are not the same thing, per article - Definition of gender from USC Berkeley professor Judith Butler — " Gender is a way of making the world seem secure. " Butler sees gender as basically just a social construct. - An increasing number of scholars & others see gender as the interplay between biology, genes, hormones and culture - Historically we've had 2 categories, male and female, with specific stereotypes for each. Michael Kimmel, sociology professor at SUNY-Stony

Brook, says: " The (idea that) there are two distinct categories and there's no overlap, that's beginning to break down... those old categories seem to be more fluid. " Terminology: - Transsexual — The outdated term for people who want to change, or are in the process of changing, their sex via hormone therapy and surgery. - Transvestites — the antiquated term for those who are now called " cross-dressers. " - Transgender — anyone whose gender identity or expression differs from their sex at birth, whether they have surgery or not Physiologically becoming male or female — the process: - Each embryo is equipped with both the Mullerian ducts that develop into the female reproductive system and Wolffian ducts that become the male system. - At about 8 weeks, the X and Y chromosomes kick into gear and determine whether then embryo becomes physiologically male or female (whether the embryo develops ovaries or testes). The ducts that end up being unnecessary simply break down. - The fetus' ovaries or testes, whichever the fetus has at this point, begin pumping out testosterone and estrogen; " bathing" the developing fetus in hormones - The brain begins to form, complete with receptors — wired differently in males and females — that later determine how estrogen and testosterone are used in the body - Male newborns, between 1-5 months, experience a " hormone surge. " - Culture (and socialization) kick in. Studies show that parents treat boys and girls very differently; breast-feeding boys longer but talking more to girls. This happens while the baby's brain is undergoing a " massive growth spurt; " doubling in size during the first 5 years. Thus " the brain is interacting with culture from Day One. " - How does this process differ in transgender people, as compared to those of us who have always felt ' at home' in the bodies,

and with the gender assignments, we have been given? 1. Scientists aren't sure. The hormone levels of transgenders seem to be the same as everyone else's levels. Scientists speculate that the transgenders' brains are reacting differently to the hormones, just as males react differently than females. 2. Some transgender people speculate the environmental pollution is to blame; citing how pollution has disrupted reproduction of some reptiles/animals; however no leap can be made from frogs to human beings - How transgendered individuals are classified in the psychiatric manual DSM-IV — as having " Gender Identity Disorder. " Due to the taint of the condition being termed a ' disorder,' activists are trying to get the classification removed, just as gay rights activists campaigned to have " homosexuality" removed - Gender fluidity in history — Cross-dressing was common in ancient Greece and Rome, as well as among Native Americans and other indigenous peoples Experiences of contemporary transgender individuals: - Largo, FLA City Manager Steve Stanton — community had a hissy-fit when he announced he was transitioning to life as a woman. Pastor Ron Sanders of the Lighthouse Baptist Church advised that Jesus would have wanted Stanton " terminated. " He equated gender change with homosexuality and declared it "...an abomination, which means that it's utterly disgusting. " - Baptist Minister Jon Nemecek — was married and 56YO when he decided to surgically make the switch. His employer of 15 years, a ' faith-based' liberal arts college in Michigan, renewed his contract but cut his workload and pay. He (by then a She) filed a discrimination suit which was later settled through mediation. Nemecek has no problem aligning her gender change w/her faith and says expressing her feminine side has brought her " closer to god. " -

High School teacher Ken & Karen Kopriva — was allowed to keep her job after the surgery - V. P. at Prudential Financial Mark & Margaret Stumpp — made sex change in 2002. Sent memo to colleagues (" Subject: Me") explaining the change..."We all joked about wearing panty hose and whether ' my condition' was contagious...but when the dust settled, everyone got back to work. " Companies like IBM and Kodak now cover transgender medical care. Perspective of young people today (on gender issues): - Many are embracing something in-between the stereotypical male and female. - Although boys...5-to-1 over girls...believe they were born with the wrong anatomy, most boys (and girls) DO ultimately get their gender aligned with their anatomy; perhaps due to hormone surges during puberty or maybe due the prospect of discrimination by the world at large, should they start doing their lives as the ' other' gender. Only about 15% of these kids show signs of gender-identity problems into adulthood. - What the experts advise concerned parents to do, if their kid shows signs of wanting to be the ' other' gender — allow the child to " lead the way" (choose for him/herself)

Becoming Me: The Gender Within — FMG Video # 40695 Matt: - Transitioned from female to male - Experiences during childhood/puberty — During puberty, he felt he should have been born male; that a mistake had been made (in that he was born with female body parts). Tried to make himself be a girl but still had male feelings...when that occurred he would tell himself he was having a " boy attack. " - Experiences as adult, prior to transitioning: Was married twice as a woman; neither marriage successful - Type of transgender surgery Matt has had — has had breasts removed; decided not to get penis. Is on hormone therapy. - Advice to other transgender people —

If you need medical care, you need to find a doctor who can accept you are transgendered; who is not going to be horrified or "disgusted" when he/she sees what genitalia you have/don't have, or when he/she hears your story. You are going to have to tell your doctor up front that you're on hormones as this may affect what types of medication he prescribes, even for routine illnesses

Denise: - Transitioned from male to female - Experiences during childhood/puberty — felt from childhood that she was female Was forthcoming about this to everyone and felt that everyone should just accept her as female. Did try to be a male for awhile as a teenager; had girlfriends and had sex with them; it was okay but ultimately not satisfying as it should be - Experiences as adult prior to transgender surgery — Played in a band with her now-husband. Was living life as a woman; began dating husband at a point when they had already played together in the band for several years. Because husband already knew Denise as an individual, had relatively little difficulty accepting her 'trans' status once she told him. - Type of transgender surgery Denise has had — had penis removed. Recovery painful for 6 months to a year; hard to walk sometimes...but during entire recovery, was "on cloud nine." - Experiences as adult post-surgery — now married and mother of two kids whom she and her husband adopted. Has busy, happy life. - How Denise's mom feels about the transgender issue — says that although she is a Catholic who goes to mass daily, the church's position on this issue is outdated, given the body of scientific knowledge we now have about transgendered individual. This parents of transgender kids need to just 'get over it' (my paraphrase) and accept their kids as they are

Briton: - Transitioned from male to female - Experiences during childhood/puberty —

always felt like a girl. . Used to play dress-up in girl's clothing, as a kid. - Experiences as adult prior to transgender surgery — Put a lot of effort into fitting in as a guy. Played the male role in college; joined fraternity. However, she hated masquerading as a guy; also the stress of trying to fit in became too much — she began drinking too much, smoking a lot of weed - Type of transgender surgery Briton has had — not stated in film, although she has had some type of surgery Nate: - Transitioned from female to male - Experiences during childhood/puberty — came out as a “ lesbian” to mom, g’ma and dad at age 12. Didn’t really feel lesbian, but though his parents could accept that more easily than what he really felt, which was that he was actually a boy. - Type of transgender surgery Nate has had — had breasts removed but decided not to get penis. Is on hormone therapy, which has made him a lot “ hairier. ” - Current life experiences — Family members accept him; has good relationship (and good sex life) with girlfriend. - How Nate’s girlfriend views Nate’s ‘ masculinity’ — She says in her view, masculinity is based on more than simply “ what’s in your pants” or what a person’s chest-area looks like. - Advice to others who are considering transitioning from one gender to the other — don’t rush the transition process; give yourself and those around you time to accept the changes you are making Paul: - Transitioned from female to male - Experiences during childhood/puberty — as always felt like a male - Type of transgender surgery Paul has had — has had breasts removed, is giving himself a penis for his 50th birthday. Despite the expense, felt it was too important to his identity, to forego it.