

Who am i gender as
a social construct, not
an inherent
characteristic



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Who am I Gender as a Social Construct, not an Inherent Characteristic. " Oh, what a strong little boy. What a sweet little girl." From the moment of birth (and often before) people closely associate sex with gender. Many people would even argue that they are one and the same. However, the difference between sex and gender is great. Sex is a physical, genetically based characteristic, visible through the sex organs. Gender is a social construct, created and utilized by society to place people in categories. This is clearly shown through Peter Levin's article " Gendering in the Market: Temporality, Work, and Gender on a National Futures Exchange." In Peter Levin's article, gender is proven to be a social construct and not an inherent aspect of self, and is hierarchically organized within the society."

There are few places in America that are more gendered than the Stock exchange and trading floors. Over 90% of all trade floor workers are male, and according to Levin, " are highly heterosexual, hyper-rational, and based on the ideals of domination, aggression, and competition" (Levin 4). Levin creates the model to explain the environment, and how the environment changes to create gender. In an environment that is traditionally thought to emulate one gender or another, such as the trade floor, the discrepancies become clearer.

For women to act on the trade floor successfully, they would have to overcome their gender, which, were it a genetic construct, and not a social construct, would be impossible. Yet, when the trade floor is busy, women are considered to be equally successful to men. They are just as able to trade successfully. Indeed, men and women insist that the actions of trading are gendered, but the ability to do them is not (Levin 9). Men and women are equally suited to the trade, even though gender normative behaviors

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suggest that only men would be. Therefore, according to Levin's study, if women can overcome gender normative behaviors, then gender must be socially constructed, and not a genetic characteristic.

Levin, however, goes one step further. While men and women are equally able to work on the floor during busy times, it is during the times of rest that the apparent hierarchy of gender appears. However, men rely on the off time to create an environment that is masculine, and is carefully constructed to exclude women, and keep them in a minority position. Crude sexual humor, masculine contest, insults, and sports metaphors are meant to show women how they do not belong (Levin 10). " Women do participate in both athletics and armed service, but for men, the metaphor of sports denoted manliness as much as masculinity. Without explicit reference to gender, these narratives nevertheless tied together masculinity and the ability to handle pressure" (Levin 10). By excluding women from banter, men are purposely creating a second class of citizen, which is a break between genders. Some, but not many, women are able to " pass" as men, joking with them, and being accepted among them. However, since gender is closely tied to sex for most people, it is often hard to overcome completely.

Levin uses the trade floor to show that, while it is masculine, men and women are equally successful during work times. Therefore, gender is a construct, which can be overcome. Gender is also hierarchically arranged, with the upper group creating a defining the lower group through humor and subtle jabs. Peter Levin proves that gender is not an inherent aspect of self but, rather, consists of a set of socially produced and hierarchically organized.

Works Cited

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Levin, Peter. " Gendering in the Market: Temporality, Work, and Gender on a National Futures Exchange." *Work and Occupations* 28(2001): 112-130.