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PRONOUNS AND PERSONHOOD

Exploring the Construction of Gender Identities from the Feminist Perspective

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THIS PAPER ARGUES THAT TO HAVE GENDER IS NOT HAVING CERTAIN REPRODUCTIVE ANATOMY, BUT IS INSTEAD THE SOCIAL MEANING OF SEX. GENDER HAS NOW BECOME A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT IMPOSED UPON THE HUMAN PERSON, THWARTING THEIR ABILITY TO IDENTIFY AS THE SOCIAL GENDER THEY SUBSCRIBE TO. BECAUSE WE SEEK TO IDENTIFY AND ORGANIZE PERSONS INTO A SOCIO-SEXUAL HIERARCHY, THE GENDER REVOLUTION OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY, ESPECIALLY THROUGH THE IDENTIFICATION OF PERSONAL PRONOUNS, POSES A LARGER QUESTION, GREATER THAN ONE OF GENDER ORIENTATION. WHILE SOCIOLOGISTS ARE ADDRESSING THE RECENT EFFECTS OF PERSONAL PRONOUN USAGE, THE PURPOSE OF THIS INQUIRY IS TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE LACK OF NEW RESEARCH MATERIAL IN PHILOSOPHY AND GENDER/QUEER THEORY, AN INTERDISCIPLINARY FIELD THAT REQUIRES ATTENTION. I PROPOSE A REEVALUATION OF THE PROBLEMS OF GENDER IDENTITY ALONG WITH THE INTERSECTION OF FREE WILL AND BIOLOGICAL DETERMINISM AND TO FILL IN THE GAPS IN PREVIOUS THINKING SURROUNDING SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION, THE SELF, AND PERSONHOOD — ALL QUESTIONS PROMPTED BY THE GENDER REVOLUTION.

“What really matters, of course, about biological determinism is how it affects people, how it affects human beings. . . . If [the lives of individuals] are thwarted by a structure imposed from, without, or for social reasons falsely identified as lying within, they never get another chance. That’s it. That’s the greatest tragedy. That biological determinism is imposed upon billions of people.” - Dr. Stephen Jay Gould

INTRODUCTION

Social structures constitute our world, serving as frames of meaning within which we, as social beings, act. Gender is among one of the largest impediments to just social structures in our world today.¹ Gender is systemically maintained in a culture because gender is performed in social roles and then is perpetuated by individuals who internalize society’s response to those social roles. As a feminist, a student of philosophy, and a self-identifying woman, I am eager to investigate these structures and contribute to the growing conversation surrounding gender theory, gender fluidity, and social construction through my research.

I argue that to have gender is not to have certain reproductive anatomy, but instead, gender is the social meaning of sex. Because we seek to identify and organize persons into a socio-sexual hierarchy, the gender revolution of the twenty-first century, especially through the identification of personal pronouns, poses a question greater than one of gender orientation. While sociologists are addressing the recent effects of personal pronoun usage, the purpose of this inquiry is to acknowledge the lack of new research material in philosophy and gender/queer theory. I propose a reevaluation of the problems of gender identity and the exploration of the intersection of free will and biological determinism. Additionally, there is a need to fill in the gaps in previous thinking surrounding social construction, the self, and personhood.

I will be approaching this question from two primary research narratives. In the perspective of biological determinism, how free are we to choose our gender and thus pronouns that correspond to it? From a feminist philosophical understanding of sex and gender, how do we end gender oppression and force an upheaval of the conventional gender binary, which creates a power imbalance between biological males and females in society?

I will first investigate how pronouns play a part in the larger social constructs we exist in through the lens of social critical theory, working with texts by several prominent feminist philosophers. It is important to note that while much of my research will be theorizing, such theories are grounded in real world observation as well as the works of experts in the field of gender studies. My goal is to bring the ever-evolving gender culture of the twenty-first century into dialogue with the thought perspectives of sexologists, gender theorists, and social constructionists, ranging from works by the late philosopher Simone de Beauvoir to contemporary thinkers such as Dr. Sally Haslanger.

Second, I will investigate the usage of gender pronouns on campuses in the United States. College campuses are a microcosm of the fresh and adaptable minds, and first-year students are a growing resource for understanding gender theory and its social implications. I will be drawing upon surveys and interviews conducted among first-year students, noting how gender pronouns are used within college orientation programs.

The factors which make us mark and announce genders, like dress code, body hair, and even fragrance, constitute the inequality between and oppression of sexes; they are essential to the maintenance of that social system. If conversations about gender pronouns could be addressed in college campuses from first-year experiences, like orientation, it would create a foundation for a community that has a sense of gender orientation and normalizes identifying pronouns in everyday usage. Such normalization could lead to the end of gender oppression, the barriers that immobilize and mold those belonging to a particular biological sex and social gender groups.

Logically, the subordination and domination of respective gender groups presuppose that those groups may be easily identifiable by outward signals within society. One of those key identifiers is pronouns. If the usage of different pronouns in everyday culture was ubiquitous, there would be more recognition of gender fluidity, thus blurring the presupposed social boundaries between those groups and eliminating the appearance that humans are biologically sex-dimorphic. Increasing pronoun usage can be expected



IMAGE 1: PARTICIPANT AT THE ESPO LOGO WORKSHOP HOLDING A SIGN THAT DISPLAYS THEIR PRONOUN PREFERENCES.

to improve existing injustices by recognizing human beings in their fullness when their correct pronouns are used. Yes, pronoun usage creates the possibility of misgendering, but it also fosters a space for correction and conversation without awkwardness. Our gender is learned and is not biologically determined, which should allow us to have the autonomy to identify our own gender identities that may not correspond with the biological sex. If we increase pronoun usage in our everyday social lives, through our free will, we give up the social pressure to “act” in a masculine or feminine way, erasing the gender binary. With the social threat of clear gender identity removed, we may move towards social justice among the sexes.

BETWEEN YOUR LEGS AND IN YOUR BRAIN: SEX VERSUS GENDER

Originally formulated to counter theories of biological determinism, the feminist distinction between sex and gender is not as direct as it may seem, despite the amount of scholarship on the subject since the mid-1900s. Feminism, which is the support for all genders and opposition to the patriarchy and sexism, calls for a distinction between sex and gender in aiming to end gender stratification. Sex, labeled as Male and Female, pertains to chromosomal, genetic, hormonal, and physical indicators.² Gender, however, pertains to how human beings express their personhood and how they identify within the social world. Gender is often separated into man and woman, otherwise known as the gender binary, but gender is not the causal result of biological sex and should not exist in a binary system as biological sexes do.³ Within the gender revolution of the twenty-first century, there is a large draw towards the dismantling of the gender binary and the introduction of a wide variety of identities including Male, Female, transgender, gender-neutral, non-binary, agender, pangender, genderqueer, two-spirit, third gender, and all, none, or a combination of these.

Gender is the social meaning of sex—labels that we have created and systemically perpetuated within society. Thus, taken to the extent of its logistics, “if gender is the cultural meanings that a sexed body assumes, then gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way” (Butler, 6). In fact, it is quite difficult to theorize about the relationship between sex and gender when we do not have a concrete idea of what a woman is or what a man is because “women” and “men” cannot be said to exist. Instead women and men are, in a sense, verbs. Social construction, the institutions and principles that govern society, claims that women and men are concrete beings and that they align with the biological sexes of Female and Male. This is wholly untrue and cannot be conceptualized since men and women exist in the abstract; they were construed as binaries by human beings in society. Instead, gender is a “performative” action. Such is the perspective of Judith Butler, a gender theorist whose 1990s work, *Gender Trouble*, provides key insight into the social construction of gender. For Butler, gender takes both a genealogical and philosophical approach; one that does not search for the origin or case of gender but rather one that searches for the effects of the

societal institutions that construct the idea of gender and put it into practice.

Since the “performances” in question involve gesture, dress, movement, action, and language, it can be misinterpreted that gender as “performative” refers to a quasi-theatrical performance. This is not the case. According to Butler, “[Gender is] the stylized repetition of acts through time,” (Butler, 78). In that phrasing, the “through time” portion is crucial because when an act is repeated through time, it becomes a part of the individual while maintaining a possibility of change. Gender is not a one act show; we don’t perform masculinity or femininity and then cease gender expression. Instead, gender is *performative*, which implies that it persists through time, sometimes unintentionally, and has consequences outside of the self. Butler shies away from the idea of gender expression, which she understands to be an outward portrayal of an inward characteristic about our personhood. Instead, gender applies in the reverse format; it is established by others, usually from birth, and then shapes an individual’s inward personhood over time.

Consider the idea of gender as being “performative” with this example of a common verb: to run. The phrase *I run* is logically valid because if I am propelling my legs through space in some direction, pumping my arms, and moving faster than walking pace, I would be considered to be running by an outside observer. Now if I were to propel my legs with less force and slow down my pace, I would be considered to be walking by an outside observer. The same argument applies to gender. The phrase *I am a woman* is logically valid because I am carrying out actions that society has deemed to be “of a woman” for whatever reason, such as having long hair, being gentle and petite, even down to my scent. Floral scents are largely considered feminine while musky scents are considered masculine. But, if I were to cut my hair short, start acting with a certain toughness or confidence and my actions appealed to society’s definition of a man, the phrase *I am a man* would also be valid. In each case, whether I am acting as a man or acting as a woman, my gender is performed; it is not inherent to me as a person but it is done as an action, just like running or walking. Just as my heart size or lean mus-

cle mass don’t define me as a runner, my action of running does. My sex organs or hormone levels don’t define my femininity or masculinity but rather my actions.

Ideas of gender can sometimes be contrary to a convention or logic. Society creates both discrete and overt principles of how a “man” and “woman” should act, dress, smell, and biologically and linguistically be identified before the subject can decide for themselves. Human beings that are regulated by these social constructs are thus formed, denied, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those constructs.

Thus, we reach the fault line of the gender binary. We assume that the titles of man and woman represent a common identity. Man and woman are not exhaustive terms; “if one is a woman, that is surely not all one is” (Butler, 3). In this way, the idea of gender identity is a misnomer, as identity is usually presumed to be a fixed idea. That is why I argue for the idea of personhood in accompaniment to gender identities, as gender identity falls under one aspect of personhood (personhood being a plural entirety). Furthermore, gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, historical, and sexually-constructed identities; man and woman in the United States do not map onto man and woman in Vietnam.⁴

Feminism, which is typically defined as the movement toward equality among the sexes, is facing a larger problem. In the distinction between sex and gender, the Feminist perspective ought to strive for equality among the biological sexes and gender identities. The social structure of the gender binary remains ubiquitous in Western culture, but we can resist it by subversive acts. As Butler questions, “what would the acts of resistance be like, and what would we expect them to accomplish?” I offer gender pronouns as a partial solution and concrete act of resistance that finds its roots in historical movements that have influenced the twenty-first century. In the following section, I will discuss at length the linguistic representation of gender through the usage of gender pronouns.

“If we are to recognize human beings in the fullness of their personhood, gender pronouns are one small yet pivotal step towards dismantling a binary that has oppressed genders for over a millennium.”

IDENTIFYING GENDER BY PRONOUN USAGE

PGPs: Preferred Gender Pronouns

Pronouns are the most common gendered words in the English language. Pronouns, in a grammatical sense, are also known as function words. On their own, function words have very little meaning. In English, there are fewer than five hundred function words yet they account for more than half of the words we speak, hear, and read every day. Pronouns - such as I, you, he/she/they - differ greatly from gender pronouns. Gender pronouns (sometimes called preferred gender pronouns) take the same form as functional pronouns (he/she/they) but denotes gender identity and personhood instead. This distinction is most often made on college campuses, where preferred gender pronouns are defined as:

“A consciously chosen set of pronouns that allow a person to accurately represent their gender identity in a way that is comfortable for them. For example, a trans person may begin using a gender-neutral pronoun prior to transitioning, and a gendered pronoun afterwards, or an agender, bigender or third-gender person may choose to use a neutral or invented pronoun.”

The two youngest generations, Gen Z and Gen Y, are more likely than others to see gender roles and binary labels as outdated. According to a new study conducted by the advertising insights agency Bigeye, “half of members of Generation Z (or 50%) agree that traditional gender roles and binary gender labels [she/he pronouns] are outdated” (Bigeye 2021, 74). In their survey, Bigeye discovered that “one half of the respondents identifying as nonbinary indicated their personal pronouns are they/ them/theirs.” Personal pronouns do more than correctly

refer to a person, they also validate that person’s gender identity. According to Bigeye, “more than 12 percent of U.S. millennials identify as transgender or gender-non-conforming,” and globally, “25 percent of Gen Z individuals expect to change their gender identity at least once during their lifetime.” Human beings ought to be recognized in the fullness of their personhood if we are to achieve equality among all peoples. The simplest way to do so is by normalizing widespread gender pronoun usage. Within the transgender community there is a shift towards eliminating the use of the word “preferred” and simply calling them *gender pronouns* or just *pronouns*. This stems from a belief that including the word “preferred” implies that there is a desire of a wish to be seen as a specific gender rather than presenting who they truly are through authentic gender expression. It can be hurtful to assume that because something is preferred, it is not right or natural. The word “preferred” also implies that there is a choice for the speaker and user of certain gender pronouns. Transgender people strive to eliminate the idea of “choice” over their gender and instead strive to present gender as an authentic demonstration of personhood and using a person’s gender pronouns is a form of mutual respect, solidarity, and understanding.

Moving Forward

In 2020, MasterCard’s “TrueName™” campaign announced that trans customers could use their preferred name on credit cards, and United Airlines began offering passengers nonbinary booking options. Twelve states have introduced gender-neutral IDs and provide an “X” alternative to “M” and “F” on driver’s licenses. Harvard’s Faculty of Arts and Sciences’ registration tool now allows students to register their preferred gender pronouns, including printing them alongside their names on student IDs. The importance of these policies is deeply personal: being able

to use their chosen names and gender markers sanctions transgender and nonbinary gender identities. Incorporation of gender pronouns ought to be ubiquitous: on name tags, in social media bios, in email signatures, on licenses and student IDs. The benefits of such identification are twofold. If a nonbinary person signs their email they/them in their signature, it is an immediate clarification for the type of pronoun that may be used. Additionally, although a cisgender person clarifying preferred cisgender pronouns (she/her, he/him) may seem futile, it may catch the attention of someone who is unfamiliar with gender pronouns, prompting a conversation.

Singular or Plural?

Grammar Mechanics of Gender Pronouns

In the previous section, I covered the historical conception of gender pronouns and the modern-day linguistic representation of gender pronouns - most commonly manifested in she/her/hers, he/him/his, and they/them/theirs. As our conceptions of gender evolve and adapt to the ever-changing definition of masculine, feminine, and non-binary, so do the grammar mechanics that apply to the gender pronouns. My inclusion of grammar mechanics is crucial in striving for the normalization of gender pronouns. It clarifies the grammatical rules that apply to them and will only further aid those confused by pronouns. As my father, a member of the baby-boomer generation, has recently questioned, “they/them... they is swimming or they are swimming?”

Dad, they are swimming, and here is why:

The Singular They

Among professional linguists and everyday English speakers, the syntactic representation of gender through the usage of a singular they has gained curiosity for decades. The English language lacks a gender-neutral singular pronoun to correspond neatly with “everyone” or “someone” and as a consequence, *they* has been used for this purpose for

over six hundred years. *They* is sometimes said to have the advantage of being already part of English grammar, in contrast to atypical alternatives¹ and is thus the most popular gender-neutral pronoun in use today. Let’s take a look at some examples of the singular *they* in simple sentences.

- (1) Grace and Anthony are swimming. They are swimming.
- (2) Janet is swimming. They are swimming.

In example (1) *they* takes on its standard plural form, referring to two people swimming, while in example (2) *they* is being used for a specific, named individual in a particular context that calls for a non-binary pronoun. Since Janet prefers they/them pronouns, the speaker acknowledges and identifies them with the appropriate pronoun.

Even for innovative *they* users, the current status of *they* in English can meet its linguistic pitfalls, making syntax difficult depending upon the usage of *they*. For example, in the reflexive form:

“Janet presents *themselves* as nonbinary. They presents *themselves* as nonbinary.”

NOT “Janet present *themselves* as nonbinary. They present *themselves* as nonbinary.”

Go ahead and read each sentence aloud, or better yet, type them out on your phone or computer and watch grammar suggestion tools grow furious as you ignore the syntax demands of a pronoun that must match its antecedent in gender and number. Here we see the difficulty in adapting to certain features of the English language and the singular *they*, wherein the antecedent doesn’t have a particular gender. In the case of the reflexive form, we use *themselves* and not *themselves* because Janet is not presenting many plural selves but rather one self that does not conform to a singular binary. Pronouns can be confusing and mistakes

“Correct your mistakes, ask questions, and normalize identifying your gender pronouns.”

“Social construction looks at gender through a focal analysis that seeks to explain the phenomenon of men as dominant and women as subordinate in society as a pattern of social relations that has been performed and internalized and thus systemically maintained and deeply entrenched in our culture.”

can be made, but it is in the mistakes that we gain clarity about an individual's gender presentation. Misidentifying, a common error in nonbinary pronoun usage for someone who does not outwardly express one singular gender, should be met with compassion and conversation, not criticism and shame. Correct your mistakes, ask questions, and normalize identifying your gender pronouns.

THEY ARE WHO THEY ARE: GENDER AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION THEORY

Social Construction: Defined

“Our beliefs about the world create the reality of that world, as opposed to the position that the world reveals what is really there” (Kessler, 1998).

The multiplicity of uses and definitions of social construction has transformed its meaning over time and now in common vernacular, describes something as “socially constructed.” This implies that it is illusionary or not fully real and, to a certain degree, such an impression holds true. The conversation surrounding social construction rests gently upon the surface of the larger philosophical debates of metaphysics and epistemology, which questions how we know what is real and what is not. In viewing gender through the social constructionist lens, the illusory nature of gender that is perpetuated by the usage of phrases like “gender is made up” or “gender doesn't exist” is dismantled. I argue that gender *does* exist but due to society's own conception and the meaning upon which we have ascribed it; gender does not exist naturally. Instead, because of social construction, gender has undergone the process of

determining separate groups (gender binaries of man and woman) and naturalizing their subordination to one another. This is a process not only unique to the construction of gender but also to other constructs like race. Social construction looks at gender through a focal analysis that seeks to explain the phenomenon of men as dominant and women as subordinate in society as a pattern of social relations that has been performed, internalized, and thus systematically entrenched in our culture.

The norms by which an individual's personhood is evaluated must undergo ideological and institutional critique if we seek the eradication of the gender binary. “A critique of a concept is not a rejection of that concept but an exploration of its various meanings and limitations,” through a conceptual and narrative framework that governs the way in which we socially construct ourselves (Anderson, 2001, p. 22). Following this line of thought, gender influences how individuals organize all of society and how they distribute power, thus making the elimination of gender socially impossible. It is here we see the formulation of gender stratification, which is the unequal distribution of wealth, power, and privilege across genders.

Patriarchal domination impedes equality among the genders, but conceptualizing gender oppression in terms of man-ness and woman-ness may also be misleading. It may foster false ideas and impressions based on the understanding that “man” is a single, ubiquitous, and unified category that necessarily subjugates the other single, ubiquitous, and unified category of “woman.” Studies focusing on intra-gender inequality show that there exists numer-

ous forms of plural masculinities and femininities, which then affect the relations of domination not only between different genders but also within the same gender category. The greatest domination exists between what sociologists call hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininities. These terms, as defined by social construction theorist Raewyn Connell in the late 1980s, refer to the forms of masculinity in a given historical and societal setting that legitimates unequal gender relations between men and women and within genders that then predispose the creation of stylized acts of femininity (Connell 1978, 19). Connell argued that hegemonic masculinity is always constructed in relation to subordinated femininities and other unconventional masculinities (Connell 1978, 21). Such terms allow an individual in society to understand the multifaceted dimensions of masculinity and femininity as well as the role of gender conventions in the structures of power and oppression that inadvertently and advertently govern the way in which individuals interact, particularly through their outward gender identification by means of personal pronouns. First, we must clearly define hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity.

Hegemonic Masculinities

“Initially formulated in the 1980s to shed light on a series of practices that promoted the favorable social condition of men over women, the concept of hegemonic masculinity is premised on the existence of a dominant form of masculinity. All men position themselves in relation to it, and therefore internalize personal codes of behavior that contribute to its reproduction.” (Mortenni, 1).

An Americanized concept of outward masculinity reads as such: a man is, most notably, heterosexual and manifests his man-ness in his personhood through the pronouns he/him/his. This man resists outward displays of vulnerability, weakness but instead should perform aggressive behaviors. He should “exhibit strength and toughness, and be competitive and successful” (Mortenni, 1). Therefore, men feel an immense social pressure to conform to the dominant ideas of being a man, which perpetuates gender-biased hierarchy in society. Those who do not, are typically subordinated and socially marginalized. As a result, the genders deemed effeminate or individuals in the LGBTQ-

IA+ community are subordinated while those who strive to conform to this ideal of man-ness are dominant and celebrated. Hegemonic masculinity then affects the political and economic spheres of society which perpetuate the inequality between and within genders. Consider women’s right to vote, autonomy over the female reproductive organs, the wage gap, the pink tax, or the infamous glass ceiling that perpetually hangs in the ether of a universe socially constituted as cisgender, socially conforming men dominating other human beings. Because of the need to fill this socially-acceptable role, lack of life options and choices drastically reduces the degree of individual freedom in deciding the life an individual has reason to value, crushing their personhood.

Current cultural discourse surrounds inequality between the gender binaries, but there is a distinct lack of scholarship and advocacy for the social disparities between gender-non-conforming/gender fluid males who fall victim to the power structures of hegemonic masculinity, heteronormativity, and “manly men” in society. The long-term authority of hegemonic masculinity over social structures resides in its conception of man. Societal domination takes place not only between genders but also within them. Therefore, the problem is not man himself but the types of behavior and attitudes associated with dominance and power. These behaviors and attitudes are bolstered by society’s continuation of sharply sex/gender-dimorphic categorizations. Normalizing various gender pronouns can begin to shift perspectives even in their simple, everyday usage by raising awareness to the fluidity of gender. Men face gender-related problems, just like women and such shared experiences have the potential to create bonds of mutual understanding and solidarity between men and women, increasing a social consciousness on gender perceptions.

Emphasized Femininities

Emphasized femininity is “the pattern of femininity which is given most cultural and ideological support . . . patterns such as sociability . . . compliance . . . [and] sexual receptivity [to men]” (Connell 1987, 24).

An Americanized concept of outward femininity believes a woman ought to be gentle and warm, but also a dependent and weak being who needs reassurance from men. Her sexuality is for men to capitalize on: sexual relations in her heterosexuality (i.e. sexual intercourse) and sexual spectacle in her homosexuality (i.e. pornography and fetishization). A woman manifests her femininity in outward displays of woman-ness not only through her gender normative pronouns she/her/hers but also in her dress, mannerisms, hair and makeup, scent, and, most notably, in her ability to bear children. From this limiting conception of women, emphasized femininity is practiced in a complementary, compliant, and accommodating subordinate relationship with hegemonic masculinity. Connell emphasized in her work that hegemonic masculinity has no meaning unless it is viewed in relation to its subordinated counterpart in emphasized femininity (Connell 1978, 21). And vice versa: femininity as a term, can barely be understood on its own if not for the opposing relationship to masculinity. Femininities are constructed in and through male bodies (what is commonly referred to as the “male gaze” in pop culture) and are emphasized through the repetition of stylized acts that foster and maintain a heteronormative, sex-dimorphic image of woman-ness. This, in turn, discursively emphasizes men in holding dominate roles, particularly in sexual relations within which the woman is deemed sexually compliant to the man. Femininity in this case is practiced and performed as Butler, being described in my earlier chapter, suggests (Butler, 3). Femininity is complementary to masculinity and the two work in a pseudo-social-symbiotic relationship: the “man” maintains his dominance, the “woman” maintains her subordination.

A functionalist approach to such inequalities holds that the disparities in sociological relations to power structures and larger social institutions are a result of each gender adapting to the roles they are best suited for: women in childbirth and maintaining the home while men are tied to labor and primary financial support. In third wave feminist understanding, emphasized femininity can only be conceptualized by the intersectionality of being a Female and the standard of the “woman identity” existing in society. Social norms are further propagated into a unique

form of social separation, known as “othering.” Here, “othering” refers to the discrete social competition among women in attempting to best orient themselves to an unattainable standard of femininity, thus isolating those who do not seek to conform to such a standard. Not only do women face subjugation to men but are isolated from other women in competition for femininity, which exists only as a complimentary social factor to men. This furthers women’s subjugation, essentially annexing the woman from her personhood out of need for social survival.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

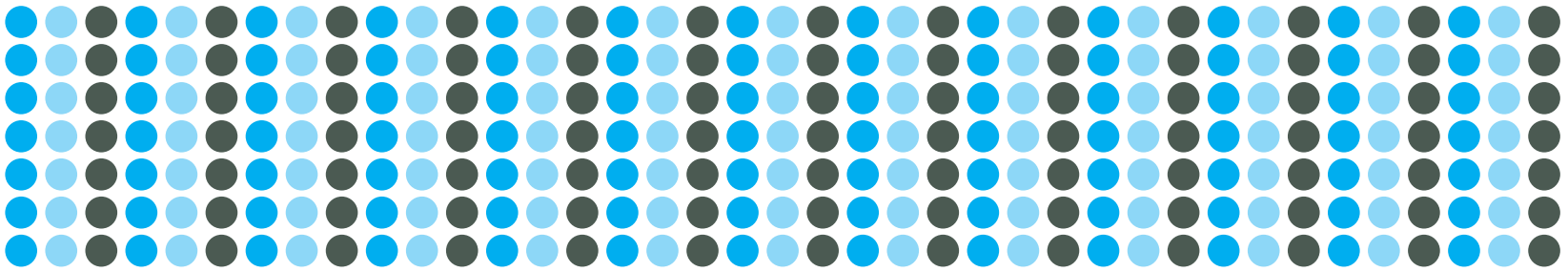
Gender is an entirely disjunctive class and a recent trend in feminist theory is to turn away from gender as a social classification on the whole. Gender is inherently unclear and complicated, so I don’t believe there to be an answer to the social construction of gender. And yet I do not think gender needs to be removed from the conversation about social construction. In fact, gender is a primary example of the effects of social construction; our conversations should be directed towards it. Within this debate about the inclusion or removal of gender and social construction theory, it can be hard to tell what gender is, or, if it is anything at all. Context-sensitive gender distinctions, like in a position of social relations wherein the relations of domination constitute the categories of man and woman, depend upon the deepening discourse on gender theory. The aim of my work on the ubiquity of gender pronouns do just that. Gender theory, in the feminized social constructionist view is not a search for a distinctive truth but collects a plethora of truth from multiple perspectives to build a framework for contextual theorizing like for gender how social forces, under the guise of biological forces work to perpetuate inequalities. If we are to capture what is morally significant about the human being in society, we must continue to foster debates on gender in social constitution and incorporate the normalization of gender pronouns, which are a direct outward reflection of an individual’s personhood corresponding to their gender or lack thereof.

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ENDNOTES

1. In this thesis, 'sex' denotes human females and males depending on biological features (chromosomes, sex organs, hormones and other physical features); 'gender' denotes women and men depending on social factors (social role, position, behavior or identity). The primary feminist motivation for making this distinction is to counter biological determinism. This theory is explained further in Section 2.
2. In the remainder of this paper, I will be denoting the biological sexes of Male and Female with capital letters in order to preserve their scientific definitions.
3. Or appear to do. Sexes are not always binary in their biological morphology as seen in Section 8.
4. Vietnam is a widely used example of a historically matriarchal society.
5. Some, but not all, neopronouns include *per/per/pers*, *ve/ver/vis*, *xe/xem/xyr*, *ze/zie/hir/hirs*



LIST OF ARTWORK

13 **ESPO WORKSHOP8**

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41 **CHAUCER ELLESMERE**

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54 **FIGURE 1**

© EnergySage. (2019, May 10). “Storing Solar Energy: How Solar Batteries Work”. <https://www.energysage.com/solar/solar-energy-storage/how-do-solar-batteries-work/>