

Sources: Construction of Race / Construction of Gender

Dr. Stephanie Y. Evans

www.ProfessorEvans.com

As seen in the recommended reading for this class, there are numerous (over 50) books which I have located that deal with race and gender. These are the 5 which best represent my starting assumptions of this vast discussion of the origin and construction of race and gender. Basically each of these texts represent that race and gender are real, but not static.

Construction of Race

Molnar studies race from the following views: biology, blood groups & proteins, hemoglobin, metabolism, genetics & DNA markers, geographic evolutions, physical traits, behavior, intelligence measures, biodiversity, health & disease, and changing dimensions and demographics. *Question: Are we "different"? Answer: Yes & No.*

(physiology/anthropology) Stephen Molnar *Human Variation: Races, Types, and Ethnic Groups* (2006): 398-401.

"Race is but a label we append to a population grouping with some physical characteristics that have some genetic components. ... There is no gene for race identification, that is, there is no marker that is unique to a particular race.... The race concept implies a real natural origin--a special creation of a few types. The race concept is but a social construct...[We have moved from folklore of arranging people into higher or lower order to scientific studies] of blood types, dominant and recessive genes, gene frequencies...genome, gene, or phenotype. ... The human genome has been identified by sequencing the 3 billion bases in our DNA, and the 30,000 genes that function to code for the synthesis of the body's proteins."

(history) Jabari Asim *The N Word: Who Can Say It, Who Shouldn't, and Why* (2007): 20.

"I advance it therefore as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments of both body and mind" -- Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, 1785

"To justify their aversion to emancipation...slaveholders adhered to what Ira Berlin has called 'the logic of subordination, generally finding the sources of their own domination in some rule of nature or law of God.' Desperate to cloak their nakedly unreasonable system in the respectable garb of rationality, members of the propertied elite increasingly turned to the comforting pronouncements of scientific racism. With his Notes on the State of Virginia...Thomas Jefferson gave himself and his peers just what they needed.... His ludicrous, inflammatory absurdities, relayed in the careful prose of 'learned discourse,' set a poisonous precedent for the seemingly endless examples of racist pseudo-scholarship that would follow."

"Black Gender"
Graduate & Undergraduate Course
University of Florida, 2007

(sociology/psychology) Wijeyeshinghe & Jackson, Eds. *New Perspectives on Racial Identity Development: A Theoretical and Practical Anthology* (2001)

"The Factor Model of Multiracial Identity"

- Racial Ancestry
- Early Experiences and Socialization
- Cultural Attachment
- Physical Appearance
- Social and Historical Context
- Political Awareness and Orientation
- Other Social Identities (gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class)
- Spirituality

Construction of Gender

(physiology/biology) Anne Fausto-Sterling *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (2000): 250, 7

Fausto-Sterling considers gender from multiple perspectives: history of genital variation; surgeries to "fix" or "assign" a gender to intersex babies; psychological and sociological aspects of identity development; chromosome and DNA variation; glands, hormones, and gender chemistry; sex and sexuality in rats; and theories of gender. Ultimately, she concludes,

"Thus Lorber...points out that concern with our subjective selves is not 'merely' about human psychology and physiology. Rather, gendered individuals exist in social institutions strongly marked by a variation of power inequities." She situates gender in the mixed realms of psychology, physiology, and sociology, then writes, "As a biologist, I believe in the material world...but as a feminist Witness...I believe what we call 'facts' about the living world are not universal truths."

(health/psychology) Ehrenreich & English *Complaints and Disorders: The Sexual Politics of Sickness* (1973): 28, 8, 62.

"Doctors and educators were quick to draw the obvious conclusion that, for women, higher education could be physically dangerous. Too much development of the brain, they counseled, would atrophy the uterus."

Beyond gender, "In the historical period we have studied, science in general was invoked to justify the social inequities imposed by race and by class as well as sex. ... Blacks and European immigrants were described as congenitally inferior to white Anglo-Saxon Protestants, having smaller brains, larger muscles, and a host of 'inherited' social traits. ... In the popular imagination, working-class women were all somewhat sickening, whether because they spread disease or dragged down the [White] 'race' with their inferior and all-too-plentiful offspring."