

## СОЦІАЛЬНА ПСИХОЛОГІЯ

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### GENDER RESEARCH METHODOLOGY IN THE MODERN WORLD: AN INDIVIDUAL'S GENDER EXPERIENCE

*У статті обґрунтовано необхідність пошуку нової методологічної основи дослідження гендеру у сучасному світі. Розкрито роль теорії соціального конструктивізму у дослідженні різних гендерів. Обґрунтовано поняття «гендерного досвіду особистості», що дозволяє вивчати особистість через її суб'єктивну репрезентацію. Розглянуто гендерний досвід особистості як соціокультурний конструкт, що створюється в процесі соціальної взаємодії на мікро-, мезо-, макро- рівнях. Розкрито структуру гендерного досвіду як системи інтерпретативних схем, концептів, проаналізовано особливості їх формування.*

**Ключові слова:** гендерний досвід, соціальний конструктивізм, гендерна ідентичність, соціо-культурний досвід, інтерпретативні схеми.

*The article deals with the research methodology of gender individual experience. It is grounded the necessity of finding a new methodology for the study of gender in the modern world. Outlines the role of the theory of social constructionism in interpreting gender it is grounded introduction to the scientific analysis of the concept of "gender individual experience." An individual's gender experience is interpreted as a socio-cultural construction that is the result of mutual influence of human's subjective and objective realities. This individual's gender experience is formed in the process of social interaction. There is a whole system of interpretive schemas and concepts in the structure of human's gender experience.*

**Keywords:** gender experience, socio-constructivist, gender identity, socio-cultural experience, interpretive schemas.

**Statement of the problem.** The modern world offers different gender patterns of contextual nature, as they are determined by gender schemas of the culture or community they are formed and legitimized in. Hence there is a need for a new research paradigm in the study of forming individual's gender, because using the present-day classical and non-classical theories of gender do not allow to solve the given problems.

Poststructuralist and postmodernist ideas reflect a new style of philosophical thinking based not on finding out traditional alternatives (opposition of general and particular, individual and social, old and new, male and female) but on recognition of plurality, denial of non-alternative. With the advent of poststructuralist and postmodernist ideas it became possible to talk about a new subject that was previously hidden, and to present it in a completely new way. This new research subject is a gender specified individual, whose formation occurs in certain social, historical, cultural and situational contexts. At that, not sex but society is the main object of analysis during its influence on forming human's gender and human's experience included in the system of social expectations and requirements. Therefore, the study of gender in psychology should be based on analyses of an individual's

experience, mechanisms of its construction in a certain socio-cultural context. A new step in gender research methodology sets grounds for introducing the concept of "gender experience" of an individual.

The **aim** of the paper is to justify the application of socio-constructivist paradigm in the study of gender experience of an individual.

**Theoretical analysis.** In gender studies based on social constructivist paradigm and postmodernist principles gender is considered to be a socio-cultural, multifactorial construction (Gergen, 1996; Gilligan, 1982; Kessler & McKenna, 1978, pp. 1-6; Koestner, 1995; Spence, 1993) permanently constituted and reproduced in communicative situations.

With an advent of ideas of social constructivism in interpreting gender it became possible to distinguish between biological sex: genitals, prenatal, teenage and adult hormonal sets; gender as a social category that indicates social functions, which are based on the ability of role interaction of sexes as transmitters of life, etc; and gender as a constantly created category in a certain context, a category of learning, "assuming a role", mastering behavioral actions that meet or do not meet a certain gender status. Gender as a specific structure of behavioral patterns and schemes that clearly delineate male and female experiences. Gender, biological sex and sexuality are social constructs created in a socio-cultural context. The fact of gender differences is not as important as their socio-cultural interpretations that determine social interaction.

The analysis of current researches (Sandra Bem, Shawn Meghan Burn, M. Gergen, K. Dauks, B. Lott, R. Anger, Jeanne *Marecek*) on gender identity in the socio-constructivist aspect reveals the basic parameters of a multifactorial model of psychological gender: 1) an individual can combine features of masculinity and femininity in their identity regardless of sex displaying them depending on the situation. For example, a male can demonstrate masculine behavior as well as show feminine features in being interested by methods of parenting and upbringing children; 2) the main determinants are not biological factors, but socio-cultural ones since the construction of gender experience happens in a certain socio-cultural context (ethnicity, social class, time and place of living, belonging to a community, etc.); 3) the core identity i.e. belonging to a particular sex remains unchanged over time, whereas characteristics of identity are determined by subjective experience and may change due to life conditions and socio-cultural transformations; 4) gender identity is not a monolithic structure, its components are interrelated, they can be inconsistent and contradictory. For example, a woman may have a strong focus on a family as well as on a professional growth. A man can be demanding, rigorous, uncompromising at work and sensitive, gentle, caring at home or with loved ones.

**Presenting main material.** Representatives of social constructivism (Gergen, 1996, West, Zimmerman, 1987, Connell, 1998;) state that ideas about masculinity and femininity are of an artificial origin which are created and legitimized by social institutions due to human interpretation. In a process of social interactions an individual adopts gender models created in a certain context. In other words, an individual gains an experience to be and to seem a man or a woman, thereby

consolidating and affirming gender schemes typical to a particular community and culture.

Understanding gender as a structure and a process allows us to talk about an existence of socio-cultural experience, expectations as to what society expects what men and women should be. Theorists of this trend examine social technology of forming gender roles, gender consciousness and experience through various social institutions, arts, science and everyday life. Gender hierarchizes social relations and roles of men and women involving complex mechanisms or technologies, which in turn determine a subject as of a male or female type in the process of standardization and regulation of what a person should be under expectations of society. Thus, gender is nothing more than a kind of ideological relations. In other words, gender is seen as a process that constructs a social and normative entity through constructing gender differences related to race, class, ethnic differences. Therefore, the concept of gender is not natural or given, it is a process of creating and recreating institutions, values and identities. At the same time, it is regular, systematic and logical, it depends on a cultural and social context, on specifics of gender relations in different societies, historical periods, ethnic groups, social classes, communities and generations.

The main tenets of the theory of gender within social constructivism is that the relationship between males and females are socially constructed. Proponents of this theory (Gergen K., J. Hoffmann, D. Zimmerman, J. Lorber, R. Connelly, C. West, S. Farrell et al.) doubt the fact that relationship between the sexes, their different experience are derivatives of belonging to a biological sex, that all social is biologically determined and should be considered as natural and normative. Thus, they criticize a-historism and essentialism (essential unchanging) of experience. Social constructivism is a theory which conceptualizes distinctions between different categories of men and women. The main objective is the analysis of the values attributed to differences of masculine and feminine in different contexts.

In social constructivism gender is defined as a result of everyday interactions that require a constant performance and confirmation. It is not achieved once and for all as a permanent status. It is constantly reproduced in communicative situations. According to the American feminists authors K. West, D. Zimmerman (1987), the procedure of attributing gender always accompanies everyday human interaction. During the interaction a person first tries to categorize his/her interlocutor, in case of failure, there is a feeling of discomfort and uncertainty. In a situation of uncertainty during the interaction a question of criteria of relating an interlocutor to the category of sex arises. When a person can find the criteria for categorization, communication occurs. If there is a problem with identification, communication fails. So categorization by gender is a basic practice of everyday interactions, it is often a non-reflexed background for communication in all social spheres, so it cannot be avoided.

Social constructivism explains the process of constructing categorical gender identity based on cultural constructs. Gender relations are a construct of the culture in which they work. Social constructivism based on the theory of dramatic interactionism by E. Goffman explains how cultural contexts are conceptualized, referring to the analysis of a micro context of social interaction. E. Goffman

introduces a concept of a "gender display" to explain such mechanisms. During communication, an information exchange is accompanied by a background process of creating gender – doing gender. According to E. Goffman, a gender display is a main mechanism for creating gender on a level of interpersonal interaction.

Using the notion of a gender display, constructivists argue that gender relations cannot be reduced to implementation of sex roles. Their mechanisms are subtler, gender cannot be changed by a dress, a hairstyle or a role, since it is merged with bodies of active agents. The display is a variety of ideas and expression of male and female features in interaction. Gender display as an image of sexual identity in interaction is rather complex and its implementation cannot be reduced to individual phrases, clothes, manners, etc. The whole atmosphere – style, habitus (a term by P. Bourdieu) shows the gender display. Being a man or a woman and showing it in a display means to be a socially competent person who is credible and fits in communicative practices allowed in a particular culture.

Demonstrating the display is really a virtuoso "play" aimed at partners on stage; it is a game that has long been fused with lives of "actors" and it appeared to performers and observers as a natural expression of their essences. This is the whole mystery of constructing gender – continuously taking part in a "masquerade" of presenting gender, people do this so that playing by the rules seems a natural expression of human selves. The proof that the gender display is not derived from anatomical and physiological sex is that it is not universal, it is determined by culture and power relations.

Different societies, social groups and even different social situations involve different forms of gender conventional display. As noted by E. Goffman (1997), gender self-expression is less a result of our sexual nature than an interpretation image that we would like to express about our sexual nature using conventional gestures. Our human nature enables us to learn how to create and allocate the male or female gender display, and "we are endowed with this ability because we are humans, not persons of male or female sex" [5, p. 76].

Creating gender should be seen not just as a demonstration of the display, but as the use of discrete, well-defined behavioral strategies that may be included in a situation of interaction for recognition of masculinity or femininity. A man "creates" masculinity by letting a woman at the door enter first or he offers her a hand while getting off a bus, and she "creates" femininity allowing him to do this. However, a creation of gender is not so simply organized. To be successful and to comply with norms and standards of gender adopted in a particular culture the labeling and demonstration of gender must meet situations, vary and evolve depending on a situation. Construction of gender consists in managing situations so that a behavior is seen as gender-relevant or gender-irrelevant. Thus, constructivists define gender as a system of interpersonal interaction through which people create, state, confirm and reproduce an idea of masculine or feminine basic categories of a social order.

Construction of gender occurs on a macro-level of a social life. Gender is constructed and legitimized by institutions and it primarily concerns social relations within which individuals and groups act (Connell R. W., 1997). That is why gender

should be explained as structural characteristics of society. In every society there is a gender order and a gender mode that determine the specificity of individual's gender experience. Construction of gender is grounded on the thesis that the structure is not given in advance, it is formed historically, so there are different ways of constructing gender, reflecting dominance of different social interests. Hence the existing forms of sexuality are social constructs and therefore masculinity and femininity should be seen as historically variable structures.

Schools, offices, factories, sports clubs, etc. are the examples of gender modes. Gender modes are part of larger entities – a gender order of society, which is also subject to a time change. As noted by R. Connelly, gender modes typically coincide with overall gender order, but may deviate from it. This deviation from the dominant gender order in society by a particular gender mode is an important factor of changing the gender order, because the changes often begin in one area of public life, and only then move on to another.

Gender order is found at the level of society, gender modes are at the level of institutions and gender relations are at the level of individuals, groups and organizations. Not all gender relations directly concern interactions between men and women; some interactions occur through, for example, the labor market or the media.

There are four dimensions of gender, which determine gender relationship: power relations, production relations, emotional relations, symbolic relations. The patriarchal power is manifested not only in a direct control of men over women, but it also acts indirectly through the state. In today's economy, the division of labor between predominantly male and female professions is included in a process of economic development and certain products and services. Sexuality (in particular, a division in heterosexual and homosexual relationships) refers to the emotional component of an individual. Society is full of symbols that have gender meaning. Gender symbolism is present in language, fashion, gestures, movies and more.

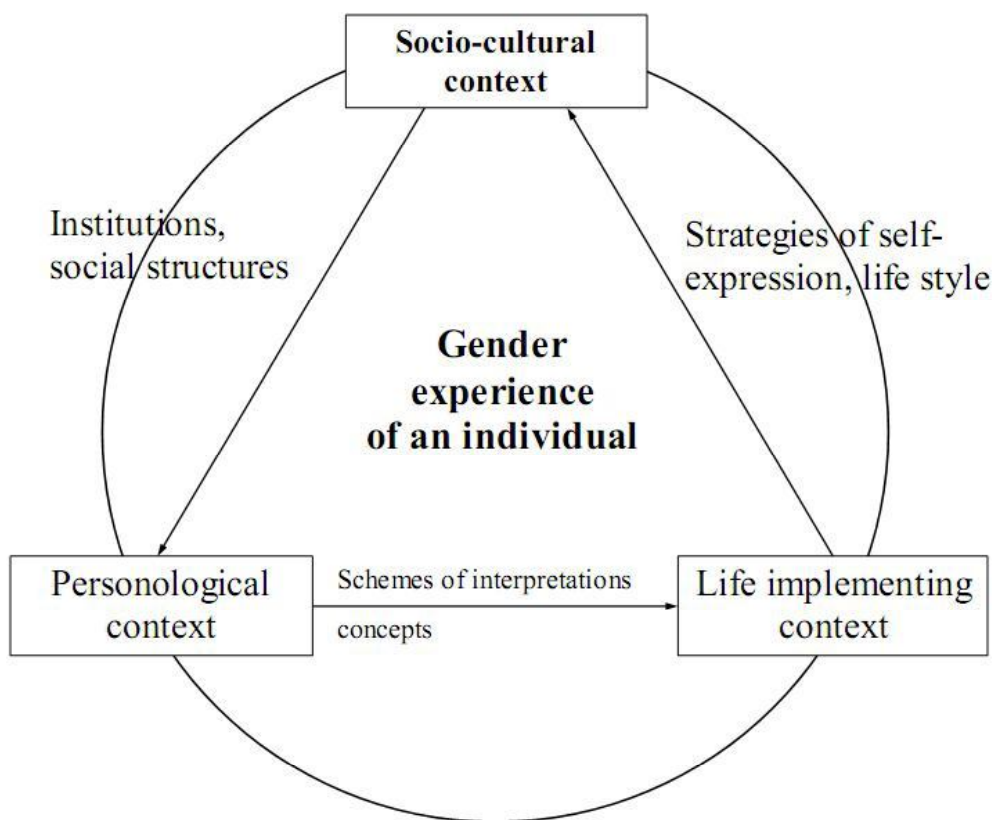
Judith Lorber offers a new paradigm of gender, namely gender as a social institution[6]. Gender identity from a micro-level (where, according to Judith Lorber, it appears as an "individual sense of gender feeling himself/herself as a worker and a family member") applies to a macro level – the level of public institutions. Gender is a characteristics of individuals; gender individuals having acquired their gender identity become a part of society, thus forming gender institutions. However, from a point of view of ethnomethodology and phenomenology, social institutions and other social phenomena are "real" only to the extent we organize our activities so that we constantly confirm their real existence. Sociologist David Walsh asserts that this social world inevitably ceases to exist if it is denied human recognition, because without such recognition it does not have the quality of being. In this sense, society and stereotypes really exist because its members define and treat them as a reality.

Hence, a social-constructivist paradigm has acquired a status of basic methodology in gender studies, which, in our opinion, can explain the nature of gender differences that are constructed by the socialization, demarcation of labor, system of roles, family, media and an individual on the level of awareness, acceptance, internalization, reflection, interiorization of norms and roles set by

society. In other words, gender differences are determined by socio-cultural experience that directs a formation of subjective experience of an individual to be and to show gender characteristics. In our opinion, social constructivism is the methodology that speaks most confidently about the existence of gender experience of an individual and creates opportunities for revealing mechanisms of its construction in different groups, cultures, communities and subcultures.

Hence psychologists are interested in the process of construction of individual's gender experience and the essence of an individual's gender experience.

An individual's gender experience is interpreted as a socio-cultural construction that is the result of mutual influence of human's subjective and objective realities (Table 1).



**Table 1. Construction model of gender experience of an individual.**

This individual's gender experience is formed in the process of social interaction. There is a whole system of interpretive schemas and concepts in the structure of human's gender experience. These schemas and concepts have the function of a matrix through which an individual perceives and interprets reality.

They direct a comprehension of a situation, facilitate a development of alternative methods of implementing actions and plans. The presence of a required set of interpretative schemas in the subjective experience of a man or a woman allows them to evaluate events and situations, have their views, and ultimately make decisions and choose solutions to everyday problems. In our opinion, different

configurations of such schemes in men and women contribute to the differences in self-expression, which are indicated in many gender studies. The difference in interpretive schemes in men and women we can explain by various ways of their construction in the culture which is gender-defined.

Primary interpretative schemes differ in their structure and functions from stereotypes-concepts that are based on cultural models created by an individual and tested in practice, act as integrators and stabilizers of subjective human experience. Such experience formations are usually of reproductive character, they are based on already known cognitive structures (gender stereotypes that are specific to a particular culture, community, environment of an individual). They are quite stable formations of subjective experience of a man or a woman reflecting both conscious and unconscious levels of a mental activity and they can operate at a level of a gender setting. There are stereotypes-concepts in a form of opinions and judgments reflecting generalized and interiorized knowledge about specifics of gender roles and attitudes (acceptance or non-acceptance) to the models and patterns of behavior within these roles. Unlike primary interpretive schemes, stereotypes-concepts have a more stable structure fixed on a past experience and rather invariant with respect to various life situations. Primary interpretative schemes regarding stereotypes are so-called "raw data" and are a primary phenomenal base for their further organization. In forming a new experience stereotypes-concepts that are structures of consciousness accept or reject new information depending on a degree of its compliance with the scheme.

Such schemes are not isolated on different levels, they form an intertwined gender model (theory) of an individual's world that is textual in nature and is the result of subjective reflection and interpretation of the personal experience or experience of a community, culture and society. The gender pattern (image) of the world serves as an individualized basis for perception, understanding and interpretation of the reality. Being not always conscious, it defines a way which underlies the understanding and interpretation of reality by males or females and sets a peculiar character of their self-expression and actions.

Concepts-meanings are all knowledge, thoughts and assumptions of a person about a particular situation. A conceptual system is formed not only by external influences of an objective reality on a personality, but it is a result of self-reflection, independent thinking of structures of meaning. Concepts-meanings are a system of individual values obtained as a result of the interpretation that determine subjective conceptualization and categorization of a human being. Therefore, gender experience is a system of values. It can be studied basing on interpretive schemes and concepts that reflect an individual's attitude to itself, others and the world.

**Conclusions.** Thus, social constructivism sets new coordinates of researching gender, gender experience of an individual and peculiarities of its construction. This approach provides an opportunity to study the mechanisms of formation and reproduction of masculinity and femininity, gender culture, "creating gender" in everyday life as well as the ways to gain knowledge about them. In addition, social constructivism leaves room for conceptualization of changes in socio-cultural

experience, where the gender schemes that hinder the processes of self-identity are fixed.

Today there is not any single "theory of social construction" that could fully reveal peculiarities of the creation of gender and gender experience of an individual. Nor are there any existing "constructivist practices" that would allow to definitely conclude about the mechanisms of forming subjective experience of men and women. However, we can talk about a number of generalizations, particularly the spectrum of analysis in the social constructivism shifts to gender determination of social construction of sexes. In this case, the subject of study changes: society, not sex, is the main object of the analysis in its impact on the formation of subjective experience of an individual in the system of social expectations and requirements, which determines an individual according to his/her aptitude to self-identification and relation of himself/herself to the perfect holder of features of a "real" man or a woman. Socio-cultural interpretations of gender direct the formation of gender experience of an individual, which is a system of interpretative schemes, concepts that define the relation and attitude of an individual to himself/herself, others and the world.

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**Світлана Боцвінок**

## **ГЕНЕЗИС РОЗВИТКУ ОБРАЗУ УСПІШНОСТІ В СИСТЕМІ ЦІННОСТЕЙ УКРАЇНЦІВ**

*У статті розкрито зміст поняття «практика успішності» і на підставі художніх текстів здійснено аналіз цінностей, які домінували в часи козацтва, та їх впливу на формування образу успішності у свідомості українця. Також висвітлено фактори, що*