

GENDER

Gender is a cultural construct that varies according to the historical period and the society and culture in which the concept is generated, and is therefore neither innate, nor static. It addresses a series of traits (roles, attitudes, physical attributes, behavioral patterns, sexuality, etc.) that are generally associated with a person depending on their gender, thus creating a system which classifies individuals in specific categories. Western culture functions according to a dual sex/gender system (man/woman, male/female), but from a relativist perspective, anthropological studies have shown that this construct is not universal. There are, in fact, various gender systems that identify two, three or more genders. Gender studies analyze the following:

- Gender as a cultural construct
- Gender as a relational process (the attributes associated with each sex are socially constructed in opposition to one another)
- Gender as power relations (a hierarchy of oppression exists between the sexes)
- The confluence of gender with other power relations (class, sexuality, race, age...)

** This is not a comprehensive list of gender terms and issues; rather, it has been created to include the topics of interest for analyzing the museum collections included in the "Rereadings" project*

GLOSSARY

Gender systems

A gender system is the social structure that establishes the number of genders, their respective roles and the relations between them (gender relations) for a given society.

Gender roles

The activities, behavior, tasks and labor that a culture assigns to each sex; the social abilities and forms of conduct that are considered appropriate for the members of a society, based on an individual's identity as male, female or other. Roles also vary from culture to culture and over time, and are influenced by various factors such as socio-economic standing, religion and ethnicity.

Gender identity

The feeling of belonging that a person professes towards a specific gender. Gender identity is constructed throughout an individual's life cycle, and includes feelings, attitudes, and gender affirmative or gender negative models.

Sexual/gender division of labor

This refers to the work that is assigned to each sex by society. Gender division of labor is not associated exclusively with a biological difference between men and women (e.g. jobs requiring greater physical strength being attributed to men), but is determined by society and culture as well. It is a cultural construct.

Gender and the body

Body decoration, body language, attire, etc. are aspects related to the body that help to create a gender identity. The control and objectification of bodies (circumcision, slavery, prostitution, surgery, etc.) in certain political, religious, social or cultural contexts is closely related to gender.

Gender and sexuality

Aspects related to sexuality (a person's sex, sexual orientation, sexual practices, etc.) are considered to be unrelated to gender identity, although certain aspects may influence the creation of this identity.

Gender and ethnicity

Gender studies must also be considered in the context of other variables like ethnicity. An individual's classification in a gender category and their belonging to a certain race, ethnic group, community, etc. define, together with other variables, the roles and identity of the individual in a given cultural context.

Gender and social class

Gender studies must also be considered in the context of other variables like social class. An individual's classification in a gender category and their belonging to a specific social class define, together with other variables, the roles and identity of the individual in a given cultural context.

Gender and attire

Clothing has multiple social, cultural, ethnic, political and artistic connotations, but it is undoubtedly a gender marker. Fashion and codes of attire, both subject to cultural and historical variation, are a reflection of gender identity. Changes in apparel also allow an individual to transgress the established norm (transvestism or cross-dressing).

Gender and space

Space –not just physical, but symbolic and social as well– is governed by a series of social and cultural norms that determine the relation of a space or sphere with gender (presence/absence, prohibition, confinement, freedom, etc.).

Gender and history

As history is an essentially subjective discipline that has traditionally been transcribed by men, the male figure is generally the subject of historical records.

Gender and life cycle

From an anthropological standpoint, this refers to a set of rites determined by the different phases in a person's life, from birth until death. The rites that characterize the transition from one stage to another are known as rites of passage. These rites vary based on society, beliefs, culture and historical moment. Rites of passage may be the same for all individuals, regardless of their association with a specific gender, or they may be gender specific.

- Gender and the life cycle: Birth
- Gender and the life cycle: Adolescence
- Gender and the life cycle: Courting
- Gender and the life cycle: Marriage
- Gender and the life cycle: Death

Maternity / Paternity

The role of women and men in the conception, birth, upbringing and education of children varies by culture and historical period. Not all cultures attribute the same meaning and value to maternity and paternity.

Family and family relations

Like gender, family is a cultural construct, and is conditioned by culture and society, as well as by the historical moment. The role of women and men within the family and in family relations is therefore determined by socio-cultural norms.

Gender stereotypes

A set of preconceived ideas and images that are used to explain the behavior of men and women, dictating how each gender should behave, what roles they are expected to fulfill and how they are to relate to one other. Such ideas can often lead to overly simplified caricatures of what women "are" and what men "are".

It therefore represents an essentialist perspective that refuses to acknowledge the variable and artificial constructs of gender.

- Gender stereotypes: Reason / feelings
- Gender stereotypes: Culture / nature
- Gender stereotypes: Male hunter / female gatherer
- Gender stereotypes: Public / domestic
- Gender stereotypes: Genius / muse
- Gender stereotypes: Subject / object
- Gender stereotypes: History / allegory
- Gender stereotypes: Desirer / object of desire