

haslanger

haslanger offers a very rigorous approach to defining what race and gender are. she does this by doing an inquiry into what these definitions are and should be, in both a critical and an analytical approach. let's summarize what she means by each of these words:

- the **critical** approach to the inquiry involves uncovering the social processes and power dynamics which construct and sustain the aforementioned categories; instead of merely using the traditional definitions based on biological/physical attributes. she finds this necessary as a way to understand how these constructs perpetuate inequalities and injustices.
- the **analytical** aspect of her inquiry involves studying the concepts themselves by what they mean, how they're used, and the implications of their uses. she attempts to break down every piece of the puzzle, from scratch, pointing out very atomic definitions (which i find to be quite inclusive)

haslanger emphasizes the need for this type of inquiry for a couple of reasons: **first**, it provides a framework for understanding the complexity of social identities by themselves, but also in intersection with other identities. **second**, it serves to challenge the deterministic views that often underpin oppressive practices and policies. **last**, she suggests that an inquiry such as this can redefine what gender and race mean, and thus open the possibility for social transformation.

i'd also like to remark that she values her essay as more than just a philosophical paper (even if i find it to be very much worthy of a good piece of philosophical writing!), but as a contributor of political value.

jenkins

jenkins main critique about haslanger is that the original article is trans-exclusionary. by using a definition of woman where women need to be functioning and/or interpreted *as* women in society, not all trans women will be included.

she also makes it a point that by being too strict with our definition of what a woman is, we're also being prejudicial about what a woman *can* be.

lastly, jenkins suggest a dual view about gender, where gender is both defined by its social class AND each person's own identity.

counterpoint

while i partially do agree with jenkins' points, i don't get the feeling haslanger was being trans-exclusionary through her definitions. she even states that in an ideal world, woman would not exist (even if femalehood would) in its social sense. jenkins mainly claims this through the definition of what it is to be a woman, which haslanger kind of alludes to not be a perfect definition.

i feel like the definition of haslanger is perfectly trans-inclusive, but would instead put the blame of misinterpreting the definition on the people who are prejudiced in how they perceive

people, and not the definition itself. that said, haslanger could maybe have done a better job at conveying the need for a change in people's prejudices regarding identity and class.

my own views

personally, i view gender (and race, but explained through gender) as a large multivariadic spectrum involving several points:

biological:

- external (both primary —genitalia—, and secondary—facial hair, breasts, body shape...—)
- genes (chromosomes, mainly XX and XY; but also other variants)
- hormonal balances

identity:

- a box to fit in (a word/label that makes you feel comfortable, and explains who you are in major traits)
- gender expression (how you act, dress, and talk; mainly)
- community (who you hang with as “your people”)

social:

- assigned gender -> taught gender roles
- sociopolitical gender (concerning [anti]privileges)

this table, which i made a long time ago, seems to agree with haslanger in that there is a need for a deep analysis of gender. however, my approach diverges by incorporating a more nuanced spectrum that accounts for the complexity of gender beyond a binary or even a single spectrum model.

similar to jenkins, we can see my table aims to build on the need of inclusivity by offering a framework that is inherently inclusive, recognizing the validity and importance of each person's unique experience and identity. by breaking down gender into biological, identity, and social components, i propose a model that respects the multifaceted nature of gender.

i have kind of wanted to dig deeper into this table before, and feel like the authors we're going to discuss will help me dig deeper into my surface-touched ideas a bit deeper.

that said, i don't think it's super necessary, nor even possible, to have a streamlined definition of “woman”, since this is inherently a flawed view; as both of the authors kind of suggest.