

LATITUDE REDUCTION BASED ON GENDER
CATEGORIZATION AND GENDER STEREOTYPES
- STUDIES ABOUT EXPLICIT ATTITUDES, IMPLICIT BIASES,
AND NEGOTIATING LATITUDE

About Lea Skewes

Lea Skewes has a BA and a Research Masters in Philosophy, as well as a BA and a MSc in psychology. Furthermore, Lea Skewes is the founder of the Gendering in Research Network (GIR) at Aarhus University, which organize dissemination of gender research once a month, as well as an international conference once a year. Just like Lea Skewes herself, GIR has been based at the interdisciplinary Interacting Minds Centre, which has generously funded all the network events.

Time and place for defence

The 16th of December at 1 pm, building 1441, room 113, Auditorium 3

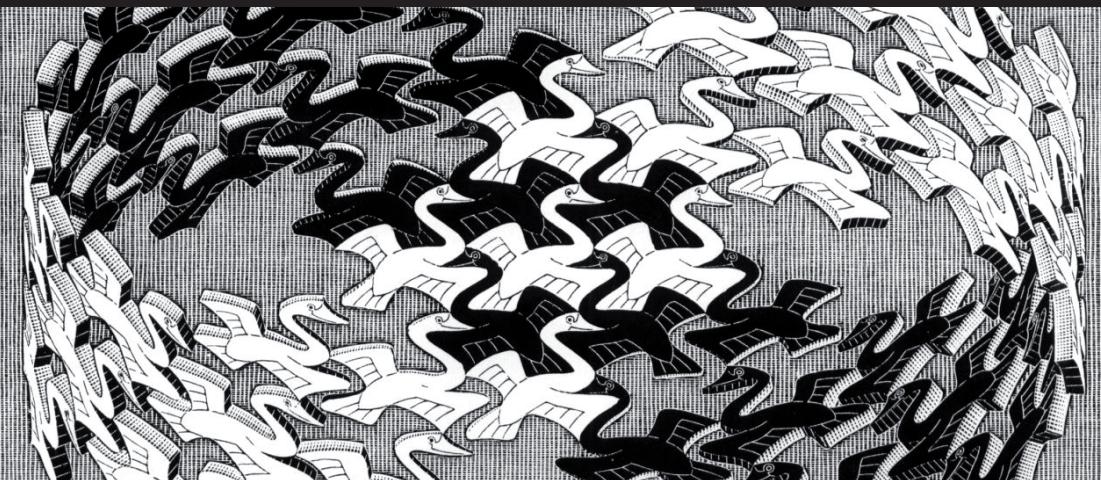
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PhD dissertation by Lea Skewes



AARHUS UNIVERSITET

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This dissertation consists of three articles; two articles which apply experimental methodologies from social psychology, and one articles which apply Butler´s queer theory. These two different methodologies are applied in order to uncover different kinds of asymmetrical power relations driven by sex/gender categorization. The social psychology methodology is applied in order to capture fundamental psychological mechanism at play in patriarchal society – striving to unveil gender inequalities between the binary categories of men and women. The queer theoretical meta-perspective is applied in order to allow us to take a step back from our sex/gender categories, and unveil which effects categorizing by sex/ gender has on people who are considered unintelligible on the binary sex/gender back-drop. This language philosophical perspective offers tools to analyze non-binary sexed/ gendered people, and the sex/gender latitudes they are striving to achieve in a primarily binary defined world.

Can stereotypical gender association moderate our ability to categorize gender?

The purpose of the current study was to explore whether the well-documented implicit association between males and agentic qualities, and the equally well-documented association between women and communal abilities, influences how people perceive the gender of others. Using a theoretically driven Bayesian modelling approach, we found strong evidence that context did not influence people's perceptual categorization of gender.

Does Gender Essentialism (GE) moderate the backlash effect?

This study aimed to validate the first psychometric measure of GE, using two large and diverse samples from Denmark and Australia, and expand knowledge of its relation with prejudice and justification of the status quo. The Gender Essentialism Scale assesses the degree to which individuals see gender as natural, fixed, deep-seated, discrete, informative, and fundamental, beliefs that often rest on a biogenetic understanding of the sources of gender difference. And further explore whether gender essentialist attitudes moderate the backlash effect.

Doing Gender in Denmark as a transgender person

In the final article which focuses on the conditions for Danish transgender people I let Butler pose two questions; is being a woman a "natural fact" or a cultural performance, and how does the terminology of "natural" constrain the performative acts that produce the category of sex/gender? I then aim to shed light on how battles over which ontological foreground is the "real" is fought on a daily basis in Denmark, and how gender struggles stretch from everyday practices with use of names and pronouns, to political decisions about which kind of clothing people can wear, which legal names people are entitled to, and what kind of medical treatments people can have access to and on what grounds.

Conclusion

This dissertation aims to show that sex/gender is a multifaceted phenomena, which contrary to lay peoples assumptions should not be captured as an essence of an individual, or even a biological fact about a body. Rather, sex/gender is better captured as a dynamic negotiation for the size and the shape of the latitude for agency that one is offered by others, on the backdrop of how one has been categorized as a sexed/gendered person. This does not only carry consequences for the concept of sex/gender, but also for how we approach the phenomena within science. Because science is always part of the backdrop on which certain sex/gender positions are made possible and others are made impossible. So, while the social psychology perspective assist us in unveiling gender inequalities between binary categories of men and women, queer theory assists us in unveiling inequalities between heteronormative people vs. people that fall outside this norm. And the combination of the two conflicting onto-epistemological approaches facilitates an awareness of the implicitly assumed premises within each approach – thereby troubling both positions.