**Social Construction of Gender**

Our ability to assign gender to words or constructs has to do with what some people call the social construction of gender. Using the feminist lens is one way to examine gender construction, but the notion of the social construction of gender broadens the lens to more fully consider how both men and women are affected by this social construction.

Using your first instinct and without overthinking, write each word in the table column that seems most appropriate.

*fashion, football, breadwinner, pilot, strength, flower, ambitious, perseverance, compassionate, bossy, helpless, thoughtful, soft, brassy, dangerous, perpetrator, victim, attractive, opinionated, hostile, emotional*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Male** | **Female** | **Both** | **Neither** |
|  |  |  |  |

Part 2: Read through the following explanations of the social construction of gender:

*The Construction of Gender*

This theory acknowledges that men and women are actively involved in constructing their own gendered identities. We adopt different masculinity and femininity practices depending on our situations and beliefs. Our understandings of gender are dynamic, changing over time with maturity, experience, and reflection. Thus, we are active in constructing our own gender identities. The options available to us are not unlimited, however. We are influenced by the collective practices of institutions such as school, church, media, and family, which construct and reinforce particular forms of masculinity and femininity.   
 These widely accepted, dominant notions of gender often construct masculinity and femininity as opposites, ignoring a vast array of shared human characteristics, and traditionally valuing masculinity as more powerful. Such ideas may be accepted, challenged, modified, or rejected as individuals develop and shape their gender identities. Students need the critical skills to understand and assess narrow messages about the way they can live their lives.

Adapted from Understanding Gender (retrieved February 9, 2009, from <http://education.qld.gov.au/students/advocacy/equity/gender-sch/issues/gender-under.html>)

TURN OVER

*The Social Construction of Gender*

The power of the ideology of gender lies in the way it encompasses fundamental cultural and social values pertaining to the relations between men and women. The ideology of gender determines:

* What is expected of us
* What is allowed of us
* What is valued in us

The manifestation of gender difference can be found in the construction of:

* Roles (what women and men do)
* Relations (how women and men relate to each other)
* Identity (how women and men perceive themselves)

The ideology of gender thus contains norms and rules regarding appropriate behavior and determines attributes; it also reproduces a range of beliefs and customs to support these norms and social rules.

Adapted from The Social Construction of Gender (retrieved on February 9, 2009, from [www.hku.hk/ccpl/events/training/2003/27032003/4.doc](http://www.hku.hk/ccpl/events/training/2003/27032003/4.doc))

Briefly jot down your response to these explanations AND any questions these explanations raise for you. You can also write down anything that comes to your mind after reading these and the chart activity.