

# ian hacking the social construction of what

**ian hacking the social construction of what** is a pivotal inquiry into the philosophical and sociological explorations led by Ian Hacking, a prominent figure in the philosophy of science and social theory. This article delves into Hacking's influential contributions to understanding social constructionism, particularly focusing on the nature and implications of what is socially constructed. By examining his theories and critiques, we gain insight into how categories, knowledge, and realities are not merely discovered but actively shaped through social processes. The discussion includes key concepts such as "making up people," the role of scientific classifications, and the dynamic interaction between individuals and social classifications. This comprehensive overview aims to clarify the nuanced question of "the social construction of what" as framed by Ian Hacking, emphasizing the significance of his work in contemporary debates. Following this introduction, a detailed table of contents outlines the main sections exploring his philosophical framework, key concepts, and critical analyses.

- The Philosophical Foundations of Ian Hacking's Social Constructionism
- Key Concepts in Hacking's Theory of Social Construction
- The Social Construction of Scientific Classifications
- "Making Up People": The Interactive Dynamics of Classification
- Critiques and Implications of Hacking's Social Construction Theory

## The Philosophical Foundations of Ian Hacking's Social Constructionism

Ian Hacking's approach to social constructionism is rooted in a philosophical examination of how scientific and social realities are formed. Unlike traditional essentialist views that consider categories as fixed and natural, Hacking emphasizes the contingent and historical nature of classifications. His philosophy draws from the pragmatist tradition and the sociology of knowledge, highlighting the co-production of knowledge and social order. Central to his foundation is the idea that knowledge about people and phenomena does not merely reflect an objective reality but actively shapes it through social practices.

## Historical Context and Influences

Hacking's work builds on and critiques earlier social constructionist theories, including those from Berger and Luckmann, and the broader constructivist movement in epistemology. He introduces a nuanced perspective that transcends a purely relativist stance by focusing on the interaction between classification and human behavior. His historical contextualization of categories demonstrates how scientific insights evolve alongside social changes, reinforcing the idea that what is socially constructed is deeply embedded in temporal and cultural frameworks.

## Philosophy of Science and Social Construction

In the philosophy of science, Hacking challenges the idea that scientific categories are mere reflections of nature. Instead, he proposes that scientific classifications are instruments that influence the subjects they categorize. This instrumentalist view supports a more dynamic understanding of social construction, where scientific knowledge is not only descriptive but performative. Thus, the social construction of what includes the very classifications that science produces and legitimizes.

## Key Concepts in Hacking's Theory of Social Construction

Ian Hacking introduces several key concepts that clarify the question of the social construction of what. These ideas form the backbone of his analysis and provide a framework for evaluating the nature of social categories and their effects on individuals and societies.

### Dynamic Nominalism

Dynamic nominalism is a concept coined by Hacking to describe how classifications and categories evolve in response to social and scientific practices. It captures the feedback loop between how people are classified and how they come to understand and behave according to those classifications. This concept highlights the changing nature of social kinds, emphasizing their dependence on historical and social contexts.

### Kinds and Classification

Hacking distinguishes between natural kinds and social kinds, arguing that social kinds are not merely passive labels but active forces that influence the behavior of classified individuals. He focuses on how classifications such as mental illness, criminality, or sexuality are constructed through discourse, institutions, and scientific inquiry. These classifications have

real-world consequences, affecting identity, social policy, and personal experiences.

## **Interactive Kinds**

One of Hacking's most influential contributions is the notion of "interactive kinds," where the classification interacts with those classified, resulting in changes in behavior or self-perception. This interaction exemplifies the social construction of what by showing that classifications are not static but evolve as people respond to them, thereby shaping social realities.

## **The Social Construction of Scientific Classifications**

Scientific classifications are a primary focus in Ian Hacking's investigation of social construction. He explores how categories used in science, especially in the human sciences, are constructed and how they influence both knowledge production and social life.

## **Constructing Scientific Categories**

Hacking argues that scientific categories are created through complex social processes involving scientific communities, social institutions, and cultural norms. These categories are not simply discovered but are fashioned through negotiation, experimentation, and consensus. Examples include classifications of mental disorders, diseases, and social groups, which vary across time and place.

## **Impact on Individuals and Social Groups**

Scientific classifications have profound effects on individuals and groups, influencing identity formation, social inclusion or exclusion, and access to resources. Hacking's analysis reveals how these categories can both empower and constrain individuals, shaping their life trajectories and social roles. This underscores the significance of the social construction of what in the context of scientific knowledge.

## **Examples of Socially Constructed Scientific Classifications**

- Mental health diagnoses (e.g., multiple personality disorder)

- Sexual orientation categories
- Race and ethnicity classifications
- Disability and ability categorizations
- Criminal typologies

## **“Making Up People”: The Interactive Dynamics of Classification**

Ian Hacking’s phrase “making up people” captures the essence of how classifications actively create the kinds of people they describe. This concept is central to understanding the social construction of what, emphasizing the performative role of classification in shaping human identity and behavior.

### **The Process of “Making Up People”**

“Making up people” refers to the historical and social processes by which new categories of people emerge through classification. This involves the identification, naming, and institutionalization of categories that individuals then come to embody. The process is iterative, with classifications influencing how people see themselves and how society treats them.

### **Examples of “Making Up People” in Practice**

Examples abound in areas such as psychiatry, where new diagnoses create groups of patients with specific identities, or in sexuality studies, where the invention of categories like “homosexual” transformed social attitudes and personal identities. These cases illustrate how the social construction of what is not only theoretical but has tangible social effects.

### **Consequences of Interactive Kinds**

The interactive nature of classifications leads to several consequences:

- Individuals may alter their behavior to fit or resist classifications.
- Social policies may be shaped around newly constructed categories.
- Ethical and political debates arise regarding the legitimacy and impact

of classifications.

- Classifications can become self-fulfilling prophecies.

## **Critiques and Implications of Hacking's Social Construction Theory**

While Ian Hacking's work on social construction has been widely influential, it also invites critical evaluation and raises important implications for philosophy, sociology, and science.

### **Philosophical Critiques**

Some critics argue that Hacking's emphasis on social construction risks undermining objective knowledge or scientific realism. Others question whether all social kinds are equally constructed or if some have more fixed bases. Hacking's nuanced position attempts to balance these concerns by acknowledging both the contingency and the real effects of classifications.

### **Implications for Social Policy and Ethics**

The recognition that categories are socially constructed has profound implications for policy and ethics. It challenges fixed assumptions about identity and responsibility, urging flexibility and reflexivity in social governance. Understanding the social construction of what can lead to more inclusive and responsive policies that account for the historical and cultural variability of human categories.

### **Ongoing Debates and Future Directions**

Hacking's work continues to inspire debate on the boundaries between nature and culture, science and society. Future research explores how emerging scientific fields and technologies further complicate the social construction of categories, emphasizing the dynamic and evolving nature of what it means to be human.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

**Who is Ian Hacking and what is his contribution to**

## **the concept of social construction?**

Ian Hacking is a Canadian philosopher of science known for his work on the philosophy of social construction, particularly how scientific classifications can shape and influence social realities.

## **What does Ian Hacking mean by 'the social construction of what'?**

Ian Hacking explores how various categories and concepts, such as mental illness or gender, are not just discovered but actively constructed through social processes, affecting how people understand and experience them.

## **How does Ian Hacking differentiate between natural kinds and social constructions?**

Hacking differentiates natural kinds as categories that exist independently of human classification, whereas social constructions are categories created and maintained through social practices and interactions.

## **What is the significance of Ian Hacking's concept of 'interactive kinds'?**

Interactive kinds are categories where the classification affects the behavior of the people classified, creating a feedback loop; this concept highlights the dynamic nature of social constructions.

## **How does Ian Hacking's work impact the understanding of scientific classifications?**

Hacking's work shows that scientific classifications are not merely objective descriptions but can shape the identities and behaviors of people, thus having real social consequences.

## **What role does language play in Ian Hacking's theory of social construction?**

Language is crucial in Hacking's theory as it is through linguistic categories and classifications that social realities are constructed and maintained.

## **Can you give an example of a social construction discussed by Ian Hacking?**

One example is the classification of mental illnesses, where Hacking discusses how new categories can emerge and influence how individuals are diagnosed and treated.

## **What is the relationship between power and social construction in Ian Hacking's analysis?**

Hacking acknowledges that social constructions often involve power dynamics, where certain groups have the authority to define categories that affect others.

## **How does Ian Hacking's perspective challenge traditional views of objectivity in science?**

Hacking challenges the idea that science is completely objective by showing how social factors and classifications influence scientific knowledge and its application.

## **What is the practical importance of understanding social construction according to Ian Hacking?**

Understanding social construction helps in recognizing how categories shape experiences and policies, allowing for more critical and ethical approaches to social issues.

## **Additional Resources**

### *1. The Social Construction of What? by Ian Hacking*

This seminal work by Ian Hacking explores the concept of social construction in philosophy and social sciences. Hacking critically examines what it means to call something socially constructed and distinguishes between different kinds of social constructions. The book challenges simplistic interpretations and encourages readers to think deeply about the relationship between social realities and scientific truths.

### *2. Reconstructing Individualism: A Pragmatic Tradition from Emerson to Ellison by Robert B. Talisse and Scott F. Aikin*

This book discusses the social construction of individual identity and agency, drawing from American pragmatic philosophy. It examines how social contexts shape personal identities and the implications for democracy and ethics. The authors provide a nuanced perspective on individualism that complements Hacking's exploration of social constructs.

### *3. Social Constructionism by Vivien Burr*

Burr provides an accessible introduction to social constructionism, explaining its origins, key ideas, and applications. The book explores how knowledge and reality are constructed through social processes and interactions. It is a useful companion to Hacking's work for those seeking to understand the broader theoretical framework.

### *4. The Construction of Social Reality by John R. Searle*

Searle's influential book delves into how social facts and institutions are

created through collective intentionality and language. It offers a philosophical foundation for understanding social construction, emphasizing the role of speech acts and social conventions. This work provides a complementary perspective to Hacking's analysis of social constructs.

5. *Making Up People* by Ian Hacking

In this collection of essays, Hacking explores how classifications of people (such as mental health diagnoses) come into being and affect those classified. The book investigates the dynamic relationship between social categories and individual identities. It is a key text for understanding the practical implications of social construction theory.

6. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* by Judith Butler

Butler's groundbreaking work challenges traditional notions of gender as biologically determined, arguing that gender is performatively constructed through social practices. The book has been influential in gender studies and social constructionism. It provides an important case study of how social constructs shape identity and power relations.

7. *Constructing Social Theories* by Arthur L. Stinchcombe

This book offers a methodological approach to building social theories that account for social constructions. Stinchcombe emphasizes the importance of understanding the social processes that generate and sustain social phenomena. It is a valuable resource for those interested in the theoretical and empirical study of social construction.

8. *Epistemology and the Social* by Alvin I. Goldman and Dennis Whitcomb

This edited volume examines the social dimensions of knowledge and epistemology, addressing how social factors influence what we know and believe. The contributions explore topics related to social construction, consensus, and disagreement. It provides a philosophical context for Hacking's concerns about knowledge and social reality.

9. *The Sociology of Scientific Knowledge: Theoretical and Empirical Investigations* edited by K. D. Knorr-Cetina and M. J. Mulkey

This collection investigates how scientific knowledge is socially constructed through interactions among scientists and within scientific communities. It offers empirical studies and theoretical insights into the social processes underlying scientific facts. The book complements Hacking's interest in the social construction of scientific concepts.

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**ian hacking the social construction of what:** *The Social Construction of What?* Ian Hacking, 1999-05-15 Lost in the raging debate over the validity of social construction is the question of what, precisely, is being constructed. Facts, gender, quarks, reality? Ian Hacking's book explores an array of examples to reveal the deep issues underlying contentious accounts of reality—especially regarding the status of the natural sciences.

**ian hacking the social construction of what:** *Social Construction of Law* Michael Giudice, 2020-10-30 This illuminating book explores the theme of social constructionism in legal theory. It questions just how much freedom and power social groups really have to construct and reconstruct law.

**ian hacking the social construction of what: Fools and idiots?** Irina Metzler, 2016-02-01 This is the first book devoted to the cultural history in the pre-modern period of people we now describe as having learning disabilities. Using an interdisciplinary approach, including historical semantics, medicine, natural philosophy and law, it considers a neglected field of social and medical history and makes an original contribution to the problem of a shifting concept such as 'idiocy'. Medieval physicians, lawyers and the schoolmen of the emerging universities wrote the texts which shaped medieval definitions of intellectual ability and its counterpart, disability. In studying such texts, which form part of our contemporary scientific and cultural heritage, we gain a better understanding of which people were considered to be intellectually disabled and how their participation and inclusion in society differed from the situation today.

**ian hacking the social construction of what:** *Social constructionism and theology* [electronic resource] Chris A. M. Hermans, 2002 Practical theology starts its theological reflections from practices, aims at analyzing empirically practices, and is directed towards the transformation of these practices. From this practice-orientation there is a strong connection between practical theology and the social sciences. Social constructionism is a growing theory within the social sciences. This volume offers a theological and social scientific reflection on this emerging concept of social constructionism.

**ian hacking the social construction of what: The Progress of This Storm** Andreas Malm, 2020-02-04 An attack on the idea that nature and society are impossible to distinguish from each other In a world careening towards climate chaos, nature is dead. It can no longer be separated from society. Everything is a blur of hybrids, where humans possess no exceptional agency to set them apart from dead matter. But is it really so? In this blistering polemic and theoretical manifesto, Andreas Malm develops a counterargument: in a warming world, nature comes roaring back, and it is more important than ever to distinguish between the natural and the social. Only with a unique agency attributed to humans can resistance become conceivable.

**ian hacking the social construction of what: The Sociology of Childhood and Youth in Canada** Xiaobei Chen, Rebecca Raby, Patrizia Albanese, 2017-12-12 The sociology of childhood and youth has sparked international interest in recent years, and yet a reader highlighting Canadian work in this field has been long overdue. Filling this gap in the literature, *The Sociology of Childhood and Youth in Canada* brings together cutting-edge Canadian scholarship in this important and growing discipline. Thought-provoking and timely, this edited collection explores a breadth of essential topics, including research on and with children and youth, the social construction of childhood and youth, intersecting identities, and citizenship, rights, and social engagement. With a focus on social justice, the contributing authors critically examine various sites of inequality in the lives of children and young people, such as gender, sexuality, colonialism, race, class, and disability. Encouraging further development of Canadian scholarship in the sociology of childhood and youth, this unique collection ensures that young people's voices are heard by involving them in the research process. Pedagogical supports—including learning objectives, study questions, suggested research assignments, and a comprehensive glossary—make this volume an invaluable resource for students of childhood and youth studies in Canada.

**ian hacking the social construction of what:** *The Present Situation in the Philosophy of*

*Science* Friedrich Stadler, 2010-05-19 This volume is a serious attempt to open up the subject of European philosophy of science to real thought, and provide the structural basis for the interdisciplinary development of its specialist fields, but also to provoke reflection on the idea of 'European philosophy of science'. This efforts should foster a contemporaneous reflection on what might be meant by philosophy of science in Europe and European philosophy of science, and how in fact awareness of it could assist philosophers interpret and motivate their research through a stronger collective identity. The overarching aim is to set the background for a collaborative project organising, systematising, and ultimately forging an identity for, European philosophy of science by creating research structures and developing research networks across Europe to promote its development.

**ian hacking the social construction of what:** *Alfred Schutz, Phenomenology, and the Renewal of Interpretive Social Science* Besnik Pula, 2024-04-16 In recent decades, the historical social sciences have moved away from deterministic perspectives and increasingly embraced the interpretive analysis of historical process and social and political change. This shift has enriched the field but also led to a deadlock regarding the meaning and status of subjective knowledge. Cultural interpretivists struggle to incorporate subjective experience and the body into their understanding of social reality. In the early twentieth century, philosopher Alfred Schutz grappled with this very issue. Drawing on Edmund Husserl's phenomenology and Max Weber's historical sociology, Schutz pioneered the interpretive analysis of social life from an embodied perspective. However, the recent interpretivist turn, influenced by linguistic philosophies, discourse theory, and poststructuralism, has overlooked the insights of Schutz and other phenomenologists. This book revisits Schutz's phenomenology and social theory, positioning them against contemporary problems in social theory and interpretive social science research. The book extends Schutz's key concepts of relevance, symbol relations, theory of language, and lifeworld meaning structures. It outlines Schutz's critical approach to the social distribution of knowledge and develops his nascent sociology and political economy of knowledge. This book will appeal to readers with interests in social theory, phenomenology, and the methods of interpretive social science, including historical sociology, cultural sociology, science and technology studies, political economy, and international relations.

**ian hacking the social construction of what: Teen Pregnancy and Parenting** David Checkland, James Wong, 1999-01-01 Nine original essays explore the many factors affecting how Canadian society responds to, and creates, the phenomenon of teen parenting. A challenges to assumptions about the circumstances, consequences and experience of teen parenting.

**ian hacking the social construction of what:** *Normativity and Legitimacy* Riccardo Dottori, 2001 This volume contains the Proceedings of the Second Meeting Italian-American Philosophy, that took place in New York from 12 to 15 October 1999, together with two contributions given during the First Meeting. It is the first volume of a Yearbook for Philosophical Hermeneutics, The Dialogue, actually aiming to promote the dialogue between analytic and hermeneutic philosophy. Normativity and legitimacy are the two key concepts which have been at the base of the confrontation between the thought of the Frankfurt School and most of the American philosophy. They can offer the possibility for further discussions and developments within the fields of aesthetics, logic, and language philosophy, epistemology, ethics, philosophy of law and politics. They also represent the ground on which the two different aspects of contemporary philosophy, that one of hermeneutic dealing with historical legitimacy, and the one of analytics dealing with rational determination of norms, could together establish a productive dialogue.

**ian hacking the social construction of what: Emotions, Art, and Christianity in the Transatlantic World, 1450-1800** Heather Graham, Lauren G. Kilroy-Ewbank, 2021-08-24 *Emotions, Art, and Christianity in the Transatlantic World, 1450-1800* is a collection of studies variously exploring the role of visual and material culture in shaping early modern emotional experiences. The volume's transatlantic framework moves from The Netherlands, Spain, and Italy to Mexico, Peru, Ecuador, and the Philippines, and centers on visual culture as a means to explore how emotions differ in their local and global "contexts" amidst the many shifts occurring c. 1450-1800.

These themes are examined through the lens of art informed by religious ideas, especially Catholicism, with each essay probing how religiously inflected art stimulated, molded, and encoded emotions. Contributors: Elena FitzPatrick Sifford, Alison C. Fleming, Natalia Keller, Walter S. Melion, Olaya Sanfuentes, Patricia Simons, Dario Velandia Onofre, and Charles M. Rosenberg.

**ian hacking the social construction of what: Discussing New Materialism** Ulrike Tikvah Kissmann, Joost van Loon, 2019-02-27 The essays in this volume discuss the various approaches to New Materialism in Sociology and Philosophy. They raise the questions of what New Materialism consists of and whether it in fact should be considered a radical change in Social Theory. Are the ideas of a “material turn”, as the theory is formulated and in its assumptions, foreshadowed by the classical philosophies of Spinoza and Tarde? Do these new approaches bring substantially new perspectives to Social Theory? A further goal of these essays is to formulate the methodological and methodical consequences for its empirical implementation. What conditions must an ethnography of things fulfill if it is to be sufficient? Which participant objects and bodies do the approaches of the various social theories and methodologies include or exclude?

**ian hacking the social construction of what: Stone** Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, 2015-05-06 Stone maps the force, vivacity, and stories within our most mundane matter, stone. For too long stone has served as an unexamined metaphor for the “really real”: blunt factuality, nature’s curt rebuke. Yet, medieval writers knew that stones drop with fire from the sky, emerge through the subterranean lovemaking of the elements, tumble along riverbeds from Eden, partner with the masons who build worlds with them. Such motion suggests an ecological enmeshment and an almost creaturely mineral life. Although geological time can leave us reeling, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen argues that stone’s endurance is also an invitation to apprehend the world in other than human terms. Never truly inert, stone poses a profound challenge to modernity’s disenchantments. Its agency undermines the human desire to be separate from the environment, a bifurcation that renders nature “out there,” a mere resource for recreation, consumption, and exploitation. Written with great verve and elegance, this pioneering work is notable not only for interweaving the medieval and the modern but also as a major contribution to ecotheory. Comprising chapters organized by concept —“Geophilia,” “Time,” “Force,” and “Soul”—Cohen seamlessly brings together a wide range of topics including stone’s potential to transport humans into nonanthropocentric scales of place and time, the “petrification” of certain cultures, the messages fossils bear, the architecture of Bordeaux and Montparnasse, Yucca Mountain and nuclear waste disposal, the ability of stone to communicate across millennia in structures like Stonehenge, and debates over whether stones reproduce and have souls. Showing that what is often assumed to be the most lifeless of substances is, in its own time, restless and forever in motion, Stone fittingly concludes by taking us to Iceland—a land that, writes the author, “reminds us that stone like water is alive, that stone like water is transient.”

**ian hacking the social construction of what: History and the Study of Religion** Stanley Stowers, 2024 How does one understand religion? Can one explain religion? How does one understand the craft and discipline of the historian? How can one best bring together the study of religion with the craft and discipline of the historian? I am a historian who works in the study of religion and believe that the present intellectual moment offers enormous in some ways unprecedented opportunities both in the study of religion and historiography. But at the same time, difficulties and dangers loom together with the opportunities. My specialty and prime set of examples lie in the study of ancient Mediterranean religion, if indeed there is something that can rightly be called Mediterranean religion or even called religion. Many specialists in the study of religion and also many of those who study ancient cultures doubt, or even reject outright, religion as a cross historical category, on the one hand, and on the other, anything common about religion across the ancient Mediterranean. And some cognitive scientists who against religion specialists have argued for the centrality of gods to religion, then agree with the skeptics that religion is not a coherent social object, a social kind. I will argue that long discredited forms of anti-realism and untenable anthropocentrism haunt both groups. Among other areas, I work in Christianity and Judaism. Do they belong to Mediterranean religion? One can easily see how coming to an

understanding of what religion is and what Mediterranean religion is form key questions. I will argue that religion is a robust realistic entity, a social kind, and that ancient Mediterranean religion even with all of its great diversity operated with some key common principles. It is no secret that Christianity and Judaism have presented themselves as unique and essentially untouched by an inferior and degenerate religiosity that characterized everyone else in the Mediterranean. History looks different when one dispenses with such normatively heavy freight and situates the two within rather than outside of Mediterranean religion--

**ian hacking the social construction of what: Poverty Knowledge in South Africa** Grace Davie, 2015-02-05 Poverty is South Africa's greatest challenge. But what is 'poverty'? How can it be measured? And how can it be reduced if not eliminated? In South Africa, human science knowledge about the cost of living grew out of colonialism, industrialization, apartheid and civil resistance campaigns, which makes this knowledge far from neutral or apolitical. South Africans have used the Poverty Datum Line (PDL), Gini coefficients and other poverty thresholds to petition the state, to chip away at the pillars of white supremacy, and, more recently, to criticize the postapartheid government's failures to deliver on some of its promises. Rather than promoting one particular policy solution, this book argues that poverty knowledge teaches us about the dynamics of historical change, the power of racism in white settler societies, and the role of grassroots protest movements in shaping state policies and scientific categories. Readers will gain new perspectives on today's debates about social welfare, redistribution and human rights, and will ultimately find reasons to rethink conventional approaches to advocacy.

**ian hacking the social construction of what: The Unbuilt Bench** David Andrew Peterson, 2025-04-22 Psychological experts are omnipresent across public and private spheres. Nonetheless, psychology has always been dogged by questions about its authority and validity. Psychological research has yielded relatively few unambiguous successes, and the widely publicized "replication crisis" has called much of the published literature into question. How closely akin to other experimental sciences is psychology, and should its findings be assessed by the same standards? What makes psychology distinct, and how do such differences affect understandings of the boundaries of science? In *The Unbuilt Bench*, David Peterson argues that the scientific study of the mind and human behavior is a different sort of epistemic activity than the work of the natural sciences. Through fieldwork in ten experimental psychology laboratories and, as a comparison, a molecular biology lab, he explores the concrete practices of experimentation. Ongoing improvement of research practice and technology at the frontiers of data collection, a process Peterson calls "bench-building," is essential to most sciences, since it opens new possibilities for experimentation. Psychology labs, however, largely lack an emphasis on bench-building. Instead, the discipline and its subfields gravitate toward different dimensions of scientific progress that focus on theory building and cultivation of outside audiences. An empirically rich and theoretically sophisticated exploration of experimental psychology and scientific practice, *The Unbuilt Bench* also offers new insight into the ethical questions that psychology's aims raise.

**ian hacking the social construction of what: Rules for the World** Michael Barnett, Martha Finnemore, 2012-04-15 *Rules for the World* provides an innovative perspective on the behavior of international organizations and their effects on global politics. Arguing against the conventional wisdom that these bodies are little more than instruments of states, Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore begin with the fundamental insight that international organizations are bureaucracies that have authority to make rules and so exercise power. At the same time, Barnett and Finnemore maintain, such bureaucracies can become obsessed with their own rules, producing unresponsive, inefficient, and self-defeating outcomes. Authority thus gives international organizations autonomy and allows them to evolve and expand in ways unintended by their creators. Barnett and Finnemore reinterpret three areas of activity that have prompted extensive policy debate: the use of expertise by the IMF to expand its intrusion into national economies; the redefinition of the category refugees and decision to repatriate by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; and the UN Secretariat's failure to recommend an intervention during the first weeks of the Rwandan genocide.





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