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The Reality of Social Construction

‘Social construction’ is a central metaphor in contemporary social science, yet it is used and understood in widely divergent and indeed conflicting ways by different thinkers. Most commonly, it is seen as radically opposed to realist social theory. Dave Elder-Vass argues that social scientists should be both realists and social constructionists, and that coherent versions of these ways of thinking are entirely compatible with each other. This book seeks to transform prevailing understandings of the relationship between realism and constructionism. It offers a thorough ontological analysis of the phenomena of language, discourse, culture, and knowledge, and shows how this justifies a realist version of social constructionism. In doing so, however, it also develops an analysis of these phenomena that is significant in its own right.

DAVE ELDER-VASS is a senior lecturer in sociology at Loughborough University. He is the author of *The Causal Power of Social Structures* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

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Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page</i> x
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi

Part One: Social Ontology

1	Introduction	3
	Varieties of social constructionism	4
	Realism versus social constructionism?	6
	The social ontology of normatively based phenomena	8
	Culture and institutions	9
	Linguistic constructionism	10
	Discursive constructionism	11
	Knowledge and reality	12
	Reconciling realism and social constructionism	13
2	Norm circles	15
	Realist ontology	15
	Social ontology	19
	Norm circles	22
	Norm circle boundaries	24
	Locating normative causal power	26
	Norm circle intersectionality and complexities	28
	Types of norm circle	30
	Is normativity socially constructed?	32
	Conclusion	33

Part Two: Culture

3	Culture and rules	37
	The problem of culture	38
	Culture as objective knowledge?	41
	Culture as a property of groups of people – and things	44
	Can rules be things with causal power?	47
	Can rules be shared?	50
	Conclusion	54

viii Contents

4	Institutional reality	55
	The construction of institutional facts	56
	Constitutive rules and status function declarations	59
	The background	61
	Does language create institutional facts?	62
	Is Searle an individualist?	65
	Indexing norms and institutional reality	69
	Conclusion	73

Part Three: Language

5	Signification	77
	Saussure's theory of signification	80
	The ontology of the sign	84
	Linguistic arbitrariness	92
	Conclusion	99
6	<i>Langue</i> and <i>parole</i>	100
	Speech communities	101
	Communities of practice	103
	Linguistic circles	105
	Communities of practice as associations	107
	Linguistic circles and speech communities	109
	From <i>langue</i> to <i>parole</i>	112
	Meaning in practice	116
	Conclusion	119
7	Categories, essences, and sexes	121
	Linguistic hegemony	122
	Natural kinds	125
	Cluster kinds	127
	Kinds and categories	131
	The social construction of the human sexes	132
	Are the sexes natural kinds?	133
	Sex and gender	136
	Conclusion	138

Part Four: Discourse

8	Discourse	143
	What is discourse?	146
	Discursive formations	150
	Discursive norm circles	153
	Conclusion	157
9	Cultures and classes	159
	Cultures and boundaries	160
	Cultures as national	163
	Cultures: constructed or real?	171

Contents	ix
Classes	173
Conclusion	180
10 Subjects	183
What is the subject?	184
The subject in Althusser and Foucault	187
Butler's attack on the subject	190
Butler's performative account of the subject	194
Moderate constructionism and subjects	200
Conclusion	203
 Part Five: Knowledge	
11 Knowledge	207
Knowledge as a form of belief	209
Justifying knowledge	212
Types of knowledge	214
Epistemological circles	217
Science and epistemic circles	224
Social influences on epistemic standards	228
Epistemic relativism and its implications	230
Conclusion	232
12 Reality	234
Berger and Luckmann	236
Rhetoric and reality	238
The genealogy of neo-Kantian constructionism	244
The incoherence of neo-Kantian constructionism	246
Conclusion	250
13 Conclusion	253
The social ontology of normative structures	253
Realist social constructionism	258
The rebuttal of radical constructionisms	260
Towards a constructionist realist social theory	264
 <i>Bibliography</i>	267
<i>Index</i>	279

Figures

2.1 Types of norm circle.	<i>page</i> 31
9.1 Intersecting norm circles.	161
9.2 Cultural boundaries and intersectionality.	163
9.3 Bourdieu's mapping of social space.	174
9.4 Marxist class categories.	175
9.5 Bourdieu's class categories.	175

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