



# The Construction of Human Kinds

*Ron Mallon*

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## **The Construction of Human Kinds** Ron Mallon

Ron Mallon explores how thinking and talking about kinds of person can bring those kinds into being. Social constructionist explanations of human kinds like race, gender, and homosexuality are commonplace in the social sciences and humanities, but what do they mean and what are their implications?

This book synthesizes recent work in evolutionary, cognitive, and social psychology as well as social theory and the philosophy of science, in order to offer a naturalistic account of the social construction of human kinds. Mallon begins by qualifying social constructionist accounts of *representations* of human kinds by appealing to evidence suggesting canalized dispositions towards certain ways of representing human groups, using race as a case study. He then turns to interpret constructionist accounts of *categories* as attempts to explain causally powerful human kinds by appealing to our practices of representing them, and he articulates a view in which widespread representations produce entrenched social roles that could vindicate such attempts.

Mallon goes on to explore constructionist concerns with the social consequences of our representations, focusing especially on the way human kind representations can alter our behaviour and undermine our self understandings and our agency. Mallon understands socially constructed kinds as the real, sometimes stable products of our cognitive and representational practices, and he suggests that reference to such kinds can figure in our everyday and scientific practices of representing the social world. The result is a realistic, naturalistic account of how human representations might contribute to making up the parts of the social world that they represent.

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