

What are the theories of social construction of gender (2016)

I. INTRODUCTION: FUNDAMENTAL PREMISE OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER

The fundamental premise of social construction of gender is that gender roles are assigned to males and females. These gender roles refers to the attitudes and behaviors that are considered acceptable, appropriate and desirable from a person based on their biological sex. While there is some role of innate characteristics in ~~de~~ ~~but~~ constructing gender, it is primarily the nurturing of a person that defines his gender.

II. THEORIES OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER

Theories of social construction

of gender can be categorized as historicism, ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism and theory of material dependence.

1. Historicism

Historicism assigns the major role to the historical events in constructing the gender. According to it, certain important factors, such as ecological, political and economic, act together to bring any major development.

Gerda Lerner, in her book "The Creation of Patriarchy," mentions the historical development of gender role. She ~~analyzes~~ analyzes that in hunter-gatherer societies, men and women had more of egalitarian roles. As societies began to domesticate animals, cultivate lands and ~~having~~ have surplus good, the concept of

private property emerge. Men sought to transfer their ~~property assets~~ animals and farmlands to their heirs. This is when the reproductive capacity of women ~~was~~ became significant for men, and thus, the social norms around women's chastity and marriage began to emerge.

Claud - Straus theory on "Exchange of Women," also proposes ~~that~~ how women were started to be seeing as commodities as societies entered ~~agrarian~~ agrarian era. Marriages in early times were done for social cohesion more than for personal or familial purposes. They were done to build alliances, avoid wars and to extend power. Women were ~~central~~ the commodity of exchange in these marriages. Hence, over time, religious & ideologies, cultural norms and legal frameworks

further entrenched a such patriarchal set up where women's role was just seen as child-bearers and child-rearers. They were made to marry those suitable to the objectives of male members of the family, irrespective of ~~their consent~~ women's opinion.

2- Ethnomethodology and Symbolic Interactionism

Ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism revolves around the idea that social order is the result of individuals' interactions in the society. Socialization agents, such as, family and schools, among others, teach males and females their roles in society.

Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity argues that gender is not an innate

characteristic, ~~but~~ rather a set of socially constructed behaviors and norms that individuals "perform" through repeated acts. Gender is not a stable identity but rather produced through these acts.

Similarly, Simone de Beauvoir in her work "The Second Sex," also holds the ~~is~~ view that biological sex, 'male' and 'female,' do not determine a person's gender/^{or identity} ~~as~~ ~~man~~ 'man' or 'woman.' Instead it is the society that assigns roles, behaviors and expectations based on a person's sex. She established that women are not born/^{with traits like} submissive, nurturing or passivity; these are imposed on them by culture. As she ~~said~~ said, "One is not born, but becomes a woman."

Nancy Chodorow in her book, "The Reproduction of Mothering" also

6
writes that differentiated experience in infancy orient girls and boys towards different development paths. Boys identify with father's social power while girls develop their sense of self in relation to mother.

3- Theory of material dependence

According to this theory, men and women exist in a class-like relationship, where women's selfhood and labor are appropriated for the benefit of men. Due to material dependence of women upon men, men have been ~~historically~~ historically been able to control and dominate women.

This resulted in exclusion of women from power corridors and defined their role for them in ways that benefited men. Household is the fundamental site for such appropriation where women do unpaid labor and men control capital over women.

Marx and Engels in their work, "The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State," draw the link between the emergence of private property and patriarchal family structure. They contended that ~~is~~ the transition from communal ~~societies~~ societies to societies based on private property led to the establishment of patriarchal ~~soc~~ family structure. The institution of private property created a need to pass down property to ^{our} progeny, and this contributed to the formation of monogamous family structure that enforced male dominance.

III. Conclusion

The theories ~~were~~ of historicism, ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism, and material dependence all support

the notion that gender is ~~is~~
socially constructed.