

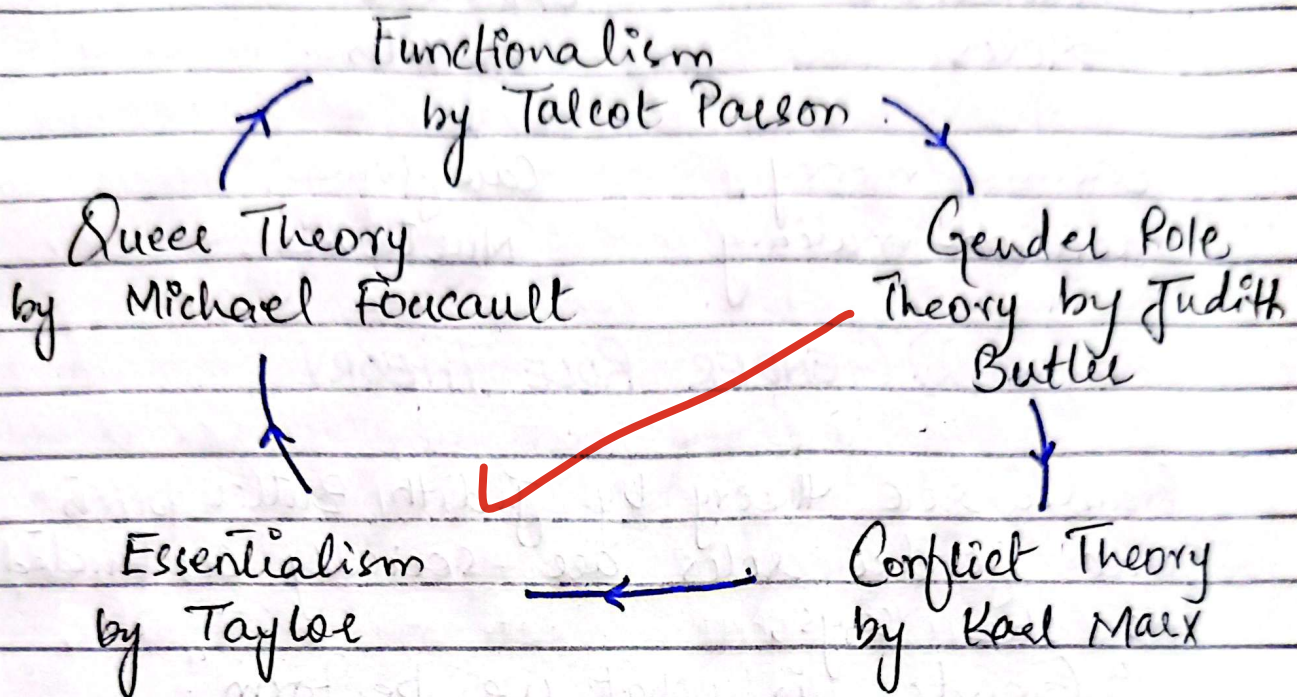
Gender Studies

Gender is a socially constructed Phenomenon.
Discuss in the light of theories of social construction of a gender.

1. INTRODUCTION

Simone De Beauvoir once said, "One is not born rather becomes a woman". Gender is a socially constructed phenomenon which emphasizes that no one is born with a specified gender. It's a society which constructs gender roles and assigns them accordingly. The theorists of socially constructed gender explain by their theories that gender is not biologically determined, instead it is socially constructed. All men and women are associated with the roles of masculinity and femininity by their society and they are bound to follow them throughout their lives. Therefore, according to theorists, the meanings, roles and expectations we associate with masculinity and femininity are not innate or biologically determined, but are created and reinforced by society overtime.

2. SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER IN THE LIGHT OF THEORIES

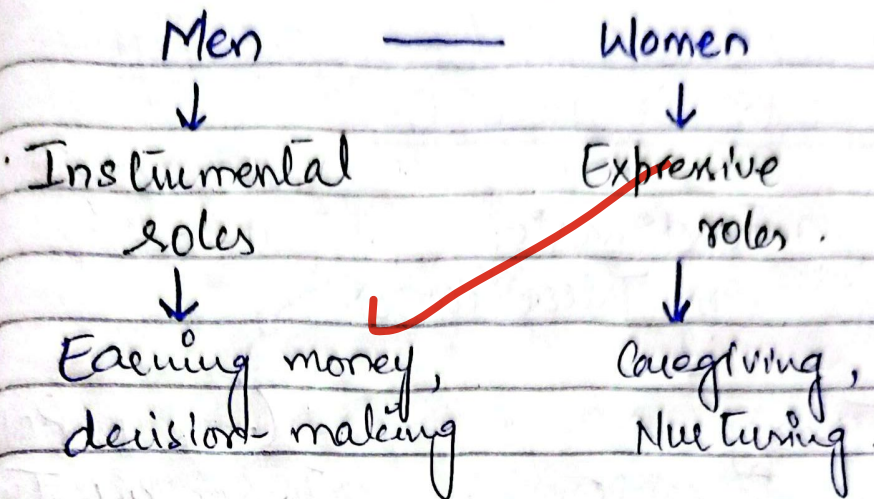


2.1) FUNCTIONALIST APPROACH

Talcot Parson gave the idea that traditional gender roles emerged because they were functional for society. He said,

"The goal of constructing something is to make it functional."

He emphasized that society is like a human body, every part needs to be functional. This is how, roles for men and women are socially constructed. For example, women are considered natural caregivers while men are considered to lead as they are dominating and aggressive.

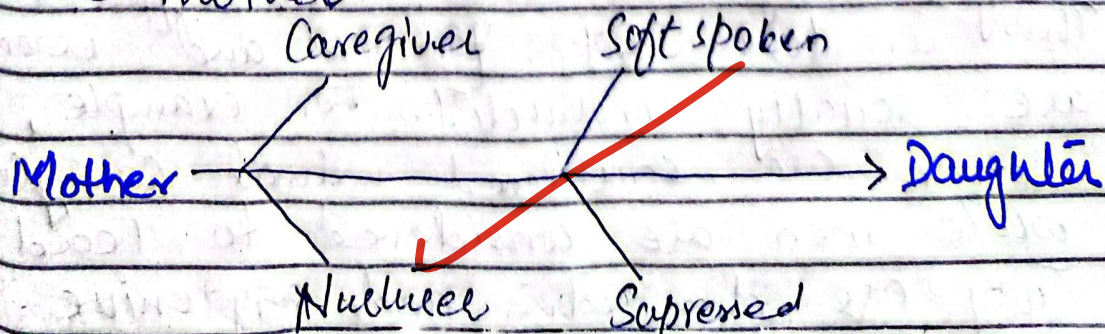


2.2) GENDER ROLE THEORY

Gender role theory by Judith Butler points that gender roles are socially constructed. As she says,

"Gender is what we perform".

Gender is not biologically determined, instead it depends on the repetitive performance of a being. This theory suggests that gender is constructed by the repetitive actions. For instance, a girl seeing her mother being a nurturer, caregiver, soft spoken and suppressed will start behaving like her mother.



Hence, daughter will assume the same roles and start behaving like her mother. The repetitive actions assigns her a role of femininity. Therefore, gender is socially constructed.

2.3) CONFLICT THEORY

Conflict theory by Karl Marx argues that society is structured around power inequality and competition. According to Marx, gender is not natural but a social hierarchy engineered to benefit men. Women are treated as resources instead of the owner of the resources.

Gender As A System of Power Inequality

Men: Dominant class Women: Subordinate class

Gender Inequality maintained through institutions

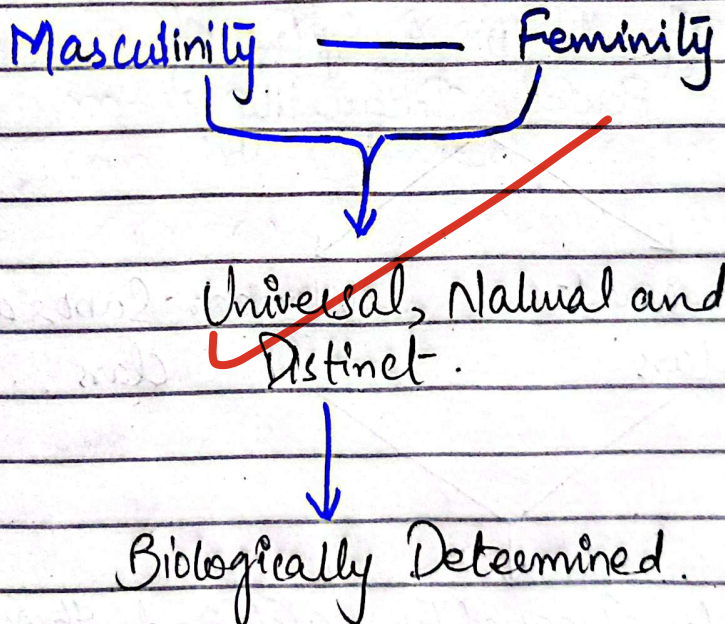
Distribution of Resources

Division of Labor

2.4) Essentialism

Taylor argues that humans are born with essential forces. He emphasizes on the psychic unity of mankind. Focuses on the concept of biological determinism. As men are born assertive and dominant, while women are born fragile.

It is among the critiques of social construction of gender, emphasizes that men and women have inherent, fixed, and biologically determined traits, roles, and behaviors.



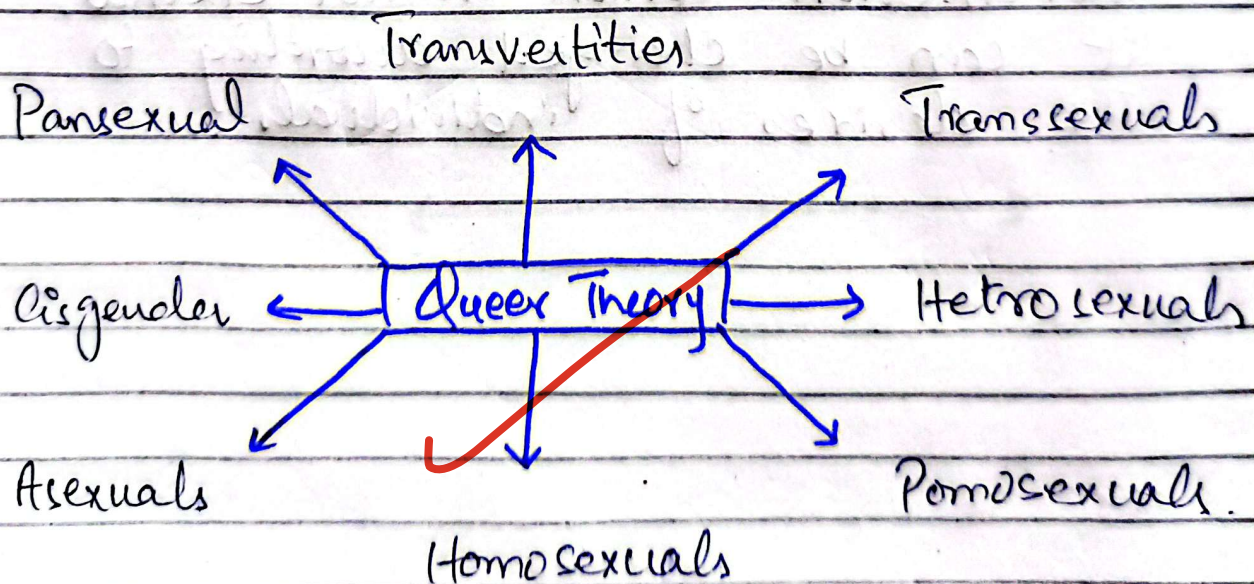
2.5) QUEER THEORY

Queer theory is a remarkable work in

The field of gender studies done by Michael Foucault and Judith Butler. They seek an end to traditional forms of gender and emphasises that people should be allowed to construct their gender.

Moreover, people who are non-binary, gender-fluid and queer challenge the idea of heterosexuality.

Foucault argues that norms enforced heterosexuality as natural, instead of freeing people to choose their sex. It states that the concept of femininity being emotional, soft and nurturer while masculinity being aggressive, dominant and assertive are socially constructed, hence they can be dismantled.



Queer theory based on the idea that identities are not fixed and do not determine who

we are.

3. CONCLUSION

To sum up, although there are many critiques on the social construction of a gender, yet theorists like Foucault, Butler, Taylor, and Parson argues that genders are socially constructed and they can be dismantled. Moreover, people should be allowed to choose their gender. As Judith Butler says, "Genders are not biologically but socially constructed and therefore desires are changeable". Hence, gender is a socially constructed phenomenon which is not eternal, it can be changed according to the desires of individuals.



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