

Q What are the theories of Social (20) Construction of gender.

Introduction

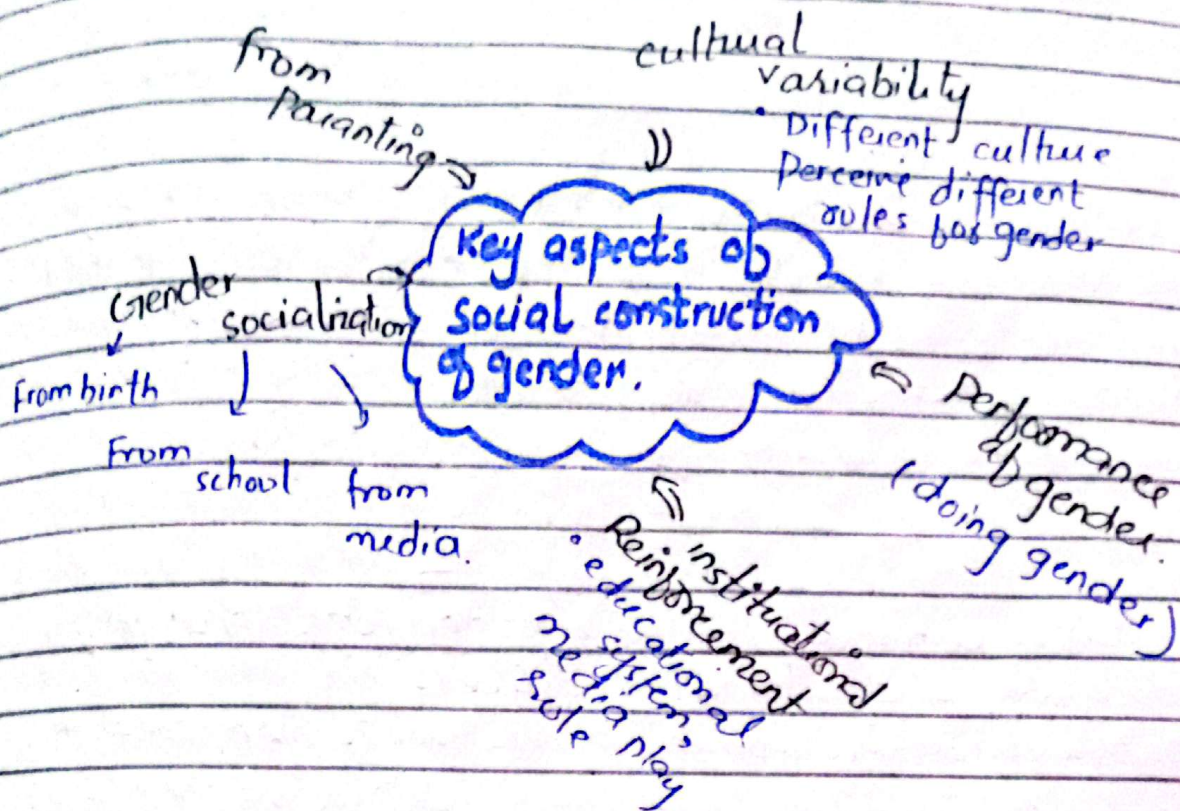
Gender as an ongoing social performance in everyday life ^(West & Zimmerman)

Gender as a social construct challenges the notion that gender differences are purely biological. Instead it argues that gender roles, identities and expectations are shaped by history culture and social influences. Various theories within this framework explain how gender is created, maintained and reinforced through language, institution, and daily interaction. These theories emphasize that gender is a fluid, performative and subject to change over time.

Foundational Concept of Social Constructionism.

Social constructionism is a sociological theory that examine how our understanding of reality is shaped through social interaction and cultural norms. It posits many aspect of our daily perceived reality, including knowledge, beliefs, and gender categories are not inherent or naturally occurring but are created and maintained by collective human agreement. Social construction suggest that gender identity and roles are not biological determined but constructed through societal expectation and cultural norms. This means that the characteristic and behaviors associated with "male" and "female" are learned through societal

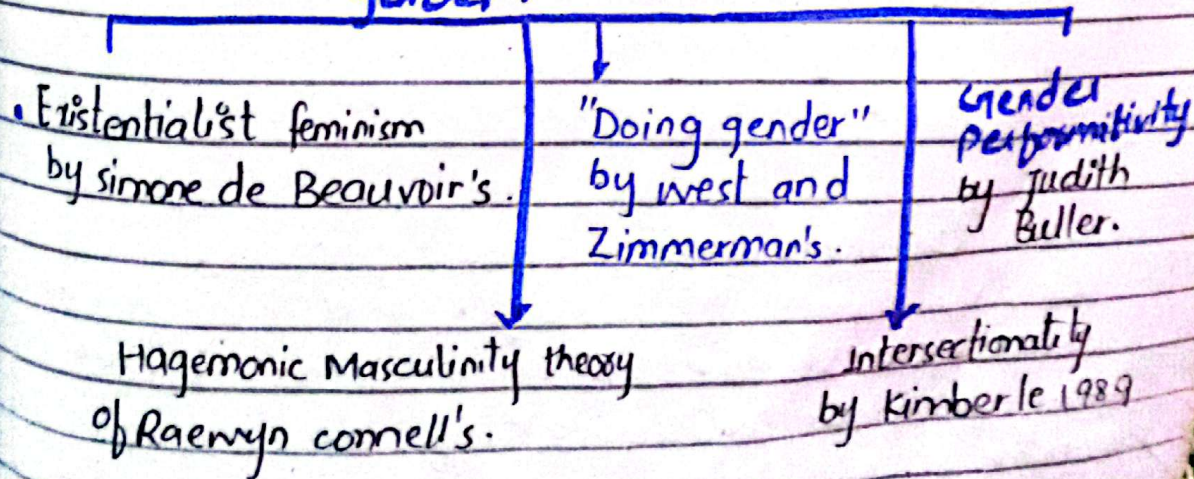
Process rather than being innate.



(2) Key theories of social construction of gender.

There are following key theories of gender as a social construction.

Theories of social construction of gender.



2.1 Existentialist Feminism by Simone de Beauvoir's.

One is not born, but rather becomes,
a woman.

Simone de Beauvoir, in her book *The Second Sex*, argued that women are biologically destined to be subordinated but are conditioned by society to adopt feminine roles. She introduced the idea that gender is not a natural trait but as a result of societal expectation.

Core Arguments of her theory

- Women are socialized into gender roles through family, education, and cultural practices.
- Patriarchy defines women in relation to men, treating them as the "other" rather than independent beings.
- Liberation requires women to break free from these imposed roles and redefine their existence.

Significance of her theory

Beauvoir's work laid the foundation for later feminist theories that focus on the socially constructed nature of gender.

2.2 "Doing gender" by West and Zimmerman's

"Gender is ongoing social performance"

Candace West and Don Zimmerman's, in his theory introduce the concept of "Doing gender" arguing that gender is not something we are but something we do in everyday interactions.

Core Arguments of his theory

- Gender is enacted through daily behaviors, speech, and appearance.
- Society expects individuals to conform to established gender norms, and those who deviate may face social sanctions.
- Institution like family, works of media reinforce gender roles by rewarding those who perform them correctly.

Example

A man avoiding emotional expression to appear "masculine" or women speaking softly to seem "feminine" as a example of how individuals "do gender" in response of social expectation.

Significance of his theories

This theory highlights that gender is actively maintained and reinforced through social interaction rather than being an inherent trait.

2.3 Gender Performativity by Judith Butler's (1990)

"Gender is not something we have,
it is something we perform."

In Gender trouble (1990), Judith Butler challenged the idea that gender is a stable identity. Instead, she argued that gender is a performance repeated through social behaviors, gesture and language.

The straight and continues to affirm that incest, and not homosexually represent its major interdiction. Thus when thought

straight mind, homosexuality is nothing but
heterosexuality.

Core Argument of her theory

• Gender identity is constructed through repeated action and behavior over time. There is no natural gender rather it is shaped by culture. Language and power structure play a key role in defining gender. For instance, A child assigned female at birth learn to "act like a girl" through repeated reinforcement - wearing dresses, playing with dolls or being praised by quiet & calm.

Significance

Butler theory influenced Queer theory and gender studies by questioning fixed category of gender and open space for non-binary and fluid identities.

2.4) Hegemonic Masculinity theory by

Raewyn Connell's (1995)

"Gender is structured around dominant and subordinate forms."

Raewyn Connell introduced the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which explain how certain forms of masculinity are privileged over others, reinforcing gender hierarchies.

Core Arguments

Society promotes a dominant form of masculinity (being strong, assertive and emotionally detached).

Other masculinities (e.g. subordinate, marginalized, or compliant masculinities) exist but seen as inferior.

Femininity is often constructed in opposition to masculinity and is often subordinated. For instance, a powerful businessman who is aggressive and competitive represent hegemonic masculinity, while a man who is nurturing or expressive may be labelled as less masculine.

Significance

This theory explains how power operates within gender structure and how men & women are pressured to conform to specific gender norms.

2.5) Theory of Intersectionality by Kimberle Crenshaw's

"Gender does not exist in isolation; it intersects with race, class, and other identities."

Kimberle Crenshaw introduced the concept of intersectionality to highlight how multiple social categories intersect to shape an individual's experience of discrimination and privilege.

Core Arguments

- Gender alone does not determine social experiences, race, class, sexuality and other identities must also be considered.

Structural inequalities reflect different forms of oppression that vary across social groups.

eg a black woman experiences discrimination different than a white woman or a black man because she faces both racism and sexism simultaneously.

Significance

Intersectionality has reshaped discussions on gender, emphasizing the need for more inclusive feminist and social justice movements.

Conclusion

These theories collectively challenged the idea that gender is biologically fixed. Instead, they show that gender is continuously shaped through social interaction, cultural narratives and institutional structures. While some focus on individual performance (Butler, West and Zimmerman), others examine systemic influences (Connell). Together, they provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how gender is constructed and maintained by society.