

Gender Studies

Question no: 1

What are the theories of social construction of Gender?

Answer:

In sociology and feminist studies, gender refers to the cultural, social, and symbolic meanings attributed to "masculinity" and "femininity", distinct from biological sex. It shapes identities, power relations, and social expectations associated with being male, female, or non-binary.

"Gender... refers to our ideas of femininity and masculinity. It has to do with the relations of power between and within the sexes. It is the result of how we raise boys and girls to be men and women."

Kaufman & Kimmel.

Major Theories on Gender as Social Construction:

Gender Performativity - Judith Butler.

According to Judith Butler's idea of Gender Performativity, Gender isn't something one simply is; it is something one does. ~~It~~ It is a performance shaped by norms and repeated acts.

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In Gender Trouble and ~~data~~ related works, Butler proposes that these repeated acts create the illusion of a stable gender identity.

Butler also ~~argues~~ argues that sex itself is discursively constructed: The idea of a pre-social "biological sex" is destabilized by how bodies are interpreted through norms.

"We act as if that being of a man or that being of a woman is actually an internal reality, but actually it's a phenomenon that is being produced all the time"

Sandra Bern - Gender Schema Theory

Gender Schema theory given by Sandra Bern suggests that individuals internalize society's gender norms via cognitive "schemas". Children observe and learn "gendered" behaviour for example who does chores and apply it to themselves and others. Bern's work also reveals how deeply embedded and maintained gendered patterns become via early socialization.

Psychoanalytic & Sociological Approach by Nancy Chodorow

In "The Reproduction of Mothering", Chodorow examines how mother-daughters relationships contribute to internalizing gendered roles. She ~~less~~ shows how gender differences emerge not biologically, but through familial and social experiences.

Deconstructing Sex and Gender by Anne Fausto-Sterling

In "Sexing the Body", Fausto-Sterling explores how medical and social institutions construct gender and sexuality, particularly through cases of intersex individuals. Her work illustrates how "sex" is not just biological, but deeply intertwined with cultural norms.

Challenging Western Gender Models Oyeronke Oyewumi

In "The Invention of Women", Oyewumi argues that Western binary gender paradigms are imposed on societies like the Yoruba through colonialism. She highlights that many non-Western languages

and cultures operate without rigid gender hierarchies.

Social Construction of Reality by Berger & Luckmann

The "Social Construction of Reality" laid the groundwork for understanding how societal institutions shape our perception of "real" categories. Gender can be viewed as a socially constructed role embedded within the broader process of institutionalizing social categories.

Conclusion:

Theories in Gender Studies shows that gender is not biologically fixed but socially constructed through culture, power, and daily practices. Theorists and thinkers like Butler, Bern, Chodorow, Connell, and Oyewumi reveal it as learned, performed, and reinforced by institutions and interactions. Seeing gender as contextual and fluid enables us to challenge stereotypes, embrace diversity, and work toward equality.