Documentary Review #2 - Gender Revolution (Part 1)

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1. **Define intersex. How does the explanation of this term in the video compare to what is said in the textbook? What explanation is given in both the video and the textbook for intersex development? How is intersex different from transgender?**

Intersex people are the individuals that do not fit in the typical definitions of male or female. These are the people with either some characteristics missing from the gender set or the having both the qualities of male and female genders. This may happen due to any of the multiple variations in sex characteristics which may include chromosomes, sex hormones, gonads or genitals. These variations in the gender can also occur due to the deviation in genital ambiguity, an abnormality in the combination of chromosomal genotype in addition to the sexual phenotype other than XY-male and XX-female.

As per a documentary produced by National Geographic titled as "Gender Revolution; A journey with Katie Couric," the term intersex has been elaborated as “….relating to or denoting a person or animal that has both male and sex organs or other sexual characteristics….” Another definition in the same documentary presents intersex as “the condition of having both male and female sexual characteristics." Whereas in the textbook *Sexuality Now Embracing Diversity 6th Edition by Janell L. Carroll,* intersex has been defined as *“*Intersexis a term used to refer to a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn’t appear to fit the typical definition of male or female (these conditions are also referred to as disorders of sex development).” (Carroll, 2003, p. 87). Both these definitions presented for the same term "Intersex" are pretty similar; in fact, both give out almost the same meaning. The only difference lies slightly in the use of the word “disorder” as the textbook considers intersex as a disorder as well, whereas, on the other hand, the documentary does not give out any such impression.

Often intersex is confused with transgender, although both are entirely different concepts. Intersex individuals differ from the transgender people in the sense that transgender people have the typical anatomy of male or female, but they feel that they are in the "wrong body"; on the other hand, intersex people have both male and female characteristics.

1. **What did Dr. John Money believe about gender? What experiment did he conduct to test his theory? Did this experiment prove or disprove Money's ideas about gender? What are your personal thoughts about Money's ideas and his experiment?**

Dr. John William Money was a psychologist, sexologist and an author, who specialized in the areas of sexual identity and Biology of gender. He was one of the initial scientists who started research on the psychology of sexual fluidity and how the social constructs of “gender” affected an individual through his or her life. Dr. Money believed that the differences in gender within the individuals are related to their sexual differences. The gender differences lied in the anatomy or the reproductive duties that the individuals belonging to specific sex performed.

In order to prove his belief, Dr. John Money, in the mid-1960s, conducted an experiment related to gender reassignment on one of his patients, David Reimer. David Reimer, born as a male biologically, suffered from irreparable damage to his penis during infancy, due to a failed circumcision. As per the advice of Dr. Money, Reimer's parents decided to raise the later as a girl, and he underwent a gender reassignment surgery. Dr. Money constructed rudimentary female genitals in Rimier and gave him female hormones during puberty so that he can develop female characteristics.

Although Dr. John Money succeeded in conducting his research and wrote many pieces of research and books on the basis of this experiment to prove his beliefs right, it left great impact over the life of young Rimier. He went into deep depression and was never able to recover from it. David Reimer and his twin brother both were sexually abused and forced to conduct unnatural sexual activities during their visits to the Dr which made both of them mentally disturbed. David’s twin brother, who also suffered from schizophrenia along with depression, died of an antidepressant drug overdose and just two years later, David Rimier also ended his life by firearm. In my opinion, it is plain cruel to conduct such an experiment just to prove someone's own beliefs no matter how much harm it does to that individual or animal.

1. **What is the definition of gender, according to the video and the textbook? What does the video say about the possible role of testosterone in gender identity? What do brain staining patterns indicate about gender? How is gender different from sexuality? Why do you think people often confuse gender and sexuality?**

The term gender refers to the sense of belonging to either of the sexes whether male or female. The term is more inclined towards the social and cultural constructs instead of just referring to the sexual differences between both the sexes which include anatomy and the reproductive roles performed by both. The word “gender” also encompasses the range of identities that individuals belonging to both the male and female sexes correspond to.

As per the video, the term gender is a comprehensive term, which means "…the way you present yourself to the world, the way you dress, the way you make your hair, the way you use or the kind of products you use…." The textbook also defines gender as "The behavioral, psychological, and social characteristics associated with being male or female” (Carroll, 2003, p. 78).

As per the documentary, testosterone has no role to play in the identification of the gender of a person. In the documentary, it is clearly stated that gender is a trait that is entirely in control of the individual and he or she is the one to decide whether they would be liked to be called as a male or a female. The ability to produce testosterone or estrogen may be able to define your sexual identity but not your gender.

Brain is the most crucial part of the human body which acts as the control center of the whole body. The powerhouse of the brain, the hypothalamus secretes various hormones, including the gender-related ones, which also affect the development of the brain itself. As a result of the production of these hormones, the brains of a male and female are able to think differently and assign unique tasks to the individual.

Many people confuse gender with sexuality because there is a common perception that gender is co-related with the gonads or the external genet ilia of the individuals, which is wrong. There exists no link between the gender roles and the presence or absence of outer genital parts. Gender refers to the functions a person would like to play in the society, whereas, on the other hand, sexuality refers to the preference or the arousal of feelings of that individual for the people belonging to other (Brown, 2014).

**References**

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