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Gender and Development Journal of Health and Social Behavior

**I. Introduction**

Gender is generally derived from one's sex; a person with feminine biological traits (sex) is considered to be a woman whereas a person with masculine traits is believed to be a man. This binary has been existing in almost all societies of the world since the recorded origin of the human race. The twentieth and 21st century is the centuries when human beings started re-examining the traditional norms and theories which led to challenging many established *truths*. Sociologists of this time also decided to study and evaluate facts about how gender establishes itself and how it develops. Cindy Faith Miller has done an original empirical sociological research on the theories which attempted to explore the reasons behind *fixed* gender roles. Miller has categorized those theories into three families: biological, social, and cognitive. This paper studies Miller’s article to examine what different theories propose and how they present their cases.

**II. Purpose of the Research**

Genderhas become an issue of deep interest among sociologists since Feminism claimed that women have all those abilities and capabilities that were believingly employed by men only in the past. They also claimed that women were restricted to their homes by their men with an organized plan so men would be able to exploit them whenever they want. Finally, they demanded full liberty for the women so they would be able to use their capabilities to live in society equal to men. Multiple perspectives of this phenomenon appeared as the debate moved on. Many scholars tried to explore the actual cause behind the apparent subjugated role of women in society.Miller has written a comprehensive account of those researches that were utilized by different scholars to reach on the synthesis of all the studies till date. Thus, this paper has been written on the following purpose:

* The purpose of this research is to review all the theories about gender and development, via Miller's article "Gender Development, Theories Of", to prove that the sociologists agree that gender roles have developed historically and the responsible factor behind this categorization was the biological difference between the sexes.

**III. Theories**

Theories of gender development are categorized into three groups in this article: biological, social, and cognitive. Biological approaches find the cause of defined gender roles in biological features of human beings. Evolutionary Theory has been discussed as a biological approach to studying the phenomenon. Evolutionary Theorists David Buss and David Geary emphasize that the process of reproduction causes the fixation of gender roles. For instance, they believe that men and women got together to perform the act of reproduction. Men had the least role in the process of reproduction that gave them space to go outside and perform daring actions. They were less sensitive because they had to face challenges of food production whether in forests, fields or elsewhere. Women were often hindered by pregnancy to go outside and accompany men in such daring acts. Additionally, women were supposed to bring up their offspring with care. Eventually, women evolved as sensitive and caring creatures whereas men as aggressive and physically stronger human beings. This process evolved for centuries and these two groups of humankind defined their gender roles to grow mutually. The problem with Evolutionary theorists was that they did not talk about variations in sex except talking generally about how gender roles evolved historically. Therefore, some other biological theorists attempted to study the sex differences biologically. They found that Turner Syndrome (TS) in females caused physical fragility in them that convinced them to leave aggressive roles to men and to adopt sensitive, loving, and caring social roles.

Social approaches hold the stereotyped social roles responsible for the typical development of gender. For example, *Social Learning Theory* claims that genders develop as the result of those social roles that are learned by both sexes directly and indirectly. Social psychologist Albert Bandura argued that a child learns his/her gender roles from social institutions like home, school, and government. These institutes portray a world before him/her that shows which social roles are *normal* for him/her and which will be considered deviance, and the human child is the best imitator identifies and learns those roles to fit into his/her defined *normal* category. Bandura updated his theory *Social Cognitive Theory* and claimed that these institutions deliberately teach a child his/her social role, the child develops a cognition that helps him/her to associate that role with himself/herself permanently. For instance, a boy is appreciated when he plays with dummy weapons and shows aggressive behavior while a girl is appreciated when she plays with a doll. In the same manner, they are condemned overtly or covertly by their children if they adopt the other gender's roles. According to this theory, were there no social institutions to teach a child his/her role, there might have been no categorization of typical gender roles. Social theorist Lawrence Kohlberg outlined his *Cognitive Developmental Theory* in Eleanor Maccoby’s 1966 book *The Development of Sex Differences* and claimed that children learn their social roles with age development and adopt those roles which they feel suitable to their personality living in a particular society. They learn the roles to appear normal in their surroundings; they adopt a role after they believe that this is best according to their sex, they create Social Schemas to follow for the whole life. This theory has some space for the queers (gays, lesbians) because it claims that they do not create a social schema for them if they do not find themselves satisfied with their gender roles.

**IV. Research Method**

**A.** Social surveys were conducted to examine the hypothesis. Surveys had three categories: scholar survey, door-to-door survey, and social media survey. The territory that was selected to examine was the state of Alaska, the USA.

**B.** Social scholars were approached first to discuss the theories in detail and learn their latest reviews. Door to door surveys was conducted to know how contemporary people feel and talk about gender roles. Noticing that face-to-face interaction hindered some people to answer all questions freely, social media surveys were conducted with a limited choice of answers like yes/no/don’t know, etc.

**C.** Some ethical issues occurred when people were interviewed at their homes because they showed reluctance to answer such questions like are the women deliberately subjugated by their male partners? Some women answered some questions but requested not to reveal their identities.

**D.** Independent variables were how long women were interviewed separately from their men and how answers (dependent variables) were affected.

**V. Results**

The hypothesis that sociologists agree upon the view that gender roles developed historically, and the responsible factor was the biological difference between the sexes was proved in the surveys. Social scholars were convinced that gender roles are the result of two factors: the biological structure of both sexes, and historical evolution. They were questioned and were free to give their views as comprehensive as they liked. Their answers were analyzed, and the researchers found that the scholars agree that women have a biological fragility due to Turner Syndrome, and the process of reproduction is another factor that weakens women. One other important factor is menstruation that causes monthly bleeding in women. It also decreases the physical strength of women. Men have no such issue that helps them to have a stronger physique. The scholars also acknowledged that due to these factors, the ancient human beings might have decided to demark social roles that led to the patriarchal structure of society. women who were interviewed at their homes acknowledged that they have a secondary role in society and household in decision making, but the majority of them showed reluctance to acknowledge that this should be called deliberate subjugation of women. The same question was one of the major questions which were asked via social media. The majority of women respondents expressed that they are being subjugated deliberately whereas the majority of men responded opposite.

**VI. Summary**

Results from the surveys support our hypothesis that gender roles are determined first by biological differences where females have weaker physiques than males. Strength was critical for survival on earth anciently and the strong physique of men exploited this opportunity to form a society on a patriarchal structure. Scholars and common people in the surveys acknowledged that men have been dominating society because they have the stronger physique. One more dimension of this hypothesis is that since technology lessened the demand for human labor and increased the demand of human intellect, we noticed that a large number of women entered the workplace to prove their skills. The issue of gender disparity is not as grave in developed societies as in underdeveloped society, thanks to technology, I say. Limitations in the research surveys were that the researchers could not approach as many people and scholars as we planned due to limited resources. Short duration for the research was another limitation. The researchers had another issue when many women relucted to answer the all questions. This research is purely applied research because it is based on research articles and social theories that are examined and tested in society. Those theories are evolving with more researches like this research to find more dimensions of gender and development.