

Discussion 2

Literature, Russian Literature



Gender & Sexual Studies For many decades, there has been a notion in the society regarding male domination, sex-based division of labor, and particular forms of gender differentiation. There has been raging debates among sociologists, development experts, psychologists, scholars and general public on whether these aspects are biologically inevitable or not. On one side, there have been those who have argued that these aspects are inevitable and that they occur by both default and by design. On other side, there are those who hold opposing views arguing that these aspects only depend on factors such as socialization process within a particular society. Utilizing examples from my own experience where appropriate, this paper will discuss how these aspects are not biologically inevitable. Biological models assume that biological sex tends to determine gender and that innate biological differences lead to behavioral differences, and which eventually lead to social arrangements (Kimmel 58). In essence, these models imply that male domination, sex-based division of labor, and particular forms of gender differentiation is biologically inevitable. However, other models and life realities and experiences have proved that these aspects are not biologically inevitable. Although biological factors play some role in behavioral, psychological, and social lives of men and women, they do not entirely and ultimately determine aspects such as male domination, sex-based division of labor and particular forms of gender differentiation. Instead, it is the people's choices, their experiences in life, and their sense of identity that make who they are (Kimmel 58). Differences in sex are not biological, but rather, they are learned and become part of the ideology that continues to perpetuate them once they learned. There are cross-cultural

evidences that show that male domination, sex-based division of labor and particular forms of gender differentiation are not biologically inevitable. An examination of Arapesh culture in New Guinea showed that these aspects are not biologically inevitable; men and women appeared emotionally warm, passive, and gentle. In addition, men and women in this culture were equally confident, trustful, and happy, as well as exhibited absence of individualism. Arapesh culture was also found to share child bearing and discouraged aggressiveness among girls and boys. Besides, both women and men of this culture were viewed to be relatively equally sexual, although their sexual relationships tended to not to be “romantic” but rather “domestic”. Even though in nearly every society labor is divided by gender, some cross-cultural evidences have shown that this aspect is not necessarily biologically inevitable. In today’s society, the biological bases for sex-based division of labor have been significantly eroded. This situation has further been compounded by physical constitutions that have become less determinative in respect to choosing of careers and assignment of tasks (Kimmel 63). The technologies of sexual autonomy and family planning, legal abortion, institutional childcare and birth control technology have freed women from performing their traditional responsibilities; instead, they have enabled women to participate in almost all responsibilities that were traditionally reserved for men. There are very few occupations that exist today for which only men or only women are strictly biologically suited (Kimmel 65). This shows that sex-based division of labor has outlived its physical imperatives or social usefulness. For example, I have been treated by a male nurse and have seen increasing number of male nurses in recent years. In addition, I

have seen most of my friends studying and practicing engineering and joining military, fields that was largely reserved for men in past decades because it was believed that they were not biologically suited for women. It should not be lost though that there exists aspects of gender differentiation, sex-based division of labor and male domination in some cultures around the world. For example, in the Mehinaku culture in central Brazil, there are well-institutionalized men's huts where ritual instruments stored and played and tribal secrets are kept. In these huts only men are allowed to enter and women are prohibited from entering (Kimmel 67). Nonetheless, it can be observed from the discussion that over the years, the biological inevitability has been eroded. As such, male domination, sex-based division of labor, and particular forms of gender differentiation is not biologically inevitable. Today's society has less pronouncement of male dominance as men and women control near equal ideological and political resources that are essential in achieving the cultural goals. Although biological factors plays important role in influencing the afore-mentioned aspects in the society, factors such as education and technological developments are significantly eroding biological inevitability. It is worth noting that the extent of biological inevitability among cultures differs; men and women status, as well as gender differentiation, and sex-based division of labor differ from one culture to another. That notwithstanding, biological inevitability can be said to get eroded gradually in the society, generally. Works Cited Kimmel, Michael S. The Gendered Society. New York, NY [u. a.: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000. Print.