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## **Division of labor**

### **Part 1**

The term gender as defined in anthropology refers to the social, economic and cultural attributes assigned to persons for being male or female in a particular society at a particular point in time. As noted by most anthropologists, roles among men and women in the society are socially distinguished based on the nature of the activities involved in undertaking those particular roles. There are a number of theories that can be used to explain the differences in division of labor between the two genders. These include: the strength theory, compatibility-with-childcare theory, economy of effort theory and expendability theory.

The strength theory ascertains that men have greater aerobic capacity and can as a result undertake more physically engaging activities than their female counterparts. Often times, men are tasked with activities that require lifting of heavy objects such as hunting of large animals, butchering, clearing of land, as well as working with stones and metals (Lyman, 223). Other tasks undertaken by men include building houses, making nets, engaging in quarry and mine work. The women on the other hand undertake simple tasks namely collecting shell fish, caring for animals, tending to crops milk and meat preservation as well as engaging in cloth, basket and pottery making. Compatibility-with-childcare theory, another major model that is used to explain

the differences in division of labor between gender, postulates that women perform best when tasked with responsibilities that revolve around their households; that is, assigned tasks should not keep them away from home for longer durations as this could negatively impact on their productivity (Kottak, 170). In occasions where tasks women have to stay away from home, such social settings should allow them to bring along their offspring so that they are taken care of even as tasks are being undertaken.

Closer to the above theory is the economy of effort theory which asserts that people engage in tasks that they are more knowledgeable on and which are located in close proximity to other related tasks (Family.jrank.org.). Owing to the fact that women are naturally born with the motherly instincts, they are best suited to take care of their young ones. It would therefore be more economical for them to undertake tasks that revolve around their homes. Based on the same theory, men resort to making musical instruments as they are more efficient in collecting the constituent materials that are used to make the gadgets. Of equal importance is the continued dominance of men in politics in the ancient as well as modern society. This trend is often explained using the expendability theory which argues that men are more likely to engage in more dangerous tasks than women owing to the fact that men make minimal contributions in the reproductive cycle (Lyman, 227). Women are considered as a major link to the establishment of a healthy society following their child bearing and rearing abilities. Men have minimal capability of rearing their offspring and as a result engage in food livelihood seeking activities. Based on this theory, more men than women tend to engage in politics. The kinds of warfare and physical outbursts required in politics are deemed incompatible with childcare tasks hence the minimal number of women in this arena.

## **Part 2**

The above theories apply to a great extent to the assignment of roles in the society. It is by default for instance that all the women in my family lineage are often more concerned with the children than the men. In my teenage years, I witnessed my mother abandon a well paying job in an established corporation to take care of my younger twin brothers who were at the time very vulnerable. Logically speaking, it would have been more appropriate to have my father take care of the little boys since he ran his own metal fabrication business. The assignment of the role was as a result based on the compatibility-with childcare theory (Berk). On most occasions, the males in the family engaged in more physical roles while simple household tasks were often undertaken by the females. Land mowing, trimming of fences, preparation of the farms as well as planting were exclusively undertaken by my grandfather and his sons. This was equally compatible with the strength theory.

There are however occasions when the above theories have been disapproved. For instance, in the modern American society, more and more women are engaging in physical tasks that were previously preserved for the men. Politics, for instance, has become a common playfield for men and women alike (Family.jrank.org.). Women in the modern society abandon the child bearing and rearing responsibilities at an earlier age so as to compete favorably with their male counterparts in the same field. In most rural parts of the country, women continue to engage in agricultural land preparation. This is contrary to provisions of the strength theory which claim that women have little aerobic energy and cannot as a result engage in more physical tasks. With continued advancement in technology, more women are able to undertake engaging tasks. None of the above theories can explain whether the differences in division in labor between the two genders will remain at status quo following the ease with which women undertake tasks initially preserved for men.

## References

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