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IRD 318

GENDER STUDIES IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

IS GENDER RELATIONS CHANGING IN THE 21ST CENTURY? WHAT ARE THE AREAS OF CHANGE AND THE FACTORS DRIVING

 Gender relations refer to **relations between men and women** that are socially determined by culture, religion, or socially acceptable ways of thinking or being. These relationships between men and women, as they exist in most societies, are characterised by the marginalisation of women in decision making and other forms.

Is gender relations changing in the 21st century?

Gender relations within the 21st Century are at a tumultuous time, with evolving, challenging attitudes and seemingly permanent changes to tradition. Humanity aims to do away with the discrimination and evils of the past, with everyday life in the background being influenced by society’s gradual changes. The battle of tradition vs. change, prominent within culture, is also apparent here. This ties into the tired left-right wing false dichotomy. Most people within the western world find these more tolerant attitudes perfectly acceptable, yet there is a discontent with social justice movements, which are perceived as corrupt. Both people who disagree and agree with them are prominent in the mainstream legitimacy. Humane beliefs about sexuality and gender identity are being implemented to replace outdated social structures. The gender rights activism breached the cultural mainstream of civilized worlds. This happens in tandem to similar, interconnected issues regarding race and class. To illuminate this discussion on gender, firstly general gender relations must be discussed, followed by pertinent fears of gendered criminal activity, and then the transition from old societal ideals to new ideals.

Stereotypical, historical, and biological ideas about gender are as relevant as they have ever been. Gender is extremely relevant to everyday life. It is a part of a person; part of the identity. There exists a growing resentment of how much it controls in everyday life. It generally initially determines a person’s social life through friend groups and how a person is treated, to varying degrees. It is also linked to sexuality, in that people’s sex generally means that they will be attracted to the opposite sex, and then pursue them. There are characteristics that are favoured for only one gender. These characteristics are only beneficial for one gender, and have no value or are negative traits for the other gender. For males, these are assertiveness, anger, rationality, and strength (for this one, it’s valued within both genders, manifested within different ways). For females, these are fragility, chastity, purity, deep emotional empathy, and sensitivity. In sex roles, the male is active and the female is therefore passive. The male possesses the intrusive mechanism, which penetrates into the female. The female is more valuable, from a biological basis, than the male. The male is more disposable, only being needed for one day, while the women carries the baby to term and nurses it with protection from the male. People have theorized about this creating a societal drive to protect women, as they are therefore more valuable; this does not end up being the case however, evidently. It works the other way around, with rape being used as a way to control women with pregnancy. This is a historical and favoured tactic. These ideals come from a biological basis, especially the ideal of maleness being intertwined with dominance. These ideals, when enforced on civilized beings, can be and often are suffocating. There are some who slander the name of science by using the initial gender roles (the training wheels of humanity, if you may) to control lives, enforcing them regardless of their obsolete nature. These gender roles are also used to promote double standards; for example, sexual promiscuity being seen as desirable within a man, but abhorrent within a female. As the world knows, gender plays no significant role in determining one’s talents, personality, or other traits. And people should have the freedom to express themselves and their gender, and have mobility through a world unrestrained by primitive dictations.