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ASSIGNMENT QUESTION: Is gender relations changing in the 21st century? what are the areas of change and factors driving the change

To start with, what is gender relations? Gender relations refer to relations between men and women that are socially determined by culture, religion, or socially acceptable ways of thinking or being. Gender relations are the ways in which a culture or society defines rights, responsibilities, and the identities of men and women in relation to one another. Looking at history, gender was understood differently according to different cultures and societies. Society in many occasion has set standards for women that limits them from other roles and responsibilities. History has it that for many years men have been the dominant sex in roles and responsibilities at all levels; political, social, economic and religious. However, gender relations in the 21st century has demonstrated equal participation of both genders in different activities as compared to early centuries that kept women behind by being responsible for domestic chores alone. Both genders now actively attend sport events, go to bars and all other outdoor activities that were dominated by men alone. Also, the male breadwinner behavior is hardly visible in the industrialized countries of the 21st century because of the increase in women’s employment. There are some areas that these changes are visible which I’ll like to list out and explain in the body of my answer; marriage proposals, dress code and work.

 First of all, in the early centuries men were known to be the ones who propose to women, which was traditionally their role but in the 21st century, women are stepping up by proposing to men. They simply boldly come out to propose to men, when they can no longer wait. Most times, culture term these women as taboo breakers. This has led to these traditional cultures thinking of women proposing as prostitutes desperate for marriage. However, todays women are proposing more than ever before.

Furthermore, traditionally, both genders have different roles and responsibilities whereby men were considered responsible for taking care of the family financially, guiding the family, though while listening to their spouse they make the final decisions while the women take care of household duties and their children. Towards the late 20th century and early 21st century, gender equality began to strengthen in all areas, especially social structures. There have been arguments that women are more burdened with daily chores such as laundry, cleaning, cooking, shopping, looking after sick relatives while men only show significant contribution by other services of mending faulty items around the house. In recent times, it is velar that both genders to some extent perform equal domestic duties and in providing for the family, even though tradition still holds some societies.

Lastly on the areas, we have dress code. The dress has the direct contact with the human body, therefore, it is considered an integral part of the self. Dress code influences and shapes the appearance with significant impact on the construction of the identity. In the 21st century, for example, trousers are worn by both genders, we even have transgender, where we have people dressing like their opposite sex.

There are some factors that have caused this and they are Education, political and legal change as well as globalization and development. Education is strongly associated with greater decision making. There is need for education of genders and expose them to different environments, so they can know what happens in each part of the world. Inadequate exposure and education leads to misunderstanding of gender in the current generation in the South Asia, Middle East, and Africa, women with more education are not likely to ask their husbands or family permission to seek medical care, since education gives them more freedom than earnings and they are also able to fend for themselves with it.

 Globalization and development is another key factor. Access to information, advertising and television can expose men and women to new and varied ideals of gender roles, relations ad expectations. As economic conditions change, so do norms around work. Greater economic opportunities for women and girls can also promote women’s exercise agency by broadening their networks- from mostly kin related networks- and thus expanding their sources of information and support.

Lastly is political and legal change. Although changes in relations and norms can be difficult to trace back to legal change, they can provide a space for increased gender equality. A great example is the efforts of the Scandinavian countries to use employment policy and law to give men and women the opportunity to be more involved in the family life.