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**IRD 318**

**Question:** Is Gender Relations Changing in the 21st Century? What are the areas of Change and the factors driving the Change?

Gender is a state of being a male or female. In most cases, it’s typically defined with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological differences. 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 of power sharing in the home and places of authority.

**Gender in the 21st Century**

In the current generation of 21st Century, gender is often misunderstood as promotion of women who have taken more active role in different sectors and careers despite some traditions still hold women inferior in their society like numerous cases reported in Indian cultures women still come from traditional strict households, they have accepted their roles and feel comfortable in their decisions or lack thereof. Feminist movement gained momentum in the 1960’s and 70’s in the United States together with other Human Right groups that advocated for equal rights among all genders in recent centuries after observing women gender being domesticated by cultural norms, religious believes, traditional marginalisation yet for the few women who were out speaking role models showed great hope. Gender roles in communities changed lately whereby women now play equal role as men in owning lead large companies, very active in their families and communities, own personal businesses, manage big organisations, head political groups, earn higher academic degrees from all sectors equal to men, to mention but few as compared to early centuries. Both genders actively attend sporting events; go to bars and all other outdoor activities that were dominated by men alone. The 21st century demonstrates equal participation of both genders in different activities as compared to early centuries that kept women behind by being responsible for domestic chores. Gender being a central organising principle of society in social construction which governs the process of production, reproduction where consumption and distribution are elements in that setting, gender has remained a critical and major focus of society despite equal rights. Young genders both males and females are groomed up with knowledge of man being head of family. Religions across all denominations still hold believe of man being a superior being from woman gender. This naturally has left a gap between the two genders where by man still carries weight of being the head of the household though women headed families also perform equal roles but the family still remains incomplete without a man due to title, security, and other duties that women can’t perform.

**AREAS OF CHANGE**

**MARRIAGE PROPOSALS:** Marriage proposal in early centuries, men typically propose to women which was traditionally their role but in the 21st Century, women are stepping up by proposing to men as they get down on their knees. They have boldly come out elaborating men initiative proposals that can’t wait any longer for men to propose. Sometimes cultures term them as taboo breakers who boldly ask their future husbands to be hand in marriage. Men traditionally take head the process of proposing for marriage but this has changed in the 21st century where women now take bold action in dating and propose for marriage. This has left some traditional cultures thinking of women proposing as prostitutes desperate for marriage for example in my Iteso Culture, men take lead in proposing for marriage but when woman proposes, man shys off in fear of mockery and insults from fellow men or woman might be having HIV/AIDS as to why she boldly took men role of proposing for marriage and men prefer traditional marriage proposals or weddings. This happens in rural villages. However, todays women can propose for marriage. According to Chicago Tribune Article on marriage, more women are proposing than ever before. Some are giving men engagement rings.

**DRESS CODE:** Culturally dress code for men and women are defined by norms and expectations that relate to an understanding to tell difference between man and woman. The dress has the most direct contact with the human body and is therefore considered an integral part of the self. In the 21st century, the trousers are worn by both genders. Women dress on trousers, shirts and neck-ties like men while men as well take part in women dresses, skirts and blouse though not widely in public. This has been associated with gay proactive men. Meanwhile Brighton College in Britain is the first school to scrap uniform policy so all children can wear skirts or trousers (Mirror online by Steve Robson. January 20th 2016). In Islam women are required to wear modest forms of attire which covers from head to toe. Therefore all this depends on the traditional cultural environment either in rural or urban though in most urban settings adapt any kind of dress code. In other words the world of clothing is changing as new cultural influences meet technological innovations.

**WORK:**Traditionally, both genders have different roles and responsibilities whereby men were considered responsible for taking care of the family financially; guiding the family while listening to their spouse though they make final decisions while women are to take care of children and household duties. During the 20th – 21st centuries, there strengthened Gender inequalities in all areas that are rooted in social structures but also in attitudes, said Professor Gillian Robinson, of the University of Ulster. Many arguments have shown imbalance at work. Others defend men to be more burdened while others argue that women are more burdened with daily chores such as laundry, cleaning, cooking food, shopping, looking after sick relatives and carrying our repairs while men only show significant contribution by other services of mending faulty items around the house. Both genders to some extent perform equal domestic duties though tradition still holds some societies.

**ROLE REVERSAL:** In some families we are seeing a complete role reversal from the past where the woman is going out to work full-time and the man stays at home to look after the children and carry out the household chores.

**The Stay at Home fathers:**Times are changing and we are seeing many more men taking the paternal role and committing to being the stay at home parent while their partner goes out to work. Compared to the 1980’s this is a complete change that has perhaps transformed parenting in certain places of the world. The majority of people feel that if the man has the option to become the full-time parent, it is a refreshing and important change for many parents and for society. Men are now getting the chance to spend more time with their children and workplaces are understanding that this is important. Paternity leave has now been granted and fathers are not missing out on the early months of their new born baby.

Some of the factors driving these changes include; Feminists, celebrities, government international law, internet and social which has a great influence on people and so on.

In conclusion, there’s a tremendous Change in gender relations in the 21st century because people that is, both men and women are getting a better understanding of gender and are both fighting for equally right, so that the world can be a better place.

Reference

Gender in the 21st Century by Samson Esudu , Essay 2016

‘ Gender Studies in International Relations’. Osondu Oti, Adaora (2017)