

Gender roles term nowadays overview

[People](#)



Gender role is a term used in the social sciences and humanities to denote a set of behavioral norms that accompany a given gendered status (also called a gender identity) in a given social group or system. (WHO, 2011) Gender roles are seen everywhere, everyday. There are many different ways to look at gender roles. Defining the terms that help you completely understand gender roles is necessary. Delving into the family aspect of gender roles gives you a better grasp on the different family structures and how they are used in daily life.

We are used to the traditional gender roles in everyday America, but have you ever thought about the gender roles in different cultures? This paper will define different terms to help you better understand gender roles, look into the family aspect of gender roles, and looking into different cultures and how they are different from ours. Sometimes it is hard to understand exactly what is meant by the term "gender", and how it differs from the closely related term "sex". "Sex" refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women.

While "gender" refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes a given society considers appropriate for men and women (WHO, 2011). To put it another way, "male" and "female" are sex categories and "masculine" and "feminine" are gender categories. Aspects of sex will not vary substantially between different human societies, while aspects of gender may vary greatly. Sex characteristics are very different from gender characteristics. Some examples of sex characteristics; women menstruate while men do not, men have testicles while women do not, men generally have more massive bones than women do.

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Now, some examples of gender characteristics; in the United States women generally earn less money than men, in Saudi Arabia men are allowed to drive while women are not (WHO, 2011). Can you tell the difference now? Your sex does not determine what gender you are. The way they are determined in the family setting can be drastically different depending on which family structure you belong in. There are four essential types of family structures. The first is the nuclear family that can be defined as a family consisting of a mother, father, and their biological or adoptive descendants, often called the traditional family.

The second structure is the single parent. The single parent structure consists of the mother or the father and the child and/or children. The third type of structure is the extended family, which is two or more adults from unlike generations of a family, who share a household. The fourth and final structure is the childless family. The childless family is a group of people from all variety of backgrounds and all lifestyles who, for whatever reason, have never had children (Shelton, 2010). Depending on the family structure you grew up in, it could have long-term effects on your gender role attitude.

In the single-parent structure, the parent has to fulfill both gender roles in the family. Research has confirmed that people raised by single parents tend to be more androgynous, as well as more mature and independent (Schenck, 2009). They learn from seeing their parent take on both roles. In the extended family, there are many generations of a family living under the same roof. In an extended family, there are many advantages, such as the big support structure. The big support structure has a strong influence in many facets of life (economic, social, emotional, and psychological).

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Talcott Parsons goes into detail with the nuclear family structure and the types of gender roles that can play out. In 1955, Talcott Parsons developed a model of the nuclear family. It compared a strictly traditional view of gender roles (from an industrial-age American perspective) to a more liberal view (Discovery Media, 2011). The Parsons model is used to contrast and illustrate extreme positions on gender roles. Model A describes total separation of male and female roles, while Model B describes the complete dissolution of gender roles (Skolnick, 1995).