

# Understanding Gender and Gender Roles

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Study guide – concise, organized, and easy to read

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### 1. Core Concepts

| Term                      | Definition                                                                                                           | Key Points                                                               |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sex                       | Biological attributes (chromosomes, hormones, anatomy).                                                              | Usually classified as male, female, intersex.                            |
| Gender                    | Socially constructed identity, roles, expectations, and behaviors associated with being male, female, or non?binary. | Fluid, culturally variable, can differ from biological sex.              |
| Gender Identity           | An individual’s internal sense of self as man, woman, both, neither, or somewhere along the spectrum.                | Expressed through pronouns, self?descriptions, and personal narratives.  |
| Gender Expression         | External presentation of gender (clothing, hairstyle, voice, mannerisms).                                            | May align with or differ from gender identity and societal expectations. |
| Gender Role               | Set of social norms dictating “appropriate” behavior, tasks, and responsibilities for a given gender.                | Historically rooted, but increasingly contested and renegotiated.        |
| Cisgender                 | Gender identity matches the sex assigned at birth.                                                                   | Most common classification in many societies.                            |
| Transgender               | Gender identity differs from the sex assigned at birth.                                                              | Includes trans men, trans women, non?binary, gender?fluid, etc.          |
| Non?binary / Gender?queer | Identities that fall outside the male?female binary.                                                                 | May use pronouns such as they/them, ze/hir, etc.                         |
| Intersectionality         | How gender interacts with other social categories (race, class, sexuality, ability, etc.) to shape experiences.      | Highlights layered forms of privilege and oppression.                    |

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## 2. Historical Overview

| Era                                        | Dominant View of Gender                               | Typical Roles                                                                        |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pre-industrial societies                   | Gender tied to reproductive and labor divisions.      | Men: hunting, warfare, leadership;<br>Women: child-rearing, food preparation, craft. |
| Industrial Revolution (18th–19th c.)       | Public sphere = male; private sphere = female.        | Men worked in factories/offices; women confined to home.                             |
| Early 20th c. (suffrage & labor movements) | Emerging challenges to fixed roles.                   | Women entered workforce, fought for voting rights.                                   |
| Post-World War II (1940s–60s)              | Re-emphasis on traditional nuclear family.            | “Breadwinner” men, “homemaker” women.                                                |
| Second-wave feminism (1960s–80s)           | Gender as a social construct; critique of patriarchy. | Push for equal pay, reproductive rights, broader career options.                     |
| Late 20th c.–present                       | Growing recognition of gender diversity.              | Legal protections for LGBTQ+ people; non-binary visibility; fluid role expectations. |

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## 3. How Gender Roles Are Formed

### 1. Family Socialization

- Parents model gendered behavior (e.g., toys, chores).
- Reinforcement through praise, restriction, or punishment.

### 2. Education System

- Curriculum content, teacher expectations, and peer groups shape norms.
- Tracking into “male-dominant” (STEM) vs. “female-dominant” (arts, caregiving) subjects.

### 3. Media & Popular Culture

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- Advertising, TV, movies, music, and social media portray idealized gender scripts.
- Repetition of stereotypes (e.g., men as strong, women as nurturing).

## 4. \*\*Religion & Tradition