

Appendix 1: AP Human Geography Topic III.B.4. Cultural Differences in Attitudes Towards Gender

Biological sex is not the same as gender. A person is born male or female (or intersex in a small percentage of the population), but gender roles are shaped by societal and historical norms. Cultures have traditional views on what it means to be masculine or feminine that are reinforced by society as a child grows. In the United States, certain toys are marketed, for example, to just boys or just girls. High schools often offer sports for women that they don't offer for men, and vice versa. Media outlets often produce programming that reinforces gender stereotypes, such as car shows for men and cooking shows for women. Even though gender boundaries can and are crossed, they are still exist.

Over time, cultural attitudes about gender can change. For example, in the United States, it was culturally unusual for a woman to become a physician in the nineteenth century and in fact, most medical schools in the United States would not even admit a woman for classes. Now, nearly half of all medical school students are women and female physicians are commonplace. As culture changes so does attitudes on gender roles.

Geographically, because there are cultural patterns on the Earth's surface, there are also corresponding patterns of differing views on gender. In some regions, equality between men and women is championed and legally protected. In other areas, the rights and activities of women are legally restricted. For example, in Saudi Arabia, women are prohibited from driving. This may end in 2015 with a change in the law to allow women over 30 to drive as long as they wear no makeup and are off the road by 8:00. Even when not codified in law, cultural attitudes about gender roles can lead to less schooling for women, less participation in the labor force, and less political representation.

While typically women have less equality than men in the world today, in some regions of the world, women have more power than men. For example, among the Mosuo (or Na) people of China, women have absolute authority over their households, property is passed along matrilineal lines, and children take their mother's name.

While most societies in the world recognize two genders, male and female, there are some cultures that recognize other gender identities. For example, in India, a 2014 Supreme Court ruling recognized transgendered *hijras* as a third category of gender and gave them minority status for affirmative action programs. Discrimination towards hijras, however, is very common, indicating that recognition as a gender does not equate to universal societal acceptance.