

Chapter 3:

A Woman's Worth

PERSONAL CONNECTION

In your notebook, do you believe there is gender equality in the USA? Around the World? If not, what do you think are the most important issues facing women today?

Introduction

Women. This one word raises a string of thoughts, opinions and emotions. With half the human population composed of women, everyone knows and has a vital connection to at least one woman. Women play the most vital role in the survival of the human species, a role even the best science cannot replace. And yet, all around the world, the treatment of women differs greatly from men. In the core countries, women are paid less for the same jobs, are restricted in job opportunities, are controlled by media's constantly changing portrayal of "ideal female beauty," and are fought over for control/rights to their bodies. In the periphery of the periphery, women are bought and sold as property, living under such restrictive boundaries that it calls into question if their society considers women to even be human.

This chapter explores the question: *What is a woman's worth?*

The Givers of Life

The story of women is tied to fertility. Females carry the blessing and burden of the continuation of humanity. Fertility is written in their DNA and shapes the female experience, from cradle to grave.

Childhood. The first decade of life shows little sign of difference between boys and girls. At birth, it is quite common for a stranger to say, "That is a LOVELY... I'm sorry, is it a boy or a girl?" Brothers and sisters run, jump, play, sing, dance, scream, cry, pretend, dream... They are equal in strength, equal speed, and equal intellect (actually, some scientists say girls develop communication and complex thinking sooner than boys, but that is for another course). While parents and society may treat boys and girls differently, there is relatively little that biologically distinguishes their experience.





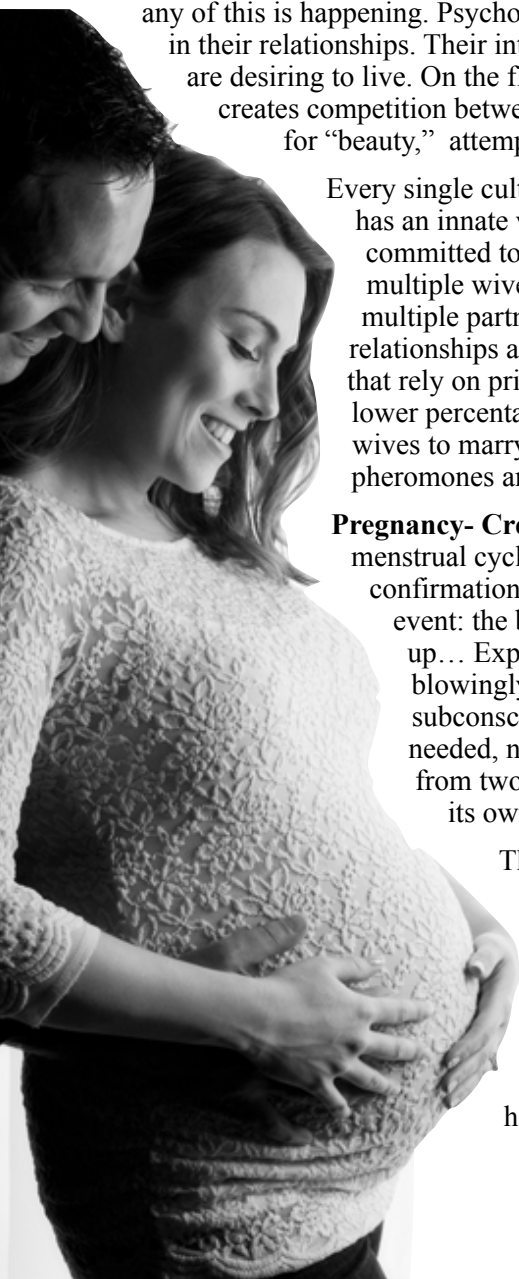
Adolescence and Puberty. The first signs of a girl's fertility usually appear between 9-13 years old. Cramps, bloating, headaches, moodiness, fatigue. Blood. Every woman has the story of their first menstrual period. It is a time of great vulnerability, both physically and emotionally. As menstruation begins its monthly cycle of preparing the body for fertility, other body changes accompany it. Hip width, chest size, hair location, body fat composition all begin to evolve; leaving a visible distinction between brothers and sisters.

Romance and Marriage. As a girl moves towards womanhood, her interests shift. Added into the mixture of other emotions are romantic interests (statistically, in boys), although at this point the boys are still generally clueless that any of this is happening. Psychological studies show that women seek emotional, physical, and financial security in their relationships. Their interests tend to be attracted towards a partner that will help create a lifestyle they are desiring to live. On the flip side, women seek to become "beautiful" to attract potential partners. This creates competition between females who share similar interests, as they chase the standards society has set for "beauty," attempting to ensure the greatest number of interested mate options to choose from.

Every single culture in the history of humanity has "invented" some form of marriage. Humanity has an innate wiring towards a monogamous relationship, where two people are exclusively committed to each other. Some societies have polygamous relationships where one man has multiple wives, or open polyamorous relationships where each partner is open to have multiple partners. However, statistically, the vast majority of humans choose monogamous relationships around the world. Polygamous societies are predominantly centered in rural areas that rely on primary sector jobs and have a low life expectancy for males. In societies with a lower percentage of males, they consider it the duty of men who can financially support multiple wives to marry multiple wives. Once a committed partner has been found and secured, pheromones and biology move the couple towards the next phase - parenthood.

Pregnancy- Creating Life. A little nausea. A lot of fatigue. Craving for strange food... a missed menstrual cycle and two pink lines now appear on the pregnancy test instead of one, providing confirmation to her suspicions: pregnancy. Every society has a phrase to commemorate this event: the bun is in the oven... In the family way... The bacon is in the drawer... Knocked up... Expecting. The female body begins to do perform an act that is absolutely, mind-blowingly incredible: create life. This process requires zero thought, happening subconsciously 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for around 40 weeks. No education is needed, no manuals, no extra training. The complex molecular process of "life" growing from two microscopic cells to an incredible multi-system functioning baby takes place on its own within the woman's body.

This is yet another vulnerable time for a woman as her life is radically being altered. Her body is changing. Her dietary and sleep needs are changing. The further along the pregnancy develops, the more inward-focused her thoughts become. She has to be careful what she is eating, what activities she is taking part in, and who she is around. Every action is weighted and evaluated against the impact it will have on the life growing inside of her. She becomes overjoyed in every little kick, while becoming anxious and concerned in periods of stillness. For some women, it is a fairly casual process, with little change happening in their life and lifestyle until the late stages of the pregnancy. For other



women, every step of the way is a hardship; requiring bed rest, struggling to keep food inside their body, needing medicine to keep their blood pressure and blood sugars in check. As time gets closer to 40 weeks, new hormones are released into the body, causing the Mom-to-be to start “nesting.” There is a nearly uncontrollable desire to get everything “ready” for the new baby: cleaning, rearranging, clothing... Everything must be just right.

Then, it happens. As with the rest of the pregnancy, the delivery of the baby happens of its own accord. The mother’s mind becomes consumed with one and only one task: deliver the baby. The female body can safely deliver a baby on its own, with zero assistance (although at least a little support from other people is typically desired). A woman can even be unconscious, and her body will still safely deliver the baby - it is what the system was wired to do. This is not to say that there are no complications. Around 85% of pregnancies are safe, normal, and healthy. Another 10-13% have some level of mother-or-baby complications. Finally, 1-2% of pregnancies have severe complications that could threaten the life of mother and baby. If the situation is mishandled, there could also be a variety of risks. It is a powerful, moving event that leaves the women and the surrounding society changed forever. History will never be the same. Life has been created. A new human has been born.



Having completed her life-creating work, a woman’s body goes through a 6-8 week recovery phase. It is a time where the mother must be very careful. The post-pregnancy period consists of heavy bleeding. Too much activity or stress and the mother’s life can be put at risk. Most women ideally need a level of community support in being cared for as she begins to care for the new baby.

Motherhood. The woman’s body naturally begins to change roles from the life creator to the life sustainer. The baby begins a 9-14 week phase referred to as the fourth trimester. Human babies are born absolutely helpless compared to other mammal babies, only able to cry and feed through sucking. Babies need intensive amounts of care provided for them, being constantly held or fed until their bodies develop the ability to move, self-feed, and better communicate. The mother’s body begins to produce milk specifically for the needs of her baby. Through breastfeeding, the baby receives all the nutrients it needs. The mother’s body changes the composition of the milk based on the changes in the baby; signaled through the baby’s saliva while feeding. The mother’s milk also shares the mother’s immunity with the baby, protecting it from disease. Breastfeeding also benefits the mother by serving as a natural contraceptive and weight loss plan. It is the undisputed best nourishment for infants.

As the baby develops into a toddler, new questions arise: Who will watch the child? Feed the child? Cloth the child? Teach the child? Having underdeveloped brains, children need near constant supervision and maintenance for at least for the first 10-15 years of their life (and some for longer than that as the brain does not fully develop until 23). These are questions the parent(s) have to juggle, along with how to provide food and shelter, pay for the bills, and protect from danger. This does not include questions about each partner’s career aspirations, work life balance, life goals, and professional dreams they would like to accomplish in the larger society. And then, about 1-3 years after the child is born comes the most mind-boggling question in humanity:

“Is it time to have the next one?”



The History of Women

The story of women has changed over time and across space. The treatment of women will be examined across four historical eras.

In the Beginning... The societal role and value of women traces back to foundations of existence, back to the first humans to live. While there are great disagreements as to what happened at the beginning, every religion and science theory have agreed there was a beginning. While there are disagreements between societies about what finally brought humanity into existence, everyone agrees that there are males and females, and that they are distinctly different beings. With that said, how a society chooses to view the “creation” of women has a disproportionate impact on how women will be treated. Here are three creation stories, from three continents describing their view on how women were “created”:

Ancient Greece. The Titan Prometheus was once assigned the task of creating the race of man. He afterwards grew displeased with the mean lot imposed on [men] by the gods and so stole fire from heaven. Zeus was angered and commanded Hephaestus and the other gods create the first woman Pandora, endowing her with beauty and cunning. He then had her delivered to Prometheus’s foolish younger brother Epimetheus as a bride. Zeus gave Pandora a storage jar as a wedding gift which she opened, releasing the swarm of evil spirits trapped within. These would forever after plague mankind. Only Hope remained behind, a single blessing to ease mankind’s suffering.

Pandora’s daughter Pyrrha (Fire) was the first child born of a mortal mother. She and her husband Deukalion were the sole survivors of the Great Deluge. To repopulate the earth they were instructed to cast stones over their shoulder which formed a new race of men and women.

Inuit. Time was, there were no people on earth. The first man still lay inside the pea pod. Four days passed, and on the fifth day, he pushed with his feet. He broke through the bottom of the pod and fell to the ground. When he got up, he had become a grown man. He looked at everything and himself, his arms and legs, his hands; felt his neck. The pod that had held him still hung on the vine with a hole in its bottom. The grown man walked a little away from the pod where he had started. The ground under him felt as if it were moving, too. It was not firm, but soft...

“You will get lonely if you stay by yourself,” Raven said to Man. “So I will make somebody for you.” Raven went off a ways, where he could view Man but where Man couldn’t be sure what he was doing. There, off a ways, he made a figure out of clay much like Man’s, although different. He fastened watercress on the back of its head for hair. When the figure had dried in the palm of his hand, he waved his wings several times. It came to life. It was a lovely woman. She got up, grew up, and stood beside Man. “That is your helper and your mate,” said Raven. “She is very pretty,” said Man, and he was happy. Raven went on doing what he needed to do. And Man and Woman had a child. Soon, there were many, many people and animals. All that was living grew and thrived.

Australian. The Father of All Spirits said to the Sun Mother, “Mother, I have work for you. Go down to the Earth and awake the sleeping spirits. Give them forms.” ... The Sun Mother looked down upon the Earth and thought to herself that she must create new creatures lest the Father of All Spirits be angered by what she now saw. She gave birth to two gods: the Morning Star (male) and the Moon (female). Two children were born to the Morning Star and Moon, and these she sent to Earth. They became our [human] ancestors.

While these are just a few of the hundreds of known creation stories, they give us a glimpse into the mindset of societies towards women. A few items to pay attention to: (1) Who comes first? Societies give special honors to the gender that is born first, considering them to be special or deserving of leadership. In stories where the man came first, the society developed into a patriarchy - where the men held key leadership positions in the family and government. The vast majority of creation stories have the men arriving first. In the stories where a woman was made first, or a female goddess was responsible for the creation of the earth, women held the key roles in family and society. The Iroquois and Mosuo tribes developed into matriarchies - where the women are the leaders. (2) The woman’s role is beauty and birthing. In these stories, soon after creation came the woman’s procreation, defining the key role of women as being mothers. There are many stories where the female goddess is responsible for the creation process dying in childbirth - foreshadowing the multitude of women who would die giving birth. (3) The presence of evil. Not every society specifically mentions the origins of wrong doing. Those that do often tie the responsibility of evil to the actions of women. In the Greek story, Pandora was created and her curiosity brought all the evil into the world. In the Jewish and Islamic versions, the woman Eve led humanity towards evil. In the Australian story, the female goddess does a poor job with her task of making animal spirits, and they fight and bicker. In these societies,

the character qualities of women are put into question, that they could not be trusted. The Greek and Arabic societies used this as a justification to require the perpetual supervision of women by men, or to deny women positions of leadership like in the Jewish/Christian culture. (4) Silence. In many creation stories, women are never heard from again. The Inuit, Korean and Chinese accounts never mention the woman except in relationship to child birth.

As early societies developed, they possessed a strong sense of religious zeal. These creation stories heavily influenced the shape and form their social mindsets would develop into regarding gender. The most prominent ancient societies had origin stories where men were the protagonist, or a male deity was the most powerful figure. In these societies, men became the god-ordained leaders, the rulers of earth. In some cases, the men thought they were the living image of the god(s) or had physically become living gods. Meanwhile, the women were to be beautiful, silent, and second - giving birth and being kept from causing trouble.

Hunter-Gathers. No matter how long a person views the age of the earth and humanity, the vast majority of human existence was spent hunting and gathering - a daily quest for survival. In these tribal societies, everyone had an equal role to play. They shared all food, all objects, and all responsibilities. The goal was a shared survival. For women, this was a time of equality with males, as their contributions of gathering and life-giving was considered essential to the goal of survival.

Female fertility was viewed as the sustaining force of life in the tribe. With life expectancy being between 30-35 years of age, girls became “adults” once they hit puberty. Upon reaching child-bearing age, they would become married and begin having children. This resulted in one child every 2-3 years. As the tribe was always in a mobile quest for food, being pregnant too frequently or having too many young children that required being carried was a risk to society. If a woman became pregnant again before the most recent child could be self-functioning, or if the new baby was considered “too weak to survive,” they left the infant in the woods; placed in the “fate of the gods.” This was rarely an issue, as the infant and child mortality rates ranged between 40-60% (depending on the source of research). The early humans valued female fertility to such an extent that many of the goddesses in early religion were devoted to fertility, childbearing, and child rearing. Many women had 8-10 children during their lifetime. While child birthing itself was relatively safe, after so many pregnancies, each pregnancy increases the risk to the mother’s life. It was common for women to die in childbirth, as there was no medical aid to assist with even basic complications or infections.



Roles of marriage were different in these hunting and gathering tribes, from what is customary to Western societies. Since tribes were made up of family members, it was not uncommon for marriages to take place with other family members (cousins or siblings). In some tribes, the parents arranged marriages. In others, they would have rituals where the eligible women would dance and then men would take the bride that most interested them. Some tribes allowed romantic experimentation beginning as early as 8 years old, with couples becoming more exclusive by 12-13; giving a woman a greater level of choice in her monogamous mate. Other tribes had camps that were divided in half, the male side and the female side. “Couples” would find time to sneak off to be together, but they would not stay together. Children would be born and grow up on the female side of the camp, and once boys were old enough, they would ritually kidnap their woman to the men's side. Some regions with higher populations would have trading posts or common religious sites where tribes would meet and exchange girls as brides. This was customary as a means of building good faith between neighboring groups: I will not attack you as long as my daughter is with you. Some tribes in South America had policies that a person had to marry someone that spoke a different language than them which, without scientifically realizing it, kept the gene pool fresh.

With the tribe always being on the move, fertility shaped the other roles women played. Due to the nature of bleeding related to menstruation, and without the female hygiene products of today, it was a risk to have women wandering out too far from camp sites. Thus, women did not spend as much time hunting; that was considered the men's job. Since there was no artificial infant formula and most did not have access to any animal's milk, young mothers were the only source of food available for babies. This meant that their daily job consisted of caring for the children by keeping them fed and alive. This evolved into women having the role of making the clothes, cooking, basket weaving, and general maintenance around the camp. Finally, women had the responsibility of gathering food from the surrounding areas. While hunters were glorified for their adventure, bravery, and meat, it was the women's gathering that made up 60-90% of the tribe's daily food; comprising nuts, berries and leaves.

While hunters and gatherers did not live a glamorous life, women were valued as relatively equal members. Their roles as fertile mothers and as food foragers was considered essential to the survival of everyone in the tribe.

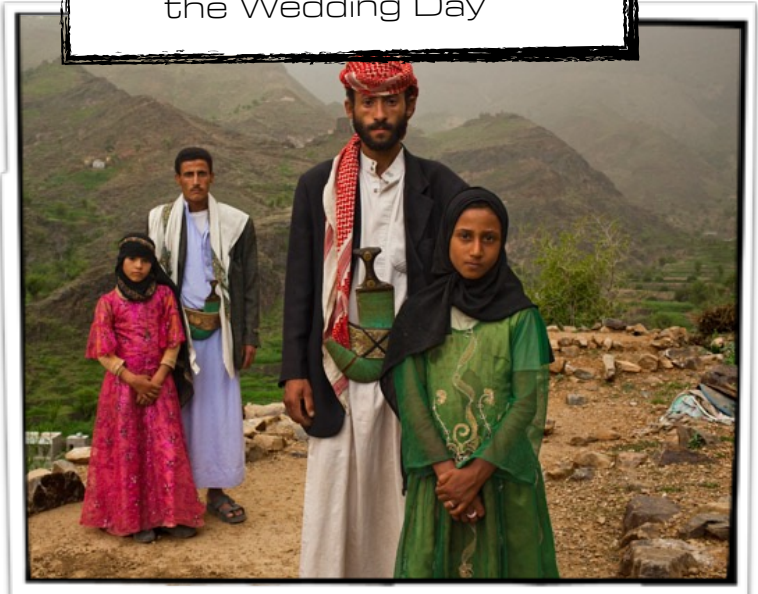
Agricultural Revolution. As humanity settled down to farm, the social structure of society radically changed. At the core of the agricultural revolution is the concept of "mine." This is my land, my farm, my food, my workers, my tools, my water, my seed... Because all land was not equal in its growing potential, control and protection of property was critical to the health, wealth, and security of the family. For men, their role changed as they became the owners and workers of the land. As food began to grow in abundance, it freed men to pursue other careers away from the farm: pottery, carpentry, blacksmiths, musicians, weavers, physicians, priests and government officials. Soon, the ranks of government were filled by rich men from successful farms. The less successful farmers became paid workers, servants or slaves to the rich and powerful men. They tied power and prestige to possession of the fertile land. The family ownership of the fertile land was linked directly to fertility; with land possession being passed down to the oldest son(s).



As the role of men changed, and as the nature of society evolved into an agrarian model, the role of women evolved as well. While farming life eventually provided a more stable food source, it also created certain problems. The farm needed male workers. The military needed male soldiers to protect the land. The man of the house needed a son to pass his inheritance onto. People, especially infants, had an increase in the Crude Death Rate (CDR) from animal-born illnesses.

All these demographic burdens fell squarely on to the wombs of the women. Girls were married off between 8-13 with the clear intention of birthing as many children as possible. It was a typical practice for girls to be married off at 5 years old to be taught how to keep the house of her husband, with the relationship being consummated at the start of puberty. With a stable house and food supply, it was not uncommon for a woman to have 10-15 children in her lifetime, at the rate of one every 18 months... if she didn't die from birth complications or disease. Since there were

8 & 10 year old Girls on the Wedding Day



still no modern hygienic conveniences, women's lives were centered on the home: cooking, cleaning, sewing, mending, gathering water, etc. They would perform basic farming tasks that could be done by hand that, while still productive, were not considered as valuable as the male's contribution. Because fertility cycles tied women to their houses, they could produce little monetary value in the male-dominated marketplaces. This further decreased the perception of their worth.



Men's obsession with land and power developed into paranoia and fear over the women's fertility. "What if my wife has a child... and it's not mine? What if another man or another family could claim my land?" Men became jealously protective of their wealth, property, and possessions. The Greeks, Romans, and certain Arabic populations viewed a woman's sexuality as something that could not be tamed or controlled. They restricted what women were allowed to wear, assuming that any clothes showing a wrist or an ankle might tempt a man to lead his woman astray. These societies would not let women out of the house, unless under the protective care of the husband or a male relative. They feared that women were so easily seduced that any interaction with another male could lead to reproduction. This fear was so great in Roman societies that when a baby was born, the wife would place the baby at the husband's feet. The husband would then decide if he would accept the child as his own. This would be an intense moment in the house, as a rejection of the baby was also an accusation that his wife was unfaithful, leading to the killing of both the wife and child.

In many parts of Africa and the Middle East, females undergo female circumcision, also known as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Out of fear that a woman's desire could grow out of control, especially if her husband was off to war or on business, the external parts of the female genitalia would be cut off and the vaginal opening sown shut. FGM would be performed upon the girls around 11 years of age, becoming a requirement for a girl's family to be able to find her a spouse (If she refused, she would be labeled as a prostitute; and banished from her father's house and the larger community). FGM would ensure to the prospective husband that the bride-to-be was a virgin upon marriage, and that her desire for physical pleasure had been removed from her to keep her faithful.

Women became undervalued to the point that girls were bought, sold, and wasted like expendable commodities. In some societies, they would kill girls at birth; a practice called infanticide. It became a family disgrace to give birth to a baby girl. Girls would grow up being viewed as just another mouth to feed until she could become a bride. A girl's marriage was a business transaction requiring the bride's family to pay the groom to take the girl off of their hands. The woman should not be looking for love, but instead be glad she had a man to protect and provide for her, while she attempted to perform the one duty that would bring respect and honor: producing sons. The parents hoped to arrange a marriage to a rich husband to improve the family's financial standing and position in society. Royalty used women in trade deals to broker friendships between powerful families. Men could marry multiple women; with the size of his harem demonstrating his wealth and power. Men could divorce their wife(s) for any reason: for not bearing a son, for not keeping the house organized, poor cooking skills, or losing her beauty.



The Bride price paid by the family of the girl.

These views limited the rights and opportunities for women and eventually became enshrined into law and reinforced by religions. A woman could not take part in government. They could not own property. Women had limited or no legal rights. A woman's testimony was not acceptable in the court of law. Women were not even allowed to press charges for rape or abuse. Many cultures did not allow women to file for divorce no matter how she was being neglected or abused. The "rejected" women of society from poor families, or those who had been divorced, had to return to their father's house. If their family would no longer accept them, the women were sold into slavery or sent to the streets homeless. This was especially true if they had lost their virginity since no respectable man would marry a non-virgin woman. Many women turned to prostitution, selling their affections to rich men, having it as their only opportunity of earning a bite to eat.

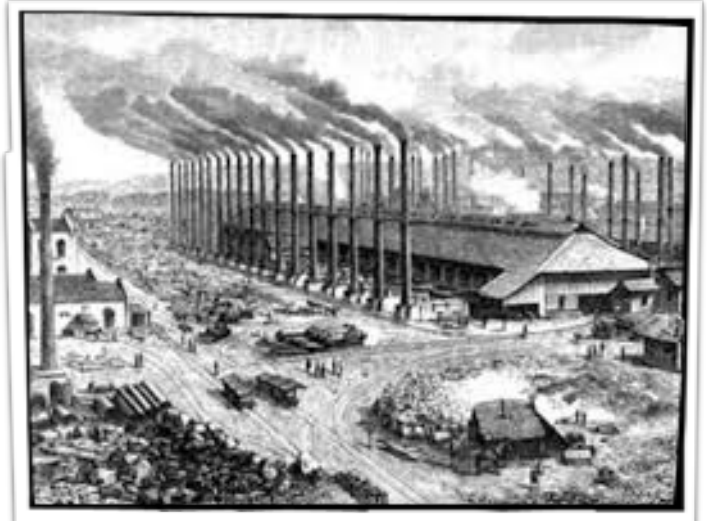
As women aged, their value to society plummeted. In India, if the husband died, the wife was expected to perform Sati. Sati was an Indian custom to cremate dead bodies, and it was the oldest son's duty to light the funeral fire. Sati is a ritual where the widow was expected to throw herself onto her husband's funeral fire; being burned alive and entering eternity with him. Performing Sati would gain the widow's instant recognition as a saint worthy to be worshiped by the town. Failure to perform Sati would result in the widow being rejected by her family and the community, to be left alone to suffer as an extra mouth to feed, and as a burden to society. Many societies had a crisis of having an abundance of homeless widows, left to fend for themselves as their families and communities rejected them.

From the cradle to the grave, the agricultural revolution oversaw the rapid deterioration of the worth of women.

Industrial Revolution-to-Modern. With the Industrial Revolution came the dawn of a new era for women. Industrialized societies witnessed small family farms getting merged into mega-farms run by machines and multinational corporations. Families were broke, having lost everything. This caused a flood of workers to migrate to urban areas in search of new factory jobs; giving birth to industrial cities. Since the initial factory work centered on textiles and clothing, they viewed these jobs as an opportunity for women to become employed to earn money for the family.

Women had long worked with textiles and were considered to have more dextrous fingers than men, making them ideal for the jobs. Also, the lower social status of women allowed businesses to pay women significantly less than male workers for the same work. While a meager wage, women were finally able to financially contribute to their families. For some, this brought an increase in respect at home and in society. For others, it bought a level of freedom from the patriarchy of the agricultural societies. Women could now support themselves financially, no longer requiring men to meet all their basic needs.

Between 1800-1950s, women became an increasingly larger percentage of the work force, gradually earning the right to control their own life: when they worked, where they lived, who they married, and when to start a family. Governments in industrialized societies increased the legal status of women, including the right to divorce and the right to vote.



Machines and scientific advancements provided women freedom from traditional female roles. Female hygiene products like pads and tampons allowed women the freedom to move about, with little concern to the day or time of the month. By the 1950s, appliances were creating further freedoms. Dishwashers, washing machines, and vacuums replaced women's efforts in the housework (although it did drastically increase the expectation of what it meant to have a clean house...) Stoves and microwaves reduced the amount of time invested into preparing family meals. Family planning and contraceptives allowed a woman the chance, for the first time in history, to control her own fertility - choosing when to have a child and how many children she wished to have. Baby formula gave women an alternative to breastfeeding; allowing the responsibility for caring for infants to be shared with a spouse, family member, or day care. Medicines and certain vaccines, along with more sanitary living conditions, reduced the infant mortality rate; placing less of a burden on women to have as many children. Female children transformed from being a family curse to a source of joy and blessing, a source of hope in her potential as a person and not just as a mother.



With these new-found freedoms, women began to take the world by storm by investing themselves in education, government, and the workforce. Women became valuable contributors in higher education; attending college in large numbers as well as becoming professors. Women organized for political rights and equal standing under the law while also running for positions of political power. As technology developed, the economy saw an increase in the tertiary and quaternary sector jobs. These jobs were intellectually dependent as opposed to muscularly dependent, granting greater opportunities for women. As a result of these actions, women could marry who they wanted to and divorce when they wanted. Women gained property rights - the ability to own land on their own without a male being on the title. Women were elected into positions of leadership, including being elected as president in major Western countries. Women have worked their way into every imaginable level of businesses; from grassroots entrepreneurs to being selected as CEOs within major multinational companies.

Angela Merkel
(Germany)



Sheikh Hasina
(Bangladesh)



Park Geun-Hye
(South Korea)



Dilma
Rousseff



Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf
(Liberia)



Indra Nooyi
(CEO-Pepsi)



Meg Whitman
(CEO-HP)



Mary
Barra



Ursula Burns
(CEO-Xerox)



Cristina
Fernandez
(Argentina)



Measuring Gender Equality & Empowerment

Even though life for women has generally improved over the past 150 years, we have not reached the point of universal gender equity. The development of a country has a direct impact on the treatment of its women. In certain areas of the world, women have achieved the greatest heights of business and political power; becoming CEOs and elected leaders of core countries. Other areas still treat women as property, not allowing them the freedom of expression or travel without a male family member. The UN developed an indicator to measure the quality of life for women: **The Gender Inequality Index (GII)**.

Gender Inequality Index (GII). The GII is a tool used to measure the inequalities between males and females across three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and economic status.

- **Reproductive Health:** This is composed of Maternal Mortality rates and Adolescent Birth rates. The Maternal Mortality rates give an indication of the quality of medical care that is specifically available to women while also reflecting the intentional use of resources towards women-specific medical practices. Adolescent birth rates - also known as teen pregnancy rates - show the level of control a female has over her own body. High Adolescent Birth Rates indicate young girls are giving birth to children earlier in their lives, either from a lack of contraceptives and education about sexual health or from social pressures to marry at a young age (child brides). Women who have children at a young age tend to have fewer educational opportunities and limited economic opportunities. Low Adolescent Birth rates show the availability of family planning to young girls and the opportunities available to them. Women who postpone pregnancy to an older age have greater educational and professional opportunities, almost equal to their male counterparts.



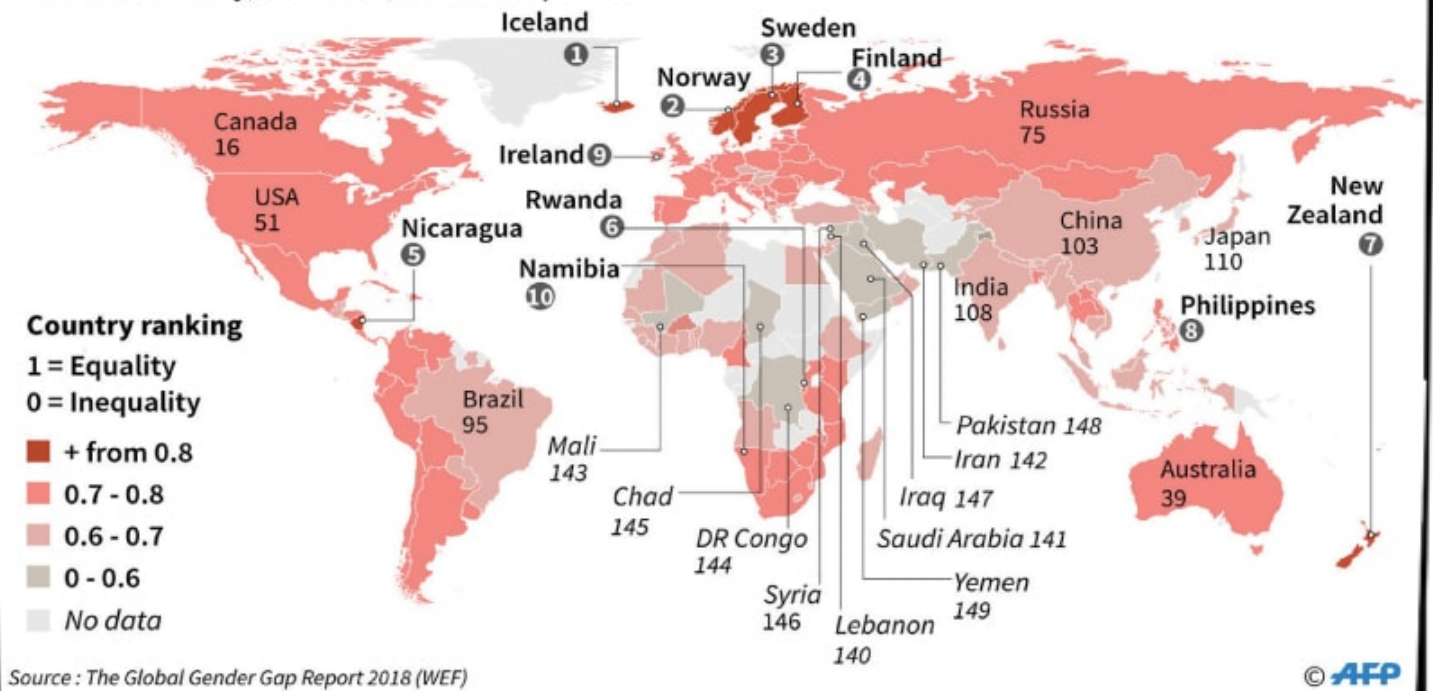
- **Empowerment.** The empowerment component of the GII compares the population who have achieved a secondary education and the elected official positions possessed by each gender. Education rates reflect how much a society values young women and what resources they have invested in their development. When male and female education rates are equitable, this indicates girl babies are being kept alive, nurtured, and intentionally invested in. Education is the gateway to jobs with a better income. If a society has more males with secondary education, that reflects a greater value of investing into the male children, laying the foundation for women to struggle to obtain careers with equal profitability.

The gender percentage of male and female politicians reflects the opportunities available for each gender to make social change. Women make up half the society, with a unique set of needs only other women truly understand. If women are uneducated and constantly engaged in child-rearing responsibilities, they will be unable to contribute to the social change and legal frameworks of a society. An all-male political body tends to be ignorant and unsympathetic to the needs of women causing policies, legal frameworks and judicial systems to be male-biased.

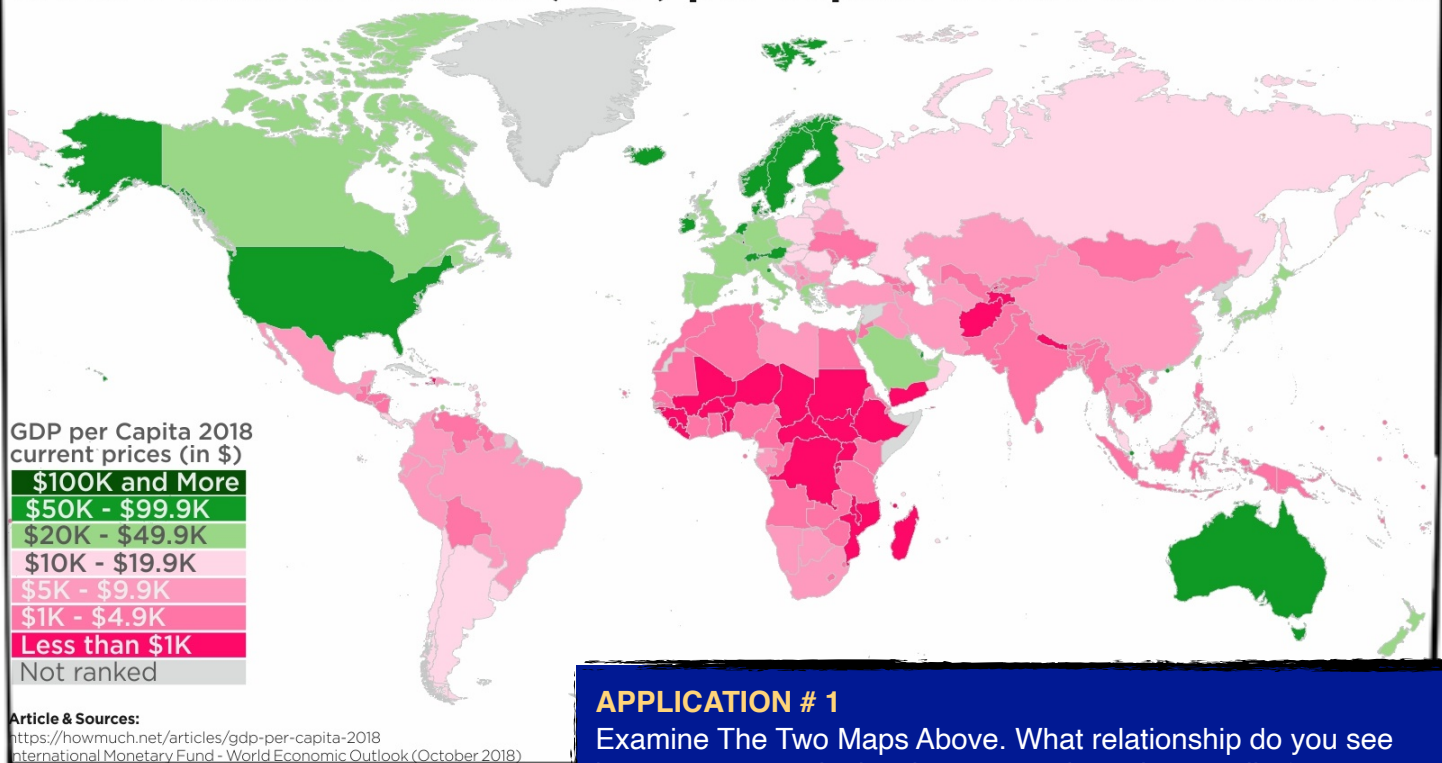
- **Economic Status.** The economic component of the GII compares male and female participation in the paid workforce, age 15 and above. In societies where women contribute to family incomes, they receive greater respect from their male companions, and the more control they can exert over their own lives: who they marry, when they marry, when they have kids, occupation, etc. When women have greater economic influence, there is a correlation to the level of political influence and justice under the law. Conversely, women face greater hardship, oppression, and other inequalities when they do not have equal access to employment opportunities. (See maps next page)

Gender equality ranked

The World Economic Forum measured gender inequality in 149 countries with an index based on 4 criteria: economy, education, health and politics



Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per Capita Around the World 2018



APPLICATION # 1

Examine The Two Maps Above. What relationship do you see between economic development and gender equality?