



Chapter 9:

Culture and Women



What will you learn?

- How does the status of women vary worldwide?
- How is the status of women related to specific cultural factors?
- How do individual countries and areas compare in regards to the status of women?
- How do marriage, family units, and communication impact the status of women?



Culture and Women

- **Sex:** more used to refer to the biological features based on chromosomal evidence that distinguish males from females
- **Gender:** more often used to refer to the learned behaviors and attitudes associated with the words *feminine* and *masculine*; considered socially constructed
- Antiquity to 18th century: no concept of gender, female body was considered a variation of male body; the distinction between sex and gender and the understanding that sex is fixed before gender are products of the modern era
- In the United States, children are aware of gender role differences by age of two (Witt, 1997)



Status of Women



United Nations studies

- **Human Development Index (HDI)**
 - created by United Nations Development Program as a measure of life expectancy at birth, educational attainment, and adjusted per capita income, showed in 1993 that no country treated women as well as it treated its men
 - Gender equality not dependent on income levels, with some developing countries having greater opportunities for women
 - Japan - world's highest HDI rating, 17th on female HDI scale; Sweden - 5th overall, 1st on female version (1993)
- **Gender-Related Development Index (GDI), Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)**
 - two new indices created in 1995 to unravel differences
 - GDI is still lower worldwide than HDI



Status of Women

United Nations studies

- **Gender Inequality Index (GII)**, the newest measure, introduced to better show differences in the status of women and men across countries, is a composite measure of 3 dimensions:
 - **Health** (maternal mortality ratio, adolescent fertility rate)
 - **Empowerment** (share of parliamentary seats held by each sex and secondary and higher education attainment levels)
 - **Labor** (participation in the workforce)
- **Findings of U.N. studies:**
 - Over the past decade reduction in gender inequality has been virtually universal, yet there remain significant gender gaps
 - Generally, gender inequality is highest in South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Arab states
 - United States ranked 3th in 2008



Status of Women

World Economic Forum study

- Independent of U.N., the World Economic Forum released its first annual report on world gender inequality in 2006 as well as subsequent updates
- The study is based on health, education, economic opportunity, and political participation measurements
- The report shows that empowering women means a more efficient use of a nation's human resources and that reducing gender inequality enhances productivity and economic growth
- Consistent with U.N. studies, the World Economic Forum study shows Nordic countries to have least gender inequality





Status of Women

World Economic Forum study: Health

- Examination of sex ratio at birth to measure infanticide and the gap between women's and men's life expectancy
- 96% of health gap between women & men has been closed
- Yet in developing nations maternal births are still frequent and fewer than half the births (in South Asia fewer than a third of births) are attended by any health personnel

- **Sex ratio at birth** – reliable indicator of sex discrimination
- Women internationally are victims of violence rooted in patriarchy (many countries have no laws of violence against women; female genital mutilation flourishes in many countries - belief that it prevents promiscuity among women)
- Women are victims of neglect, trafficking into prostitution, rape, incest, domestic violence, political torture



Status of Women

World Economic Forum study: Education

- 93% of education gap between women & men has been closed
- Nearly two-thirds of the illiterate people in the world are women, although there have been some great gains
- Enrollment in primary and secondary education
Developed nations – nearly universal
South America, the Caribbean, South Africa: 90%
Southeast & Eastern Asia, northern Africa: 70% girls, 80% boys
South Asia: 64% girls, 77 % boys
Sub-Saharan Africa: 47 % girls, 59 % boys
- In 1990, higher education enrollment for women was 70% of what it was for men; today: more women enroll in higher education than men in 32 countries



Status of Women

World Economic Forum study: Economics, Political Participation

- 60% of economic gap between women & men closed
- Women: 40% of global workforce, 70% of people in poverty
- On average, women make two-thirds the wages of men
- Women in managerial/administrative positions worldwide: 14%, 28% in industrial countries, 3% in sub-Saharan Africa
- 20% political participation gap between women & men closed
- In ancient Rome, women were not considered citizens
- Most countries had to protest for women to get right to vote
- Women's representation in parliaments worldwide: 13.1%; 32 countries have some sort of female quota for representation



Comparison of Individual Countries

Nordic Countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden)

- World Economic Forum: as a group the Nordic countries have closed over 80% of the gender gap
- Nordic countries rank high in femininity on Hofstede's dimension of masculinity versus femininity, and rank the lowest in gender inequality
- Nordic countries have a strong value for personal freedom and a long tradition of egalitarianism
- Since the mid-1970s, political parties have instituted quotas for female representation
- Gender equality and women's empowerment are national policies





Comparison of Individual Countries

Mexico

- Mexico ranks sixth highest in masculinity on Hofstede's dimension of masculinity versus femininity, and fairly low in gender inequality
- Literacy rates: 86% women, 87% men; participation to labor market: 46.3% women, 84.6% men; women's participation in parliament: 36% (quotas established)
- In 2003, parliament adopted law to protect the right of women to own land and to protect women's access to information about reproductive health
- 2007: President Felipe Calderón - despite antidiscrimination laws, millions of women suffer from workplace discrimination and physical and psychological abuse and violence due to Mexico's enduring "culture of machismo" (due to traditions of revolutionary family, Roman Catholicism)





Comparison of Individual Countries

China

- Not included in the original Hofstede studies
- Ranks 35th on Gender Inequality Index, ranks high in economic participation and opportunity for women
- Culture values family above individual and boys above girls
- Improved status of women was state initiated, but barriers such as Confucian traditions still remain
- One-child policy has improved conditions but has greater cultural and social impacts
- Human trafficking is a major concern as China is a source, transit, and destination country for women and children trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation





Comparison of Individual Countries

Japan

- Hofstede placed Japan highest in masculinity
- Ranks 21st on Gender Inequality Index
- Unlike China, Japan ranks extremely high on women's health
- Postwar Constitution of 1947 clearly stipulated equality under law and excluded discrimination on the basis of sex
- High schooling and literacy rates, decline in marriage rate, trend of smaller families
- Within home, women control household income and family life
- More women work, but are tracked to lower paying jobs
- Changing roles of women; breaking down gender roles





Comparison of Individual Countries

South Korea

- Based on Hofstede's scale, considered a masculine society
- Ranks 27th on Gender Inequality Index, and like Japan, South Korea ranks high on women's health
- Family law is male dominated, and wives can be driven from the house if they do not produce a healthy son
- Most Confucian-based discrimination against women in the nation's laws has been eliminated in recent years; however, in some ways Korea is still a **patriarchal society**





Comparison of Individual Countries

India

- Rankings similar to South Korea's
- Literacy rates: 47.8% women, 73.4% men; participation to labor market: 35% women, 85% men; women's participation in parliament: 10.9% (quotas established)
- The number of working women has increased in recent decades, but violence against women has increased as well
- Similar to China, India has a history of female infanticide; 50 million girls "missing" over the past century
- A few Indian women have obtained high positions in politics (e.g. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi) and business (e.g. PepsiCo CEO Indra Nooyi)

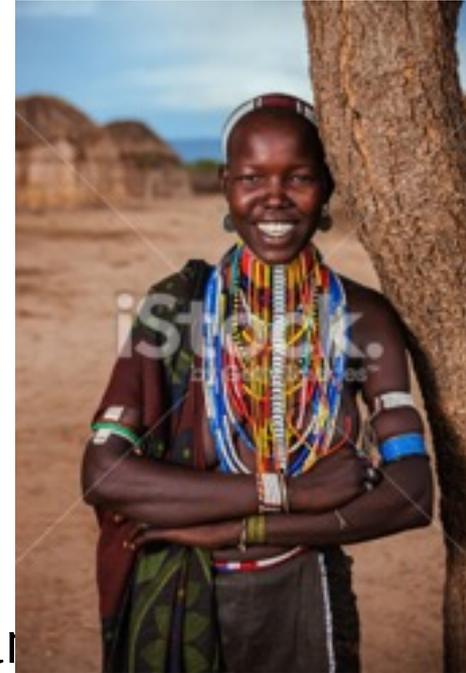




Comparison of Individual Countries

Sub-Saharan Africa

- Largely patriarchal societies
- In the Democratic Republic of Congo, 1,152 women are raped every day (Peterman, Palermo, & Bredenkamp, 2011)
- Women have fared better in countries where there was participation in campaigns against colonialism, white minority rule, or authoritarian regimes (e.g. Uganda)
- Every year 265,000 mothers and 4.4 million children, including 1.2 million newborns, die in sub-Saharan Africa; ½ of world's maternal, newborn, and child deaths from pregnancy and childbirth complications, newborn illnesses, childhood infections, malnutrition, and HIV/AIDS





Comparison of Individual Countries

Arab States

- Pre-Islamic Arabia: girls having little value; Islam gave women rights in marriage, divorce, ownership, business, and inheritance
- Actual practices have not met Islam's ideal; patriarchal society based on cultural traditions, social considerations, and contested interpretations of the Qur'an
- Legally, a Muslim man can have four wives at once, but a woman can marry only one man; strict disciplining of women is openly encouraged; divorce is discouraged, but marriage can be terminated by mutual consent, judicial ruling on the wife's request, or repudiation by the husband
- Saudi Arabia: 58% of women college students, but only 14% of women in the labor force; women can't drive cars





Culture and Women

Marriage

- Cultures regulate how many spouses a person can have, which partner has more authority and dominance in the union, and from what group a person can choose
- Criteria for selecting marriage partners: mutual love, kindness, emotional stability, intelligence, and health were universally desired, but others varied by cultural dimensions
- In Western countries, marriage as an institution has waned
- In China, with economic reforms and increasing Western influence, divorce rates have soared
- In the industrialized world, only in the Nordic countries is the poverty rate below 10% for one-parent families
- With more women moving into the workforce, the parents' role in preparing children for adulthood is diminishing



Culture and Women

Family Units

- The organization in which the majority of human beings continue to exist
- Women's role in family unit has relationship to cultural values
 - Nuclear family:** One married pair + their unmarried offspring
 - Extended family:** Two or more nuclear families joined by an extension of the parent-child relationship
 - Exogamy:** practice of marrying outside a defined group
 - Endogamy:** practice of marrying within a defined group
- Todd (1985) developed the following family typology:

Exogamous community family	Endogamous community family
Asymmetrical community family	Authoritarian family
Absolute nuclear family	Egalitarian nuclear family
Anomie family	



Culture and Women

Communication

- Women and men may literally speak different languages
 - In Zulu, women and men use different words for the same thing
 - In Japanese, word endings using *wa* are for female speakers and word endings using *na* are for male speakers
 - Chinese Nushu language created and propagated by women for women
- Anthropologists have shown that women share some common communication behaviors across cultures
 - Ritual laments (e.g. over the loss of a loved one)
 - Girls are more likely to hear twice as many diminutives—words like *kitty* or *dolly* in place of *cat* or *doll*



Let's Discuss!

- What possible explanations can be given for why the Nordic countries have the least distinctions between women and men?
- Describe the ways in which China's one-child campaign changes the culture
- Project the future status of women in the Arab states
- In what ways does improving women's social, economic, and political opportunities enhance society at large?