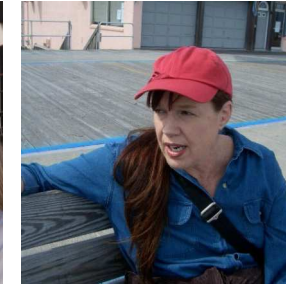
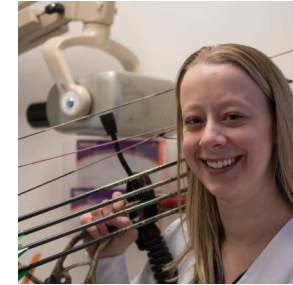
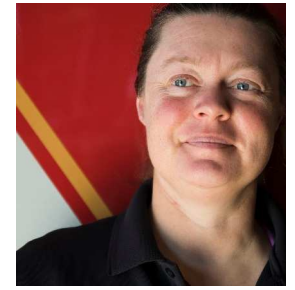




# Portraits of Empowerment: Women's Wellbeing



A Photo Essay Book  
by  
Drs. Susan Schaefer









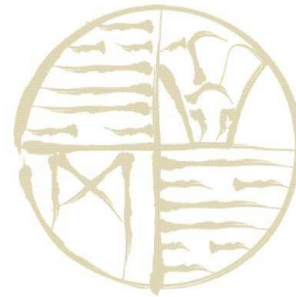


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A Photo  
Essay Book  
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Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA



*This book is dedicated to the many women who have supported me with fierce compassion and sparkling wisdom through my peaks and valleys as I stumbled and soared. You have challenged me to exceed my grasp while staying human.*

*You each seem so fearless and free yet there's the story beneath. You are mothers, sisters, daughters, wives, partners, cousins, aunts, friends and colleagues - all full participants in this game of life. You encircle my heart, rock my body, and light my soul. You know who you are. Thank you.*

*My special gratitude to Kathy, who has a capacity and courage that sometimes dazzle.*



All humans are drawn to images of the human face – and to stories. We are hardwired for this.

In *Portraits of Empowerment: Women's Wellbeing* I employ this human desire for verbal and visual storytelling, putting a face on the issue of gender parity.

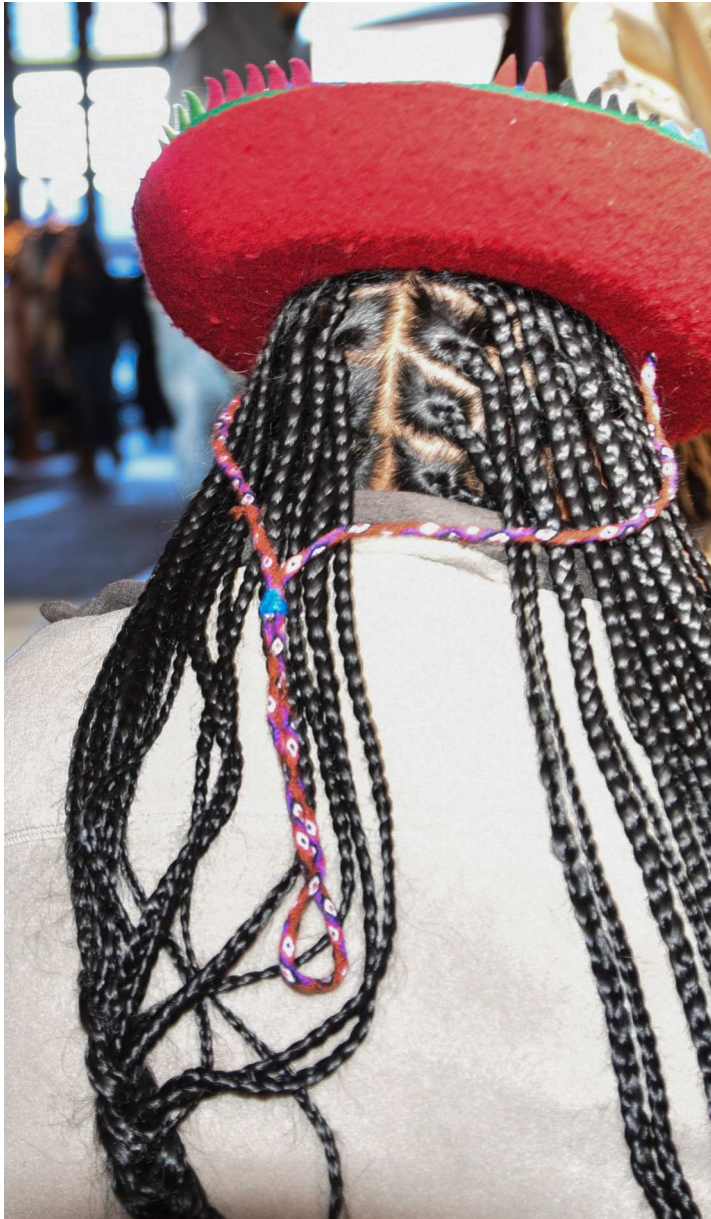
Using words and images, I illuminate the multi-facets of women striving for authentic wellbeing in their livelihood, home and play that come from equality, equity and empowerment in a male dominated world.

Parity not domination.

Susan Schaefer ©2016

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Equality is not a women's issue – it is a societal one.

When women do better, all of society is lifted. The renowned author, Riane Eisler, has long posited the concept of global *gender holism* – a world where gender partnership, full and equal access of power and influence between and among the sexes is the norm. Alas, society remains far from achieving such parity.

The overall objective of gender equality is a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, rights and obligations in all spheres of life. Equality between men and women exists when both sexes are able to share equally in the distribution of power and influence.

*What impacts a woman's sense of wellbeing?*

This volume of words and images examines what makes women feel empowered .

The project is an exercise of both process and outcome. The very act of being witnessed by photography and essay honors and validates each woman's distinctive core.







What is at stake? Her future.

Despite progress, women continue to confront discrimination, marginalization and exclusion, even though equality between men and women stands as a universal international precept—a fundamental and inviolable human right.





# Sobering Statistics

- More people have been lifted out of poverty in the last 50 years than in the previous 500; yet more than 1.2 billion still subsist on less than \$1 per day. According to some estimates, women represent 70% of the world's poor.
- The most common form of violence experienced by women globally is physical violence inflicted by an intimate partner. On average, at least 6 out of 10 women are beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused by an intimate partner in the course of their lifetime.
- It is estimated that, worldwide, 1 in 5 women will become a victim of rape or attempted rape in her lifetime.
- The International Fund for Agriculture and Development (IFAD) reports that in the developing world, the percentage of land owned by women is less than 2%.
- According to U.S. Government-sponsored research completed in 2006, approximately 800,000 people are trafficked across national borders annually. Approximately 80% of transnational trafficking victims are women and girls and up to 50% are minors.
- An estimated 72% of the world's 33 million refugees are women and children.
- Every minute somewhere in the world a woman dies due to complications during pregnancy and childbirth







# Women's Empowerment Principles

## **Gender equality**

According to principles developed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and widely accepted worldwide, **gender equality** describes the concept that all human beings, both women and men, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles, or prejudices.

It does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but that the different behaviors, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favored equally, that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born female or male.

## **Gender equity**

means that women and men are treated fairly according to their respective needs - equal treatment or treatment that is different but considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities.

## **Empowerment**

means that people - both women and men – can take control over their lives: set their own agendas, gain skills, or have their own skills and knowledge recognized, increase self-confidence, solve problems, and develop self-reliance. Empowerment is both a process and an outcome. It generally creates a sense of wellbeing.



# Stories: Words and Images



## Kathy Tait, Marketing Leader, Architecture & Engineering Firm

I grew up with gender inequity. I work in a very male dominated industry. All of my life I've resonated well with men. I get along very well with men, often more so than with women. I work well because I'm not an overly dominant female. I work well through questions, by not trying to dominate the conversation.

What I do well is ask a lot of questions, I'm very strategic, I'm very good at summarizing the ideas; and I've risen through the ranks, whether that's by title, or responsibility, or influence, it's because of my skill sets.

The impact of being a woman in this industry is a double-edged sword. I've never been comfortable about using my femininity for power. I've watched girls get stupid when boys come in the room and get all giggly. I've seen a number of women succeed with that power play. I try to play as genuine to who I am as I can.

I like doing things that I like to do. I like working with people who are passionate about what they do. It's not about making the most money, it's about solving the issues, solving the problems.

I like bringing a different perspective to the table, one that makes people see an issue differently and respond differently.

I find a great deal of satisfaction from the influence of my ideas.

I love the ideation process. One of the reasons I love working with creative people is the banter back and forth of how are we going to do what we need to do. This is a team effort. If I don't have the respect of my peers, I don't play well. I self select individuals, or they do me, who can play well together in the same sandbox. It's a large enough organization where I can do that. I have a say. I have my job responsibilities and I do those but I won't do the extra if I don't feel valued. And I don't know who would, male or female, young or old.

## FIELD GOAL



## REALIZING

the vision of a campus master plan



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CLARKSON UNIVERSITY









## Phyllis Kahn

### Minnesota State Representative

Entering politics in 1972 when women were mostly relegated to the roles of wife and mother Phyllis Kahn had already experienced gender bias head on.

“Oh yes, there are more than a few incidents of pure gender discrimination in my journey. Early on, while applying for grad school a male interviewer told me there was no hope for me – that I should just go home and be a housewife. Later, after I’d proved him wrong, I still had to use the name of a male colleague in order to apply for a prestigious grant in my field of science.”

Kahn won that grant earning her doctorate in the male dominated field of biophysics from Yale University and a Master of Public Health from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. And, yes, Phyllis Kahn was a wife and mother of two!

A St. Catherine student, Alexandra Kerlin, sat with Kahn at Wilde Roast Café in St. Anthony Main to learn more about her long career in public service and her views on science, technology, public health and women’s rights.

Kerlin questioned Kahn about how young women could make a difference in society.

“First of all,” she advised, “never be afraid to be involved. Don’t be relegated to the back of the room and *always* encourage other women. We need to support each other.”

But, Kahn added, for women to raise the bar they must also create strong coalitions across the board.

“I learned early in my legislative career how to form strong alliances with my fellow legislators, male and female, Democrat and Republican. One piece of legislation of which I’m very proud was forged with Republican Keith Downey. Together we hammered out a law to revamp the State’s antiquated computer systems, thereby facilitating more open, transparent and accessible communications for elected officials, staffers and citizens alike. This kind of lawmaking can only happen when you forge solid working relationships across the aisle and the gender divide.”







## Becca Schanche

### Hairstylist

I do feel we have a gender equity issue in society. My current place of employment does not have an issue, even though the industry does. The beauty industry is a female driven career, though men tend to be the leaders, role models, and educators for the industry. There are women in these positions as well, but predominantly men.

In my workplace I'm in charge of how successful I want to be. It gives me the sense of empowerment, since I control how and when I receive promotions/raises. I also feel empowered raising my kids. It's important that I pass along the inspiration that they too can control their endeavors. I can only hope that as they grow they receive the respect they deserve, regardless of their gender.















## Rosa Thompson-Vieira

### Cellist

I absolutely think there is a gender equality and equity issue in our society today. I am lucky enough to have grown up in a community of people who are aware of these issues and actively promote equality, however the discrimination is still very much alive.

I am a cellist and I have been in the music world since I was a small child. I went to the University of Minnesota for cello performance and I currently teach lessons and play gigs around town. The classical music world has come a long way. In what used to be a completely male dominated field, there are now generally just as many female performers in any given orchestra.

Performers have the argument that music is a universal language and emotion. There is no advantage to being male or female. However, the administrative world and conductors for example, are still male dominated.

The one area where I have witnessed the most inequality is the teacher student dynamic. It used to be completely normal for male teachers to take advantage of their female students. Unfortunately I have witnessed this first hand and have seen the issue with others as well. The problem with the music world specifically, is that it is based on tradition. The music we still play today is from hundreds of years ago, and we work so hard to perform it the way it was performed hundreds of years ago. People in this field are very much opposed to change, therefor making the gender issue hard to change as well.

In a field where gender equity issues still exist, this field is also where I feel most empowered. I feel empowered because it is my passion, and I am choosing to do what I love. I feel empowered talking about the issues that happened to me and spreading awareness. I feel empowered that I can share my love of music with others, and that I worked hard enough at it to now make a living from it. I feel empowered when I teach, because for so many years I was a student sitting in front of a teacher, and finally now I can be the teacher. Most importantly I am doing what matters most to me and not for anyone else.





## Sarah Rasmussen

### Artistic Director, Theater

Rasmussen has a self-proclaimed goal for great inclusivity and diversity in her new theatrical tenure. Her brilliant debut staging of Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona* featured an all female cast indicating she can deliver on her promise.

"I feel particularly fortunate to present 'Two Gents' with an all female cast at the same time Guerrilla Girls have made the Twin Cities their focal point to introduce the ongoing disparity in gender representation in the arts."

"It truly seems ironic that such a gap exists in our field, a creative field, which you imagine is populated with progressive people. To understand the problem you can take a simple view and say that men have been in charge."

But now there are new realities that can govern how theater adapts to the changing demographics of both audience and participants.

Rasmussen references Maureen Dowd's New York Times article about Hollywood female executives and filmmakers where sexism is so rampant that a federal lawsuit is in the works. The article highlights what *Girls'* creator Lena Dunham calls a dark loop, and Rasmussen states the quote almost verbatim: "If female directors don't have experience, they can't get hired, and if they can't get hired, they can't get experience."

It's time for the paradigm to change and Rasmussen believes the way to change is for women and people of color to speak up and speak out, and she is very optimistic that overall inclusivity is on a fast track, at least here.

Rasmussen and her administration have made welcome changes that provide more access to wider audiences.















## Damaris Hollingsworth

### Architect, Higher Education

I believe that there is a gender equity issue in our society based on my personal experience and substantial data. As co-chair for the AIA MN Women in Architecture Committee we discuss this issue often.

In my profession women and men enter the profession at about the same rate – men at 52% and women at 48% - but as the path toward leadership and the C-suite progresses, the rate for women drops drastically.

In the architectural profession one of the biases against women is highly connected with the long hours culture. It is assumed that women, after becoming a mom, will not be as committed to work and as reliable and therefore, women are no longer seen as a potential senior leader or executive leader.

At my current work place, seeing women in senior leadership that has the same age as me empowers me. It shows me that DLR Group does not look at age and gender when promoting and showing appreciation for its leaders.

Eating healthy and doing extraneous exercise including bootcamp and long distance races empowers me. This shows me that there is no limit for what I can achieve. In this specific context the only barrier I have to overcome is my own mind.

Something else that empowers me is to keep fresh in my mind where I started or where I came from socially. It reminds me once again that though things may get difficult, determination and passion pays off.







## Kelly O'Connell

### Licensed Dental Assistant

I do think that we have a gender equity issue, maybe not so much in my field of work but in other environments.

As a avid archery hunter I frequently feel like I am not taken seriously because I am a woman.

My work gives me a sense of purpose and makes me feel empowered because it allows me to contribute to my family.

I have worked hard and achieved a career that I'm proud of. I feel that this makes me a strong role model for my daughter's. I hope to help guide my daughters to do whatever it is they are passionate about regardless of gender and regardless of what others may think.









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