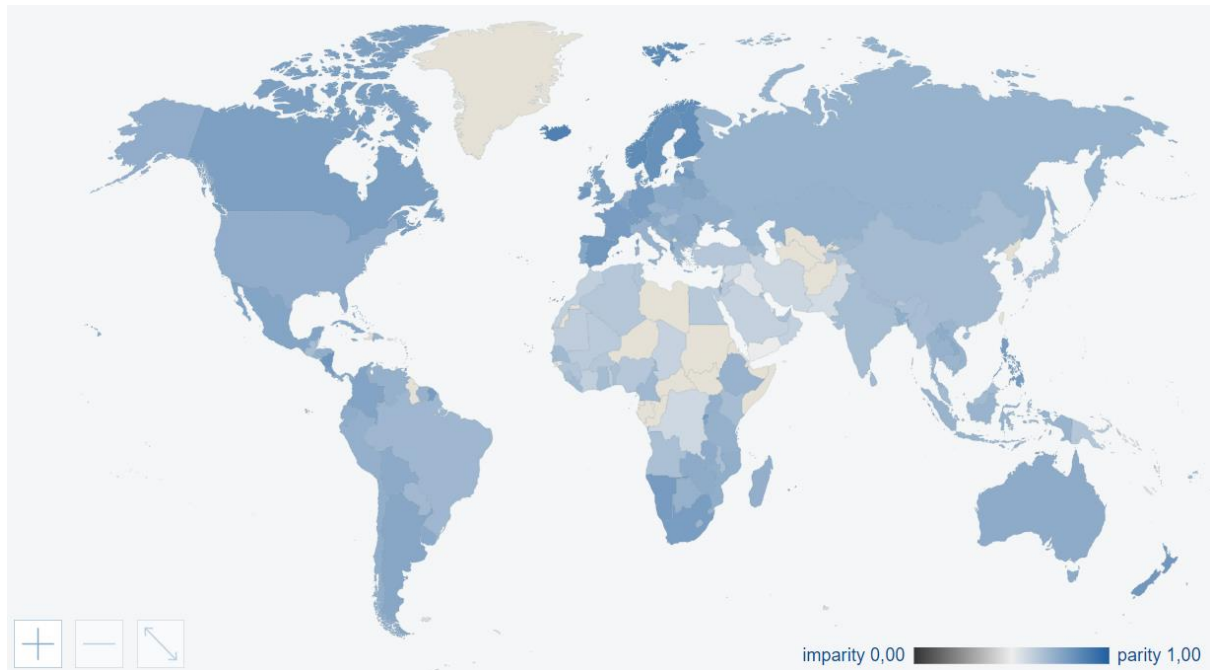


Problematising a universalist approach to measuring gender (in)equality worldwide



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Chapter 1. Introduction

Roughly a hundred years ago women gained voting rights throughout most Western countries. After that breakthrough, many others followed. Women living in Europe and North America can now do so many things that were unheard of a hundred years ago; they can keep their jobs without being fired when they get married or pregnant, they can marry whoever and whenever they want, they can file for a divorce, they can own and inherit, they can run for office, they can go to college, they can practice any kinds of sports casually or on a professional level, they can wear pants, they can serve in the military, they can use birth control and do so many more things that were unthinkable in the past.¹ Women's emancipation movements fought hard to achieve these rights, both on a legal level to change the system, and on a social level in order to create acceptance of the new legal equality. Still, feminists are far from done. Nowadays women's emancipation movements in Western countries focus on issues such as the gender pay gap, slutshaming and abortion rights. They might also aim for issues that are not purely about advancing women, but about LGBT+ acceptance or situations that disadvantage men because of their gender, because that is feminism too.

Women's emancipation does not only take place in Western parts of the world, but elsewhere it often follows a very different path. The rights that Western women can take for granted these days, may only be partially present in other countries, or not at all. Many women worldwide are still not allowed to vote, to decide who to marry, to even drive a car, or do so many other things, purely because they were born in a female body. Below are a few examples of gender inequality captured in numbers, but this list is far from complete.

- One in three women worldwide becomes a victim of gender-based violence, making it a bigger cause of disabilities and deaths than malaria, cancer, and war.²
- At this moment around 650 million girls and women worldwide were married before they were eighteen years old.³
- 75% of the 876 million illiterate adults are women, due to a lack of education.⁴

¹ School of Feminism (2019) *Thank a Feminist If...* <https://www.schooloffeminism.org/8m> visited on [23-06-2019].

² Oxfam Novib (2018) *Killer facts on gender equality*. <https://www.oxfam.org.nz/what-we-do/issues/gender-equality/killer-facts> visited on [25-06-2019].

³ Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform (2018) *Progress of Goal 5 in 2018*. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg5> visited on [25-06-2019].

⁴ Oxfam Novib (2018) *Killer facts on gender equality*. <https://www.oxfam.org.nz/what-we-do/issues/gender-equality/killer-facts> visited on [25-06-2019].

- On average, women spend three times as many hours on unpaid domestic and care work, compared to men.⁵
- On a yearly basis approximately 300.000 women die from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth, creating a maternal mortality rate that in certain parts of Africa is as high as 1 in 16.⁶

These numbers show some of the human rights violations women undergo because of their gender. Human rights violations are contraventions of the UN International Bill of Rights, and its supporting treaties. That alone could be a reason to promote gender equality, but there are more reasons to do so. First of all, research shows that gender equality is a better indicator for peace than a countries' GDP or level of democracy.⁷ Gender equality is also beneficial for business. Using all the potential that women have to offer unlocks a huge workforce, which stimulates economies. Moreover, companies with a diverse workforce, especially in management positions,⁸ benefit due to the different perspectives diversity offers.⁹ Lastly, not only society benefits, but on a personal level it has been shown that equality creates better relationships and happier children.¹⁰

1.2. Definitions

In bettering the position of women, several terms can be used to describe the efforts and doctrines that play a role. The word *feminism* refers to the doctrine advocating equality between women and men when it comes to social, political, economic and all other rights. There are several sub doctrines with different ideas about what issues should get prioritized and how

⁵ Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform (2018) *Progress of Goal 5 in 2018*. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg5> visited on [25-06-2019].

⁶ Oxfam Novib (2018) *Killer facts on gender equality*. <https://www.oxfam.org.nz/what-we-do/issues/gender-equality/killer-facts> visited on [25-06-2019].

⁷ Women's International League for Peace & Freedom (2015) *Does Gender Equality Lead to Peace? Fact Sheet Building on the Global Study on 1325*. <https://www.peacewomen.org/resource/does-gender-equality-lead-peace-fact-sheet-building-global-study-1325> visited on [26-06-2019].

⁸ Dezső and Ross (2012) *Does Female Representation in Top Management Improve Firm Performance? A Panel Data Investigation*. Strategic Management Journal 33, no. 9, 1072-1089.

⁹ Hunt, Layton and Prince (2015) *Diversity Matters*. New York: McKinsey and Company.

¹⁰ Looze, Huijts, Stevens, Torsheim and Vollebergh (2018) *The Happiest Kids on Earth. Gender Equality and Adolescent Life Satisfaction in Europe and North America*. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, Vol.47(5),1073-1085.

these issues should be solved.¹¹ *Women's empowerment* and *women's emancipation* both refer to the process to achieve equality between the sexes, hereby focussing on women because they are in most cases the disadvantaged sex and most in need of advancement. *Women's rights movements* are organizations that work to achieve gender equality.

1.3. Prioritizing women's emancipation

The importance of women's emancipation has been noticed and promoted by many global organizations, like the United Nations. In 2015 the United Nations launched the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a project that replaced the Millennium Goals that ended in 2015.¹² There are seventeen SDGs that together should make the planet a better place by 2030. Eliminating poverty, hunger, inequality, but also improving sustainability and protecting animal life are part of the goals. 'Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women' is the fifth Goal on the list. Even though women play an important role in the other goals too,¹³ SDG5 has been presented specifically because gender inequality continues to hold back women, depriving them of basic rights and opportunities. This negatively affects societies and some of the other SDGs.¹⁴ The goal of SDG5 is split into several sub-goals that specify how gender equality and the empowerment of women should be achieved.¹⁵ Examples of these sub-goals are: all kinds of discrimination should stop, just as all kinds of violence against women. This includes human trafficking and sexual and other exploitation. Furthermore, harmful practices like forced marriages and genital mutilation need to be stopped. The governments should provide help with unpaid care and housework. Equal opportunities and participation in the political, economic, and public life should be ensured, just as universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare. Laws, innovative technology, and policies should support these goals.

¹¹ Maynard (1995) *Beyond the 'big three': the development of feminist theory into the 1990s*. *Women's History Review*. 4 (3): 259–281.

¹² Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform (2018) *Sustainable Development Goals*. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> visited on [24-06-2019].

¹³ Regionaal Informatiecentrum van de Verenigde Naties (2015) *SDG 5 - Bereik gendergelijkheid en empowerment voor alle vrouwen en meisjes*. <https://unric.org/nl/sdg-5> visited on [24-06-2019].

¹⁴ Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform (2018) *Sustainable Development Goal 5*. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg5> visited on [24-06-2019].

¹⁵ Regionaal Informatiecentrum van de Verenigde Naties (2015) *SDG 5 - Bereik gendergelijkheid en empowerment voor alle vrouwen en meisjes*. <https://unric.org/nl/sdg-5> visited on [24-06-2019].

Another initiative by the United Nations is UN Women, the “global champion for gender equality, working to develop and uphold standards and create an environment in which every woman and girl can exercise her human rights and live up to her full potential.”¹⁶ UN Women does this by supporting international political negotiations in order to promote equality of the sexes, and by providing expertise and support to UN Member States in order to implement gender equality friendly policies.¹⁷ Other organizations than the UN pay attention to the position of women as well. NGOs like Amnesty International¹⁸ and UNICEF¹⁹ have special programs for advancing the position of women, because they acknowledge that gender inequality affects society. These initiatives are just a few among many, but they show the current priority given to gender equality and women’s empowerment worldwide.

1.4. Measuring women’s emancipation

To measure gender equality and analyse the effect of the SDG5 and other programs that try to improve the position of women, several measuring tools have been developed over the years to be able to take a closer look at the gap between the genders. However, the tools are diverse and each one has its own challenges.

The United Nations itself developed the Global Development Index (GDI)²⁰ and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM).²¹ These tools were both introduced in 1995, to provide a gender-sensitive dimension to the Human Development Index (HDI),²² another UN tool that measures human development. The GDI measures gender-gaps in life expectancy, education, and income. The GEM focusses more on empowerment of women in political and economical aspects by measuring income and the presence of women in high-paying, professional and parliamentary positions. Both provide useful information but are limited by their narrow focus

¹⁶ UN Women (2020) *About us*. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us> visited on [18-10-2020].

¹⁷ UN Women (2020) *How we work*. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work> visited on [18-10-2020].

¹⁸ Amnesty International (2020) *Women’s rights*. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/discrimination/womens-rights/> visited on [18-10-2020].

¹⁹ Unicef (2020) *Gender equality*. <https://www.unicef.org/gender-equality> visited on [18-10-2020].

²⁰ United Nations Development Programme (2019) *Human Development Reports - Gender Development Index*. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-development-index-gdi> visited on [12-05-2020].

²¹ Charmes and Wieringa (2003) *Measuring Women's Empowerment: An Assessment of the Gender- Related Development Index and the Gender Empowerment Measure*. Journal of Human Development. November 2003;4(3):419-435.

²² United Nations Development Programme (2019) *Human Development Reports - Human Development Index*. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi> visited on [12-05-2020].

on incomes, jobs, education, and life expectancy. Moreover, they cannot be used separately from the HDI, which limits them even further. To remedy some of the shortcomings of the GDI and the GEM the United Nations Development Programme developed the Gender Inequality Index (GII) which focusses on three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and labour market participation.²³ With only three focal points the GII is still quite limited but its scope is worldwide, it is updated yearly, and it is an independent tool.²⁴

UNESCO developed a tool which solely focuses on education. This Gender Parity Index (GPI)²⁵ started in 1990 and measures the ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary, and tertiary education every year. Even with their narrow focus it is an interesting instrument that stands on itself, but the quantity of their data seems to diminish in the more recent years. Both in 2018 and 2019 fewer countries were measured than in the year before.

The Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) by the OECD Development Centre is a tool that measures “discrimination against women in social institutions across 180 countries”.²⁶ This means their focus is very different from the GDI, the GEM, and the GPI, providing a completely different view on gender inequality. The goal of aiming at the social aspect is uncovering underlying processes that create gender inequality. The SIGI intends to uncover such processes by analysing familial code, son preference, ownership rights, physical integrity, and civil liberties. The SIGI first appeared in 2009 and was updated in 2012, 2014 and 2018.²⁷ Its social point of view provides unique insights, but the SIGI is still limited, and the lack of yearly updates is a disadvantage as well.

²³ United Nations Development Programme (2021) *Human Development Reports – Gender Inequality Index*. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii> visited on [07-01-2021].

²⁴ United Nations Development Programme (2020) *Human Development Reports – Human Development Report 2020*. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2020-report> visited on [07-01-2021].

²⁵ The World Bank (2020) *School enrolment, primary (gross), gender parity index (GPI)*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ENR.PRIM.FM.ZS> visited on [14-05-2020].

²⁶ Social Institutions and Gender Index (2020) *What is SIGI?* <https://www.genderindex.org/> visited on [12-05-2020].

²⁷ Social Institutions and Gender Index (2020) *The SIGI*. <https://www.genderindex.org/sigi/> visited on [12-05-2020].

Indexes exclusively focussed on a part of the world exist as well, like the African Gender Equality Index of 2015.²⁸ However, since their scope is inherently limited, these indexes will not be discussed any further.

The tool that is most diverse in its topics, is updated every year and can be used independently from other tools is the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) by the World Economic Forum (WEF).²⁹ The GGGI measures gender equality - or the lack of it - in economy, education, health, and politics in almost every country worldwide. For every country scores between 0 and 1 are awarded, where 0 means that there is no equality at all and 1 is perfect equality between the sexes. The average number of all the criteria determines how well a country is underway in closing the gender gap, and it places a country on the ranking list where the countries that are closest to closing the gap end up high on the list, and countries that are far from closing the gap, end up at the bottom. In the yearly Global Gender Gap Report all the information is gathered and presented. This makes the Global Gender Gap Index one of the most complete and useful tools currently available in measuring gender equality worldwide. Still, since the GGGI uses a limited, universalist approach to measuring gender (in)equality, it is not a perfect tool either.

Since the GGGI was created in 2006, the top 10 of the GGGI has been dominated by Western countries, meaning that the gender gap is the smallest there - according to the criteria set by the GGGI. Apparently Western countries do well for these criteria that the GGGI created. But are these criteria universally applicable? Or can feminism and women's emancipation mean different things in other, non-Western parts of the world? Are cultural factors of influence and if so, how?

This leads to the following research question:

What are the challenges of measuring gender (in)equality using a universalist approach?

²⁸ Africa Gender Equality Index 2015 (2015) *Empowering African Women: An Agenda for Action*. https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/African_Gender_Equality_Index_2015-EN.pdf visited on [07-01-2021].

²⁹ World Economic Forum (2020) *Mind the 100 year gap*. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/gender-gap-2020-report-100-years-pay-equality> visited on [11-05-2020].

1.5. Methodology

To answer this broader question, this study will focus on the GGGI to highlight some of the potential problems of approaching gender equality and its measurement from a universalist perspective. In addition, two case studies will be used to outline the challenges of applying a tool like the GGGI to different states. In determining which case studies would provide the best data to answer the main question, the GGGI itself was a helpful tool in deciding. The Western countries would probably not provide many new insights since the hypothesis is that the GGGI is Western-biased. Therefore, more diverse data can be gathered from non-Western countries, especially non-Western countries that are ranking high on the GGGI list, because that means that in those countries there must have been some improvements in gender equality in recent years, but it would be interesting to see what other views and issues might be present as well. Looking at countries at the bottom of the list was also an option because that would probably provide quite different views on the position of women in a society. However, a country at the bottom of the GGGI list is not doing well according to their standards, which makes the chance of finding other attempts at creating gender equality smaller. Therefore, it is better to look at countries that are performing well according to the standards set by the GGGI. Nicaragua³⁰ started in a 63rd place in 2006, but steadily rose throughout the years and entered the top 10 in 2012. When more countries were added, Nicaragua dropped out of the top 10 for a few years, but re-entered in 2016, and has not left it since then. Rwanda³¹ only joined the list in 2015 but immediately ranked high with a 6th place. It has remained in the top 10 ever since, going a few places up or down per year, with a 4th place as the highest notation in 2017. Using Rwanda and Nicaragua as case studies provides an opportunity to look beyond the view of Western feminism, which is often taken as the standard, and discover what feminism might mean in other parts of the world.

In researching whether these assumptions are correct, research will be conducted based on literature, using document analysis. The sources that will be used will consist of the GGGI data explorer, secondary sources, articles, and data from Rwandan and Nicaraguan governments, via their websites. The information will be analysed using a postcolonial feminist theoretical comparative case study.

³⁰ Global Gender Gap Report (2020) *Data Explorer – Nicaragua*. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2020/dataexplorer/#economy=NIC> visited on [19-05-2020].

³¹ Global Gender Gap Report (2020) *Data Explorer – Rwanda*. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2020/dataexplorer/#economy=RWA> visited on [19-05-2020].

1.6. The theoretical framework

Postcolonial feminism is a way of looking at the struggle for gender equality from a postcolonial perspective. This means that it aims to look beyond the experiences of women in Western cultures, that are often taken as the standard, and takes the political, economic, social, and cultural influences of the colonial past into account, which creates another level of inequality for some women that is easily overlooked when looking from a Western perspective. Both Rwanda and Nicaragua have been occupied by foreign countries and still experience consequences from these occupations. Nicaragua was conquered by the Spanish in the sixteenth century and gained independence in 1821, after which the United States of America tended to interfere in South America whenever they thought it would benefit their own position or purposes, making Nicaragua less independent than they expected, and wanted, even after 1821.³² Rwanda was claimed by Germany at the Scramble for Africa in 1884, but was reassigned to Belgium after the First World War and only gained independence in 1962.³³ In both the case of Nicaragua and the case of Rwanda the end of foreign rule did not mean that any harmful influence was suddenly gone too. Especially with Rwanda this has been very apparent in the internal conflicts that led to the Hutu-Tutsi genocide in 1994, but there have been and still are countless subtle and less subtle influences at play in both the former colonies, affecting the position of women as well. Postcolonial feminism strives towards decentring 'mainstream' feminism, which is deemed too white and Euro-American. This makes it a relevant framework to use in examining the GGGI and the challenges it faces worldwide.

1.7. Chapter outline of the rest of the thesis

The rest of the thesis consists of chapters 2 to 5, and the bibliography. Chapter 2 contains the literature review. A brief history of gender equality, the development of feminist theory and relevant scholarship on gender equality is provided here. It also provides an overview of the postcolonial feminist approach. Chapter 3 explains the GGGI and its structure, and further explains why this tool is the focus of this study. In chapter 4 the case studies are discussed, using the structure of the GGGI to map their feminist development, but going beyond that

³² Staten (2010) *The history of Nicaragua*. Santa Barbara, CA [etc.]: Greenwood. 13.

³³ Burnet (2012) *Genocide lives in us: women, memory, and silence in Rwanda*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 5.

structure to explore other aspects of female emancipation as well. Chapter 5 contains the critical analysis and the conclusion.

Chapter 2. Literature review

In this chapter a brief history of gender equality is provided to understand the background of the situations discussed in the rest of this study. This is followed by an overview of different feminist theories and their views on gender equality and women's empowerment.

2.1. A brief history of gender equality

Modern feminist movements started a little over two hundred years ago. Of course, there have always been women that did not want to conform to the paternalistic gender norms of their time and powerful women have played a role throughout history. However, modern women's emancipation movements have their roots in the post-WWI period. From this point onwards feminism in the so-called 'West' developed in waves. After the First World War there was a strong impulse that led to achieving legal rights like access to education, employment, and the right to vote in most Western countries.³⁴ The second wave came in the 1960s to counter the traditional household with dominant men that had emerged after the Second World War. This wave focused on financial and sexual freedom for women, but again happened almost exclusively in the West.³⁵ Some argue that a third wave emerged in the 1990s, others merely see it as a continuation of the second.³⁶ Either way new impulses emerged during the 1990s to make feminism more inclusive. This was mostly caused by the upcoming internet, which allowed worldwide communication and led to many new feminist sub-theories. When social media became popular this meant another twist for feminism and some see this as the start of a fourth wave, starting around 2010, although the opinions differ here too.³⁷ Social media and other modern technologies are widely used by feminists to create new forms of activism to fight old issues that persist and new issues like acceptance of everyone in the LGBT+ spectrum and increasing body positivity.³⁸

³⁴ Elshtain (1987) *Women and war*. New York: Basic Books. 4.

³⁵ Ampofo, Asa Adjei and Kyerewaa Brobbey (2015) *Feminisms and Acculturation around the Globe*. In Wright, J.D.'s International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences. Amsterdam: Elsevier. 905-911.

³⁶ Ampofo et al. (2015) 905-911.

³⁷ Munro (2013) *Feminism: A Fourth Wave?* Political insight, 2013, Vol.4(2). 22-25.

³⁸ Looft (2017) *#girlgaze: photography, fourth wave feminism, and social media advocacy*. Continuum, 02 November 2017, Vol.31(6). 892-902.

These general, feminist developments took place mainly in Western countries, and even the Western countries have their own variations, each with unique circumstances influencing the developments. When feminism already differs within a country, imagine the differences between countries and even continents. The First World War, which was an important impulse for feminism in the West, had an entirely different effect on the rest of the world and expressed itself in the shape of colonialism, wars, revolutions, distinct cultural practices, famine, disease, and more. As a result, other issues were often prioritized over women's emancipation, and understandably so. In a country at war, protesting to gain voting rights generally makes little sense; trying to survive has a higher priority. Consequently, feminism means very different things in different parts of the world and a plethora of varying ideas exist about gender equality and how to achieve that.

2.2. Feminist theory

Feminist theory within the study of International Relations (IR) is just under forty years old. Men have dominated the field of IR for many years, both in those who studied it, as in those who were studied. This dominion of men resulted in a lack of attention for the feminine side of IR. One of the first to address this issue was Cynthia Enloe in 1990, in her book 'Banana's, Beaches and Bases' in which she asked the big question: Where are the women?³⁹ Enloe demonstrates in her book, aided by a number of case studies, that women play a plethora of roles in the international relations that are often overlooked but are nonetheless important for the international system. Enloe's was one of the first studies to do so, hereby introducing a new, feminist way to look at IR. However, this was not a theoretical way of looking at the issue yet. The one who put theoretical feminist IR on the map was J. Ann Tickner with her book 'Gender in international relations' in 1993, in which she applied feminist perspectives to the phenomenon of international relations.⁴⁰ From this point onwards many other scholars added their ideas to the discourse and forever changed the study of IR. Feminist theory now mostly focuses on three points: gender inequality, how key issues in IR affect men and women differently, and issues within International Relations that mostly affect women and tend to be overlooked by mainstream IR research.

³⁹ Enloe (2000) *Bananas, beaches and bases: Making feminist sense of international politics* (Updated ed., with a new pref. ed.). Berkeley, Calif., [etc.]: University of California Press.

⁴⁰ Tickner (1992) *Gender in international relations: Feminist perspectives on achieving global security* (New directions in world politics 115115048). New York, N.Y., [etc.]: Columbia University Press.

There is a lot of debate about these issues, and feminist scholars disagree with each other, hereby creating new sub-theories within the overarching feminist theory. When it comes to the road towards gender equality - the aspect most relevant to this study - there are a few important sub theories that will be explained shortly below.

The most 'mainstream' form of feminist theoretical thinking is called liberal feminism. Liberal feminism argues that men and women are essentially the same because they both possess the same ability for reasoning, and should therefore be treated equally.⁴¹ It emphasizes the importance of women's choices and actions in creating equality, and dictates that equality should be established through political and legal means, adjustment of social conventions, and the way children are raised.⁴² Common critiques of liberal feminism are that it still wants to work within patriarchal structures like the current political systems, that it downplays gender differences, and that it does not take into account the fact that equal opportunities do not necessarily mean equal outcomes.⁴³ It also implies that equality looks the same everywhere, not taking into account the different feminist experiences worldwide.

One reaction to this last issue is Black Feminism, or Womanism, terms that emerged during the second feminist wave. Alice Walker wrote a series of essays, 'In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose' (1983), in which she offers the Womanist movement as an alternative for the narrowly defined feminism of those days that did not include experiences of women who were not white and middle-class.⁴⁴ Black feminism argues that there is a connection between gender and race when it comes to oppression.⁴⁵ It also states that there are plural, unique experiences that mainstream feminism does not address adequately, and that feminism needs to be culturally embedded to be effective.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Owlcation (2019) *Feminist Theory Explained*. <https://owlcation.com/social-sciences/Feminist-Theory> visited on [28-05-2020].

⁴² Research Matic (2011) *The Liberal Feminist Understanding Of Women's Inequality*. <https://www.researchomatic.com/The-Liberal-Feminist-Understanding-Of-Womens-Inequality-75633.html#buytopicstep> visited on [26-05-2020].

⁴³ Owlcation (2019) *Feminist Theory Explained*. <https://owlcation.com/social-sciences/Feminist-Theory> visited on [29-05-2020].

⁴⁴ Martin (2017) *Womanism*. In D. Miller (Ed.), *American Literature in Transition, 1980–1990* (American Literature in Transition, pp. 27-41). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781108234856.005

⁴⁵ Roth (2004) *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1.

⁴⁶ Owlcation (2019) *Feminist Theory Explained*. <https://owlcation.com/social-sciences/Feminist-Theory> visited on [28-05-2020].

Muslim feminism, or Islamic feminism, is another form of feminism that aims to look beyond the standard white, Western feminism.⁴⁷ Muslim feminists aim to show that feminism and the Islam are not necessarily contradictory, and that allowing a woman to choose how she practises her religion - in order to feel empowered or closer to God or simply because she wants to – can be a feminist action too.⁴⁸ It once again shows that liberal feminism is not suitable for everyone, but that a form of feminism that is adapted to a certain culture or religion can still be feminism, in the sense that it strives to improve the position of women.⁴⁹

Another reaction to the narrow focus of liberal feminism is postcolonial feminism. Instead of focussing on one group of women that does not fit in with mainstream feminism, like black feminism and Muslim feminism do, postcolonial feminism considers the legacies of colonialism on the position of women in the modern-day world, because the consequences of colonialism still continue to oppress people in different areas of the world.⁵⁰ These influences affect women in special ways that postcolonial feminism wants to address, understand and undo. Postcolonial feminist critique on liberal feminism has multiple aspects. One important critique is that the white, Western, Euro-American view on the rest of the world is distorted and fails to fully understand the nuances of power, politics, and money that each play their own role in oppressing and exploiting various people, nor does it see colonial tendencies like the white saviour complex that are still in place, affecting both world politics and the development of women. Postcolonial feminism also demands attention for the one-sided view on non-Western women. Chandra Talpade Mohanty called this the notion of a “singular ‘Third World woman’”, which is a way of generalizing all non-Western women as underdeveloped, poor, oppressed by traditions, religious fanaticism, and overpopulation.⁵¹ Women that meet these criteria do exist, but there is much more complexity to the lives of non-Western women and ignoring that gives a narrow and incomplete view. Not every woman in the “East” is a victim,

⁴⁷ Afshar (2008) *Can I see your hair? Choice, agency and attitudes: The dilemma of faith and feminism for Muslim women who cover*. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 31(2), 411-427.

⁴⁸ Aljazeera (2013) *The reality and future of Islamic feminism*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2013/3/28/the-reality-and-future-of-islamic-feminism> visited on [07-01-2021].

⁴⁹ Department of Political Science, Statsvetenskapliga institutionen, Göteborgs universitet, Gothenburg University, Samhällsvetenskapliga fakulteten, & Faculty of Social Sciences. (2020). *Explaining support for Muslim feminism in the Arab Middle East and North Africa*. *Gender & Society*, 34(3), 437-466.

⁵⁰ Medium (2018) *What is Postcolonial Feminism*. <https://medium.com/verve-up/what-is-postcolonial-feminism-de3391325407> visited on [25-05-2020].

⁵¹ Mohanty (2003) *Under Western Eyes*. Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28(2), 499-535.

helpless, and in desperate need of Euro-American civilizing forces.⁵² Another aspect of postcolonial feminism is in line with womanism and Muslim feminism, stating that mainstream feminism does not cover the experiences of all women.⁵³ Issues that are different from what white, Western women experience, are not automatically invalid or non-existent. The same is true for issues that are not easily visible within legal structures and official numbers, where liberal feminism puts an emphasis on. Feminist movements in non-Western countries may encounter unique challenges that deserve a priority over what liberal feminism dictates to need priority. For example, focussing on more equality in tertiary education when hardly any girl gets secondary education makes little sense. On the other hand, there are issues in non-Western parts of the world that do not exist and have never existed in Western countries, like female genital mutilation, Chinese foot binding or the Kayan tradition of creating giraffe necks by adding more and more metal rings around a woman's neck.⁵⁴ Postcolonial feminism therefore states that feminism in its totality should be inclusive to diverse global experiences that comprise worldwide womanhood and leaves room for other forms of feminism, stating that there is no universally equal oppression and that the road towards equality between the sexes takes on different forms everywhere.⁵⁵

2.3. Universal and particularistic rights

The idea that gender equality does not mean the same everywhere in the world is related to the debate between universal and particularistic rights. Those who favour universal rights believe that laws and regulations should be the same for everyone and must always be upheld by everyone. Those in favour of particularistic rights believe that laws and regulations can and should vary depending on context and situation. In the case of gender inequality this translates to a debate between universal rights that are the same for every country and culture, and rights

⁵² FEM (2017) *Feminism 101: What is Postcolonial Feminism?* <https://femmagazine.com/feminism-101-what-is-postcolonial-feminism/> visited on [26-05-2020].

⁵³ Tyagi (2014) *Understanding Postcolonial Feminism in relation with Postcolonial and Feminist Theories*. International Journal of Language and Linguistics Vol.1. No.2. 45-50

⁵⁴ Lapo, Pattawan, Inmutto, Nakarin, Tanaka, Hirofumi, & Suksom, Daroonwan (2019) *Cardiorespiratory burden of brass neck coils placed on Kayan Karen long-neck women of Thailand*. Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism, 44(8), 894-901.

⁵⁵ FEM (2017) *Feminism 101: What is Postcolonial Feminism?* <https://femmagazine.com/feminism-101-what-is-postcolonial-feminism/> visited on [26-05-2020].

that may be different depending on local traditions, cultures, and practices.⁵⁶ Both viewpoints have advantages and disadvantages. Universal rights theoretically mean that everyone is equal, but that is a utopian idea and in practice there are differences between people that might get overlooked by a discourse based on universality. Particularistic rights do take these differences into account, hereby including relevant but specific issues. The downside to particularistic rights is that harmful practices can be defended with the argument that they are part of a culture and therefore cannot be removed. Examples are forced and early marriage, domestic violence and honour killing. Postcolonial feminism is not in favour of practices that harm women, but it does want to create awareness for issues that might be overlooked by the current, dominant discourse that operates from a white, Western viewpoint.⁵⁷

2.4. Conclusion

Within feminist studies, not a lot of research has been done that looks specifically at the use of instruments that measure gender equality, such as the GGI. While there are many critical voices about gender equality, and even though they do not link their critiques to specific measuring instruments, their ideas can be applied to this research question. By using a case study approach, this study will be able to draw on empirical evidence to support the theoretical arguments made by other scholars. Insights from postcolonial feminism will be applied in the analysis.

⁵⁶ Lakatos (2018) *Thoughts on Universalism versus Cultural Relativism, with Special Attention to Women's Rights*. Pécs Journal of International and European Law – 2018/I. 6-25.

⁵⁷ Ting-Toomey (1999) *Communicating Across Cultures*. The Guilford Press.

Chapter 3. The Global Gender Gap Index

Before analysing the two case studies, it is important to first provide an overview of the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI), its origins, and the four broad criteria it uses in its assessment. The GGGI and its yearly Global Gender Gap Report are made by the World Economic Forum (WEF). The WEF is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1971 that started with a focus on “on how European firms could catch up with US management practices”⁵⁸ but nowadays aims to “address the world’s most significant challenges.”⁵⁹ Calling themselves “the International Organization for Public-Private Cooperation” they claim to be independent, impartial, global, holistic and forward-looking.⁶⁰ Their strategy is to bring together the most relevant political, business, cultural and other leaders of society, in order to create change on global, regional and industrial levels.⁶¹ The Forum has been doing this for nearly fifty years by “building awareness and cooperation, shaping mindsets and agendas and by driving collective action.”⁶² With their goal to change the world for the better, the WEF has prioritized gender parity because of its influence on whether or not societies and economies thrive.⁶³ To create awareness for gender parity and “influence government priorities, business strategies and public opinion,” the WEF started the Global Gender Gap Index in 2006.⁶⁴ Every year since then⁶⁵ a Report was made, about an increasing number of countries, building a data set that gets more interesting each year. The Global Gender Gap Index is designed to “measure gender-based gaps in access to resources and opportunities in countries rather than the actual levels of the available resources and opportunities in those countries” in order to make the comparison between countries as fair as possible.⁶⁶ The scale that is used to put situations from real life into numbers ranges between

⁵⁸ World Economic Forum (2020) *History*. <https://www.weforum.org/about/history> visited on [25-10-2020].

⁵⁹ World Economic Forum (2019) *Our Impact*. <https://www.weforum.org/our-impact> visited on [26-06-2019].

⁶⁰ World Economic Forum (2019) *What makes us unique*. <https://www.weforum.org/about/what-makes-us-unique> visited on [26-06-2019].

⁶¹ World Economic Forum (2019) *Our Mission*. <https://www.weforum.org/about/world-economic-forum> visited on [26-06-2019].

⁶² World Economic Forum (2019) *Our Impact*. <https://www.weforum.org/our-impact> visited on [26-06-2019].

⁶³ World Economic Forum (2020) *Mind the 100 Year Gap*. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/gender-gap-2020-report-100-years-pay-equality> visited on [12-01-2021].

⁶⁴ World Economic Forum (2019) *Building awareness and co-operation*. <https://www.weforum.org/our-impact#building-awareness-and-co-operation> visited on [26-06-2019].

⁶⁵ Except in 2019, because the data set published in December 2019 was labelled 2020, hereby leaving 2019 without data and a ranking list.

⁶⁶ TIME (2017) *48 Countries Are Ahead of the U.S. in Closing the Gender Gap*. <https://time.com/5028384/gender-gap-united-states-world-economic-forum/> visited on [25-06-2019].

0.00 and 1.00, where 0.00 means that women are absolutely unequal to men, and 1.00 means that there is no difference between women and men. Any number between 0.00 and 1.00 is possible, and yes or no questions are answered with a solid 0.00 when the answer is not in favour of women's rights and 1.00 for the opposite. Cases where women have more rights or otherwise have the advantage over men are represented with numbers higher than 1.00. However, when calculating the total outcome of a country, numbers higher than 1.00 are replaced by 1.00 because the Global Gender Gap Index measures how gender inequality harms women, not men. Including numbers higher than 1.00 would mean that a country can compensate some of its gender inequality towards women with gender inequality towards men, which would create distorted information about gender equality in a country. This is not to say that gender inequality towards men is not important. However, in every country in the world men are currently experiencing less disadvantages than women, which is why the Global Gender Gap Index is - for now - only aimed at the disadvantaged position of women. The GGGI is designed to "ensure that talent is developed and deployed for maximum benefit to the economy and society"⁶⁷ and the most is to be gained in improving the position of women. All participating countries are measured each year to determine how far they are from closing the gap. They are judged on several criteria that together create an average number that shows how big their gender gap still is. The goal is to be as close to a 1.00 as possible, and the closer a country is to a 1.00, the higher their position on the comparing list of countries. Because the GGGI measures gaps instead of actual available resources, richer countries will not automatically end up in the top. The United States of America for example, ended in 53rd place this year, while Nicaragua and Rwanda were both in the top 10.⁶⁸ Still, it is a complicated task to compare different countries with all their unique characteristics and their influences on the position of women and men. Deciding criteria on which all countries are judged equally is therefore far from easy. The GGGI has decided to rank participating countries based on four areas of criteria: economy, education, health, and politics.⁶⁹ Each of these criteria has a few general factors that provide an overview, and some more specific factors that create more in depth understanding.

⁶⁷ World Economic Forum (2019) *Shaping the Future of Education, Gender and Work*. <https://www.weforum.org/system-initiatives/shaping-the-future-of-education-gender-and-work> visited on [26-06-2019].

⁶⁸ Global Gender Gap Report (2019) *Data Explorer*. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2020/dataexplorer/> visited on [24-06-2019].

⁶⁹ World Economic Forum (2018) *Global Gender Gap Report 2018*. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2018/> visited on [23-06-2019].

3.1. Economic participation and opportunity

In this category it is not about how well an economy is doing, but rather about how much equality there is within this economy. The general factors for economy consider labour force participation rate in percentages, wage equality for similar work, estimated earned income, legislators, senior officials and managers in percentages and professional and technical workers in percentages. The more specific factors provide more information about participation of women and men in the workforce, what positions are held, and financial consequences. For all economic factors data about both men and women is provided.

3.2. Educational attainment

The general factors for education are quite straightforward. The literacy rate is measured in percentages, and enrolment in primary education, secondary education and tertiary education in percentages is measured. The more specific factors show the attainment in percentages of both men and women in several areas of expertise. Both typically feminine and masculine areas are shown. The full list consists of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM); Agriculture., Forestry, Fisheries & Veterinary; Arts & Humanities; Business, Administration & Law; Education; Engineering, Manufacturing. & Construction; Health & Welfare; Information & Communication Technologies; Natural Sciences, Mathematics & Statistics; Services; Social Sciences, Journalism & Information; Vocational training; and PhD graduates.

3.3. Health and survival

The information about health and survival is unique in the sense that there are factors included that are not measured for men. Most of these are about childbirth, looking at maternal mortality, the number of births attended by skilled personnel, antenatal care, the mean age of women at the birth of their first child, and the average number of children per woman. Even though childbirth is a female-only factor, it is prominently present in comparing gender inequality since it can be a great contributor to gender inequality, since women are often the ones that suffer most from the consequences. Countries that help women with childbirth, in preventing maternal mortality, providing skilled personnel by births, and giving antenatal care, are helping to close the gap between the genders. The other health factors that are only measured for women but are not related to childbirth are the prevalence of gender-based violence in a lifetime, the right to abortion to preserve a woman's health, and child marriage of women

between 15 and 19 years old. Factors that concern health and look at both women and men in the GGGI are about life expectancy and the sex ratio at birth.

3.4. Political empowerment

The criterion politics in the Global Gender Gap Index partly focusses on how women perform within the government. It is measured how many women occupy positions in parliament and ministerial positions in percentages, and the years with female or male heads of state in the last 50 years are counted and included in the statistics. In some countries there is an upper house, aside from parliament and general ministerial positions, so seats held in the upper house by women in percentage of the total amount of seats, are included in the additional factors as well. In the more specific factors the GGGI tries to capture information about freedom and rights in numbers as well. The year women received the right to vote is included to show some historical development. In many cases the right to vote has been one of the first accomplishments for women's emancipation movements in a country and it therefore is a proper indicator for when feminist development started. Quotas for women might help to increase the number of women in a government and reach equality sooner. Therefore, the GGGI notes whether or not there are national election list quotas for women and/or voluntary party membership quotas. The Index includes some rights that should be universal for women, but are not universal (yet): the right to equal justice, the right to travel outside the country and the right to divorce. Maternity and paternity leave are issues that are secured in the law and are therefore discussed here as well. The Index both looks at the length of official maternity/paternity leave, and at wages that are paid during this period in percentages of annual gross wage.

Chapter 4. Beyond the Global Gender Gap Index

In this chapter the case studies Nicaragua and Rwanda will be explored from a postcolonial feminist perspective to explore the challenges of applying a universalist tool like the Global Gender Gap Index to different countries worldwide. The postcolonial feminist idea that is most relevant to this analysis is the notion that non-Western women face other challenges and might have other priorities than Western women, and that these challenges, experiences and priorities are just as valid, but tend to get overlooked. Taking into consideration that there is not one road towards equality and that equality might look different in diverse places is necessary to create an inclusive global womanhood, according to postcolonial feminism.

4.1. Nicaragua

4.1.1. Historical background

The position of women in Nicaragua has unique characteristics because of Nicaragua's history and place in the world. These characteristics are largely due to the European conquests that took place in South America from the sixteenth century onwards. The mainly Spanish and Portuguese adventurers came in search of gold, silver and other valuable materials, hereby not afraid to wage war on the original inhabitants and enslave them. On top of that, the Europeans brought diseases like measles and influenza that the original inhabitants were not used to, which meant that these diseases killed a majority of them.⁷⁰ The Spanish settled in the area that would become Nicaragua and they brought three cultural characteristics that greatly affect gender equality to this day: The Catholic church, machismo, and political unrest.

The Catholic church came to South America with the colonizers, but it adapted to the new environment, mixed with other religions, and remained unaffected by protestant movements in Europe, resulting in a dominant Catholicism with distinct ideas about the place men and women should fulfil in society.⁷¹ A man is typically seen as the head of the household, the one who has a job to provide for his family. A woman should stay at home to take care of the children and housework. This emphasis on a 'traditional' family has the consequence that the Nicaraguan

⁷⁰ Clifford (2010) *The history of Nicaragua*. Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood. 15.

⁷¹ Clifford (2010) 13.

Catholic church rejects divorce, contraception and abortions.⁷² The strong separation between men and women by the Catholic church is reinforced by the idea of machismo. Machismo is a common South American ideology, brought to the continent by the European colonizers, which overemphasizes the differences between men and women, hereby placing men in a superior position.⁷³ In line with the Catholic church the idea of machismo dictates that men should work while women stay at home. Machismo also attributes different qualities to the genders: the typical male, according to machismo, is strong, aggressive, and virile, while women are submissive, self-sacrificing, and emotional. With such strongly defined ideas about what men and women should and should not do, machismo unavoidably creates limits for women and men that want to operate outside their assigned spheres.⁷⁴ In Nicaragua it is harder for women to get a job, because society expects them to stay at home and take care of housework and children, and even if women work, machismo deems some jobs more feminine, like jobs in the care system, and working in other sectors of the economy is harder. Aside from that, it is hardly possible to combine work and housework thanks to the amount of time housework takes, and often women are too uneducated to get a (good) job because their surroundings never saw learning a priority for them, since they were to become housewives anyway.⁷⁵ Aside from such expectations that live in a society, machismo can be reflected in legislation as well, not granting women all the same rights as men.⁷⁶

Another factor that influenced many aspects of life in Nicaragua, including the position of women, is the internal unrest that happened quite regularly throughout Nicaragua's history. Aimed at first at the European colonizers and later at dictators or otherwise unwanted leaders, revolutions were no rare events. Often it was women who suffered gravely from inequality, oppression and abuse. Consequently, women were often willing to support revolutionary movements that opposed the hardships imposed on the populations by oppressive governments. One of the consequences of the participation of women in revolutionary movements was that women became more politically active,⁷⁷ a skill that was later applied to their own

⁷² Fisher (1993) *Out of the shadows: women, resistance and politics in South America*. London: Latin America Bureau. 5.

⁷³ Fisher (1993) 3.

⁷⁴ Fisher (1993) 4-5.

⁷⁵ Fisher (1993) 7.

⁷⁶ Hollett (2017) *Come hell or high water: Feminism and the legacy of armed conflict in Central America*. *Feminist Review*, 116(1), 176-177.

⁷⁷ Clifford (2010) 159.

disadvantaged position as well, which caused women's emancipation movements to grow exponentially in Nicaragua in the second half of the twentieth century. Independent women's organizations emerged⁷⁸ and political parties initiated policies that improved the position of women, for example with health and literacy campaigns.⁷⁹

These developments proved themselves beneficial for gender equality in Nicaragua, which now has a very high fifth position on the GGGI out of all 153 countries that are included in the list, and has been among the highest-ranking countries for eight years. This auspicious position is mostly due to the high level of educational attainment and high numbers in health and survival. Both in terms of women's education and health Nicaragua is actually in first place worldwide. For political empowerment Nicaragua earned a third place. The only indicator that brings the average down significantly is economic participation and opportunity, because Nicaragua has the 81st place in that category. That does not mean that the only issues of concern to feminists in Nicaragua are about economic participation and opportunity. What the next part of this chapter will try to establish is how well the information from the GGGI represents the actual situation in Nicaragua. To this end, Nicaragua's position in all four indicators is further explained and analysed, and other relevant issues are addressed as well in order to critically assess the mechanics behind the GGGI.

4.1.2. Economic participation and opportunity

Nicaragua's 81st place worldwide in economic participation and opportunity in the Global Gender Gap Index is relatively low, which is caused by several factors.⁸⁰ Labour force participation is quite unequal in Nicaragua (53,9% for women and 86,0% for men) and that the official unemployment rates are very small in both cases (only 5,76% for women and 4,05% for men). That means that most women do have a job, but often not a full-time job. This is consistent with the information about part-time jobs (51,38% of the women who work, work part-time, versus only 26,57% of the men). In addition to participation, unemployment and part-time workers, the GGGI includes information about unpaid work, but that information is not available for Nicaragua. What is not clear from the information provided in the GGGI, is

⁷⁸ Shayne and Randall (2014) *Taking Risks*. Albany: State University of New York Press. 279.

⁷⁹ Van Manen and Van den Berg (1984) *De strijd van de vrouwen in Nicaragua*. Amsterdam: Van Genneep. 2.

⁸⁰ World Economic Forum (2020) *Global Gender Gap Report Nicaragua*. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2020/dataexplorer/#economy=NIC> visited on [23-09-2020].

whether or not undeclared work is included in these numbers. Undeclared work can be any kind of job, but without declaring it to public authorities, it becomes a problem because it affects tax revenue, social security and labour standards.⁸¹ In countries that experience poverty, undeclared work is often a bigger problem, according to Gutierrez et al (2008).⁸² Nicaragua can be considered a low-income to low-middle-income country, and according to the International Labour Organization in 2008 as many as 62.5% of Nicaragua's urban, non-agricultural workers were employed informally.⁸³ This is quite an impressive percentage, but it cannot be found in the GGGI. Including information about undeclared work could change the image that is currently created of Nicaragua's workforce. People who are officially unemployed could have an undeclared job, and people who officially only work part-time might have another, undeclared job that makes the amount of work they do full-time in total, and when these numbers are different for women and men, it changes the ratio of gender inequality in the workforce. The reason that undeclared work is not specifically included in the GGGI is unclear. It might be possible that the creators of the GGGI are unconsciously influenced by the liberal feminist view that emphasizes legality and laws, hereby overlooking undeclared work, which often escapes the legal sphere and therefore cannot be captured easily with a framework that solely takes an interest in legal activities. However, it is not certain that the idea that only legally measurable data should be included in the GGGI underlies the exclusion. The narrow focus when it comes to undeclared work might also be related to a West-oriented view, because undeclared work is not a major concern in Western countries. Research shows that, especially in certain European countries but to a lesser extent in most European countries, reducing undeclared work has been a priority for governments for decades.⁸⁴ For these countries adding undeclared work in the GGGI would probably not make a big difference in depicting gender inequality. Nicaragua, on the other hand, has had a past with a lot of unrest, like colonialism and revolutions.⁸⁵ With other, more important issues like these at hand, reducing undeclared work has not been a priority for governments, as research by Farrell (2010)

⁸¹ Popescu, Cristescu, Stanila, & Vasilescu (2016) *Determinants of Undeclared Work in the EU Member States*. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 39, 520-525.

⁸² Gutierrez, Paci, & Ranzani (2008) *Making Work Pay in Nicaragua: Employment, Growth, and Poverty Reduction (Directions in Development)*. Washington, DC: World Bank 11.

⁸³ Ibañez (2020) *Relational work in Nicaragua's low-wage labor market*. *Socio-economic Review*, Socio-economic review, 2020-07-10. 4.

⁸⁴ Williams, Windebank, Baric, & Nadin (2013) *Public policy innovations: The case of undeclared work*. *Management Decision*, 51(6), 1161-1175.

⁸⁵ Shayne and Randall (2014) 279.

shows.⁸⁶ The result is that undeclared work exists more frequently in non-Western countries, like Nicaragua, and therefore including it in the GGGI actually could create a different image of gender inequality in the workforce in those countries. The same is true for working more than one job, which is also often done because of poverty, when working one job is not enough to make ends meet, but it is not included in the GGGI either. As Millar and Glendinning (1989) demonstrate, poverty affects men and women differently.⁸⁷ Therefore including data about people who have more than one job would provide further information about gender equality or the lack of it in a country, creating a more complete overview.

The GGGI does not just provide information about the division of the workforce in full-timers, part-timers and unemployed, it also sheds some light on what different jobs women and men in a country have. It shows that in Nicaragua legislators, senior officials, managers and business owners are only 26-35% women. Only in professional and technical work women are well represented and even dominate a little with 54,4%. How the workforce is divided in other areas is not specified. Adding information about other work fields could be interesting because it would create a more complete image of gender (in)equality in the workforce, and perhaps even reveal some of the underlying structures of inequality in a country.⁸⁸ In the case of Nicaragua, the presence of the strong, dogmatic Catholic church, and machismo, play a part in many aspects of life, consciously or unconsciously. Even in modern day society, where machismo and the Catholic church are not as strong as they used to be, their ideas might still affect the way work is divided between the sexes. Therefore, including more information about what kind of jobs people have, could potentially help to reveal certain structural inequalities, and ideas like machismo could be traced more easily in the GGGI. On top of that, Goodman (2004) shows that when women and men are working in different economic areas of society, it can lead to inequalities in the distribution of wealth, since the welfare systems for workplaces are not equal in every sector.⁸⁹

More clarity about the division in the workforce could also help to explain another aspect the GGGI assesses: the gender pay gap. Information about the gender pay gap in Nicaragua is unavailable in the GGGI, but the factor is included in the GGGI and is supplemented by

⁸⁶ Farrell (2010) *Nicaragua Before Now*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

⁸⁷ Millar & Glendinning (1989) *Gender and Poverty*. *Journal of Social Policy*, 18(3), 363-381. doi:10.1017/S004727940001761X

⁸⁸ Gutierrez et al. (2008) 7.

⁸⁹ Goodman (2004) *World, class, women global literature, education, and feminism*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer. 26.

information about estimated earned incomes per gender. In Nicaragua these differ with more than a thousand dollars in favour of men.⁹⁰ Part of this difference may be explained by the information in the GGGI about how women less often end up in powerful positions and work part-time more often. However, it would be easier to see where the gender pay gap is coming from, if the GGGI provided more information about the division of the workforce. In the section about educational attainment, it is shown that it is possible to show the different fields women and men partake in.

4.1.3. Educational attainment

The school system in Nicaragua consists of primary, secondary and tertiary education, where only primary education is compulsory.⁹¹ Enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary education is higher for girls, bringing Nicaragua to a first place in the GGGI when it comes to education.⁹² However, information about enrolment alone leaves a lot unsaid. Enrolment is not the same as attendance and neither do these numbers show what is learned, nor how, which are important topics when it comes to education. The GGGI sheds some further light upon education by including a list of what fields men and women were educated in. For primary and secondary education there is no information on what subjects are studied, but it could be interesting to add in regards to subjects like sexual education. Adding such information could expose inequality that would otherwise go unnoticed or notice underlying reasons for gender inequality, not only within education, but also in the workforce, since that has a direct link to the education people receive. As Robin Truth Goodman argues in ‘World, Class, Women’ (2004), education is a powerful way to introduce ideas to people from a young age, and when these ideas are not female-friendly, girls can become indoctrinated to comply with these ideas, even when they are not beneficial to their position.⁹³ This means that the effects of what children learn should not be underestimated since they have consequences for the entire society and the future of a country. Including topics of learning in the GGGI raises the question of how to do this; especially how to do this without imposing the white saviour complex on non-

⁹⁰ World Economic Forum (2020) *Global Gender Gap Report Nicaragua*. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2020/dataexplorer/#economy=NIC> visited on [23-09-2020].

⁹¹ Scholaro (2020) *Education system in Nicaragua*. <https://www.scholaro.com/pro/Countries/Nicaragua/Education-System> visited on [24-09-2020].

⁹² World Economic Forum (2020) *Global Gender Gap Report Nicaragua*. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2020/dataexplorer/#economy=NIC> visited on [23-09-2020].

⁹³ Goodman (2004) 25.

Western countries, which has happened often in the past when it comes to education.⁹⁴ However, including options that can be answered with a yes or a no, for example “Is sexual education taught?”, might shed some light on a curriculum without harming cultural norms.

The GGGI does not show if schools and classes are mixed or not. Whether classes are mixed or not does not say anything about the quality of education, but if education is separated and the one gender structurally receives other lessons than the other gender, it will have consequences for how these children function in society as adults, and it will influence the gender gap, which makes information about mixed and separated classes relevant to the GGGI. Information about the gender of teachers is also lacking, and even though that would probably fit better in the economic aspect of the Index, it would be interesting to know more about the function that role models, like teachers, provide, since studies have shown the great influence of role models on students.⁹⁵

4.1.4. Health and survival

As mentioned before, the information about reproduction is most prominent in the category health and survival. When it comes to reproduction, it can be seen that maternal mortality in Nicaragua is 98 deaths per 100,000 live births, 89,6% of live births are attended by skilled personnel, there is antenatal care, family planning and the right to divorce, but no right to abortion.⁹⁶ Information about maternity and paternity leave is not available for Nicaragua but is included in the GGGI. In other words, there is a great focus on support for women’s healthcare from the government and public services. However, this liberal feminist tendency to stick to legal structures does tend to overlook certain issues that governments might not cover.

One example of issues that do not get the attention in the GGGI that it deserves is menstruation. Nowhere in the data of the GGGI is there any mention of periods, even though they can create severe obstacles on the road towards equality for women and girls. Research by MacLean et al (2020) shows that in many countries, Western and non-Western, menstruation still is a taboo that sometimes causes girls not to go to school and women not being allowed to work, which

⁹⁴ Goodman (2004) 103.

⁹⁵ Buck, Clark, Plano, Diandra, Lu, Yun, & Cerda-Lizarraga (2008) *Examining the cognitive processes used by adolescent girls and women scientists in identifying science role models: A feminist approach*. Science Education (Salem, Mass.), 92(4), 688-707.

⁹⁶ Htun (2003) *Sex and the State*. 142.

is a threat to their development and equality.⁹⁷ This can be aggravated by lack of access to period products, as Jewitt and Ryley (2014) proved.⁹⁸ In the case of a taboo or when there is no access to (enough) period products, it does not matter if a girl or woman is officially enrolled in school or officially has a job, she is still limited by her gender and how her community reacts to it. It seems strange for the GGGI not to include such an important issue in their data set. Perhaps this is also due to the taboo surrounding menstruation,⁹⁹ causing it to be overlooked by the GGGI. Especially since period products are almost always available in Western countries this creates a taboo without many problems within Western countries. Women can function in society while keeping their periods secret. It is in places where period products are unavailable that menstruation and its taboo can become a big problem for girls and women who want to fully participate in society. It would be helpful to include information about access to period products in the GGGI because it could help understand other data in the Index, like how equal enrolment still leads to inequality in the workforce. Information about taboos would be harder to measure, but research about whether or not menstruation affects school attendance already exists.¹⁰⁰

Another example of an important issue that is lacking from the GGGI is access to birth control. In the GGGI the right to abortion is included and it is considered negative when there is no right to abortion, but information about other birth preventing measures is not included. In Nicaragua the Catholic church is a very dominant remainder from the colonial times. It is very anti-abortion and anti-contraception.¹⁰¹ Consequently contraception is not always available in Nicaragua and knowledge on how to use contraception is not always sufficient, as research by Ehrle and Sarker (2011) shows,¹⁰² causing a high abortion rate and far from all of these abortions are legal and safe. Priya (2015) demonstrated that illegal abortions often cause way more harm than necessary, to the point where women in some cases die.¹⁰³ Unfortunately we

⁹⁷ MacLean, Hearle, & Ruwanpura, (2020) *Stigma of staining? Negotiating menstrual taboos amongst young women in Kenya*. Women's Studies International Forum, 78, 102290.

⁹⁸ Jewitt & Ryley (2014) *It's a girl thing: Menstruation, school attendance, spatial mobility and wider gender inequalities in Kenya*. Geoforum, 56, 137-147.

⁹⁹ Thornton (2011) "*Time of the Month*" on Twitter: *Taboo, Stereotype and Bonding in a No-Holds-Barred Public Arena*. Sex Roles, 68(1-2), 41-54.

¹⁰⁰ Jewitt et al. (2014) 137-147.

¹⁰¹ Fisher (1993) 5.

¹⁰² Ehrle & Sarker (2011) *Emergency Contraceptive Pills: Knowledge and Attitudes Of Pharmacy Personnel in Managua, Nicaragua*. *International Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 37(2), 67-74.

¹⁰³ Shetty (2015) *Fearless in the face of Nicaragua's abortion law*. The Lancet (British Edition), 385(9972), 940.

can only deduce from the GGGI that abortion is illegal in Nicaragua, and all this other information remains invisible. Including it would give more insight in the position of women in society. Especially because birth control does not only affect a woman's ability to control when she wants to get pregnant, it can also help control periods and thereby evade existing obstacles, which makes it even more relevant to include in the GGGI. Of course, in Western countries contraception generally has been available for half a century, but that cannot be the reason that contraception is excluded from the GGGI. Neither can it be because it is only aimed at women and cannot be compared to men, because other factors in the GGGI work with this same principle.

A final health factor in the GGGI is gender-based violence. Gender-based violence according to the GGGI is: “Percentage of ever-partnered women who ever suffered intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence.” In other words, this is only about women who suffer from violence within their relationships. This definition matches most with the WHO definition of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV): “IPV refers to any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship.”¹⁰⁴ However, gender-based violence, according to the UN, refers to “harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender.”¹⁰⁵ This definition by the UN encompasses more acts of violence than the definition of the GGGI, which excludes violence based on gender outside of intimate partner relationships, for example gender-based violence that occurs in the workplace,¹⁰⁶ violence inflicted by women on men¹⁰⁷ and crimes as trafficking and sexual exploitation. According to the GGGI 22,5% of Nicaraguan women experienced gender-based violence during her lifetime. However, by using a broader definition of gender-based violence, this number may turn out higher, especially in a society with machismo. The reason for using the narrow definition of gender-based violence in the GGGI is not explained further.

¹⁰⁴ World Health Organization (2012) *Intimate partner violence*. https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77432/WHO_RHR_12.36_eng.pdf;sequence=1 visited on [16-02-2021].

¹⁰⁵ UNHCR (2021) *Gender-based violence*. <https://www.unhcr.org/gender-based-violence.html#:~:text=Gender%2DBased%20violence%20refers%20to,threatening%20health%20and%20protection%20issue> visited on [16-02-2021].

¹⁰⁶ Lanthier, Bielecky & Smith (2018) *Examining Risk of Workplace Violence in Canada: A Sex/Gender-Based Analysis*. *Annals of Work Exposures and Health*, 62(8), 1012-1020.

¹⁰⁷ Kolbe & Büttner (2020) *Domestic Violence Against Men— Prevalence and Risk Factors*. *Deutsches Ärzteblatt International*, 117(31-32), 534-541.

4.1.5. Political empowerment

Nicaragua is performing quite well when it comes to political empowerment, compared to other countries, but the 0,565 score is far from how well Nicaragua is performing in education and health. Nicaragua has had a female head of state for over 6 years out of the last 50 years. It is an interesting factor to include because it says something about how women are perceived in a country and what opportunities they get. It would be even more interesting to know if it is an elected position or not and how much power this position has. More information about the position of women and the opportunities they get, can be distilled from the balance between men and women in parliament (in Nicaragua 55,4% versus 44,6%) and the balance between men and women in ministerial positions (44,4% versus 55,6% in Nicaragua). These numbers show how female friendly a political environment is, organically or thanks to artificial measures like gender quota. In Nicaragua the rather equal division in politics may be partly thanks to quota. In the GGGI there is information on whether or not there are election list quota and party membership quota in a country. In Nicaragua both are in place, shows the Gender Quotas Database, and quotas are common in civil society organizations too, even though that is not included in the GGGI.¹⁰⁸ The GGGI distinguishes between two different quota systems, election list quota and party membership quota, but there are many more in the world. About half the countries in the world implemented some form of gender quota in their political system during the past twenty-five years, as Dahlerup (2007) shows.¹⁰⁹ Generally there is a difference in aiming for equality of outcome versus equality of opportunity. Equality of outcome can for example be achieved by reserving a certain number of seats in a political body that need to be filled by women. Equality of opportunity focuses on creating a fair situation where, in this case, women can get elected but do not necessarily have to be elected. This is included in the GGGI as election list quotas and party membership quotas. The results in Nicaragua show this same principle because the number of men and women is not exactly equal. One major argument against quota is that people will get an important position because of their gender, and not based on merit. This might be a reason to exclude quota based on equality of outcome from the GGGI. It might also be the reason to add 'voluntary' to the party membership quotas and not include mandatory quotas. This does seem strange however, when realising that, even though most countries favour voluntary quotas, there are countries with mandatory quotas too. Are

¹⁰⁸ Gender Quotas Database (2019) *Nicaragua*. <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/232/35> visited on [29-06-2019].

¹⁰⁹ Dahlerup (2007) *Electoral Gender Quotas: Between Equality of Opportunity and Equality of Result*. Representation (McDougall Trust), 43(2), 78.

these quotas not deemed ‘good’ by the GGGI? Are voluntary quotas the only ones a country should have? And what about quotas aimed at equality of outcome? They exist too, but not in the GGGI. This is regrettable because, while some are more efficient than others, the power of quota has been proven, no matter what shape or size they come in.¹¹⁰ Gender quota do not necessarily mean there is gender equality in politics - for one, setting up a quota does not mean compliance will follow,¹¹¹ nor that the people will actually vote for a woman - but the argument that the people would never vote for a woman, an argument that was used to defend excluding women from party’s or election lists, has been proven incorrect by the results of the many recently implemented quota.¹¹² It turned out that people would vote for women if that was an option, proving that the party’s actually have more power over who gets elected than originally thought. The importance of including this information in the GGGI is that studies have shown that having women in the political sphere improves gender equality in a country.¹¹³

4.1.6. Remaining issues

The situation in Nicaragua concerning the gender gap is partially captured by the GGGI. Within the structure of the four area’s there were some issues that could not fully be traced with the current criteria. Furthermore, there are some issues left that cannot be put into one of the four areas of the GGGI. For Nicaragua these seem to be mostly social issues. The presence of cultural factors, like machismo, can influence almost every aspect of a road towards gender equality, but these cultural factors are currently untraceable in the GGGI. It could be interesting to include a measure about social expectations, cultural norms and perhaps even religious dogmas since studies by Cooray and Potrafke (2011) show that the primary influence on gender inequality in education is through culture and religion, and that these are more determinative than the political system.¹¹⁴ In other words, the GGGI is currently missing information about social factors that could create a fairly different image of the gender gap in Nicaragua, and

¹¹⁰ Dahlerup (2007) 78.

¹¹¹ Dahlerup (2007) 83.

¹¹² Dahlerup (2007) 74.

¹¹³ Yao, Yang, & You, Wuyue (2018) *Women’s political participation and gender gaps of education in China: 1950–1990*. World Development, 106, 220-237.

¹¹⁴ Cooray & Potrafke (2011) *Gender inequality in education*. European Journal of Political Economy, 27(2), 268-280.

countries worldwide. When it comes to nuances it is important to remember that numbers are not everything and nuance is needed to understand (in)equality in a country better.

4.2. Rwanda

4.2.1. Historical background

The position of women in Rwanda is influenced by certain unique circumstances. Like many other African countries, Rwanda is a country where the borders were defined by European colonizers during the scramble for Africa, not taking into account the tribes that lived in the area. Culture, language and tradition were ignored or destroyed by the colonizers, who forced European norms and ideas onto the original inhabitants. This is somewhat similar to what happened when Europeans arrived in South America, but a major difference was that Africans had more resistance to foreign diseases and therefore did not die on a great scale because of epidemics. Instead, black people were taken away as slaves to work elsewhere in the world. The way that religion spread through Africa was similar to how religion came to South America. Colonizers usually forced their religion upon the original inhabitants. However, since Africa was colonized after the protestant Reformation of the Christian church, several different versions of Christianity came to Africa, instead of only Catholicism, as was the case for South America. In Africa the different versions of Christianity met competition in the shape of already present religions and the Islam.¹¹⁵

Rwanda experienced all the typical characteristics of colonialism: an invading European country, slavery, destruction of culture, language and religion. At first Rwanda was colonized by Germany and was then called German East Africa. After Germany lost the First World War, its colonies were taken from it and German East Africa was placed under the protection of Belgium. The Belgians decided that every Rwandan had to carry a proof of identity that stated which tribe a person belonged: the Hutu or the Tutsi. This distinction planted the seed for later enmity within the population because the Belgians favoured the Tutsi, which generally had lighter skin, and gave good jobs and benefits rather to Tutsi than to Hutu, with a generally darker skin. This inequality created an enmity between the Hutu and the Tutsi that increased over the next decades and finally escalated in 1994 with the genocide by the Hutu on the

¹¹⁵ Grosz-Ngaté, Hanson, O'Meara (2014) *Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 103.

Tutsi.¹¹⁶ Rebuilding after this devastating event was not easy. The new president, Paul Kagame,¹¹⁷ encouraged women to help doing this, hereby breaking traditional gender roles, which meant women could now work formerly ‘male’ jobs, own land, participate in the government, and help the country in ways that used to be exclusively male. Women’s emancipation movements existed before the genocide, but grew significantly after 1994, hereby becoming among the most active sectors of civil society.¹¹⁸ Nowadays, Rwanda is one of the best examples of post-conflict countries that made enormous leaps forward in the empowerment of women.¹¹⁹ This is reflected in Rwanda’s position in the GGGI. Rwanda was only included in the GGGI from 2015 onwards, when it entered the list at a 6th place. In the years that followed Rwanda went to a 5th, 4th, 6th again, to a 9th place this year.¹²⁰ The weak spot for Rwanda seems to be economic participation and opportunity. In the Report of 2018, it says: “Rwanda’s steady multi-year climb since entering the Index comes to a halt for the first time, with the country falling two places due to a widening gender gap on the Economic Participation and Opportunity subindex, driven by a fall in women’s estimated earned income, professional and technical workers, and wage equality for similar work.”¹²¹ This trend continues after 2018, causing Rwanda to drop to a 9th place. The political empowerment of women remains extremely high, with more than 50% of parliament and ministerial positions occupied by women, and the health gap and education gap are both nearly closed. Still, there are some issues that might not appear on the GGGI but nonetheless exist in Rwanda. These will be explored below, within the four factors of the GGGI.

¹¹⁶ Burnet (2012) 5.

¹¹⁷ Bertrand and Ensign (2009) *Rwanda: history and hope*. Lanham, University Press of America. 93.

¹¹⁸ Burnet (2008) *Gender Balance and the Meanings of Women in Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda*. *African Affairs* 107(428): 361–86.

¹¹⁹ Dahlerup (2007) 77.

¹²⁰ World Economic Forum (2017) *The Global Gender Gap Report 2017*. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf visited on [23-09-2020].

¹²¹ World Economic Forum (2018) *The Global Gender Gap Report 2018*. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2018.pdf visited on [28-09-2020].

4.2.2. Economic participation and opportunity

As quoted above from the Report of 2018, economy is clearly the most problematic factor when it comes to gender equality in Rwanda, with a low score of 0,672.¹²² The poor state of gender equality in the Rwandan economic sphere is partly made visible with the information about the economy that the GGGI provides. The labour force participation rate is almost equal, with slightly more women between the ages of 15 and 64 working, with 84,7% versus 84,1% of the men. Unemployment and part-time work see less of a gap between men and women with respectively 19,52% unemployed women versus 15,74% men, and 62,01% of employed women working part-time versus 51,34% of employed men. Information about the proportion of unpaid work per day is unavailable. These numbers indicate that there are little differences between men and women in the Rwandan workforce. Still, the same information that would be interesting in the case of Nicaragua, about undeclared work and people working more than one job, would be interesting for Rwanda as well in order to create even more clarity.

Inequality in where people work exactly is partly traceable in the GGGI when it comes to Rwanda. Jobs like legislators, senior officials and managers are for 14,1% occupied by women and 85,9% by men. Professional and technical workers are in 38,7% of the cases women and in 61,3% men. Majority ownership of firms is only 12,9% women and 87,1% men, and firms with female top managers are 19,7% women versus 80,3% men. These numbers already show a lot of inequality in different work environments. Providing data about more sectors would allow for a more complete picture about Rwandan gender inequality in the workforce and the function of role models.¹²³ One example of inequality that is now invisible in the GGGI happens in the agriculture sector. Research by De Lame (2005) shows that in Rwanda, women traditionally were the ones taking care of staple foods that feed the population, while men focus on cash crops that were suitable for marketization.¹²⁴ This division still exists in modern day Rwanda, creating a situation where women and men do not compete on equal terms when it comes to production, according to Ansoms and Holvoet (2008).¹²⁵ Another issue in Rwanda is

¹²² World Economic Forum (2020) *Global Gender Gap Report Rwanda*. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2020/dataexplorer/#economy=RWA> visited on [28-09-2020].

¹²³ Buck et al. (2008) 688-707.

¹²⁴ De Lame (2005) *A Hill Among a Thousand: Transformations and Ruptures in Rural Rwanda*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press and Royal Museum for Central Africa.

¹²⁵ Ansoms and Holvoet (2008) *Women and Land Arrangements in Rwanda: A Genderbased Analysis of Access to Natural Resources*, in B. Englert and E. Daley (eds) *Women's Land Rights and Privatization in Eastern Africa*, pp. 138–57. Woodbridge: Currey.

workplace violence.¹²⁶ As discussed in the Nicaragua chapter, workplace violence is not included in the GGGI definition of gender-based violence. Newman et al (2011) say that in Rwanda, workplace violence such as negative stereotyping, discrimination based on pregnancy, maternity and family responsibilities, and the so-called glass ceiling, has been documented in all work sectors, but sectors with more gender equality had lower levels of workplace violence. In the current information in the GGGI workplace violence is not visible at all. Specifying how women and men are divided over all sectors, not just a few, would help in tracing workplace violence. It is not clear why the GGGI includes leadership positions and technical work, but not other kinds of jobs. When it comes to education the division between many different areas of specialization is made, indicating that it does matter that there is a difference in what men and women do. However, this same distinction is not extended to the criteria about work.

In Rwanda information about a pay gap is also not available, but there is a difference in income that could be, at least partially, explained by the different jobs men and women have.¹²⁷ However, here too, more information about what kind of work people do would be very helpful in understanding the situation. In the Report of 2020, it says: “While skills are not the only factors, the fact that women’s access to education has been limited in the past is still affecting the opportunities they need to compete in the workplace today. Ongoing investments and enhancements in education and human capital promise to offer better opportunities to future generations of Rwanda’s women.”¹²⁸ In other words, the state of gender equality in education greatly influences the state of gender equality in the workforce in a country. Including information about what sectors women and men work in, would make this link between education and work better visible in the GGGI.

The gap between women and men when it comes to work can be clarified further by including an aspect called opportunity. The GGGI aspect about work is clearly labelled ‘Economic participation and opportunity’. Participation is covered in part, but opportunity is difficult to distinguish from the current information in the GGGI. How often do women and men get

¹²⁶ Newman, De Vries, D'Arc Kanakuze & Ngendahimana (2011) *Workplace violence and gender discrimination in Rwanda's health workforce: Increasing safety and gender equality*. Human Resources for Health, 9(1), 19.

¹²⁷ World Economic Forum (2020) *Global Gender Gap Report Rwanda*. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2020/dataexplorer/#economy=RWA> visited on [22-02-2021].

¹²⁸ World Economic Forum (2020) *The Global Gender Gap Report 2020*. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf visited on [28-09-2020].

promotions? How long does it take women and men on average to get promoted? Do they often switch jobs? Is it easy for them to do so? Answering these questions could show trends in freedom, or lack thereof, in the work sphere. However, perhaps these questions tend to be ignored when operating from a liberal feminist point of view, where legal structures are seen as the only limits and poverty and social expectations are easily overlooked.

4.2.3. Educational attainment

Rwanda has the 114th place in educational attainment, but with a score of 0,957 they are still doing very well.¹²⁹ In primary and secondary education the attendance of girls is slightly higher than that of boys, with 95,1% versus 94,4% and 38,8% versus 32,9%. In tertiary education the general attendance is very low, with only 6,0% of women and 7,5% of men attending. Just as in Nicaragua, official enrolment does not necessarily mean that girls and boys have the same levels in attendance, especially when factors like menstruation are taken into account.¹³⁰ Taboos and lack of access to period products can prevent girls from attending school, and research by Morgan et al (2017) has shown that in Rwanda inadequate menstrual hygiene services play a role too.¹³¹ Less than 20% of the schools in Rwanda had sufficient separate-sex latrines with doors and locks, water for use and waste bins to dispose of period products. However, a reduced attendance by girls because of menstruation problems cannot be traced in the GGGI. If attendance was included in the GGGI, perhaps it could partially explain the gap between Rwandan women and men when it comes to literacy. Of all Rwandan women, only 69,4% is literate versus 77,6% of Rwandan men.

Unlike with the data for Nicaragua, in Rwanda there is information in the GGGI about the presence of men and women in certain fields of education. This shows that men more often specialize in STEMS, Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Veterinary, Arts, Humanities, Education, Engineering, Manufacturing, Construction, Communication Technologies, Natural Sciences, Mathematics, Statistics, Vocational training and PhD's. Women only dominate in

¹²⁹ World Economic Forum (2020) *Global Gender Gap Report Rwanda*. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2020/dataexplorer/#economy=RWA> visited on [28-09-2020].

¹³⁰ MacLean et al. (2020) 78, 102290.

¹³¹ Morgan, Bowling, Bartram & Lyn Kayser (2017) *Water, sanitation, and hygiene in schools: Status and implications of low coverage in Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zambia*. *International Journal of Hygiene and Environmental Health*, 220(6), 950-959.

Business, Administration, Law, Health, Welfare, Services, Social Sciences and Journalism. It is regrettable that it cannot be seen how this representation reflects in the workforce.

4.2.4. Health and survival

Rwanda has a 90th place on the GGI concerning health and survival.¹³² In general, Rwanda is performing fairly well in health, especially since more and more women entered the political domain which, as a study by Mageza-Barthel (2015) has shown, results in more feminine issues on the political agenda.¹³³ In Rwanda this reflects in a 2008 bill against gender-based violence that was issued to, among other things, make sure that police forces and hospital personnel receive specialized professional training to deal with gender-based violence. Another example is marital rape – a former taboo which is now gaining public awareness.¹³⁴ Just as in Nicaragua, information about menstruation, contraception and limiting taboos would be helpful in the case of Rwanda. Aside from that there is another serious issue in Rwanda that cannot be traced in the GGI but is an important health factor that Rwandan feminists have prioritized in the past: female genital mutilation (FGM).¹³⁵ Female genital mutilation involves injuring female genitalia for non-medical reasons, which has no health benefits for women but it can cause infections, internal bleeding, complications in childbirth and other harmful complications. Performing FGM on women generally has cultural reasons, related to ideas about purity, honour, modesty, status and aesthetics, and can be used to promote chastity and fidelity because it reduces women's sexual desire, argued Mahmoud (2016).¹³⁶ In Rwanda FGM used to be common, but efforts to reduce it have been successful to the point where it hardly happens anymore.¹³⁷ Some forms of female genital modification, instead of mutilation, do still exist in Rwanda but these practices only concern the labia, not the clitoris, and therefore do not have

¹³² World Economic Forum (2020) *Global Gender Gap Report Rwanda*. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2020/dataexplorer/#economy=RWA> visited on [28-09-2020].

¹³³ Mageza-Barthel (2015) *Mobilizing Transnational Gender Politics in Post-Genocide Rwanda* (Gender in a global/local world). London: Routledge.

¹³⁴ Hunt (2014) *The Rise of Rwanda's Women: Rebuilding and Reuniting a Nation*. Foreign Affairs, Volume 93; Issue 3.

¹³⁵ World Health Organization (2020) *Female genital mutilation*. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation> visited on [14-09-2020].

¹³⁶ Mahmoud (2016) *Effect of female genital mutilation on female sexual function, Alexandria, Egypt*. Alexandria Journal of Medicine, 52(1), 55-59.

¹³⁷ Nnaemeka (2005) *Female circumcision and the politics of knowledge: African women in imperialist discourses*. Westport: Praeger. 4.

the same negative impact on a woman's health, research by Koster and Price (2008) suggests.¹³⁸ The discussion about whether or not these practices, and for example non-medical plastic surgery on genitalia and the common practice of male circumcision, should be included in the definition of FGM is not a discussion to elaborate on here. The question that is relevant, is how FGM relates to the question about universalism versus particularism in the GGGI. FGM is not a phenomenon that occurs in every country in the world. However, there are still thirty countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia where FGM is a common practice. More than 200 million girls and women alive today have been cut. On top of that, FGM is not the only still existing cultural practice that is harmful solely to women. Breast ironing and Chinese foot binding are a few other examples of culture specific practices that exclusively harm the health of women. Since these practices are only targeted at women this is clearly something that indicates gender inequality, which makes it relevant to include in the GGGI. It may be hard to measure a 'gap' between the genders when a practice is only aimed at women, but the GGGI already includes information about childbirth and gender-based violence that is purely aimed at women. The fact that harmful practices are not included yet, may be due to the locality of these issues. However, the fact that an experience is not universal to all women, does not mean it should not get attention. A tool like the GGGI, that wants to compare all countries alike, needs to look at comparable items in order to create meaningful data. Still, many issues in the GGGI are not experienced by all women and yet are included. An issue as harmful and important to gender inequality as FGM deserves attention in a tool about gender equality such as the GGGI, because it is intertwined with the other factors. In a 'first things first' situation, FGM might get a priority by feminist movements in a country over other issues that are measured in the GGGI. Including FGM in the GGGI could therefore clarify a lot about a gender gap in a country and it can be included, for example, by inserting a self-contained item covering the different practices worldwide with a description such as 'physically harmful, gender specific practice aimed at women'. Adding 'aimed at women' would be necessary since the GGGI only registers inequality when women have the worse position. Another option would be to include harmful practices aimed at women in the definition of gender-based violence, which currently is very narrow, as was discussed in the chapter about Nicaragua.

¹³⁸ Koster & Price (2008) *Rwandan female genital modification: Elongation of the Labia minora and the use of local botanical species*. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 10(2), 191-204.

4.2.5. Political empowerment

Rwanda's political empowerment according to the GGGI is very close to closing the political gender gap, amounting to a 4th place worldwide.¹³⁹ Both in parliament and in ministerial positions there are more women, probably partly thanks to the national election list quota that was installed in the rebuilding period after 1994. However, there has not been one year with a female head of state yet and it remains questionable how equal women and men truly are in the political sphere. Thanks to the imposed quotas after the genocide, women became a big part of the government, which had unexpected consequences on the land. Not just in Rwanda, but in other Sub-Saharan countries too, a trend is visible where the presence of women in governing positions results in positive changes in legislation that affects women. For example, according to research conducted by Bauer (2012), legislation in family law and laws against gender-based violence increased when more women entered the political sphere.¹⁴⁰ This is an interesting development, one that the GGGI might want to elaborate on. Not per se in the sense that the connection between the presence of women and female-friendly legislation is shown, but in other ways that might show the actual influence of women. It has been mentioned before that the presence of women does not necessarily mean that they have all the power that suit their position. Especially with a quota based on equality of outcome, which was one of the quota Rwanda implemented,¹⁴¹ it is possible that women are only placed in a certain position because it is legally required, not because they are actually allowed to make an impact. Rwanda's government has some authoritarian characteristics, which raises questions about the actual significance of women's representation in governmental positions.¹⁴² Especially if social backing for gender equality is missing, official gender equality becomes rather meaningless, as demonstrated by King and Mason (2001).¹⁴³ In Rwanda it appears that some measures promoting gender equality only seem to exist for the sake of appearances. Since Rwanda depends heavily on donor funding for its government budget, and since gender equality is a global spearhead promoted by powerful instances like the UN and the WEF, promoting gender

¹³⁹ World Economic Forum (2020) *Global Gender Gap Report Rwanda*. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2020/dataexplorer/#economy=RWA> visited on [28-09-2020].

¹⁴⁰ Bauer (2012) 'Let there be a Balance': *Women in African Parliaments*. *Political Studies Review*, 10(3), 370-384.

¹⁴¹ Hunt (2014).

¹⁴² Longman (2006) *Rwanda: Achieving Equality or Serving an Authoritarian State*, in G. Bauer and H.E. Britton (eds) *Women in African Parliaments*, pp. 133–50. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

¹⁴³ King & Mason (2001) *Engendering Development: Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources and Voice*, World Bank and Oxford University Press: Washington, DC. 42.

equality has become a means to an end.¹⁴⁴ In reaching the objective of donations, official numbers indicating gender equality are more important than the actual status of gender equality. This has several consequences. Debusscher and Ansoms (2013) show that this focus on numbers rather than true equality means that people can have a certain position on paper, while in reality they do not even know this position is assigned to them.¹⁴⁵ Ansoms (2009) shows that it also means that policies focus on targets, rather than changing the underlying processes, and that issues that are deemed irrelevant for the official numbers, are easily ignored.¹⁴⁶ In other words, to truly see the status of gender equality in a country, the GGGI should look beyond the numbers that are now assessed, and try to include underlying structures as well. Only when social and cultural perceptions are adjusted as well, gender equality will fully benefit a country socially and economically.¹⁴⁷ That also means that a liberal feminist focus on numbers is not adequate in measuring gender equality. The changes in legislation concerning women's rights that happened in Rwanda seem to indicate that women do have impact in their governmental positions, but it would be interesting to properly measure this in the GGGI. This could be done in several ways: including in the GGGI how often women and men initiate legislation, pass legislation or even speak at all at meetings could potentially reveal a lot more about true equality in political situations.

4.2.6. Remaining issues

Because women's emancipation in Rwanda happened mostly top down, the nation is doing well on many legal, official aspects, but the social standards around the position of women sometimes lag behind. Strong gender roles with dominant men and obeying women are still present, similar to how machismo in Nicaragua still affects gender equality. However, social inequality like this is not visible in the GGGI. By adjusting and adding several factors to the existing data within the existing four factors, as proposed above, currently invisible inequality

¹⁴⁴ Debusscher & Ansoms (2013) *Gender Equality Policies in Rwanda: Public Relations or Real Transformations? Development and Change*, 44(5), 1111-1134.

¹⁴⁵ Debusscher & Ansoms (2013) 1111-1134.

¹⁴⁶ Ansoms (2009) 'Re-Engineering Rural Society: The Visions and Ambitions of the Rwandan Elite', *African Affairs* 108(431): 289-309.

¹⁴⁷ Carlson & Randell (2013) *Gender and development: Working with men for gender equality in Rwanda*, *Agenda*, 27:1, 114-125, DOI: 10.1080/10130950.2013.796075

could be made visible, creating a complete and more accurate overview of gender inequality worldwide.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

In the previous chapters it has become clear that the Global Gender Gap Index is an elaborate tool when it comes to measuring the gender gap between women and men. However, elaborate as it is, certain pressing issues are not visible in the Index. In some cases, these issues were an extension of information already included in the GGGI, for example the issue in economic participation and opportunity that it is only partly visible where women and men work, or in health that gender-based violence is included but only with a very narrow definition. In other cases, issues seemed to be missing completely from the Index, like menstruation and female genital mutilation. When it comes to menstruation, it is unclear why this issue is missing, even with a universalist approach, since every country has women who menstruate, even though menstruation does not create the same issues in every country. The case of FGM, and similar issues, is different because it only happens in certain parts of the world. The GGGI wants to compare all countries worldwide on the same criteria to make a comparison that is as honest and reliable as possible. That is an understandable argument against including particularistic issues in its data set. However, bearing in mind the impact that practices like FGM have on gender inequality in a country, it seems like a great gap in knowledge about gender inequality to not include it. As proposed in chapter 4.2.4. including a yes or no question about a 'physically harmful, gender specific practice aimed at women' in the GGGI could partly bridge this gap, while being less particularistic and more universalistic. This solution does not provide a perfect fit with a universalist approach. Furthermore, the closer a country is examined, the more unique characteristics will be discovered. With a tool as the GGGI it will always be debatable what should be included and what should not, which characteristics can be shelved under existing, generalised criteria and which cannot.

The GGGI is not a perfect tool. Still, it is the most elaborate, often updated, complete tool currently available. The inequality measured may not be as complete as it could have been, but it does provide an indication about gender equality in a country. From a universalist point of view, some criteria in the GGGI could be elaborated on to provide more accurate information. Further research could determine what factors would be the best additions to the GGGI within or without a universalist perspective. Looking at more countries as case studies might bring attention to the importance of certain issues, or could reveal new issues that require attention. Other non-West cases studies could bring attention to more postcolonial feminist issues, while research about Western countries might be helpful to see if there are issues here too that are excluded from the GGGI. Researching and comparing to other Indices might help with showing

how other issues can be relevant and how they can be translated to usable data. For example, the SIGI measures son preference as an indicator for gender inequality, and while this subject was not relevant for Nicaragua and Rwanda, it is probably not included for nought in the SIGI and it might be a good addition to the GGGI as well.

Returning to the research question:

What are the challenges of measuring gender (in)equality using a universalist approach?

It is safe to conclude that the greatest challenge of measuring gender (in)equality with a universalist approach is that certain issues get ignored. Some of these issues can be incorporated within the universalist way of thinking, but some issues simply do not exist everywhere. In these cases, a particularistic approach is needed to get a complete overview of gender (in)equality in a country.

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