

Meredith Moore: [00:00](#) Hi. So my name is Meredith, all you guys know me. Today, I am talking with my new friend, Doctor Ronni Tichenor. I am holding her book up. Several of you have already asked me about this book, because I've shown you. There's a lot of female breadwinners out there.

Meredith Moore: [00:23](#) But specifically the book, Earning More and Getting Less, why successful wives can't buy equality. If that is not sort of thought provoking, I don't know what is. So without further adieu, hi Ronni, good to meet you.

Ronni Tichenor: [00:36](#) Hi, nice to meet you finally, too.

Meredith Moore: [00:38](#) Yeah, absolutely. So you're an Associate Professor, and correct me if I wrong, in Academia I know we can't ... we have to get titles correct, we have to get the publishing correct. So you're an Associate Professor of Sociology at Suny-Poly Tech, is that right?

Ronni Tichenor: [00:52](#) Yep.

Meredith Moore: [00:53](#) Okay. Department of Community and Behavioral Health. So what does that mean? What do you teach? What are you the authority figure on there?

Ronni Tichenor: [01:02](#) Well, the book that you held up is actually some of my earlier work. My primary specialties in Sociology are family and gender. So this work was really looking at the decades of research after the women's movement. So looking at the '70s, '80s, and '90s where it said, "Okay, conventionally ..." We had sort of this contract where men were breadwinners and women were at home.

Ronni Tichenor: [01:30](#) While not all families could live up to that, after World War II for a short period of time, most families did. So the family scholars were looking at what happened in the '70s, '80s, and '90s when women moved into the workforce in droves? It was really ... to me, it's a major social revolution that doesn't get the recognition that it deserves, because it generated fundamental change in families, in social life, and in certain relationships.

Ronni Tichenor: [01:58](#) But the research that was coming out in those decades was looking at, as women have moved into the workforce, what's happened on the other side of that contract with men? Have men taken on more of the, what we academics call, domestic labor, household chores, taking care of children.

Meredith Moore: [02:14](#) Right.

- Ronni Tichenor: [02:15](#) So the literature was pretty unanimous and depressing, if you are interested in equality. From the standpoint that women were bringing home income and men were not really helping out. They were not picking up the slack, women are still carrying the load at home.
- Meredith Moore: [02:31](#) Right.
- Ronni Tichenor: [02:31](#) Sadly, that will not sound too surprising or unusual to most women today. But my question was, in looking at all that evidence, it seemed to me like, why is this happening? Basic fairness dictates that this should not happen. So a lot of the discussion at the time was, well men have privilege.
- Ronni Tichenor: [02:49](#) One of the privileges has historically been, they get to have things done for them. Like, the house cleaned, and dinner cooked, and their children cared for. Even when women were bringing home money, it didn't seem to make a difference. My idea was, well maybe that's because women are bringing home less money than men are, maybe a third of the household income.
- Ronni Tichenor: [03:10](#) So my hypothesis was that it was easy to ignore that. It was easy to feel like, "Well, she's helping, but really I'm the breadwinner. So therefore, I'm still entitled to the privileges that soul breadwinners have long held." So I said, well what if we had a situation where women were making more money than their husbands. Not just a little more, but a lot more. So I defined that as at least 50 percent more than their husbands.
- Ronni Tichenor: [03:35](#) I looked at things that had been examined in the literature. I figure it as a power issue, an issue of male power. That money has conferred a certain amount of power on men historically and can women use their power for the same sorts of things. So, decision making, conflict resolution, management of the money, those are the things that the literature on marital power had looked at. I brought in the domestic labor piece.
- Ronni Tichenor: [04:02](#) Because of all the research that was out there, I thought, "Well, we really should think about domestic labor as a power issue, as well, because if I can get out of doing chores ..." As I say to my students, most of us will. When you were a kid, if you were required to do chores, you normally didn't run and jump the first time your parents said, "Hey, come clean up your room." Or do the dishes or whatever.

- Meredith Moore: [04:23](#) Yeah, I still have PTSD leftover from having to weed the yard. Consequently, I do not garden to this day.
- Ronni Tichenor: [04:29](#) Right, right. I am sort of that way. I went through a phase like that with making my bed. [inaudible 00:04:33] I make my bed everyday, so there are days where I'm not making my bed. But, so you get the idea here. So that was my ... I essentially set up this question to say, "Okay, in these couples where women make a lot more money than their husbands, what determines the power dynamics?"
- Ronni Tichenor: [04:49](#) Their relationship is measured by those four broad categories. Is it money? Because, money equals power in our society. Is it gender? Masculinity equals power in our society. So the short answer to the question is gender [inaudible 00:05:07], gender equals power. That's a simplistic sort of rendering, because there are some ways in which women are able to exercise power in their relationships.
- Ronni Tichenor: [05:18](#) But it was not the case that women, because they earned more money, were able to claim control over spending it, claim control over making decisions. Able to say, "Look, you're gonna do at least half." Fairness would dictate if they're making a lot more than their husbands, they should be doing less than half of the household chores. I mean, you could make that argument.
- Ronni Tichenor: [05:39](#) So, I didn't see that. I did see some handfuls of couples where they were more equal, but not where men were taking on the lion's share of the domestic labor. So it really was the case that ... Oh, and the other thing was that women were not able to say, "I'm the provider in this relationship." Men didn't give up this notion of I'm a provider just because they were making less than their wives.
- Ronni Tichenor: [06:08](#) In fact, that was one of the most interesting pieces of what I found in this work. That gender operates at different levels in our culture. There's sort of what we call the institutional level, which includes things like our beliefs about masculinity and femininity and what the proper roles of men and women are.
- Meredith Moore: [06:26](#) Right.
- Ronni Tichenor: [06:26](#) The laws that we have about family, and gender, and so on. There's the interactional level or the micro level where you and I are talking, husbands and wives are negotiating their relationships. Then, there's the individual level, which is a level of identity.

- Ronni Tichenor: [06:43](#) What I found that I didn't really anticipate was the power that exists in the identities of mother / wife and father / husband, and the homemaker / breadwinner distinctions that still exist. Because even though the majority of couples don't conform to the male as the sole breadwinner, female is the mother and keeper of the home, those ideas are still with us.
- Ronni Tichenor: [07:10](#) I talk to my students about this. I call it the cultural residue. You can't quite wipe it off your skin. So at the individual level, at the level of identity, men are still judged by whether they are good providers. Like, if I asked a room full of students, "How many of the men in here have thought about, when you were growing up, thought I'm gonna stay home and take care of children?" I never get a hand. They're not raised to think that way.
- Meredith Moore: [07:39](#) Right.
- Ronni Tichenor: [07:39](#) So they don't want to give up that ... that's a cornerstone of masculine identity in this society, so they don't want to give that up. So these couples found ways to see these men as providers, even though they don't meet the cultural definition of being the main provider, even let alone the sole provider.
- Meredith Moore: [07:54](#) Yeah, I've been in cases where she'll be making double him, back to your sample. I still will see with [inaudible 00:08:05] financial power in the relationship. Psychologist, Doctor Sonya [Luder 00:08:13] down at Kansas State who's in the CFP Department, that built the whole model around financial therapy.
- Meredith Moore: [08:19](#) Her whole thing was that it's influence. I've seen that even though she's doing double, that she will try and make sure there's some sort of accommodation to him more so than if the roles were reversed. So, I love your term cultural residue, because that completely resonates with what I'm seeing, as well.
- Ronni Tichenor: [08:42](#) Right. That actually corresponds with what I've found, too. Women will not say, "I make the money, this is what we're going to do with it."
- Meredith Moore: [08:49](#) Right.
- Ronni Tichenor: [08:50](#) Or, I make the money, I'm going to make this decision. What they will do is they will try to persuade. Sometimes, they will have specific expertise, like they have an MBA or their a CPA, they can say, "Well, look.

Interest rates are down, this is a good time to look for a house." They can draw on that expertise.

- Ronni Tichenor: [09:06](#) But they don't just put their foot down or say, "This is what we're going to do." They persuade or exercise influence within the bounds of femininity.
- Meredith Moore: [09:15](#) Right.
- Ronni Tichenor: [09:18](#) This goes back to their identity as wives and mothers, right? They're afraid because of the constraints of conventional femininity that if they are forceful, or aggressive, or put their foot down, that they're no longer a loving wife. They are something else, a shrew or worse.
- Meredith Moore: [09:36](#) Right.
- Ronni Tichenor: [09:37](#) So it's uncomfortable. It can be uncomfortable to exercise power in a direct way.
- Meredith Moore: [09:42](#) So Doctor [Lutterer 00:09:43] told me that she believes that the three biggest things that affect influence in a relationship are who has greater income, back to what we're talking about. But your theory is gender supersedes that, which I personally believe, too.
- Meredith Moore: [09:59](#) Education, who has more education of the two. And, age. She believes the person that's older might have more of an impact or more influence. But then again, the overarching thing is the whole gender role issue. Exactly what you're talking about.
- Ronni Tichenor: [10:15](#) Right. Well and if we're going with age, that doesn't really help women that much either because women tend to, what we Sociologists call, marry up.
- Meredith Moore: [10:22](#) Right.
- Ronni Tichenor: [10:22](#) They tend to marry men who are more educated, who are older, who make more money, all of those things. So that doesn't really help us either, if we're interested in [crosstalk 00:10:31]-
- Meredith Moore: [10:31](#) Well, she was dying to hear our interview. So she'll be getting an email with this after. So, it's the marriage of the Psychology and the Sociology together around this issue, I think, is so important.
- Ronni Tichenor: [10:42](#) Right, right.

Meredith Moore: [10:45](#) You've eluded to this, but talk a little bit about ... We talked about the traditional breadwinners and you used the term provider. Talk a little bit more about that with an identity as a provider.

Ronni Tichenor: [11:03](#) So one of the questions I specifically ask, because I thought that with women making this much more than their husbands, the possibility was that they would redefine what it meant to be a provider. So I specifically asked them a little bit later in the interview, after I had a chance to build rapport with them.

Ronni Tichenor: [11:20](#) I asked them, "Would you say that either of you is the provider in the relationship?" I didn't want to assume that one or the other would be.

Meredith Moore: [11:27](#) Right.

Ronni Tichenor: [11:28](#) I did have some comparison couples. Where the couples were either relatively equal on income or the husband made more than the wives, just to have that touchpoint.

Meredith Moore: [11:35](#) A controlled group, essentially, I guess.

Ronni Tichenor: [11:40](#) Yeah, essentially. So, for those couples, it was a very easy question to answer. If the man made more, he would say I provide. If they were relatively equal, they would say, "Well, we both provide. We make about the same, we both provide." When it came to the couples where the wives earned more, it was a very hard question for them to answer.

Ronni Tichenor: [12:03](#) They would hem and haw, they were going, "Well, provider, most people think that's just about money. But, really provider is about more than money, because my husband ... Yeah, I make more money than he does, but he does a lot around the house to help things, he gets my son to daycare. If he wasn't doing those things, we just wouldn't be a functioning unit. So provider is really ... I say we both provide."

Meredith Moore: [12:28](#) Right.

Ronni Tichenor: [12:29](#) I had, the other sort of extreme from the man's end was, I did have five husbands who were ... they all had to be two income couples. But in five cases, the men made a small amount of money, and worked very few hours, and maybe it was just seasonal work. So they really were primarily home.

Meredith Moore: [12:46](#) Right.

Ronni Tichenor: [12:47](#) [crosstalk 00:12:47] whatever children they had. So there was this one man who was an attorney, who had previously had a ... made a pretty lifestyle. He was a Corporate Attorney, but had decided ... his wife, also, was a Corporate Attorney. They had one child and they decided, because he was being forced to move and he didn't really want to move. That he would quit for a while and be with their son, who they felt was in daycare too long and so forth.

Meredith Moore: [13:06](#) Right.

Ronni Tichenor: [13:07](#) So when I asked about providing, he talked about the careful attention that he gave to their finances. That he ran the finances in the family, and he watched the mortgage rate to see if they should be refinancing. He watched their investments, and he paid the bills, and he did all these things. He said, "So I do all of that. I'm very carefully managing our money."

Meredith Moore: [13:28](#) But for the justification, then, essentially.

Ronni Tichenor: [13:31](#) Yes, yes. I do that in lieu of bringing home income, so I'm providing.

Meredith Moore: [13:35](#) Right.

Ronni Tichenor: [13:37](#) So the upshot is that they ... both husbands and wives. This wasn't just something that men did, this was a joint effort. So this gets back to that interactional level. That they both were trying to find ways to be able to see the husband in the relationship as still an enacting successfully that provider role because it's so important to go back to identity.

Ronni Tichenor: [13:59](#) The provider identity was really important for these men. Conversely, the mother identity was really important for the women. So they did similar kinds of things, even though they would spend long hours away from the home. They wanted to see themselves as good mothers and good wives.

Meredith Moore: [14:14](#) Right.

Ronni Tichenor: [14:16](#) The husbands would help them in that effort by saying, "Even though she doesn't spend that much time with the children, she's still a really good mom. She's focused, she's loving, she's attentive, she's all those things." So it was really fascinating to me that we can't really escape that identity level. How we see ourselves.

Ronni Tichenor: [14:33](#) When I talk to this with my students, I use myself as an example. I say, "I am a gender scholar. I read, do research, and write about these things critically. I have a daughter. I don't want to be a bad mom anymore than anybody else does." So I'm still ... we're all still bound by these things.

Meredith Moore: [14:50](#) Right.

Ronni Tichenor: [14:51](#) It's really hard to escape them.

Meredith Moore: [14:55](#) So I know you do a lot of stuff and you eluded to it, again, motherhood / fatherhood. But I wanted to hit on a point ... there's a ... I think she just got her Doctorate. But I've never read a dissertation in my life. Again, I've been in practice for 20 years, but I read a dissertation, a rough draft, off of Twitter.

Meredith Moore: [15:16](#) This gal was up at University of Maryland. Her whole thesis was around that how money, like finance basically, what's going in, how bills are paid. Or basically, do you pool money. That that's an indicator for equality.

Ronni Tichenor: [15:35](#) Absolutely.

Meredith Moore: [15:35](#) I wanted to get your take around that.

Ronni Tichenor: [15:38](#) That's fascinating because I talk about this a lot in my classes, because that's one of the things I did find. Remember, I said there was some nuances with how women could exercise power? What's very interesting is if you look at a lot of quantitative studies where surveys are done and they're looking to assess power in the relationship.

Ronni Tichenor: [15:54](#) They'll often times ask the question, who does the bills. They use that as a proxy for who has power in the relationship. It is a terrible, terrible, terrible measure. Because, depending on your circumstances, doing the bills may just be another chore and may be absolutely no way to exercise control.

Ronni Tichenor: [16:15](#) A better measure based on my data, if you're gonna ask one ... Well, I guess it really has to be a two part question. First, is there any money leftover after the bills are paid? If there is, who has access to it and under what circumstances? So where I found women were actually able to use the bill paying process as a way to exercise power was where couples only pooled their money. They didn't have separate money.

Meredith Moore: [16:40](#) It full pooling, not partial pooling?

Ronni Tichenor: [16:42](#) Full pooling.

Meredith Moore: [16:43](#) Yeah, I read all about Pahl's study from the '70s and I've built infographics. I had never known about any of this.

Ronni Tichenor: [16:50](#) Yeah, so if the money is only pooled and one person's responsible for paying the bills-

Meredith Moore: [16:56](#) Right.

Ronni Tichenor: [16:56](#) ... that person can have some opportunity to exercise power.

Meredith Moore: [16:59](#) Absolutely.

Ronni Tichenor: [16:59](#) So, if the other person has to come and say, "Look, I want to get the new truck, I'm not happy with what I'm driving right now." The person who's paying the bills can say, "You know, it's really not a good time." Whether or not it is-

Meredith Moore: [17:11](#) Right.

Ronni Tichenor: [17:12](#) ... [crosstalk 00:17:12] want somebody to go that route, you could say, "Yeah, maybe we should wait a little while on that one." Whereas, if it's something you're excited about doing, you could say, "Yes, let's go for it." [crosstalk 00:17:22]-

Meredith Moore: [17:21](#) [crosstalk 00:17:21]-

Ronni Tichenor: [17:22](#) ... opportunities to do things on your own that your partner's not going to see. Whereas, the other person wouldn't necessarily have that opportunity.

Meredith Moore: [17:28](#) Well and I don't know if you saw on the news, I was sitting at a gym parking lot when it came on NPR. But, creditcards.com did a very interesting study that came out this week about financial infidelity.

Ronni Tichenor: [17:41](#) You know, I saw that headline, but I hadn't had a chance to look at that, yet.

Meredith Moore: [17:43](#) Yeah, the Academics are discounting it, because it's not empirical. But, I'd be interested, maybe a later date, to get your take on it. Certainly, I've seen that and it definitely can create some issues. But, it's back to influence and power in the relationship. Who had the

ability to do it and how are the checks and balances established within that relationship.

- Ronni Tichenor: [18:07](#) Right, right. So, yeah, so there are ... To go back to your question about the pooling versus separate money, I know that the women's movement, for example, [inaudible 00:18:19] said women need to have separate money. Actually, they're not the first ones, of course though. [inaudible 00:18:24] thought about that.
- Ronni Tichenor: [18:25](#) But, this idea that women need to have their own money that they don't give any kind of account for. Absolutely, agree with that a hundred percent. However, what I found in my work is that women having separate money doesn't guarantee that they have money for their own use.
- Meredith Moore: [18:42](#) [crosstalk 00:18:42]-
- Ronni Tichenor: [18:41](#) So I saw women trying to ... essentially, the money was organized in a way that really diminished the power of her money, diminished her capacity to have some [inaudible 00:18:53] herself. So they might have a joint account or all completely separate accounts, but the women would pay for most of the bills.
- Meredith Moore: [19:01](#) Right.
- Ronni Tichenor: [19:02](#) Even though, she made a lot more money than her partner, he would actually have more money left over at the end of every pay period than she would. So it really isn't about separate or pooled. It's more about what's leftover, the surplus and who gets to use and under what circumstances.
- Meredith Moore: [19:23](#) Was it you that I read something on it tends to also be used for kids and back to the whole parenting identity if it's hers? I can't remember.
- Ronni Tichenor: [19:36](#) You know, I didn't write about that specifically, but that has been documented in the literature. That's one of the reasons arguments around microeconomics and giving money to women, globally. That they're more likely to actually invest in their children. Particularly, their children's education and that is [inaudible 00:19:49] to the economy. Men are more likely to spend it on themselves and things that they want.
- Meredith Moore: [19:54](#) Got it. I was also looking at Doctor Beth Ann Shelton at University of Texas, Arlington said that your research

indicated women's higher earnings can be a liability rather than a resource. What is she talking about?

- Ronni Tichenor: [20:13](#) Because women felt like they had to kind of make up for the fact that they made more than their husbands.
- Meredith Moore: [20:18](#) Okay.
- Ronni Tichenor: [20:19](#) So they would not demand that their husbands contribute more around the household. They would not say, "I make more money than you do, I'm gonna decide how we spend it." They would not demand greater control over certain decisions. So there's potential power in money. Money is a resource or a base for power in our culture. But only if you use it, only if you use it.
- Ronni Tichenor: [20:48](#) What my results suggest is that women either are ... I mean, this coincides with work of [inaudible 00:20:54]. That women, because of the gender difference between men and women, that women's resources are discounted. They're not valued in the same way that men's are when they bring them to the relationship.
- Ronni Tichenor: [21:04](#) But also that women are reluctant and what I argue is that they're reluctant to push the issue because they don't want to be seen as a shrewish wife. Right? They don't want to be called a bitch. That's what it came down to.
- Meredith Moore: [21:19](#) That's it, yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. What about ... let's talk more about if somebody's not married. Like, let's say they're cohabiting, because I've seen a lot of data, too, where habits tend to be more similar if they're cohabiting ... or very similar if they're cohabiting and married. But can you talk about that?
- Ronni Tichenor: [21:42](#) There can be similarities, but it's also been documented in the literature that couples are more egalitarian when they're not married and that things tend to shift when they do become married. Now, this may be beginning to shift as cohabitation becomes a more popular alternative to marriage.
- Meredith Moore: [22:03](#) Right.
- Ronni Tichenor: [22:04](#) But now, for most people, it's a new stage in the courtship process.
- Meredith Moore: [22:07](#) Right.

Ronni Tichenor: [22:08](#) That's a pretty significant shift. It's just been in the last couple of decades that most people say they wouldn't think of marrying somebody without living with them first.

Meredith Moore: [22:16](#) Right.

Ronni Tichenor: [22:17](#) So that's a relatively new shift. But what we know so far is that things do tend to change. In particular, kind of this depends upon if they have children and when children come into the relationship. So if you are in a situation where you're dating, you cohabit as a precursor to marriage, you get married, then you have children. What we see is that that transition, particularly to marriage, but even more so to parenthood is where the inequality really starts to show up.

Ronni Tichenor: [22:51](#) Because, it's really, really tough to be two people working full-time, and taking care of a household, and children. In conventional marital contract, you have roughly two jobs, homemaker and provider and two people to cover them. With a [inaudible 00:23:04] couple, you've got three jobs and two people to cover them, so the math is not good.

Meredith Moore: [23:08](#) Right.

Ronni Tichenor: [23:09](#) So what happens is, there becomes a certain pressure at the identity level. Men start to think, "Holy crap, now I have a child. I really have to be a provider."

Meredith Moore: [23:19](#) Right.

Ronni Tichenor: [23:19](#) Women don't want to be a bad mom, so they both may feel like, "Well ..." Then, the third thing is, there's the insanity of trying to be a two income couple and take care of a home and children. Depending on your jobs and whether alternate shifts or do something that can make it work, you may come to the point where you're like, "We can't do this anymore. Something has to give."

Ronni Tichenor: [23:40](#) So in a circumstance where men are feeling the pressure to provide, women are feeling like, "Oh, I'd like to spend more time with my children." The solution, then, becomes, "Well, I as the woman, am gonna back out of my work a little bit or all the way and allow you to give full focus to your job."

Ronni Tichenor: [23:59](#) If you're in a situation where the man earns more, which is most cases, the gender gap and wages intensifies that pressure. So it's really not just about whether you're

cohabiting or not, it's also about whether there are children in the equation and so on.

- Ronni Tichenor: [24:15](#) So but we've seen, over the last couple of decades, we've seen a real strong pull towards more conventional arrangements once children enter the picture.
- Meredith Moore: [24:24](#) What about relationships ... I know I work with a lot of second marriages, and the blended households, and kids from multiple sides. Which creates more nuances, and debts, and alimony.
- Ronni Tichenor: [24:39](#) Right.
- Meredith Moore: [24:40](#) I don't know if at this point when you had collected data for this book or since. Like, what you can tell me about that?
- Ronni Tichenor: [24:48](#) To be honest, I'm not as familiar with what's happening, in terms of power and finances in those circumstances.
- Meredith Moore: [24:56](#) Right.
- Ronni Tichenor: [24:56](#) I know, as you said, they are much more complicated.
- Meredith Moore: [24:59](#) Right.
- Ronni Tichenor: [25:02](#) A lot of people have been burned in their first relationship and maybe more likely to insist on separate money. So again, the separate money itself is not a guarantee that you're going to have more control. But certainly, if you felt like you didn't have any control in your first relationship, that may be the way you want to go.
- Ronni Tichenor: [25:23](#) For other reasons, if there are child support payments or other things going on, it may make sense to have more separate finances. So, there is more variability, I can tell you that, in the blended family situation.
- Meredith Moore: [25:34](#) Right.
- Ronni Tichenor: [25:35](#) The lines of ... because there are potentially children from other relationships, there may be a different sense of who the whole is. When you're talking about pooling money for the family and taking care of the whole family.
- Meredith Moore: [25:48](#) So how does ... we haven't hit on it and the Psychologist I had talked to really didn't ... We didn't spend a lot of

time. But, how does gender role differ, as it pertains to power and money in same sex relationships?

- Ronni Tichenor: [26:06](#) What's interesting is that just because you have two men or two women in a relationship, doesn't mean the gender isn't operating. Some of the most interesting work I've seen looks at how ... gets back to the identity level again. How particularly around domestic labor, how men try to protect the partner that's doing more domestic labor, by making it look like he's doing less. Women will do the reverse of that.
- Ronni Tichenor: [26:41](#) So there's still those identity issues related to gender in same sex couples. As far as money, they're much ... again, I'm not as familiar with the literature on this. But my understanding is that there is much more of a sense of separation of finances because until recently, same sex couples, their marriages weren't legitimate.
- Ronni Tichenor: [27:04](#) I mean, some of them married [inaudible 00:27:06] ceremonies, but they weren't recognized legally and socially in many cases. So they don't have that same history that married couples have of the pooling of finances that tends to shape the way married couples think about money and power.
- Meredith Moore: [27:24](#) Right. So have you seen ... Again, just in your interviews, not in sort of empirical data. But, did any of these couples recognize what they were doing? In terms of like, I'm sort of over-indexing trying to accommodate ... Again, I'm sorry.
- Meredith Moore: [27:45](#) So take the female that's making more money. She's married to her sexual relationship. She realizes that she's overcompensating with some of her decisions to account for this gender role issue. Was there any acknowledgement of that?
- Ronni Tichenor: [28:04](#) It was very subtle. It seemed to me, as I was listening to them talk, that they weren't really aware quite what they were doing. They would say ... like, I had one woman who I asked ... I think I asked the question, "Do you ever try to use your money to kind of exert some control over the decision making?" Say, well I make money, this is how we're gonna spend it.
- Ronni Tichenor: [28:31](#) She said, "No, I don't do that. If I got even close to that, that would be dangerous." So there was some sense that they ought not to do that, that they [inaudible 00:28:41] because they could articulate it. But it didn't seem to me that they ... like the woman I talked about who they had

separate accounts and she paid pretty much all of the bills out of her account.

- Ronni Tichenor: [28:53](#) I don't think she did that purposely to drain herself of financial power. I think it was more trying to do it to make sure that he didn't feel like he didn't have enough money and he wasn't [crosstalk 00:29:06]-
- Meredith Moore: [29:06](#) So she wasn't aware that she was doing it to sort of create more equality.
- Ronni Tichenor: [29:11](#) Right, right, right.
- Meredith Moore: [29:13](#) [crosstalk 00:29:13]-
- Ronni Tichenor: [29:13](#) She was doing it more for relationship issues.
- Meredith Moore: [29:16](#) Right.
- Ronni Tichenor: [29:17](#) Rather than fairness issues. The women were more trying to manage the tensions in their relationships-
- Meredith Moore: [29:22](#) Yes.
- Ronni Tichenor: [29:23](#) ... than they were motivated by what's fair and what's not fair.
- Meredith Moore: [29:27](#) It's funny, because I just read an article. I had a situation, I belong to a big Civic organization here in Atlanta that you would know. A regional President came in and was pitching for the Foundation. Of course, in this Civic organization, I'm 20 years younger than the median age. So it's a bunch of guys, old white guys over 65.
- Meredith Moore: [29:54](#) He makes a joke about, "I'm sure all of you guys, your wives spend more money on shoes." I-
- Ronni Tichenor: [30:00](#) Oh, wow.
- Meredith Moore: [30:03](#) I know. I'm like, "He did not just say that."
- Ronni Tichenor: [30:06](#) Wow.
- Meredith Moore: [30:08](#) Yeah, it was not the time for me to stand up and make a statement then. It needed to be done more discreetly in a different way. But, I ended up thinking about this which prompted this article. You eluded to it. So literally, I did a ton of research, pulled every bit of history I could find around women and finance all the way back from the Egyptians to current.

Meredith Moore: [30:35](#) Essentially, created a book report for myself. Then, really timelined everything. So, I can't help to believe, I'm sure this is true in everything, but the legal and the law is a reflection of what culture is.

Ronni Tichenor: [30:51](#) Sure.

Meredith Moore: [30:53](#) This guy's excuse, apparently, to a friend of mine was, "Look, I'm a country boy. I'm old school and I really hadn't thought about it." Which, is everybody's standard excuse.

Ronni Tichenor: [31:04](#) Right.

Meredith Moore: [31:04](#) But I'm like, "Okay, well this guy really didn't know any different." If we look at the law, back to your point, you deal with the '50s and all of the laws that came about. It's very few women that I come into contact with that know that Ronald Regan ... like, women couldn't get business loans without having a man sign for it until 1988.

Ronni Tichenor: [31:26](#) Right.

Meredith Moore: [31:28](#) Even if you were single.

Ronni Tichenor: [31:31](#) Right, yeah. No, it's ... I always find that very intriguing. People say, "Well, I'm just old school. I learned such and such. I just can't overcome it." The example I use with my students all the time ... The example I use with my students is, there are a lot of people who were raised to go to church every Sunday.

Ronni Tichenor: [31:51](#) They grow up and they do whatever they want. They do all kinds of other things. So just because you were or were not taught to do something, doesn't mean you can't do it.

Meredith Moore: [32:01](#) Right. You're preaching to the choir.

Ronni Tichenor: [32:03](#) Oh, no, I know. It's just the craziest logic. We do all kinds of things we were not raised to do ... or, yeah.

Meredith Moore: [32:11](#) Yeah, absolutely. With you teaching, what are you seeing with millennials? How are things changing?

Ronni Tichenor: [32:20](#) Well, what's interesting is that millennials just can't understand this idea that ... Well, no, let me back up a second. One of the frustrations I have in teaching millennials is that they think 20 years is a long time, because it's their lifetime.

- Ronni Tichenor: [32:34](#) One of my jobs is to try to convince them that 20 years is nothing. I feel like my main message to them, which they don't really want to hear, is that ... because they think things have changed dramatically, and are changing dramatically, and they're gonna be so different.
- Ronni Tichenor: [32:51](#) Actually, they're changing, but very, very, very slowly. Very slowly. So there's work now on millennials that say that yeah, they want egalitarian relationships. They'll tell you that. They're gonna live with somebody before they get married. They're gonna make sure that they have their own money. They'll get their education, and they're in control of their lives, and so on.
- Ronni Tichenor: [33:14](#) But there's research that's been done that says, let's say you can't work out that egalitarian relationship, what do you want? Then, they'll say, if I can't get that, then I'm going to be the provider and my wife is ... these are all heterosexual couples.
- Meredith Moore: [33:26](#) Sure.
- Ronni Tichenor: [33:26](#) My wife will be sort of secondary earner, taking care of the home, and the children, and so on. The women say, "If I can't get that, I'd rather not be in a marriage at all." So there's a real disjunction between young men and young women. They both espouse the same thing and say they want the same things. But their plan B is very, very different.
- Ronni Tichenor: [33:46](#) So it'll be interesting to see what happens over the course of the next 10 to 15 years, how many of them are able to work this out, able to negotiate. The problem is that on an individual level, we all have power. We can all say, this is what I want my relationship to look like. I'm gonna find somebody who's willing to negotiate with me, and create this relationship, and so on.
- Ronni Tichenor: [34:09](#) But we're not doing it in a vacuum. We're doing it in a societal and institutional context that has made almost no accommodation whatsoever for this tremendous social revolution that has taken place with women moving into the workforce and dual earner households.
- Ronni Tichenor: [34:26](#) Single parent households. The world of work still treats the worker as if he or she has somebody at home doing all these things. Somebody doing all the work of the household and childcare. I mean, I remember ... gosh, must be close to 20 years ago now when we were talking about this in a class one time.

Ronni Tichenor: [34:42](#) This young man in the back of the room raised his hand and he said, "You know, what's wrong with wanting to have a wife who will stay home, and take care of the house, and raise the children, and do all these things?" I said, "Absolutely nothing." I said, "I want a wife [crosstalk 00:34:56]-

Meredith Moore: [34:56](#) Exactly what I was about to say ... I was about to say-

Ronni Tichenor: [34:58](#) ... all of things for me.

Meredith Moore: [35:00](#) Right.

Ronni Tichenor: [35:00](#) Why not? If men can get that deal, why not? [crosstalk 00:35:04]-

Meredith Moore: [35:04](#) That's a standard joke, by the way. I hang out with a lot of women in Senior Leadership and we all want these metaphorical wives at home, too.

Ronni Tichenor: [35:11](#) Yes, absolutely. But the problem is that we don't have ... we're one of the only industrialized countries that doesn't have universal healthcare, we don't have guaranteed parental leave. We have very few places where you can flex your hours, or job share, or do any of these other things that would make life possible for families.

Meredith Moore: [35:31](#) Right.

Ronni Tichenor: [35:31](#) So they do other things like work shift work, one during the day and one at midnight. Or people have to cut back, like I talked about. Women, typically, are the ones that will say, I have to pull back because something has to give. We can't live like this anymore. So [crosstalk 00:35:44]-

Meredith Moore: [35:43](#) You want to know what's funny about all this? Is sitting in Doctor Mary Frank Fox's class in 1995, I remember thinking the same thing. Like, how am I going to be able to have a family, create balance ... and at the end of the day, I am kind of a big Capitalist. So how can I create a business that does that.

Meredith Moore: [36:04](#) That's why I went in the industry that I'm in, because I knew I could create revenue streams, and have staff, and things like that. I have a 14 year old son, but ... and be able to do the family gig at the same time. But it's still a very ... it's a difficult thing for all of us.

Ronni Tichenor: [36:20](#) Yeah, absolutely.

- Meredith Moore: [36:20](#) But I'm laughing because ... it's like the whole Sociology of gender comes full circle for me.
- Ronni Tichenor: [36:27](#) Right, right. Absolutely. Again, back to your question about millennials, it has not changed that much. They think it's a very different world from the 1970s. When I talk about being a young person from the '70s and early 80s, they're like, "Oh, my God. That's forever ago."
- Ronni Tichenor: [36:41](#) It's not that different. I hate to break it to them, but we really have not seen the societal shifts that we need to support this revolution.
- Meredith Moore: [36:55](#) The other thing I was gonna bring up that, again, I've anecdotally seen and I find fascinating is that with especially older women, if they are divorced or widowed and they have financial security, I yet to have one that is in a hurry to ever get remarried. They're like, "I don't want to be a babysitter anymore." They still want companionship, but they will live separately.
- Meredith Moore: [37:24](#) Maybe eventually they'll move in, but they will not get remarried. They don't want the obligation anymore. But that happens much later, which I have to believe it comes back to is the motivation early. Like, gender role historical norms and financial security as a woman, the perception of that, that we can't do it by ourself.
- Meredith Moore: [37:46](#) Then, as we get older, if we have financial security. At that point, it has nothing to do with the financial element, it's only companionship.
- Ronni Tichenor: [37:56](#) Yeah, I think you're probably right on there. I also think that there's still, for many women, this sort of fairy-tale that's attached to marriage. Part of femininity is being able to prove that you are successful and love relationships. Women are supposed to be relationship managers.
- Ronni Tichenor: [38:22](#) Particularly for young girls, middle school, high school, even college age having a partner proves that you're attractive and desirable. Being attractive and desirable is still part of femininity. So it may be that women are more ... have a more nuanced view or a fuller picture of what it means to be a married person and decide that they can have the companionship piece. They already can provide their financial security for themselves, so there may not be the same inducement to marry later in life.

Meredith Moore: [38:53](#) Yep. So what advice for people that I know that are female breadwinners? Do you have any specific advise to keep in mind?

Ronni Tichenor: [39:04](#) Wow. It's hard because it comes down to what are you able to negotiate with your partner? To what extent is the fact that you earn more a sore spot in your marriage. Again, this is something that's changing. There are more men who ... some men are less threatened by that, at least overtly.

Ronni Tichenor: [39:28](#) But there's still that identity issue of ... it says you're a real man, you're a breadwinner. Maybe he's okay with it, but his parents might not be, or her parents might not be, or his friends might not be. So it's very difficult to buck all of that cultural headwind that says you really should be a provider.

Ronni Tichenor: [39:53](#) It's possible to do, but ... I sound like a Psychologist than a Sociologist on this point. But, you really need to remind yourself that you are creating this. You're not living your marriage for anybody else. The only thing that I talk about in the book that you started with is that we really need models. People who are doing this successfully, we need to be talking about them.

Ronni Tichenor: [40:18](#) We need to see that it's possible to be in a happy relationship as a man and not be the one bringing home all the money. That it doesn't mean you're less of a man. We need role models to help us redefine what it means to be a husband and a wife, a provider, a caregiver in a broader sense than the term housewife provides.

Ronni Tichenor: [40:40](#) But the people who are doing it now are pioneers. They're the people that we need to be successful and to show other people that it can be done. [crosstalk 00:40:52]-

Meredith Moore: [40:51](#) Right.

Ronni Tichenor: [40:51](#) ... of them.

Meredith Moore: [40:54](#) Right.

Ronni Tichenor: [40:55](#) [inaudible 00:40:55], we really are. So I think one of the things I would say is if you feel like it's a struggle or you're not doing it right or perfectly, give yourself a break. Because, you are revolutionary in creating egalitarian relationship with that kind of imbalance in favor of the woman. That is just a tough thing.

Meredith Moore: [41:14](#) Right.

Ronni Tichenor: [41:14](#) Give yourself a break.

Meredith Moore: [41:17](#) That's great advice, actually. That's really good advice. Well, thanks so much for spending time today. I really appreciate this. If somebody has a question about the program at school, is there a website, or a way that they can get in touch, or learn more?

Ronni Tichenor: [41:39](#) Absolutely. They could email me at the school. My email address is the first six letters of my last name, T-I-C-H-E-N and then V for Veronica, at sunypoly, S-U-N-Y-P-O-L-Y.E-D-U. That would be the easiest way to get in touch with me.

Meredith Moore: [42:00](#) Okay.