

BRAVEWomen.ca

Women's Pathway Exercise

Disclaimer:

While we have sought to find current, helpful and accurate information for this exercise we acknowledge that we may have made some mistakes and appreciate your assistance with any corrections or additions.

While issues like sexuality and gender, ethnicity, and personal experience are significantly important contributing factors we have chosen to focus on statistics related to women generically.

We apologize that so many of the statistics are North American in origin. These were the ones most accessible to us and we value input from other regions.

Instructions:

1. Print off the following quotes, stats and pictures and post like a winding pathway on the floor or on a long wall.
2. Warn participants that some information is disturbing and ask them to self-regulate to prevent triggering a negative reaction.
3. Invite participants to walk the pathway on their own reading the info as they go or in small groups with people reading aloud to each other. Although the pathway is ideally "walked" in chronological order this means it will take longer for everyone to go through so feel free to have people start at different places along the pathway and circle back to the beginning to make sure they don't miss anything.
4. Ensure there are safe places for individuals or small groups to process the information.
5. Use the debrief questions to engage in a large group discussion.
6. Close by reading the "Closing Words" and providing a "Call to Action" – an opportunity to do something about what they have just learned.

More girls are killed in routine “gendercide”—babies aborted because of their gender, honor killings, complications from female genital mutilation etc.—in any one decade then people have been slaughtered in all genocides of the 20th C.

Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* (New York, NY: Knopf, 2009), xvii.)

While the practice is officially illegal in most countries an estimated 23 million babies have been aborted because they are female.

www.pnas.org/content/116/19/9303, Fengqing Chao, Patrick Gerland, Alex R. Cook, and Leontine Alkema, PNAS May 7, 2019 116 (19) 9303-9311; first published April 15, 2019 <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1812593116>, Edited by Jakub Bijak, University of Southampton, Southampton, United Kingdom, and accepted by Editorial Board Member Adrian E. Raftery March 11, 2019

However, in some places this is changing as female children become more desirable for human trafficking.

In many parts of the world baby girls are more likely to be treated as fragile, dressed in pink and described from day one in terms of their “prettiness.”

By age six girls have been socialized to believe that boys and men can be brighter than girls and women. Researchers found that 5-year-old girls were equally likely to think boys and girls could be “really, really smart” but by age 6 they were both absorbing stereotyped notions of boys being smarter and choosing activities based on these stereotypes.

Gender Stereotypes about intelligence emerge early and influence children’s interest by Lin Bian, Sarah-Jane Leslie and Andrea Cimpian *Science*, Vol. 355, Issue 6323, pages 389-392 Jan 2017 See report at <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/355/6323/389>

As early as 3rd grade many gifted girls get the message that it is not safe for them to stand out for academic prowess and they begin to intentionally silence their voice and “dumb down.”

“Girls’ self-esteem peaks when they are nine years old, then takes a nose dive,” writes clinical psychologist Robin F. Goodman of the New York University Child Study Center. According to the Center, self-esteem drops in the pre-teen years because there is “a shift in focus—the body becomes an all-consuming passion and barometer of worth.

Natalia Brzezinski. “Building Our Daughters’ Self Esteem By Starting with Our Own,” *HuffPost* (Blogs), June 4, 2010.

8 out of 10 girls avoid seeing friends and family or trying out for a team and 7 out of 10 will not be assertive in their opinion or stick to their decision when they don't feel good about the way they look.

Dove, Girls and Beauty Confidence: The Global Report, 2017.

By grade six many girls have learned they must choose between being smart and being liked. One University of Warwick study found that by age 14 boys expect to be more intelligent than their female peers and girls feel the pressure to dumb down so as not to intimidate them.

University of Warwick. "Girls feel they must 'play dumb' to please boys, study shows." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 5 August 2014. <www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/08/140805090947.htm>.

The toys we shower girls with reinforce these mindsets: Barbie computers with half the software of their male counterparts; Merida dolls that have been radically adapted to make them thinner, tidier, and more nicely dressed than the *Brave* movie character.

Princesses with starring roles in Disney movies speak only a minority of the dialogue—and far less than they did in the films of the 1930s and '50s. While female characters speak 50% to 70% of the lines in the vintage movies *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, those in subsequent films are lucky to get even one-third of the dialogue...In *Mulan*, whose titular heroine saves China, females speak 23% of the dialogue...Even *Frozen*, the mega blockbuster starring two princess sisters, gives women only 41% of the dialogue. The only exceptions to the female-minority rule are *Tangled* and *BRAVE*, whose female characters speak 52% and 74% of the lines.

<http://qz.com/603052/new-research-has-uncovered-a-disturbing-trend-about-female-characters-in-disney-movies/>

$\frac{3}{4}$ of girls aged 8 -12 would like to switch something about their appearance.

According to a Global Dove Study

47% of girls from grades 5-12 want to lose weight – largely because of pictures they see in the media.

Beauty-related anxiety is a big problem, and is recognized as an important issue by young people all around the world.

Australian girls say that body image is one of their top three worries in life. One in three 6-year-olds in Japan experiences low body confidence. 81% of 10-year-old girls in the U.S. are afraid of being fat. And more than 110,000 girls in Brazil underwent cosmetic surgery in 2009.

http://selfesteem.dove.us/Articles/Written/What_is_body_confidence.aspx [accessed January 2016]

A global study commissioned by Dove revealed that six out of 10 girls opt out of important activities because they're worried about the way they look.

Studies in Finland, China, and the U.S. show that girls' relationship with the way they look has an impact on their academic performance: girls who think they are overweight, regardless of their actual weight, have lower grades.

And the negative impact of low body confidence continues later in life, with 17% of women claiming they won't go to a job interview and 8% missing work on days when they feel bad about the way they look.

http://selfesteem.dove.us/Articles/Written/What_is_body_confidence.aspx [accessed January 2016]

As young as age 7 children believe they are valued more for their looks than their character.

UK GirlGuiding study quoted in *The Guardian*, Sept 2017.

81% of 10-year-old girls are afraid of being fat.

According to the National Eating Disorders Association in US.

91% of women are unhappy with their bodies.

According to DoSomething.org

Serious athletes report higher rates of Eating Disorders than their peers.

See, for example, Norwegian research by Jorunn Sundgot-Borgen, PhD, and Monica Klungland Torstveit, MS, “Prevalence of Eating Disorders in Elite Athletes Is Higher Than in the General Population,” https://www.researchgate.net/publication/8928769_Prevalence_of_Eating_Disorders_in_Elite_Athletes_Is_Higher_Than_in_the_General_Population

Film critic Kevin B. Lee analyzed data from Cinemetrics prior to the 2014 Academy Awards for the New York Times. He found that best actor nominees that year spent an average of 85 minutes onscreen in their films, compared to 57 minutes for best actress nominees.

<http://qz.com/603052/new-research-has-uncovered-a-disturbing-trend-about-female-characters-in-disney-movies/>

Of the 41 nominees for directors, cinematographers, film editors, composers or visual effects artists for the 91st Academy Awards not one was a woman. 2 of the 20 screenwriting nominees were women. Altogether, of the 211 individuals who received behind-the-scenes Oscar nominations 53 are females (25%).

deadline.com/2019/01/oscar-nominations-female-nominees-list-1202539278/

Women and girls are the subject of less than 20% of news stories. “When a group is not featured in the media... it is called symbolic annihilation.”

Martha Lauzen, Center for the Study of Women in TV and Film

Every 2 minutes somewhere in the world a woman is dying in pregnancy or childbirth.

Politifact.com

The sexualization of girls in all forms of media is a “broad and increasing problem harmful to girls' self-image and healthy development” in many ways: undermining a girl's confidence in and comfort with her own body, leading to anxiety, shame, and difficulty in developing a healthy sexual self-image; and linked to eating disorders, low self-esteem, and major depression or depressed mood, the most common mental health problems in girls and women.

American Psychological Association Task Force Report

Every 92 seconds someone in the US is sexually assaulted. 82% of minors and 90% of adults are female.
15% of rape survivors in the US are between the ages of 12 and 17.

<https://www.rainn.org/statistics/victims-sexual-violence>

1 in 4 girls experience teen dating violence.

In response to calls for action from families, communities, organizations, NGO's and international organizations (including the UN), the Government of Canada launched an independent National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in September 2016. In 2013 the RCMP released their findings that 1,131 women had been murdered and gone missing.

<https://www.cbc.ca/missingandmurdered/>

A 2018 US study reported 506 missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in just 71 cities. Researchers stated this represents only a fraction of the actual cases. The report also points out that lack of data collection, lack of persecution for offenders and institutional racism occurs in urban areas – not just on reservations as was originally thought.

<https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2018/11/21/a-new-study-on-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-and-girls-highlights-challenges/>

Domestic violence in Mexico is described as a “pandemic”, normally at the hands of family members (Medrano et al Feb 2017), that cuts across social, economic, cultural and age lines (*El Universal* 14, Feb 2017). In March, 2019 Human Rights activists in Mexico condemned a government plan to slash funding for women’s shelters – and instead give the money directly to victims of domestic violence. But advocates for victims of domestic violence warned that cutting funding to shelters risks undoing two decades of work by civil society organizations, while exposing women and children to increased danger.

CANUSAUSAMEXICOMEXICO<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/05/mexico-funding-cuts-womens-shelters-domestic-violence>DomesticViolenceinMexico

Workplace sexual harassment is a massive problem in the US with 50% of women experiencing some form of “quid pro quo” (employment or benefits contingent on sexual favors) or other sexually inappropriate behaviours.

Sexual harassment of Mexican women farm workers has received nationwide attention in the US. Women farmworkers have been forced to have sex at gunpoint, threatened, and been fired after filing complaints against their managers and foremen. Women also refer to one field in California as the “field de calzon” or “field of panties” due to multiple counts of rape. Despite this growing concern, literature on WSH has been largely limited to middle-income, educated, white women working in non-agricultural settings.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5957069/>

According to *Breaking the Silence: Sexual Harassment of Mexican Women Farmworkers 2016*

By Nicole Jung-Eun Kim,^{a,b} Victoria Breckwich Vásquez,^{c,d} Elizabeth Torres,^e R. M. Bud Nicola,^a and Catherine Karr^{e,f}

Arguably the most known gender inequality statistic in North America is the wage gap. The number in the US varies significantly with race. Throughout their careers Black women will lose \$840,000 to this wage gap and Latina women will lose over 1 million!

In Canada the greatest discrepancies show up for single mothers whose average income is 1/3 less than their male counterparts. www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/54930-eng.htm

According to UNESCO's Institute of Statistics data, only 28% of the world's researchers are women. In North America and Western Europe, it's just 32%. They also point out that "Numerous studies have found that women in STEM fields publish less, are paid less for their research and do not progress as far as men in their careers."

A fascinating report from the Girl Scouts of America Research Institute found that African American and Latina girls are more likely to have leadership aspirations, to consider themselves leaders, to have leadership experiences and to enjoy those experiences than Caucasian girls.

A similar study of eighth grade students from various parts of the US found that African American girls have higher levels of self-esteem than African American boys or Caucasian girls.

Girl Scout Institute, "The State of Girls: Unfinished Business," 109.
Girl Scout Institute, "The State of Girls: Unfinished Business," 110-112.
"Monitoring the Future, a Continuing Study of American Youth"
conducted by the University of Michigan Survey Research Center in 1999.
<https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/NAHDAP/studies/2940/staff>

Differences in women's ways of thinking, processing and decision-making lead to lower scores on male oriented university tests which reinforces our self-doubt. No wonder many women at high school and university ages struggle with "imposter syndromes" – believing that we have achieved is a result of some kind of fluke. Sadly, this is most common among the brightest and most high achieving young women!

Kate Bahn, "Faking It: Women, Academia, and Impostor Syndrome," Chronicle Vitae.
<https://chroniclevitae.com/news/412-faking-it-women-academia-and-impostor-syndrome>

See Crandall, Stipek, and Hoffman's work on the negative correlation between intelligence and anticipation of success in young women; quoted in Mary Field Belenky et al, *Women's Ways of Knowing* (Basic Books, 1997), 196.

1 in 5 women in the US will be sexually assaulted by the time they graduate from college.

behavioralscientist.org/what-the-origins-of-the-1-in-5-statistic-teaches-us-about-sexual-assault-policy/

Yet survivors at more than 80 colleges say campus authorities failed to help them and have filed complaints with the Education Department. Students found responsible for a sexual assault are expelled in a minority of cases, the Center for Public Integrity found in a 2010 investigation.

www.vox.com/2014/10/15/18088608/campus-sexual-assault-title-ix

The average age of trafficked girls in the US is 12-14 years of age. Trafficked girls and women have an estimated 7-year life expectancy.

According to FBI data

Around the world 27 girls per minute
are forced into early marriages.

Womendeliver.org

Girls encounter more stressors than boys of the same age and react more strongly to those pressures, especially regarding relationships.

An astounding 91% of US women are unhappy with their bodies and resort to dieting to achieve their ideal body shape. Unfortunately, only 5% of women naturally possess the body type often portrayed by Americans in the media.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "Developing Adolescents." APA: American Psychological Association. Accessed February 24, 2014, <http://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/develop.pdf>.

More than 1/3 of the people who admit to “normal dieting,” will merge into pathological dieting. Roughly 1/4 of those will suffer from a partial or full-on eating disorder.

Geary, Kevin. "What Girls Are Taught About Health and Fitness (Roundtable)." The Rebooted Body. Accessed February 24, 2014, <http://rebootedbody.com/038/>.

Among female high school athletes in aesthetic sports, 41.5% reported disordered eating. They were eight times more likely to incur an injury than athletes in aesthetic sports who did not report disordered eating.

Jankowski, C. (2012). Associations Between Disordered Eating, Menstrual Dysfunction, and Musculoskeletal Injury Among High School Athletes. *Yearbook of Sports Medicine*, 2012, 394-395. doi:10.1016/j.yspm.2011.08.003

Among female college athletes surveyed, 25.5% had subclinical eating disorder symptoms.

Greenleaf, C., Petrie, T. A., Carter, J., & Reel, J. J. (2009). Female Collegiate Athletes: Prevalence of Eating Disorders and Disordered Eating Behaviors. *Journal of American College Health*, 57(5), 489-496. doi:10.3200/jach.57.5.489-496

In the workplace, women with low self-esteem tend to be self-deprecating, to minimize their accomplishments, or let others take credit for their work. They never move up. Finally, with friends, they are unable to say no.

Poor self-esteem has been linked to higher levels of anxiety, depression, perfectionism, hopelessness, physical illness, and unhealthy relationships.

psychcentral.com/lib/women-and-self-esteem/

Adolescent girls are twice as likely to experience depression, anxiety and panic disorders as their male peers, and are almost four times more likely to suffer from PTSD.

childmind.org/report/2017-childrens-mental-health-report/anxiety-depression-adolescence/

Beauty-related anxiety is a big problem and is recognized as an important issue by young people all around the world.

Australian girls say that body image is one of the top three worries in life. One in three 6-year-olds in Japan experiences low body confidence.

81% of 10-year-old girls in the U.S. are afraid of being fat.

More than 110,000 girls in Brazil underwent cosmetic surgery in 2009.

http://selfesteem.dove.us/Articles/Written/What_is_body_confidence.aspx [accessed January 2016] American Psychological Association Task Force Report

One large study in the US showed no significant relationship between objective (external) and subjective (internal) measures of attractiveness. It was the teen's own rating of their attractiveness that correlated to their anxiety and self-worth.

Pennsylvania Early Adolescent Transition Study

Meanwhile at school ...
differences in women's ways of
thinking, processing and decision-
making lead to lower scores on male
oriented university tests.

High percentages of women in
university and beyond struggle with
“imposter syndrome” even though the
research suggests that this
phenomenon is most common among
the brightest and most high achieving
women.

<https://chroniclevitae.com/news/412-faking-it-women-academia-and-impostor-syndrome>

A study of 4,000 American children, by the Girl Scout Research Institute, found that the greatest single barrier to leadership reported by girls was a lack of self-confidence in their own skills and competencies.

Other barriers included stress, fear of speaking in front of others, seeming bossy, and peer pressure. Girl Scout Research Institute, “Change It Up! What Girls Say About Redefining Leadership.” 2008.

The same study also showed that girls were much more likely than boys to be aware of gender biases for women leaders and tended to set much higher standards for what it takes to be a leader today.

Girl Scout Research Institute, “Change It Up! What Girls Say About Redefining Leadership,” 2008.

These findings are significant, considering the same studies indicated that girls believe three qualities are needed to be a good leader: a positive attitude (86%), the ability to listen (85%), and confidence (85%).

Girl Scout Research Institute, “Exploring Girls’ Leadership: Research Review.”

A 2013 survey carried out by the Zeno Group working in the US, Canada, UK, Beijing, India, Indonesia, Singapore, Japan, Netherlands, and Brazil found that 9 out of 10 women believe that women leaders have to make more sacrifices than their male peers and 76% are concerned about their ability to achieve a balance between personal and professional goals.

swire.com/news-releases/find-your-fearless-millennial-women-question-professional-ambition-211408921.html

Women managing leadership and motherhood face unique challenges... doubt, guilt... Often feeling, “Whatever I do it is not enough.”

Poor women are 5 times as likely to have unplanned pregnancies, and 5 times as likely to abort their babies.

Guttmacher.org

Of the 196 countries of the world only 15 had a female head of state in 2017.

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/03/08/women-leaders-around-the-world/>

While accurate figures are difficult to access it is believed that up to 80% of the estimated 30+ million people held as slaves today are girls and women.

<http://www.humantraffickingmovie.com/human-trafficking-statistics.html>

Women make up half the world's population but 70% of its poor.

Womendeliver.org infographics Invest in Equality

In fact, women work 2/3's of the world's work hours but earn 1/10th of its income.

Womendeliver.org infographics Invest in Equality

Girls and women spend 90% of their earned income on their family while men spend 30-40%.

<http://www.womendeliver.org/knowledge-center/facts-figures/sustainable-development/>

McKinsey diversity research shows that fewer men than women acknowledge the challenges faced by female employees at work.

For instance, when asked whether “even with equal skills and qualifications, women have much more difficulty reaching top-management positions,” the gender divide was striking: 93 percent of women agreed with the statement, but just 58 percent of men.

A CEO's Guide To Gender Equality, McKinsey Quarterly, Nov 2015
http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/leading_in_the_21st_century/a_ceos_guide_to_gender_equality?cid=other-eml-nsl-mip-mck-oth-1512

61% of the world's illiterate are women.

While boys and girls start out in primary school at the same rate by secondary school there are 84 girls for every 100 boys still enrolled and by tertiary levels there are 61 girls for every 100 boys.

http://www.womendeliver.org/assets/Invest_in_Girls_Education.pdf

Women own just 1% of the world's land
– in some cultures prevented by law
from doing so.

Politifact.com

Elderly women in the US are twice as likely to live in poverty as their male peers.

<http://money.cnn.com/2014/05/13/retirement/retirement-women/index.html> [accessed December 23, 2015]

Elderly women are much more likely (2/3 of all reported cases) to be abused than elderly men – the likelihood of abuse growing with age.

http://www.owl-national.org/Mothers_Day_Reports_files/OWL_MothersDay_Report_09_Final_2.pdf [accessed December 23, 2015]

While studies indicate that have a minimum of 30% women in peacekeeping decision-making teams increases levels of peace. A study by UN Women found that of 61 peace agreements between 2008 and 2012, women were among the signatories in only two.

While the same percentage of minimum 30% applies to the health of political teams and women now occupy more elected posts in many countries, they are still under-represented in leadership roles. For example, the global average of women mayors is less than 5%.

See Susan Markham, “Women as Agents of Change: Having Voice in Society and Influencing Policy.” The World Bank. *Women’s Voice, Agency, and Participation Research Series*, 2013, No. 5; “Strengthening Women’s Roles in Parliaments.” *Parliamentary Affairs*, 2012, 1-11.

When women are empowered as political leaders, countries experience higher standards of living, and positive developments can be seen in education, infrastructure and health.

L. Beaman et al., “Women Politicians, Gender Bias, and Policy-making in Rural India,” Background Paper for UNICEF’s *The State of the World’s Children Report 2007*, 11, 15-16, http://www.unicef.org/sowc07/docs/beaman_duflo_pande_topalova.pdf.

Several studies show that women’s political participation results in tangible gains for democratic governance, including greater responsiveness to citizen needs, increased cooperation across party and ethnic lines, and more sustainable peace.

A. Cammisa, A. and B. Reingold, “Women in State Legislators and State Legislative Research: Beyond Sameness and Difference,” *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* Vol. 4, No.2 (2004): 181-210, <http://sppq.press.illinois.edu/4/2/cammisa.pdf>; C.S. Rosenthal, “Gender Styles in Legislative Committees” *Women & Politics* Vol. 21, No. 2 (2001): 21-46, http://dx.doi.org/10.1300/J014v21n02_02; C. Chinkin, “Peace Agreements as a Means for Promoting Gender Equality and Ensuring the Participation of Women” United Nations: Division for the Advancement of Women (2003), <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/peace2003/reports/BPChinkin.PDF>

Research and case studies suggest that peace agreements, post-conflict reconstruction and governance have a better chance of long-term success when women are involved.

C. Chinkin, “Peace Agreements as a Means for Promoting Gender Equality and Ensuring the Participation of Women” United Nations: Division for the Advancement of Women (2003), <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/peace2003/reports/BPChinkin.PDF>.

Furthermore, there is strong evidence that establishing sustainable peace requires transforming power relationships, including achieving more equitable gender relations.

Richard Strickland and Nata Duvvury, “Gender Equity and Peacebuilding: From Rhetoric to Reality: Finding the Way,” International Center for Research on Women (2003), http://www.icrw.org/docs/gender_peace_report_0303.pdf.

Research indicates that whether a legislator is male or female has a distinct impact on their policy priorities.

Women and Children: The Double Dividend of Gender Equality (New York: UNICEF, 2006), http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/11_12_06SOWC2007.pdf.

There is strong evidence, for instance, that as more women are elected to office, there is a corollary increase in policy making that emphasizes the priorities of families, women, and ethnic and racial minorities. Women must be actively engaged in governance to represent the concerns of women and other marginalized voters and to suggest policy alternatives.

Research specifically looking at gender styles in legislative committees shows that women's leadership and conflict resolution styles embody democratic ideals and that women tend to work in a less hierarchical, more participatory, and more collaborative way than male colleagues.

C.S. Rosenthal, "Gender Styles in Legislative Committees" *Women & Politics* Vol. 21, No. 2 (2001): 21-46, http://dx.doi.org/10.1300/J014v21n02_02.

Women are also more likely to work across party lines and strive for consensus, even in partisan and polarized environments.

Moreover, women lawmakers say in studies that they see issues like health care, the environment and combating violence more broadly as social issues, and that women more than men see government as a tool to help serve underrepresented or minority groups.

Karen O'Connor, "Do Women in Local, State, and National Legislative Bodies Matter?: A Definitive Yes Proves Three Decades of Research By Political Scientists" (paper presented at the Why Women Matter Summit, Washington, DC, March 3, 2003), 24-28, http://www.thewhitehouseproject.org/culture/researchandpolls/documents/Briefing_book.pdf.

Women lawmakers are often perceived as more sensitive to community concerns. Recent focus groups convened by NDI in Kenya, for instance, showed that both women and men regard female members of parliament (MPs) as performing better than men in terms of constituent representation.

A. Cammisa, A. and B. Reingold, "Women in State Legislators and State Legislative Research: Beyond Sameness and Difference," *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* Vol. 4, No.2 (2004): 181-210, <http://sppq.press.illinois.edu/4/2/cammisa.pdf>.

“Fortune 500 firms . . . ranking in the top 25% in number of women board members generally have higher returns on equity sales and working capital with stronger than average performance with three or more female board members.

Catalyst, “Companies With More Women Board Directors Experience Higher Financial Performance, According to Latest Catalyst Bottom Line Report.”

Yet the number of organizations with balanced teams is minimal.

Medical literature reveals a paucity of women as top faculty; the National Science Foundation reports there are few women in prestigious scientific positions; Bar associations cite low numbers of female partners in big law firms; Commissions at universities like John Hopkins, MIT, and Harvard find a lack of women among tenured faculty or at top academic ranks. Yet, each university or profession seems to think it has a unique problem.

Linda Tarr-Whelan, *Women Lead the Way* (Berrett-Koehler, 2011), 41-2.

Many sources demonstrate that empowering women translates into community transformation.

As early as the early 1990s the United Nations and World Bank began to appreciate the potential resource that women and girls represent.

UNICEF issued a major report arguing that gender equality yields a “double dividend” by elevating not only women but also their children and communities.

The Hunger Project proclaims, “Women are key to ending hunger in Africa.”

Doctors Without Borders asserts, “Progress is achieved through women.”

Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* (New York, NY: Knopf, 2009)

No wonder a 2015 research project of female leaders in the US found that 67% of participants said that they need more support in building confidence to feel like they could be leaders.

KPMG “KPMG Women’s Leadership Study.

Closing Words

The complexity, connectedness and challenges of our world require people who are willing to look beyond - beyond the perspective of one culture or philosophy or gender; beyond the problems to transformational process; beyond what has been to what could be— and who are committed to building bridges across these chasms.

Bridge Builders with wisdom, wit, persistence, credibility, and skill.

People who are collaborative, intentional, innovative, inclusive, and transparent.

It turns out many women are particularly skilled at this, even though they may struggle to see themselves as leaders. As we have seen there are so many reasons for this but the high cost of women's low confidence - personally, organizationally and globally - invites a fresh look at this issue.

This high cost is true at personal, family, organizational and global levels. Girls and women with higher self-confidence do better academically and socially; have better mental health; take more calculated risks; speak up more about their convictions and are less likely to engage in self destructive behaviors. When a minimum of 30% women are included at decision making tables around the world levels of crime, corruption, terrorism, poverty and abuse go down ...and quality of life, health care, education and economic well-being go up. Conversely when women are not included ... well, you get the picture. This is why this is not just a woman's issue; it is a humanitarian issue.

As we have seen the reasons more girls and women are not following their BRAVE are complex and systemic ... From the moment of birth, in many cultures around the world, even in those where glass ceilings are being pushed back, mixed messages and challenges persist.

This begs two critical questions:

- Can women develop their leadership confidence? Turns out the answer is a resounding yes, beginning in early childhood and at critical windows throughout a woman's life discovering that they are not alone – that this is a common response to the mixed messages many women receive; having a strong and supportive team of friends and family; discovering their strengths and voice; and learning confidence building strategies can be profoundly helpful.
- Can we create environments in which both men and women can thrive? A bit harder of course— but yes--and the research suggests that the positive impact to *everyone* is significant.

Call To Action

Knowing what you now know what would you like to do about this?

Here are a few suggestions:

1. Share the gist of what you have learned with a friend this week
2. Get involved in a local woman's initiative
3. Find out more, then write a letter to a politician or editor of your paper about women's poverty or elder abuse or other issues in your area
4. Mentor a young woman
5. Encourage deeper dialogue within the leaders of your organization
6. Joining a book club to discuss a book that delves more deeply into these issues
7. Participate in organizations that support girls and women and boycott those that don't.