

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 than
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 100 million babies have been aborted, many in forced abortions, because they are female.

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.)

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By grade six most girls have learned
they must choose between being
smart and being liked.

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, neater and more nicely dressed than the character in the Disney BRAVE movie.

Disney movies where princesses even with a starring role 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 *has saved China* by the time the credits roll, females speak 23% of the dialogue...Even *Frozen*, the 2013 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 Study carried out by Dove in 2010)

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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]

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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]

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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/>

In 2011 only 11% of protagonists in
Hollywood movies were female.

(Misrepresentation stats)

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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)

15% of rape survivors in the US are
under the age of 12.

1 in 4 girls experience teen dating
violence.

1 in 4 women in the US will be raped
by the time they graduate from
college.

Yet nearly 2/3 of campuses still don't
comply with the 1972 laws
established to protect women from
and /or after assault.

(Misrepresentation stats)

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

(According to FBI data)

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

(Womendeliver.org)

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

78% of 17 year old girls in the US are
unhappy with their bodies.

(Misrepresentation stats)

Adolescent girls who diet are at a
324% greater risk for obesity than
their peers.

Serious athletes report higher rates of
eating disorders than their peers.

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Girls with low self-esteem are many times more likely to report engaging in negative and potentially hazardous activities.

Perfectionism, hopelessness and discouragement rates increase through teen years for girls.

In the last 10 years levels of depression have doubled in girls and women. Globally in 2014 the number one cause of death for girls aged 15-18 was suicide.

(Missrepresentation stats: <http://therepresentationproject.org/film/miss-representation/the-issue/>)

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.

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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."

There is a rule of thumb that it takes a woman 10 years longer, on average, than a man, to know what she is good at.

Helgeson ??

Highly intelligent and competent women are more likely to doubt or underestimate their abilities.

Women's Ways of Knowing P. ?

There is a trend among Ivy League women leaders to transition out of the marketplace into the social and non-profit world
... one can't help but ask why?

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Harvard Business Review

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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/>

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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)

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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 (2012) 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%.

(Markham, 2013)

“Fortune 500 firms . . . ranking in the top 25% in number of women board members generally have higher returns on equity sales, and working capital”¹ 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.

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.

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- 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.