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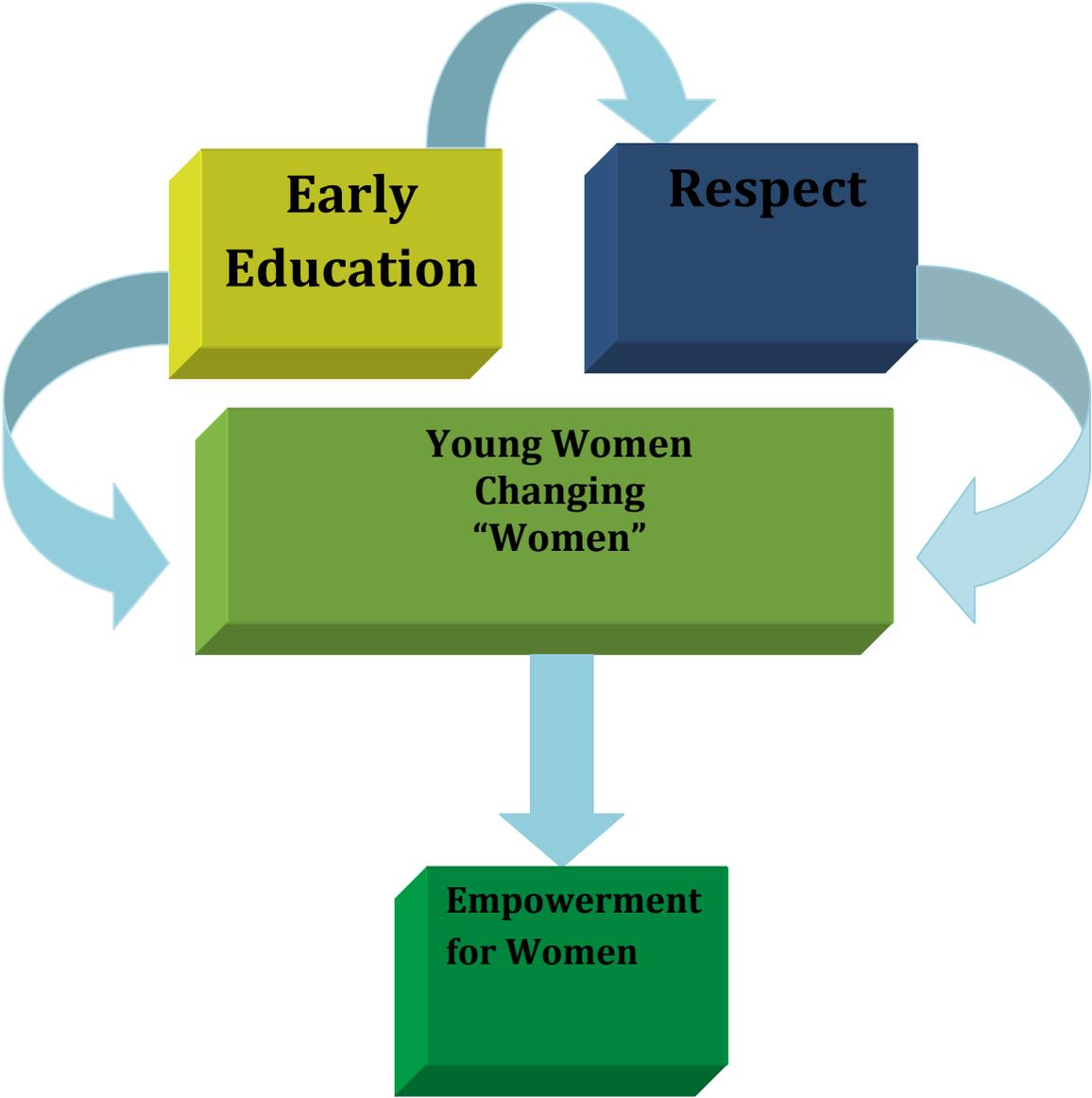
Empowering Women for the Future
Policy Paper: A Proposal

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Appendix

Empowering Women for the Future



Women empowerment: A history of patriarchy and starting fresh

Much like Rome, patriarchy was not built in a day. Rather, centuries of reinforcement have molded much of the world's view of women. In the Western world, women are given the constant pressure of being sexy and dressing to be noticed. In the Eastern world, women are to cover up and be invisible. In the United States plastic surgery is the beauty standard for women, while it was foot binding for Ancient China. To reform such demanding, unfair and unrealistic standards and ideals of women is a very complex goal without an easy solution in sight. Simply tearing down something with such a sturdy foundation will only leave the foundation to be rebuilt upon. However, starting from the bottom-up, a new foundation must be laid. Before they are exposed to the existing ideals of women, newborn generations should be taught a new way of thinking.

Generation after generation, the masses are told they should model their thoughts after great scholars of the past, such as Aristotle, who happened to not have a good opinion in regards to women and their role in society. He illustrated this in many of his writings such as *Politics*, from which quotes like this come:

“In the same way, the relationship between the male and the female is *by nature* such that the male is higher, the female lower, that the male rules and the female is ruled,” (Aristotle, 1254).

Thus, a problem is produced

In 2007, Hesse-Biber, author of *The Cult of Thinness*, said a conservative estimation of young women and girls with eating disorders were between five and 10 million in America.

Many witness increasing numbers of drop outs in schools due to early and unexpected pregnancies.

Sit down among any group of women, whether there are two or eight, some kind of gossip or drama, will eventually be discussed, obviously or vaguely. Women see other women as the enemy rather than working with each other to form strong bonds.

If there is any one thing to which these problems can be attributed to it is a lack of respect among women and men for women and a lack of respect for one's self. Low self-esteem is a large factor for many women and girls, of all ages. This, eventually, leads to distorted self views and strong desires for notice and acceptance from others. Of course it is plain to see how eating disorders and self dissatisfaction develop. Furthermore, acceptance may only seem possible by taking beauty into one's own hands, often leading to dressing and acting promiscuously. Several factors will be involved, different ones for various situations, however, on a broad scale of factors and situations, early and unexpected pregnancies are also results of a lack of self respect.

Men have been passed down a role of being above women, therefore, they lack respect for them, and because women are trying so hard to gain the respect of men, they become involved in a rat race and see other women as competition instead as comrades trying to obtain the same goal. Anyone who has ever seen a sports game or the Paramount Pictures film, *Mean Girls* (2004), written by Tina Fey and Rosalind Wiseman, knows how nasty this competition can get.

The solution: A new curriculum

“Ultimately a daughter inherits the attitudes, beliefs, roles, and struggles of her mother,” (Rabinor, *Feminist Perspectives on Eating Disorders*, 1994).

Destruction of the self begins at a very early age in the relationship between the mother and the daughter as the mother strives to create a “trophy daughter”. Right away, new ideals must be instilled, opposing what ideals already exist.

This early education should start as soon as pre-K and continue through high school. It would start out with daily or weekly instruction geared toward just girls, with a monthly assembly including boys and male staff. The exclusion of the females may further current stereotypes of women being separate or unequal, at first, but the purpose is to first build the confidence of girls. If they then have the confidence to withstand negative messages from the rest of society then they will be one step closer to demolishing those current stereotypes.

The curriculum in this program should be centered on the idea of 1) developing respect and love for the self and 2) developing respect and love for other women. Girls should be presented with the types of issues they will face in the future with society’s overall engraved vision of women.

Children have no censors and therefore can be very mean and harsh for peers who may be having a particularly hard time during the transition to puberty. Girls should be aware of this “fact of life”. They should be taught that while difficult, this transition is an important one. It is the step into womanhood and the key to their essence for new life.

With bodily changes come changes in nutritional needs. Girls need to know what those needs are. They should know there is much more to being fit and in shape than being thin and caught up in the web of unhealthy dieting constantly thrown at them by the media.

A female centered sex education should be taught without the pressure of males being in the room. Young women need to know all the truths behind the sex myths often told to them. Most importantly they need to know that “no” is an option. They should know it is true that if someone really loves them they will be willing to wait.

Girls will be taught motherhood courses, including the processes and details during the actual pregnancy and the labor. They should know of the nutritional changes and needs at this time in their life as well, for themselves and their baby. Proper care of the infant should also be included. The message that not all women are meant to be mothers should be implemented throughout the motherhood courses. Facts on adoption and abortion will also be provided.

Career building should be a large part of the curriculum. All women have talent and drive, and the career building in this program should be based on finding that talent, what women want to do with it and harnessing the drive it will take to get them there and beyond. From there, each young woman should begin to develop a portfolio as they continue with this program. Success is not an issue, not even when compared to the success of a man.

What may be the most important result of this curriculum are the alliances and relationships young women build with each other and mentors. Trust without the fear of being judged will be built, and they will have someone to go to rather than carrying the burdens of life.

Conclusion: Learning and growing

The amount of content, of course, will vary and increase with grade levels. The development of this curriculum will have a slow start. Much of it will be trial and error. If it starts in one school in one community and is successful, however, hopefully it would spread statewide, nationwide, etc. Then, after a few years of the instillation of this curriculum and empowering young girls and women the existing ideals will be the minorities. More women will be recognized as successful leaders, business women and artists on the same ranks that men are considered successful. Finally, women will be stronger emotionally and mentally for themselves, other women and society as a whole.

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