Self-esteem of Adolescent School Girls: Empowerment Lessons from U.S.

Distinguished Fulbright Award in Teaching 2012

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## DEDICATED TO THE SPIRIT OF COURAGE – TO MALALA YOUSAFZAI

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Dedicated to the spirit of courage – to Malala Yousafzai

Malala Yousafzai – Courage comes in many forms and shape. I was amazed and shaken to see it in the form of this 11 years old chit of a girl by the name of Malala Yousafzai. She had the courage and commitment to risk everything and speak for education rights for girls.

Malala dreamt of being a doctor. That required her going to school, a right denied to girls in Pakistan’s Swat Valley by the Taliban in 2009. The Taliban sought to shut down schools educating girls. Malala spoke out, continued her education despite the risk, maintained a blog under a pseudonym and inspired other girls to speak out. For the past three years, Malala has been a voice for girls who could not speak out for themselves. Her work earned her a nomination for the International Children’s Peace Prize and Pakistan’s inaugural National Youth Peace Prize in 2011. She also led a delegation of children’s rights activists, sponsored by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

But there was a price to be paid. The bullets of the Taliban tried to silence Malala. She is still recovering in a UK hospital from the deadly attack. It is shocking that in the year 2012; girls are denied education and banned from schools. This report and my Capstone project is dedicated for her courage, to Malala.
Acronyms

AAUW – American Association of University Women
DFAT – Distinguished Fulbright Award in Teaching
EDCI –
ERHS – Eleanor Roosevelt High School
NWSA – National Women’s Studies Association
STEM – Science, Technology and Mathematics
UMD – University of Maryland
UNICEF – United Nation’s International Children Education Fund
U.S. – United States of America
“Often when people begin to study the phenomenon of oppression, they start with recognizing that human beings are different from each other in many ways based upon gender, ethnicity, skin color, first language, age, ability, religion, status, religion, sexual orientation and economic class. The obvious first leap that people make is the assumption that if we just began to appreciate differences, and treat each other with respect, then everything would be all right, and there would be no oppression. This view is represented beautifully by the now famous quote from Rodney King in response to the riots following his beating and the release of the police officers who were filmed beating him: Why can’t we all get along? It should be that simple, but it isn’t.” (Harro, 1982)

Abstract
I have written a research report titled “Self-Esteem of Adolescent girls: Empowerment Lessons from U.S.”. It is a qualitative study carried out in U.S. during the scholarship tenure with Distinguished Fulbright Award in Teaching Program 2012, based at University of Maryland.

This study is based on a multi pronged approach. It includes a comprehensive survey of secondary literature- books, reports, magazines and websites. It also incorporates active learning-researching components like a number of school visits; interviews with students, teachers and experts; workshops; Conferences and taking up of University courses. It also proposes the basic framework for an innovative after school “Capsule Course for Girls’ Empowerment”
Empowerment - A Paradigm Shift

What is empowerment?
Empowerment should be defined as a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power in people for use in their own lives, their communities and in their society, by acting on issues they define as important ("Empowerment: What Is It?", 1999).

For many in Extension, empowerment is the goal we have for our programs and the volunteers, participants, or clients with whom we work. But what is empowerment? How can we recognize it? Evaluate it? Talk about it with others who are interested in empowerment? Our recent literature review of articles indicating a focus on empowerment, across several scholarly and practical disciplines, resulted in no clear definition of the concept across disciplinary lines. Many using the term cope with its lack of clear, shared meaning by employing the concept very narrowly, using only their specific scholarly discipline or program to inform them. Others do not define the term at all. As a result, many have come to view "empowerment" as nothing more than the most recently popular buzz word to be thrown in to make sure old programs get new funding.

I think empowerment is much more than that. Empowerment is a process that challenges our assumptions about the way things are and can be. It challenges our basic assumptions about power, helping, achieving, and succeeding. To begin to demystify the concept of empowerment, we need to understand the concept broadly in order to be clear about how and why we narrow our focus of empowerment for specific programs and projects (specific dimension or level,
etc.) and to allow discussion of empowerment across disciplinary and practice lines.

At the core of the concept of empowerment is the idea of power. The possibility of empowerment depends on two things. First, empowerment requires that power can change. If power cannot change, if it is inherent in positions or people, then empowerment is not possible, nor is empowerment conceivable in any meaningful way. In other words, if power can change, then empowerment is possible. Second, the concept of empowerment depends upon the idea that power can expand. It can expand to enroll more and more people, across gender, positions and disciplines.

I realized that power does not exist in isolation nor is it inherent in individuals. By implication, since power is created in relationships, power and power relationships can change. Empowerment as a process of change, then, becomes a meaningful concept.

I propose that power should be conceived as it can be gained by some specific interventions, guidance and changes even if those who hold it are not ready to give it up voluntarily.

Having said that, we must understand that empowerment is multi-dimensional, social, and is a process. It is multi-dimensional in that it occurs within sociological, psychological, economic, and other dimensions. Empowerment also occurs at various levels, such as individual, group, and community. Empowerment, by definition, is a social process, since it occurs in relationship to others. Empowerment is a process that is similar to a path or journey, one that develops as we work through it. Other aspects of empowerment may vary according to the specific context and people involved, but these remain constant.
In addition, one important implication of this definition of empowerment is that the individual and community are fundamentally connected (Sousa, 2009).

For the purpose of my study I adopted the definition of self-esteem, as “Self-esteem is the experience that we are appropriate to life and to the requirements of life. More specifically, self-esteem is:

1. Confidence in our ability to think and to cope with the basic challenges of life.
2. Confidence in our right to be happy, the feeling of being worthy, deserving, entitled to assert our needs and wants and to enjoy the fruits of our efforts.” (Branden, 1992)

At the same time, it is important to understand the characteristics of high and low self-esteem. Rosenberg’s conceptualization of self-esteem is heavily slanted toward the positive. He saw the high self-esteem person as likely to seek personal growth, development and improvement by pushing themselves to the limits to exercise their capabilities. He characterized the individual with high self-esteem as not having feelings of superiority, in the sense of arrogance, conceit, contempt for others, overwhelming pride. Rather he saw it as having self-respect, considering oneself a person of work, appreciating one’s own merits, yet recognizing personal faults. The person with high self-esteem doesn’t consider himself better than others, but neither does he consider himself inferior to others.

Rosenberg found that a deficient sense of the self has a profound impact on psychological functioning and mental health as well as on interpersonal behavior. He found that low self-esteem people are more likely to feel awkward, shy, conspicuous, and unable to express themselves with confidence. The low
self-esteem person is always worried about making a mistake, being embarrassed or exposing themselves to ridicule. For low self-esteem people the self is a tender and delicate object, sensitive to the slightest touch. They have a strong incentive to avoid people or circumstances that reflect negatively on their feelings of self-worth. They are hypersensitive and hyperalert to signs of rejection, inadequacy or rebuff. They tend to adopt a characteristic strategy for dealing with life that is protective and defensive.

They are more depressed and unhappy; they have greater levels of anxiety; they show greater impulse to aggression, irritability, and resentment, and suffer from a lack of satisfaction with life in general. They have greater vulnerability to criticism, less self-concept stability, less faith in humanity and greater social anxiety. Virtually every feature of the low self-esteem personality undercuts spontaneity and creativity.

They tend to look for evidence that they are inadequate whereas high self-esteem people are motivated to discover evidence confirming their strengths. For low self-esteem individuals accepting positive feedback is a more subtle kind of risk than accepting negative feedback. Where successful performers attribute their successful outcomes to internal characteristics, low self-esteem individuals contribute success to external influences. Thus, their general approach to life is avoiding risk and embarrassment. As a result, they are never able to discover what they can do or be. This results in individual pain and loss of human potential. (Owens, Stryker, & Goodman, 2006)
Further I define “adolescent” as the age group of 13 to 16 years old. I decided to choose 16 as the upper limit because my study group is the one that is in high school.

**Empowerment and Power: Context of Girls**

Now, defining empowerment and power and their intricate web of connectedness with individuals, groups and societies as the issue to be addressed, it is pertinent to understand that how it affects adolescent girls in their daily lives. My experience in patriarchal society in the small city of Varanasi, India and interactions with school students at Eleanor Roosevelt High School, cohort members of Fulbright, students and professors at University of Maryland in mega cities of United States, confirmed that despite geography and level of economic development, issues of empowerment and power and hence self esteem are prevalent.

I started my capstone study with a premise that probably I will be able to get some insight regarding presence or absence of such issues and what are the interventions that can be adopted to address the problem.

**Why Empowerment: RELEVANCE OF THE PROJECT**

Feeling of being disempowered leads to low self-esteem, lack of self-confidence, vulnerability to peer pressure and hence victimization. Case in favor of deeper understanding and interventions to address these issues cannot be over-emphasized. To bring out the issue more clearly, I will explain some of my observations in my school in India and understanding I developed during my interactions here in USA.
Reason for the project I chose, is the context in which I have been observing various systemic issues exacerbating the process of disempowerment in my home institution in India.

My home institution – Sant Atulanand Residential Academy, is a socially inclusive residential school in Varanasi (India). It has 1500+ students and a staff of 100 teachers. About 60 girl students are based in hostel. There is a thriving robust residential curriculum, ably supported by in house wardens and guardian teachers. We have in house doctor, Housemothers, plumbers, electricians, masons, laundrymen, gardeners, cleaners, cooks, guards and assistants besides an array of facilities like sports, auditorium, etc. **Despite it all, I perceive a distinct though invisible gender ceiling in the campus, which inhibits the growth and development of our young girls.**

**The nature of the bias**

Following are some observations that I found important to bring out nature of issues which girl student are facing in my school:

- There is reluctance in participation of girls in co curricular events
- Girls are not forthcoming and appear to be inhibited, lifeless, withdrawn and timid
- Fear of not being right and ridiculed keeps them off from asking questions or answering a query of teacher.
- They prefer writing their answers rather than presenting it themselves in person.
- They prefer anonymity over limelight
- Walking heads down is more prevalent than giggle and chuckle expected at that age
These observations and informal communication with girls set me thinking about low self-esteem of the girls there.

Besides the immediate relevance of the research for girls in my school, there is the broader context of relevance of this topic for my country India because:

- Women constitute 48% of the total population of India. Their development sets pace for sustainable growth of economy and society. The Principle of Gender Equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution - yet women suffer from varied forms of discrimination.

- The adolescent school girl suffers from psychological and social deprivation. Educational intervention for adolescent girl must be sensitive to her special needs and requirements.

Education of adolescent girl and its quality is determinant of family health, income, fertility control, family planning adoption and empowerment of women. It is directly linked to malnutrition, depression and low self esteem in adolescent girls. Her time, space, mobility is restricted and even her rights to her own body and mind are intruded upon. Advertisements and media glorify her as a showpiece. She consequently has low self esteem.

At a still larger and global level, we will agree that a healthy woman makes a healthy family and healthy families are key to wellbeing of any society and nation.
India and USA: similarities and differences
I was pondering over issues above when I got this opportunity to study, understand and develop a program to address them through Distinguished Fulbright Teachers Award. I got the opportunity to interact at depth with adolescent girl students at Eleanor Roosevelt High School, Greenbelt, my classmates at University of Maryland, women in my DFAT 2012 cohort, experts, scholars and professors. Findings from the study further consolidated my understanding of issues at hand and confirmed that they are prevalent across geography and culture.

In Indian context, disempowerment of girls begins at the time of birth itself. Female feticide is still prevalent in rural areas. Girls are considered secondary to their brothers from the very beginning and are disadvantaged in terms of investment on their education and nutrition. Starting from society and family it goes all the way to the other end of the continuum to the individual level.

In United States of America, I realized that though issues of low self-esteem and disempowerment are there, but they are vehemently denounced at the level of society and most of the families. There is no disadvantage, if nothing favorable, towards treatment of girls and investment in their education and nutrition. Issues here are mostly pertaining to individual level anxieties of appearance and acceptance within the peer group.

Realizing the importance of the task at hand, next big thing to do is to identify a set of activities and tools to use for empowering girl students in India. To broad base my proposed intervention, I conducted an AS IS study of empowerment from the literature, websites and conducting an open-ended questionnaire based survey of women in DFAT 2012 cohort. I also learned a lot from my interactions.
with girl students at Eleanor Roosevelt High School, attending courses at University of Maryland, by engaging in conversation with colleagues, working with the partner teacher at ERHS, Ms. Twu and last but not the least, from my faculty mentor.

**How to empower?**
Agreeing that issues regarding self-esteem, self-respect, peer-pressure, powerlessness are very much there, I needed to figure out what should be and can be done to address them. To come up with a solution, I adopted following methods to sift through array of interventions already being adopted. This as is study gave me a fair idea of what is being done and what more can we do to plug the holes in existing situation.

**AS IS of empowerment**
While studying about as is of empowerment and self esteem of women, I tried to capture details of the issue in various socio-economic situations and settings and also tried to evaluate the width of spectrum.

**Literature Review**

**Books and Journals**
Martha C. Nussbaum has brought out the most striking picture of systemic underprivileged picture of women in India in her book titled ‘Creating Capabilities’.

“Evidence abound that girls are less well nourished than boys and less often taken to the doctor in childhood when ill. Why? Because girls have fewer employment opportunities than boys and thus seen less important to the well being of the entire family. The work they do in the home does not bring in
money, so it is easy to overlook its economic importance. Moreover in northern and western India, girls move away from the family when they marry, taking a dowry with them. They are thus more expensive than boys, and parents often wonder why they should spend their resources on girls who would not be around to support them in their old age. The mortality of second daughters in northern and western India is notoriously high” (Nussbaum, 2011).

Patriarchy weaves a vicious cycle of subordination and limitation of the girl’s nutrition, education, even mobility options and hence inhibits her growth opportunities

Bhavana Mody says – “It is very difficult for me to travel in India, as I am rarely allowed to leave the house alone. In most cases girls and women cannot travel long distances unaccompanied because it is important to be associated with a man, as a wife, daughter, a cousin or niece.” (Mody, 2002)

Even in United States of earlier years, women were supposed to be and behave in a manner, which makes them submissive and dominated. Proper women were expected to adhere to the four tenets of what the historian Barbara Welter has referred to as the cult of true womanhood, Piety, Purity, Domesticity and Submissiveness. Although you were deemed more spiritual than your fathers, husbands and brothers, your sex made you ineligible not just for the ministry but for virtually all public works in the church. Once you were married, you would lose your legal identity as you gave up your maiden name to become Ms. John Doe. If you were a single women, you had more legal rights than a married one, but society looked down on unattached women, scorning them as spinsters (Dicker, 2008).
The entire fabric of social life was woven around certain stereotypes for women, which necessitated a subservient passive stance. “Everything in my childhood substantiated the need for women to submit. The stability of our society depended heavily on it. Fairytales were laden with morals of submission, as well as forewarnings against the girl who talked back, or the wife who tried to be the second captain on a ship that demanded just one.” (Mody, 2002)

“We get systematic training in “how to be” each of our social identities throughout our lives” (Harro, 1982)

In reflecting on 160 years of position of girls in United States, we can see breathtaking achievements. Women have accomplished many things. Gaining the right to vote, educational and work opportunities and access to reproductive rights amongst others. But there are other challenges. Naomi Wolf discussed the beauty ideal. Unlike their foremothers who wore girdles to mold their bodies, girls and young women today wear girdles made of their own flesh. Wolf argues that the contemporary world is so hostile to women’s advancements, that women’s psyche suffers as much damage as their bodies because of the unrealistic ideals they are asked to uphold. The media is full of images of beauty standards in terms of make up, curlers, false eye-lashes, panty hose and high heels and depicting such commoditization as feminine. (Wolf, 1991)

The very definition of appropriateness and conformance has been powerfully captured in the words of Carissa Pinkola Estes, PhD in her book “Women who run with the wolves- myths and stories of the Wild Women Archetype” (Estes, 1992). “Instead, harsh judgments about body acceptability create a nation of hunched over tall girls, short women on stilts, women of size dressed as though in mourning, very slender women trying to puff themselves out like adders, and
various other women in hiding. Destroying a woman’s instinctive affiliation with her natural body cheats her of confidence. It causes her to perseverate about whether she is a good person or not, and bases her self-worth on how she looks instead of who she is. It pressures her to use her energy worrying about how much food she consumes or the readings on the scale and tape measure. It keeps her preoccupied, colors everything she does, plans, and anticipates. It is unthinkable in the instinctive world that a woman should live preoccupied by appearance this way.”

A report commissioned and then published by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) in 1991 – titled ‘Shortchanging girls, Shortchanging America’ – attempted to address questions of self-esteem and empowerment of girls and to bring public attention to experiences of girls. This study connects girls' drop in self-esteem and lower aspirations to a popular culture that marginalizes women and stereotypes their roles. “Unintentionally,” authors state in the report’s summary, “schools collude in the process by systematically cheating girls of classroom attention, by stressing competitive- rather than cooperative- learning, by presenting texts and lessons devoid of women role models, and by reinforcing negative stereotypes about girls’ abilities. Unconsciously, teachers and schools counselors also dampen girls’ aspirations, particularly in math and science.” The report revealed that sexist practices were at work in the classroom, with girls often called on less frequently than boys, and their responses not taken as seriously. “Routine behaviors” within the classroom- such as boys calling out answers and gaining teacher’s attention, in contrast to girls who called out being told to raise their hands if they wanted to speak- were highlighted in the report, along with gender insensitive curriculum,
testing, and other policies shown to disadvantage girls in ways not previously recognized because they were so routine (American Association of University Women, 1991).

Following graphs bring out issues pertinent for self-esteem, level of empowerment and self-confidence amongst girls quite vividly.

**Figure 1: I am happy the way I am (Percent always true)**

*Source: AAUW study 1991*

**Figure 2: Self-esteem Index**

*Source: AAUW study 1991*
It is heartening to know that there is new recognition of how central a girl’s value is, not only to her family, but also to an entire social system.

“...And to join with all of you in making clear that social inclusion and development for all really does depend upon the status of women, and opening wide the doors of opportunity for women and for all people is the great work of our time...we also know from the work of the last decade that women drive the economic growth, as producers and as consumers.” (Rodham, 2012) Lima, Peru, Oct 16, 2012

Even if much work remains to have this more widely acknowledged and accepted for as yet the concept of girlhood is a trouble time still. Girls in US are often quick to point out how pressured they feel, often with no neutral ground on which to stand as they negotiate the conflicting messages they are given about girlhood- be athletic but not too tomboyish, attractive but not too sexual, assertive but not transgressively angry, or alarmingly still, intelligent but don’t look too smart. Stories about injustice against girls because they are girls, still

**Figure 3:** I am good at lot of things (Percent “always true)

**Source:** AAUW study 1991
abound in the news and toy stores divide neatly along the gender lines (Lipkin, 2009).

All the stories show a constant progression of increasing self-doubt and subsequent deterioration of self-esteem. The literature supports the existence of differing views and beliefs by gender (Deak, 1998a). Females often use a lens of connectedness while males usually choose a lens of justice for their decision making (Deak, 1998b).

The research points to structural components that can and do influence gender equity. Those reported as positive for girls include single gender settings that are democratic and collaborative.

Title IX and related regulations provide guidelines, procedure and tools for preventing and addressing inequities that can hinder student’s ability to succeed in school and beyond. This landmark legislation of United States of America states that ‘No person in the U.S. shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance (“Title IX - working to ensure gender equity in education,” 2012).

Girls and women have made great strides in education since the passage of Title IX. Females make up a growing proportion of students in many science, technology and math (STEM) related fields. Given greater opportunities to participate in athletics, they are now doing so in record numbers. They have also made gains in career and technical education at the high school and community
college levels. Post Title IX, things have started to change for good in as it has been shown in the graphs below. Girls have started to pick up in every field, be it science and mathematics to sports and athletics.

![Graph: Participation of women in different streams of education]

Figure 4: Participation of women in different streams of education

Note: Data on computer sciences was not collected until 1978

Source: National Science Foundation, Division of Science Resources Statistics. Survey of Earned Doctorates, 1958-2006
Figure 5: Male and Female Participation in High School Sports, 1972-2011

Source: National Federation of State High School Associations, 2011

Under Title IX, educational programs that receive federal funding are prohibited from discriminating on the basis of sex and must ensure equity in STEM education for all students. In addition, federal agencies that award grants to educational institutions are obligated to take steps to ensure that these institutions provide equal opportunities for women and girls in STEM education, including equal consideration in promotion and tenure for faculty.

Women and girls have made great progress in many STEM areas, but more needs to be done to achieve true gender parity. Time and again, girls have proved that they have the interest and aptitude to succeed in areas once considered the exclusive purview of males. Despite tremendous progress, however challenges to equality in education still exist. Women’s advancement in some areas, including
computer science and engineering has stagnated or even declined in recent years.¹

Pregnant and parenting students are frequently subjected to unlawful policies and practices that deter them from completing their education. Nearly half of all middle and high school students report being sexually harassed in school.

As it is obvious from books, journals and reports section of literature review, though things are changing in United States of America rapidly, existence of issues of low self-esteem, discrimination in schools and day to day life, lack of self confidence are all very there and are pertinent even today.

**Websites**

Any literature review without analyzing what is there on the Internet cannot be considered as complete. Hence I also surfed through the web to develop an understanding of not only issues and problems but also efforts being made by various institutions and individuals to address them.

I found some of the websites as remarkably different and focused in addressing issues of self-esteem and empowerment amongst adolescent girls, [www.teensource.org](http://www.teensource.org) is one of them. Created by teens for teens and affiliated with the California Family Health Council, Inc., this site provides crucial and practical information and resources about health and relationship issues affecting teenagers and young adults.

There is amazing variety of projects under various stages of implementation going on worldwide. I have provided a long list of useful links and website which can be utilized for idea generation and understanding the issue of empowerment and self-esteem.

¹ [http://www.heri.ucla.edu/dsdownloads_reports.php](http://www.heri.ucla.edu/dsdownloads_reports.php)
Interactions
Though it was very informative to undertake literature review, but the interactions and conversations I engaged in were the real eye-opener. I have classified personal interactions in two sections. First, interactions with high school students at Eleanor Roosevelt High School, Greenbelt and second all other interactions with teachers, DFAT 2012 cohort, classmates at University of Maryland and the scholars at NWSA Conference on Feminism etc. The basic reason behind this classification is that the students at the high school are my direct target, both as subjects of study and audience. The other set of conversations and interactions is more from the point of view of historical feelings and experiences during early stages of lives and how they overcame it.

School Students (Eleanor Roosevelt High School)
I conducted one to one informal interviews with girls and also a group workshop. In the one to one interaction, I came to know about the issues with self-esteem that the girls were facing. Majority of girls recommended a peer group based support structure to discuss and address the issue of self-confidence and empowerment. To my amazement, I encountered most of the issues, which were brought out by AAUW study of 1991 and mentioned above were prevalent in the school. Girls find sheer lack of gender sensitivity in school curriculum. Absence of role model and reinforcement was also alarming. Girls mentioned that they have issues of anxiety regarding their appearance and conformance to stereotype and peer groups. They are fearful of being pointed out and confronted, so they avoid calling on in class and also avoid questioning teachers even when they realize that they are right.
Summarily, I found lack of initiatives and proper execution of programs for encouragement of girl students in public school. On the condition of anonymity, some counselors also mentioned that though they would like to indulge into and run programs for improving self esteem of girls, but they hardly get any time to do that as they are involved with so many other things and there is no separate credit for the work done for such things.

On the contrary to the above, hall of fame and notice boards in the school display portraits of ladies in administration and libraries are stacked with posters of pioneer women who did remarkable works in various fields. But still, it seems there is a long way to go when these passive portrayals get into action and ignite an active participation of girls. It came out that discussion regarding self-esteem is conveniently avoided and girls are not expected to have any such issue of self-esteem if they are doing well in studies only. But, somehow, this good performance is not getting translated into the high self-esteem and morale in the school.

During the workshop also it became evident that there are self esteem issues. Girls wanted to discuss it in a peer group setting, which is quite encouraging in the sense that they are ready to address the issue and change. It was evident that girls identified with the issues of lack of power and self-esteem. During aided discussions, girls also brought out issues in family, where parents are posing contradicting goals in front of them. They want them to do well in studies and professional fields but they do not want them to make bigger choices in life like choosing a partner.
Interactions and Conversations with experts, teachers, cohorts and classmates

During these conversations there was a unanimous view that there are self-esteem issues. Everybody has had her share of issues. They all also agreed that technical skills like computers and other 21st century skills can go a long way in improving self-esteem level of girls.

The course of Professor Joseph McCaleb at UMD, EDCI 246, “Good stories, Teaching Narratives for Peace and Justice,” makes use of the study and use of oral storytelling and digital technologies. It explores what makes a good story and how stories advance peace and justice on both individual and social levels.

In his mail interview reply to my question, Joseph McCaleb elaborates on what he means by storytelling in digital media:

“In summary, when I (or we because the making of true stories happens in social interaction with awareness of particular exigencies) compose in digital media, I don’t want to be constrained by 1.0 paradigms or by print based models of writing. While writing a script may be the preliminary step to digital composing on some occasions and for some learners, I believe that often imposes a limitation. I feel more vitality and creativity when a compelling image calls for articulation until words expand meaning, bring relationship, and carry significance. The dynamic representation generates other words, images, sequences, tone; and all this incubates and recovers authentic voice. When I look at and read an emerging collage, I see and sense gaps, better phrasings, modifications on drawing; I remember similar or contrasting images and anecdotes; my feel for pacing and tone are invoked. This dynamic play of composing constructs the digital media canvas and interactive playground that I want to hang around. I’ll try new things and imagine better worlds. Part of the taste is the acceptance of and satisfaction with authentic voice. Power in digital media, as in any place else I’ve experienced it, improves with integrity. A digital story feels better and works and works better when it has authentic voice, when it tells a true story in the sense that the representations are genuine, accurately situated in a particular time and place, and balanced with proper fit, timing, flow, and resonance. While these criteria stretch beyond my reach, that’s why I aim for, what I love
Taking a cue from this, I administered a questionnaire regarding the feasibility of using digital storytelling as a potential empowerment tool for girls on the students in McCabe’s class (Appendix B). Most of the respondents agreed that digital storytelling can be a very powerful empowerment tool for young women. But Joseph believes that “Your question about connecting storytelling with young women gives me pause. I’m not sure how to respond because I don’t really separate stories on the basis of gender. I look at story work from the view of analytical psychology (particularly Jung and von Franz as well as mythologists and storytellers who have that orientation: Joseph Campbell, Robert Bly, James Hillman, Gioia, Marion Woodman, Clarissa Estes . . .). As you’ve heard me say in class, I believe each of us has the masculine and the feminine within and need to develop both. So a story that features a female protagonist (like Golden Water, Psyche, or Tatterhood) applies as much to a male as a female.

Some writers argue that fairy tales present negative stereotypes of women. I see why they say that, but I think it’s more up to the teacher and teller to interpret the tales so that they serve the development of females and males.”

I also discussed these issues with the international participants in the Distinguished Fulbright Teachers group by informal discussions and open-ended questionnaire (Appendix A). This cross-cultural dialogue helped me a lot in understanding the issues. Ms. June from Singapore rightly advises that there should be some definite, sustainable program that the girls can join to empower themselves once they are inspired enough through workshops and other
activities. She also poses a very interesting question: “why is it that in most cases it is women alone who become worst perpetrators of gender injustice to women?’

I attended the NWSA Conference on “Feminism Unbound: Imagining A Feminist Future” in Oakland, CA from November 8-11, 2012. It was a wonderful opportunity to interact and meet with scholars in the field as well as understand current discourses in the field. The Conference was basically an examination of the way feminist scholarship is transcending such boundaries as public and private, gender conformity and sexuality, nationalism, ethnicity, class and culture and it encouraged us to explore our own visions of 21st century feminism.

The 5 broad themes of the Conference were:

1. Revolutionary futures, which applied feminist analyses of the various global democratic movements and challenges to those ideals, from the Arab spring movement to the Occupy Wall Street protests.
2. Travelling Theory, which is an attempt towards a transnational feminism that is also multi-lingual, multi-genealogical and multi-directional.
3. Social Networks, Power and Change, which was an exploration of new technologies that have the capacity to enhance activism across geopolitical formations.
4. Decolonizing Knowledge, which dwelt on tools we use to release and utilize subjugated knowledges and interrogates the bases for our knowledge claims.
5. Creative Awakenings was the use of poetry and other art and media to create emancipatory ways of belonging, governing and loving.
I was particularly touched and moved by the creative use of poetry to depict the feminist thought and feeling. The session “Keep Yoni Coming: Unbinding Vagina Speak” was powerful and Alka Kurien and Shreerukha Subramaniam were marvelous with depicting how deeply the medium of poetry can be invoked to depict and inspire the feminist narration.

The session “Young Women Deconstructing Knowledge, Finding Voice and Taking Action” was very informative. Presentation by Ileana Jiminez and Nuala Cabral were very inspiring and we could make ample sense of the power of the digital media as an empowerment platform.

This was a remarkable year for the Conference as the first South Asian caucus was formed this year and so I got a lot of opportunity to meet and network with South Asian feminists like Shobha Rajgopal.

Poster sessions were very interesting as we got to see researches combined into poster work and also got to talk with the presenters. The poster sessions helped me conceive of similar strategy and method for representing “difficult and sensitive issues” in India.

I came to know about scholarly feminist publications and magazines as well as many relevant resources for my capstone project like MSintheclassroom.com which provides cutting edge analyses of contemporary issues using a race, class and gender lens and that too absolutely free of charge.

Besides, I also came to know about many relevant movies and books for girl empowerment.

Melisa Landa's Fall 2012 EDCI 243 course on the role of literature, Mass Media and Schooling: the formation of group and individual identity, which examined the role of literature, mass media and schooling as mechanisms for social change
and social continuation. It was very useful in helping me understand how important it is to be critically aware of the kinds of books we are reading, movies we are watching including the very innocent looking fairy tales and Disney movies. Even these can be blatantly stereotypical and hence unhealthy for self esteem of girls.

I was fortunate enough to visit the feminist class taught by the celebrated activist teacher, Illeana Jiminez in school Little Red House and Elizabeth Irwin High School in New York City. I had discussions with her students and I am convinced that such a course at school level can be of immense use in providing a fertile ground for gender empowerment as well as creating awareness about local and international issues. Based on this thought process and analysis, I propose to develop a Capsule Course for empowerment of girls.

**TO BE of empowerment**

As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, the paradigm shift that is needed to change and expand the power structure and balance in favor of disadvantaged girls, definite actions like information provisioning, instructional methods and inspiration are all very important (*The Three I's of empowerment*). A continuous program for sustaining the momentum once gained should follow it.

As an outcome of present situation of the empowerment and related issues, I developed an idea, which is unique in its approach to empowerment of adolescent girls. I propose to develop and run an “After School Capsule Course for Empowerment of the girls”.

While implementing this course, it is very important to understand the contextual environment, prevailing socio-economic culture, value structure and desired objectives. As mentioned in the earlier section of this paper,
empowerment should be understood in relation to society, relationships, positions, and power structure and individual freedoms.

This Capsule Course is a “work in progress” and I have added the basic framework of this proposed course as Appendix C.

**Conclusion**

There is so much that I could imbibe and learn from the American way of life and schooling that is or can be potentially empowering for self esteem of adolescent girls here and around the world. I saw a lot of efforts in progress at individual and group levels, at school and theory level and there are many things to know, understand and take back after serious contemplation and slight modification

I would like to conclude with the observation that “The rise of girls’ studies as a field has been steady since its birth. Yet defining as an academic field what constitutes girlhood is still in its own girlhood years, and one hopes, with a long growth spurt still ahead. Within popular culture, concerns about girlhood have always been present, whether that means defining a half century ago girls’ conduct while in “mixed company” with boys, or more recently the extent to which girls should be able to obtain birth control on their own, or how girls exercise their sexuality- all topics that are explored through the law, parental control, and the ever changing trends within any year. Speculation about the pressures and strictures that define girlhood and codes of feminity is always present- are girls still not outspoken enough, or are they too outspoken now?”

There is still work to be done and more so in my part of the world. “Now I draw strength from the knowledge that people have been actively combating sexism,

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2 Page 199, Girls' Studies by Lipkins, Elline
race and other intersecting discriminations for a long time. Many of those icons I respect are still on the scene actively doing their thing for us. That knowledge is my ammunition as I join with them and my peers to continue fighting those battles and the other fronts unique to our time. We can’t get complacent”.

It is a long way to go in terms of empowerment for adolescent girls and all the efforts do count.

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3 Page 394 Colonize This! Edited by Hernandez, Daisy and Rehman, Bushra
Acknowledgements
I am extremely thankful to the U.S. Department of State and the Fulbright Commission to have given me this opportunity to learn and empower myself in my quest for empowering my girls in India. I am also grateful to the IIE, University of Maryland, ERHS, NWSA and all my cohort teachers and friends for being a part of this journey to a better and equitable world for our girls.

I would particularly like to also thank the following people who have made valuable contribution to my study.

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I am also thankful to the girls at ERHS with whom I conducted one to one interviews as well as the Workshop Sessions and also to the students in Joseph Mccaleb's class- to whom I administered the questionnaire.
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Appendix A – Questionnaire for participating teachers

1. Do you think the young girls have self esteem issues in your country/ Did you ever feel disadvantaged in a real sense because of your gender? YES/NO/MAYBE

2. Are you aware of any good programs to deal with self esteem issues in young girls in your country? If Yes - what exactly?

3. Do you think that digital stories or oral stories could be an effective way to address young girls thinking in an empowering manner? YES/NO/MAYBE

4. What is that attribute or life skill or device that helps you feel very empowered as a woman – it could be the way you were brought up by parents/or your economic independence/or your never say die spirit...?

5. What is that one quote/ message you would like me to carry to my girls and to inform my project on gender empowerment-
Appendix B – Questionnaire for participating girl students

Name:

1. Do you think that ORAL STORY TELLING can be used as an empowerment tool for teenage girls self esteem:

   YES / NO / MAYBE

2. Do you feel DIGITAL STORY TELLING can be an effective tool for young girls to find their “Own Voice”?

   YES / NO / MAYBE

3. Can sharing stories in a group help girls to connect?

   YES / NO / MAYBE

4. Have you ever felt connected and empowered after watching someone’s digital story?

   YES / NO / MAYBE

5. Do you feel that adolescent girls have self esteem issues (much more than the boys)?

   YES / NO / MAYBE
One advice/quote you would like to share with young girls in India with respect to the importance of empowerment and self esteem:

Any other comments you would like to make from your life/ country/observations:

Thank you for your kind response!

Appendix C – After School Capsule Course for Empowerment of Girls

Optimum number of participants – 10 to 20

Duration – 30 hours spread over three months (one 2.5 hrs. session per week)

Aim of the Course - To inform, inspire and bring about behavioral changes in girl students in order to enable them to take control and lead an empowered life.
Course Description

This course is based on the paradigm that empowerment does not exist in isolation. It has to do with power structure in society and relationship. Thus it will involve not only participants in a peer group setting but also other important relationships around the participants. It will focus on self, family, social context and future goals. Starting from self-awareness, challenges, health and hygiene, it will delve into family dynamics of the participants, social relations and setting an effective goal for future for a meaningful life experience.

Course will be divided into 3 modules, each consisting of four two and a half hour session. It will also require out of class initiatives and exercises in order to derive maximum benefits.

The after school Empowerment Capsule Course is a work in progress and this is just a skeletal framework- suggesting broadly the delineation of themes that will form the basic outline of this proposed program. The details and blueprint will be worked out progressively and may differ significantly from the one conceptualized here and now, based on the twin dimensions of feasibility and logistics. We can work on having more guest speakers and also work on an exchange program later on, which will be intrinsic parts of this yet - evolving program.

The objective of the Capsule Course for girls

The students will develop confidence in their ability, effective communication and technology skills and will learn inter- personal, multi cultural competencies that will enable them to:
Play an important role in creating a peer group community that is affirming and empowering for all.

Equip them with the understanding and skills to be mobilized as local and global agents of gender empowerment and social change.

**Expected Outcome**
The participants will be able to imbibe and demonstrate skills and will be able to:

- understand the stories of gender oppression and the idea of empowerment
- gain a perspective on women’s success stories and “her story” in mankind’s history
- communicate and share personal stories in a safe environment
- listen supportively when discussing issues of personal and global significance
- recognize and empathize with the life experiences of women across the globe
- learn about one’s own identity development, socialization and change potential
- critical thinking skills to rethink the lens with which we view ourselves and others
- critical analysis of mass media and other digital stereotype messages
- gain insight into the use of technology for empowerment
- understand the history of gender inequality and how movements have resulted in greater equity
- be aware of and respond to biased cultural norms in a rational way
- become friends in this journey of empowerment
- support each other through this journey of empowerment
- seek out new learning from a varied diaspora of inter-cultural, international and digital dimensions
- apply learning to practice and become more involved in one’s own life decisions
function as confident, empowered, conscientious women and help other girls be so.

Some details:

Course will set up a continuous program supervised by a coordinator in the school who will keep in touch with participants, provide them with needed guidance throughout the school sessions. This center will also conduct a Review session every month to keep a track of the new and upcoming issues and provide sustenance to the program in the long term.

Participants will be needed to finish required readings and homework as and when asked by the instructor. Journal writing is an essential homework component for participants as it is a very useful tool to record experiences and feelings and document the learning.

The morning school assembly will often be used as a platform for presentation by the participants. This will offer advantages to other students in getting a brief perspective as well as enable the participants to develop confidence and effective communication skills. The Computer lab will be “open” to the participants of the course and they can avail of internet facilities by a proper channel of “reserving” their time slots with the Computer room In-charge at least a day in advance. The Computer room In-charge will work closely with the Course Coordinator to ensure that the participants have ready and speedy access to online resources.

The computer lab has 40 computer systems and they are all free in the evening. Since the participants will be largely housed in the Campus hostel, it makes for a very viable and convenient arrangement to enable them access to the lab virtually every evening. However, as mentioned earlier, for morning school time
Use of this facility, they will be required to “reserve” their time slots a day in advance.

The room earmarked for this course is housed within the Girl’s Hostel Compound in my Residential school. This room will be decorated with posters of famous women, slogans and inspiration quotes by the girls and lady teachers in the hostel compound. The program will be inaugurated by the Director of our school society, who has already given his blessings for such an innovative and progressive course.

The course will follow the democratic ideals of equal and active participation and will be sensitive to keeping privy the personal information discussed therein.

There will be “rest breaks” which will often include innovative components like “laugh yoga”, “general stretching”, “water breaks” and even an occasional “dance break” wherein the participants can just do a quick jig and “come back” to the task at hand.

The participants will be given a “Certificate of Participation” and a recommendation letter on course completion by the School Director in a small ceremony, in presence of guests and family members of participants.

There will be “Tool kit” placed in this room in the charge of the Coordinator and to be used by the participants. This will include (but not necessarily be limited by) the following items:

**Toolkit:**
- Color pens and pencils
- Cards
- Pen drives
- Cameras
- Books
- DVDs of movies
- CDs of songs
Divya Rathore, Distinguished Fulbright Teacher's Award 2012
Self-esteem of Adolescent School Girls: Empowerment Lessons from U.S.

Magazines

Books
A history of U.S. Feminisms – Rory Dicker
Girls’ Studies – Eline Lipkin
Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach – Martha S. Nussbaum
The Maid of the North: Feminist fairytales from around the world – Ethel Johnston Phelps
Letters to my sister – Dr. Ngozi Osuagwu
Colonize This! Young women of color on today’s feminism – ed. Hernandez and Rehman
The Diary of Anne Frank – Anne Frank
Where the Girls are: Growing up female with the mass media – Susan J Douglas
Beloved – Tony Morrison
The Bluest Eye – Tony Morrison
Future Girl: Young Woman in the Twenty-first Century – Anita Harris
Girls Speak Out: Finding Your True Self – Andrea Johnston
Schoolgirls: Young Women, Self-esteem, and the Confidence Gap – Peggy Orenstein
Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls – Mary Pipher
Failing at Fairness: How our schools cheat girls – Myra Sadker and David Sadker
Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression In Girls – Rachel Simmons

Handouts of Websites
AAUW: www.aauw.org
About Face: www.about-face.org
A girl’s world: www.agirlsworld.com
Empowering books for girls: www.deebest.com
Girls Education and Mentoring Services (GEMS): www.gems-girls.org
Girls, Inc.: http://girlsinc.org
Girls Leadership Institute: www.girlsleadershipinstitute.org
Girl’s Life: www.girlslife.com
Global Grrl Zine network: http://grrrlzines.net/writingonzines.htm
Hardy Girls, Hardy Women: www.hardygirlshealthywomen.org
New Moon: www.newmoon.com
NWSA: www.nwsa.org
What’s Good for Girls: http://whatsgoodforgirls.blogspot.com
WriteGirl: www.writegirl.org
Zooey’s Room: www.zoeysroom.com

Movies and DVDs
Divya Rathore, Distinguished Fulbright Teacher's Award 2012
Self-esteem of Adolescent School Girls: Empowerment Lessons from U.S.

Magazines:
The school will get an annual subscription for Ms magazine and also for NewMoon Girls and these will be available for reference for the participants.

Course Requirements

1. Permission letter from parents which allows the girls to participate in this after school course.

2. A nominal fee of Rs. 100 and filling up a form of acceptance.

3. The participants are expected to come in formal dress.

4. The participants are required to maintain a journal and write in it regularly.

5. The participants will be required to accept to be tested on a standardised self esteem inventory test by an expert- at the start and end of this course.

6. A room with audio-visual aids and required seating capacity. Seating arrangements will be in the form of round table.

7. A trained doctor will be needed for the session with gynaecologist.

8. A trained counsellor/ psychologist will be needed for the session with families.

9. There will be the provision of using the computer lab and accessing the internet anytime for the participants, based on a systematic scheduling of slots for different people by the provision of reserving it with the Course coordinator.
Module 1

Session 1
Instruction:

Setting the stage- In this session participants will be given a descriptive explanation of the course, the terms “self esteem”, “empowerment”.

They will be given a list of text books as well as the timeline for readings and activities.

They will be made to understand how to reserve their computer slots as well as how to borrow items from the Tool kit.

Activity:

The participants will be asked to introduce their partners through “pair and share”

Expected Outcomes:

The participants will get a comprehensive understanding of the course curriculum and a sense of how to go about it.

The participants will get to know each other and hence feel comfortable as a group.

Home Assignment:

The participants will be given a hand-out of Bob Harro’s essay “Cycle of Socialization” to read for the next session.

The participants will be asked to start writing in their journal by expressing their expectations from such a course.

Session 2
Instruction:
This session will open with a lecture on “Gender Stereotypes” which will promote interactive communication with the participants as and when required, to substantiate the lecture with personal examples for better understanding.

Activity:

The participants will be asked to discuss in short groups Harro’s “Cycle of Socialization” and complete the following activity.

- Harro's model of socialization describes how people come to accept, both consciously and unconsciously, both inequality and unfairness on the basis of their socialization in with families, friends and neighbors, and with reinforcements in later life in various social institutions. Give two examples, from two different social identities within your own life, of how your family shaped your sense of roles or rules, that were later reinforced (or contradicted) as you encountered different social institutions. If possible, offer one example of a “privileged” identity and one example of a “disadvantaged” identity.

- Harro’s model describes a “core” of the fear, ignorance, confusion, power or powerlessness that keep people from breaking out of this cycle. Can you provide personal examples (similar to Harro’s “core”) that make it difficult for you to challenge, break out of, or change this cycle?

- There will be subsequent guided discussions on how and where each of them feel challenged and limited being a girl.

Expected Outcomes:

The participants will get an understanding of the phenomena of gender stereotypes and how they are promoted by socialization.

The participants will be able to relate the theory to their own experience of being a girl and will come to identify “privileges” and “challenges” they face.
Home Assignment:

The participants will be given hand-outs from the book A History of U.S. Feminisms by Rory Dicker and expected to read it thoroughly for the next session. This book has 5 chapters and the participants will be divided into 6 pairs of 3 girls each. Every group will be given a chapter to present and an opportunity to do so in public -within 15 minutes in the School Assembly- on successive days.

The participants will be expected to write about their feelings in their journal.

Session 2

Instruction:

Brief introduction to western feminist theory. Presentation of how issues of self-esteem are handled in U.S.

(Presentation by me, based on this research report and my first person experience in U.S.)

Activity:

15 minute question-answer session related to the presentation.

I will distribute the Goodwill Cards sent to them by Eleanor Roosevelt High School girls in U.S.

The participants will then be asked to narrow down on some issues of self esteem and empowerment for girls in India. Interactive guided discussion will be held to arrive at some common issues. Issues discussed will include dowry, Khap Panchayats, inter-caste/religion marriage, the curse of the Izzat and the burden to be a good girl.
Expected Outcomes:

The participants will get an overview of issues being faced by their peer group across culture and continent. This will enable them to identify, understand and decipher gender issues in India more coherently.

Home Assignment:

The girls will read hand-outs from the book The History of Doing; An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women Rights and Feminism in India, 1800-1990, a Kali Press publication, written by Radha Kumar.

The girls will write a report on one such issue in the Indian context.

The participants will be given cards to write inspirational and Thank you notes to their friends in U.S. The coordinator will collect these cards and I will post them in a package to Ms Twu to distribute them in her class.

Session 3

Instruction:

A lecture on “Indian Feminist Movement”

Activity:

The participants will be guided to identify commonality and differences in western and Indian theories.

The participants will be asked to give a brief 5 minute oral report of all they could understand from their prescribed reading hand-out.

Expected Outcomes:

The participants will get to know the similarities and differences in feminist movements across the globe.
They will be able to articulate their observation and reading into brief and effective oral summary reports.

Home Assignment:

The participants will be given the task of reading the book “Letters to my Sisters” by Dr. Ngozi Osuagwu. They will be asked to write about the 2 letters that most appealed to them and why. They will be asked to speak to the girls about it immediately after a designated weekend evening tea in girls hostel in a time duration of 10 minutes each.

The participants will be asked to write a “fictional letter” to any of the popular television serial female characters- who they feel- will benefit from such an inspirational letter. The idea behind this exercise is to use the television for education and since most of the girls invariably spend time watching serials which propagate a stereotyped negative image of females, it will do some good to use the tool in a more positive way. These letters will be collected by the Course coordinator and will be the property of the school for the purposes of documentation of the course.

*Session 4*

Instruction:

There will be a lecture on “Health and Hygiene” by a professional Gynecologist.

Activity:

Participants will get to ask questions to the lady doctor in a 15 minute interactive session.

There will be half an hour training of learning small useful skills like fixing your own light bulb, fixing the water tap, etc.. The hostel electrician and plumber will be asked to assist and demonstrate the necessary skills.
Expected Outcomes:

The participants will become aware of the importance of health and hygiene. They will get an opportunity to pose their personal queries to the expert and hence gain valuable advice.

The participants will get more empowered by knowing the most basic skills like changing light bulb and fixing tap and become more self reliant.

They will also start appreciating the “dignity of labor”, a trait missing from the Indian society- where people have unfounded notions of superiority and inferiority of jobs, while in U.S. I was happy to see that everyone did their own work and respected the person rather than the notions of a “high” or “low” job.

Home Assignment:

The students will be given the opportunity to pose anonymous health questions and curiosity to the gynecologist. For this purpose, a make-shift mail box will be kept at the entrance to the girls’ hostel and anyone can freely “post” an anonymous question there. The mail box will be kept for 3 days and will be collected back and handed over to the gynecologist. The gynecologist will reply to all the questions and send them via e-mail at all the group mail ids simultaneously.

The girls will be asked to see the Hindi movie “Fir Milenge” by Revathi, as a part of their Sunday hostel movie time.

The participants will have a 10 minute group discussion at the evening tea time on the movie “Fir Milenge” and will discuss about aspects of the movie like the strong female character, the role of society, the consequences of unsafe sex, the issue of AIDS and prevention, etc.
Module 2

Session 1

To be conducted early morning on a week-end.

Prescribed dress code:

Comfortable sports lower and yoga upper, slippers for footwear

Instruction:

There will be a panel discussion plus lecture on “Healthy Habits: The Magic Of Yoga” by a nutritionist and a Yoga Guru.

Activity:

The nutritionist will briefly tell us about a “proper diet”.

The Yoga Guru will speak about the “Magic of Yoga” and will demonstrate some useful “asanas” and their benefits. The participants will be asked to join in.

Expected Outcomes:

The participants will benefit from the panel discussion on Proper Nutrition.

They will be able to feel inspired to gain benefit out of the Science and art of Yoga for healthy living.

They will understand that a healthy body is essential to feel good about oneself and Yoga is one tool to keep the mind and the body in the best of shapes.

If someone has a physical limitation, they can just sit back and do the light breathing exercises, under the able guidance of the yoga expert.

Home Assignment:

The participants will be expected to write and submit a report on any one of the following topics:
AIDS - Prevention and cure; Does slim mean healthy?; The Photoshop Effect and the Myth of Beauty; What should we eat?; Knowing my Body; what is sex education?; Who is beautiful?

A lot of emphasis will be given on original ideas, comprehensive summary and trying to write about issues primarily in the Indian context.

Session 2

Instructions:

There will be a lecture presentation on the “Meaning and Significance of Media literacy” coupled with a short video presentation on how powerful and subtle is the digital media in propagating images of gender stereotype.

Activity:

The students will be given a set of 20 common fairy tales, which they will be expected to rotate and read as many as they can in 20 minute duration in groups of 2/3.

The students will be encouraged to discuss and cite examples from popular media including the fairy tales they just read about stereotyped portrayals. They will also discuss with their partners how and when they have consciously or subtly felt affected by “what a beautiful/ good girl is supposed to be”

Expected Outcomes:

The participants will be able to learn to use critical analysis as a tool while watching/reading mass media.
They will learn to see the inherent patterns of gender stereotyping even in “innocent looking” fairy tales and be aware and will learn to question all that they see and hear.

It will be a cathartic experience for the participants to discuss how hard they have tried to be “good” and how they have coped up by being “bad” also.

Home Assignment:
The students will be asked to select either one of the below mentioned movies or any movie from the Toolkit and do a movie review.

Bend it Like Beckham, directed by Gurinder Chaddha, 20th Century Fox 2003
Whale Rider, directed by Niki Caro, Sony Pictures, 2002
Mean Girls, directed by Mark Waters, Paramount 2004

Session 3
Instruction:
We will have a “Guest Lecture” by a successful woman in a nontraditional career, where she will speak about her life journey and her career path.

Activity:
The participants will be asked to ask questions to the guest speaker in a 5 minute session.

Everyone will watch 2 short inspirational videos on an Indian icon- Kiran Bedi and one global icon-Aung San Suu Kyi.

The participants will be told about the great significance of digital media as an empowerment platform and they will be given a hand-out of various relevant sites for girls, which will not be limited by, but will necessarily include the following:
The girls will once again be re-introduced to the Toolkit in order to re-orient them to borrow and read the New Moon Girls and Ms Magazines as well as other reference books.

Expected Outcomes:

The participants will get a glimpse of a successful woman in a nontraditional career and that is important for as is said, “what we can’t see, we can’t be”, so conversely- “if we can see something, we can be that”.

The participants will get aware of the powerful world of digital empowerment and all the global work and initiatives that are being explored at various levels.

The participants will feel inspired to see women succeed despite failures and despite setbacks.

Home Assignment:

The participants will have to explore all the sites that are given to them as a hand-out and make a short 10 minute oral report in front of other students in the scheduled time slots in assembly time about any 1 particularly impressive website or a general summary of all the websites they explored.
The participants will have to befriend each other and create a group network account on face book.

The participants are expected to write about their experiences in the journal and to keep updating it.

**Session 4**

Instruction:

A lecture and demonstration of educational tools like Skype, Scoop It and blogging in the computer lab by an expert.

Activity:

The students will be introduced to Ileana Jiminez in New York via Skype and even to few of my international cohorts- who are “closer by” in terms of “time zones”.

Demonstration:

I will share with them the easy-to-use-edutools\(^4\) as a means to introduce then to the variety of available tools.

Expected Outcomes:

The students will get a deeper perspective on the use of digital media for educational and network empowerment.

They will learn to use even the face book for creative purposes like Scoop It newspapers, rather than for just going online.

They will gain a global and inter cultural perspective, which is a necessary skill in this global world.

Home assignment:

\(^4\) website made by my fellow cohort Marianna from Finland
The students will be required to start their own newspapers via Scoop It.

Students will also have to chose one educational tool to master from all the ones they saw and they will have to give all of us a demo into the how and why of it. The computer teachers who will be roped in for this purpose will assist them in this.

Module 3

Session 1

Introduction:

Review of famous and useful websites in order to appreciate worldwide efforts to address issues with low self-esteem and empowerment of girls.

I will make use of Community Classroom free curriculum collection at itvs.org/educators to plan a set of 5 lesson plans aligned with 6 short film modules based on “Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity For Women Worldwide. Students will learn about gender issues in a deeper context and develop global awareness of gender issues. Students will know about gender based violence in Sierra Leone, Education in Vietnam, Women’s Economic Empowerment in Kenya, Maternal health in Somaliland, and Sex Trafficking and forced Prostitution in Cambodia and India

Expected Outcomes:

The participants will get to know and be able to identify & empathize with various issues girls and women are facing across the globe.

The participants will develop an active interest in gender issues and hopefully will see themselves as potential change agents.
Home assignment:

To locate these countries on the world map and “know a little bit more” about them.

**Session 2 and Session 3**

Instruction:

Introducing oral and digital story telling as a 21st Century competence to help effective self-expression. There will be oral story telling in a traditional way by a local traditional story teller- who will be invited for this purpose exclusively.

I will also show them video footage of Dr. Joseph McCaleb doing the oral story telling and will also introduce my own digital story as well as June’s digital story for reference.

Activity:

The girls will be introduced to Joseph Mccaleb via Skype interview (if possible) and they will follow his story telling blogs as a resource to understand the medium.

http://dochorsetales.blogspot.com/2012/07/truth-nonsense.html
http://dochorsetales.blogspot.com/2012/07/sense-you-were-born-with.html

Expected Outcomes:

The participants will get to learn about a potentially very empowering tool- digital story telling.

The participants will get used to the idea of communicating effectively via the digital media and use a variety of images, pictures, drawings and music to express themselves.

They will become aware of traditional Indian story telling as well as get to learn the more contemporary models.

Home Assignment:
Every participant will be required to develop a 2-minute digital story about them and share it in the class. It can be on any aspect about themselves— their family, their life, their dream, their favorite game or even an introduction.

They will be provided simple cameras and encouraged to make a story based on their own personal pictures.

**Session 4**
This will be a review and feedback “Tea party” session for the program and all participants will be expected to fill up a questionnaire, which will try to gauge the participant’s feelings about the course and about themselves as well as try to tie up the loose ends as and when required (based on the feedback).

Participants will be encouraged to give us a peep into their minds by voluntary oral sharing of journals by all who are willing.

There will be a 30 minute “Malala session” wherein Malala Yousafzai will be introduced and we will share the story of her admirable Courage.

The session will end with participants writing “best wishes” and “inspirational” post cards to Malala. We will try to see how feasible it is to get this actually “delivered” to Malala.

**Module 4**

**Session 1**
Venue: Auditorium 1

This session will be a kind of mini Career fair for the participants. A professional career Counselor will be invited to share information on contemporary and emerging careers. A panel of distinguished professional lady guests will also be invited from among the parent/ guardians of students in the school to be a
resource person or mentor and be available in case the students want to know something.

Private professional colleges and Institutions will also be invited to send up their stalls and advertise and distribute their brochures.

Objectives:

The participants will get professional input into deciding a coherent career goal.

They will feel inspired to see and know professionally successful women at close quarters.

They will realize that self independence is crucial for self esteem and a career plan is one of the most empowering tools to pave the way for that later on in life.

Home Assignment:

The students will be asked to prepare charts/posters on 1 specific profession each and detail it comprehensively.

These charts will be put up on notice boards in the school and made available for viewing to the rest of the students also.

Session 2

In this session the participants will be asked to share their dream careers as well as try to chart a career path. They will be asked to visualize and discuss the various barriers or bottlenecks they perceive in this proposed journey- is it lack of awareness/ financial problem/ perceived opposition of family members, etc...

Then they will be asked to “pair and share” their concerns. The “listening person” has to help resolve/ talk out the issue with the partner.

Expected Outcomes:

The participants will develop a concrete sense of their career concerns and an urgency to know more about it.
The participants will feel enabled after talking it out with a peer friend.

They will develop interpersonal skills, the skill of listening and empathy.

Home Assignment:

The participants are expected to take a chart paper and draw their career path, marking the headings like “Information resources”, “Age and degree requirement”, “what I need to know”, People who can help me”, etc. and stick it up in their hostel room, where they get to “see it”.

**Session 3**

A session in presence of trained counselor will be conducted. Male family members will be encouraged to come and participate. They will be oriented to their crucial role in lives of these girls by an informal talk and training using participant interaction, case studies, role playing, brainstorming, video clips, stories and humor. This will be useful for exploring and overcoming the barriers that inhibit a more pro-active healthy male involvement in the family girl’s life.

**Session 4**

Mothers and significant women in the lives of participants will be invited. There will be a short orientation by a Counselor on the importance of having a positive female role model for girls.

Participants will each give a 3-minute presentation on the learning till now. PowerPoint presentations will be recommended to portray the participants’ feelings in a more dynamic manner. 1/2 digital stories by participants will also be featured.

The participants will be handed over their Participation Certificates and there will be a short role play/ cultural presentation by the participants. They will be deciding how and what they want to conclude with.
There will be a short speech by the Director praising the efforts and attitudes of the participants.

Expected Outcomes:

The participants and their family members will get an insight - a new way of looking at how they can complement each other.

The participants will get an opportunity to enable their family to new ways of thinking.

Appendix D

Transcript of Interview with Dr. Joseph McCaleb, Director, National Writing Project, UMD, College Park

Thank you for your very generous comments. Perhaps I consider my teaching not so much as being a pioneer in a field as it is the expression of my uniqueness. That’s what I encourage every teacher to do—in Joseph Campbell’s advice: “Follow your bliss!”
My intention for many years has been and continues to be to walk the “path of attraction,” and doing so leads a person further into the individual’s inheritance or “gift.” About 20 years ago, I was surprised to find storytelling smack in the middle of my path, and I have been fortunate to have had opportunity to develop and express “story” in my own way. The way that I do storytelling in oral, print, & digital media has my unique stamp. As such, it models for others mostly in the sense that each person should search for his or her individual expression.

“Imitation” does have a place in art, I believe. My work in developing my style has included close modeling of several mentors, particularly Gioia Timpanelli. In one of the many blog items I’ve written on storytelling, I say this:

The situation reminds me of what my storytelling mentor once said about the paradoxical and demanding requirement of being true both to the tradition/source and to the immediate moment. To paraphrase her: “If you can’t make the story true, then just recite it the way it is in your textbook. But if you can, at least try to true up the story and yourself.”

A bit later in that same blog, I elaborate on what I mean by storytelling in digital media:

In summary, when I (or we because the making of true stories happens in social interaction with awareness of particular exigences) compose in digital media, I don’t want to be constrained by 1.0 paradigms or by print-based models of writing. While writing a script may be the preliminary step to digital composing on some occasions and for some learners, I believe that often imposes a limitation. I feel more vitality and creativity when a compelling image calls for articulation until words expand meaning, bring relationship, and carry significance. The dynamic representation generates other words, images, sequences, tone; and all this incubates and recovers authentic voice. When I look at and read an emerging collage, I see and sense gaps, better phrasings, modifications on drawings; I remember similar or contrasting images and anecdotes; my feel for pacing and tone are invoked. This dynamic play of composing constructs the digital media canvas and interactive playground that I want to hang around. I’ll try new things and imagine better worlds. Part of the taste is the acceptance of and satisfaction with authentic voice. Power in digital media, as in anyplace else I’ve experienced it, improves with integrity. A digital story feels better and works better when it has authentic voice, when it tells a true story in the sense that the representations are genuine, accurately situated in a particular time and place, and balanced with proper fit, timing, flow, and resonance. While these criteria stretch beyond my reach, that’s what I aim for, what I love about composing, and what I want as target for my teaching and learning.

That entry is in my Word Press blog; since writing that one, I’ve adjusted so that most of my academic blogging is in my Google blog: http://dochorsetales.blogspot.com/.

When I was designing the Good Stories course back in January 2011, I did several blogs that explore the questions you ask. You might check out http://dochorsetales.blogspot.com/2011/01/making-good-stories.html and
http://dochorsetales.blogspot.com/2012/07/truth-nonsense.html. Another that has general background is http://dochorsetales.blogspot.com/2012/07/sense-you-were-born-with.html
A specific blog on DMP is http://dochorsetales.blogspot.com/2012/08/starting-right-in-dmp.html and the next two (Aug 9 7 13) extend that exploration.

For further background on the first question, you might also check my Scoop It site for Good Stories: http://www.scoop.it/t/goodstories246. Click on “Filter” and choose the tag for “nature of story” and for “nature of DM.”

Your question about connecting storytelling with young women gives me pause. I’m not sure how to respond because I don’t really separate stories on the basis of gender. I look at story work from the view of analytical psychology (particularly Jung and von Franz as well as mythologists and storytellers who have that orientation: Joseph Campbell, Robert Bly, James Hillman, Gioia, Marion Woodman, Clarissa Estes . . .). As you’ve heard me say in class, I believe each of us has the masculine and the feminine within and need to develop both. So a story that features a female protagonist (like Golden Water, Psyche, or Tatterhood) applies as much to a male as a female.

Some writers argue that fairy tales present negative stereotypes of women. I see why they say that, but I think it’s more up to the teacher and teller to interpret the tales so that they serve the development of females and males.

Perhaps my blog: http://dochorsetales.blogspot.com/2012/08/and-questions-not-asked.html connects with this question.

Here are some sources that might be of interest:

Your question about how is it to teach the same story a number of times is a wonderful one also. Although I sometimes get preoccupied with the logistics of teaching, I do try to be present to the story each time it’s told because there’s always an opportunity for new insight. One example of a recent “hit” for me was in telling the Ivan & the Firebird story this fall. I wrote about it in http://dochorsetales.blogspot.com/2012/08/the-firebird-horn.html .
Divya Rathore, Distinguished Fulbright Teacher's Award 2012
Self-esteem of Adolescent School Girls: Empowerment Lessons from U.S.