"What my Guidance Councillor Should Have Told me": The Importance of Universal Access and Exposure to Executive-Level Advice

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Abstract: Often, knowledge and quality education is reserved for the elite, where there are systemic obstacles to gaining access to today's leaders. Gender and racial inequities in executive-level positions across North America have been a long-standing debate amongst scholars and policy makers. Research has consistently documented that women are disproportionately represented in upper management and in positions of power and still continue to dominate traditionally "female" occupations, such as administrative support and service workers. Though gender inequalities are evidently present, there is also a clear under-representation of visible minorities holding executive-level positions as well. In order to reverse these trends, governments across North-America have enforced employment equity legislation and many organizations have voluntarily committed to similar initiatives. Perceived educational and career-related barriers to opportunity, choice, and information within these segregated groups are shaped early on. For this reason, many researchers champion early interventional programs in order to prevent such perceived barriers from developing. In this paper, there will be a discussion of social networks and how certain groups are denied access to sources of social capital, thus hindering their ability to seek out prospective jobs or entering certain career streams. In this study, Women in the Lead, a database published in 2009, is a national directory of women whose professional expertise and experience recommend them as candidates for positions of senior level responsibility and as members on corporate boards. The Women in the Lead database was comprised entirely of professional women who had voluntarily subscribed as members. Of the 630 women asked to participate, 210 responded to the survey. The 210 women who responded were from 14 different industries in Canada and the United States. The next generation was described as soon to be graduates of high school. A summary of this advice is reported in this paper, with the objective of providing guidance to the next generation looking to enter the workforce, regardless of their gender, location, and race. We also explore the potential of the internet in levelling these barriers and opening up new possibilities for e-mentoring youth and building social capital.

Keywords: social capital, gender, visible minorities, leadership, career planning, management, e-mentoring

1. Introduction

Gender and racial inequities in executive-level positions across North America have been a long-standing debate amongst scholars and policy makers. Research has consistently documented that women are disproportionately represented in upper management and in positions of power and still continue to dominate traditionally "female" occupations, such as administrative support and service workers (Burke, 2002; Hsieh, C-W & Winslow, E., 2006; Jacobs, 1999; Leck, 2002; MacRae, 2005; Shein, Vueller, Lituchy & Liu, 1996). Catalyst, a non-profit organization whose mission is to work with organizations to expand opportunities for women, reported in 2011 that women are underrepresented as heads of the Financial Post 500 organizations (5.6% in Canada, 3.2% in the U.S.), board directors (14% in Canada, 15.7% in the U.S.) and senior officers (17.7% in Canada, 14.4% in the U.S.), and generally in management occupations (36.5% in Canada, 51.5% in the U,S.) although they represent almost 47% of the labor force in both countries (Catalyst, 2011a, 2011b). Further, women represent only 6.2% of the FP500 top earners in Canada and 7.6% in the U.S. (Catalyst, 2011a, 2011b).

Though gender inequalities are evidently present, there is also a clear under-representation of visible minorities holding executive-level positions as well. In 2001, 13% of Canada's workforce was made up of visible minority workers, with the proportion said to grow to 21% by 2017 (Catalyst, 2007), Although visible minorities are set to occupy a larger portion of the workforce, the proportion of senior management positions occupied by visible minorities is expected to plateau at 3% (Catalyst, 2007). In order to reverse these trends, governments across NorthAmerica have enforced employment equity legislation and many organizations have voluntarily adopted Employment Equity Programs (EEP). EEPs were established strategically for organizational change and were designed to identify and

remove barriers to equal participation in the workplace (Leck and Saunders, 1996). Further, EEPs were implemented in order to increase the presence of under-represented groups in decision making roles as well as in other job categories that have been historically under-represented (Leck and Saunders, 1996). Although concerted efforts have been made to restore these inequities, research has consistently documented that legislation and policy changes alone will not lead to equal opportunities in the job market for women and visible minorities (Loury, 1977). McDonald (2011) claims that valuable sources of social capital are more prevalent in "old boy" networks – those occupied by high status white men - and that exclusion from these sources of social capital significantly decreases a person's labour market opportunities. By social capital, McDonald (2011) is referring to Lin's (2001) definition of social resources: information, influence, social credentials, and reinforcement embedded in social network relationships. On average, women and visible minorities tend to have smaller networks and know fewer high status and influential contacts than white men (Brass, 1985; Campbell, 1988; Ibarra, 1997; Marsden, 1987; McGuire, 2000, 2002; Moore 1988, 1990; Smith, 2000). According to McDonald's (2011) study, people in white male networks receive twice as many job leads as people in female/minority networks. Further, white male networks are also comprised of higher status connections than female/minority networks. The information and status benefits of membership in these old boy networks accrue to all participants and not just white men (McDonald, 2011). These white-male networks have been typified as those in power and are highly exclusive, making our sample of "Women in the Lead" members a very unique and under-represented group within these social networks. Regardless of perceived barriers and lack of perceived opportunity to career advancement in the workforce, these women have successfully gained experience in executive-level management and/or as corporate board members.

Although there have been programs and legislation put in place to correct these inequalities in organizations, little has been implemented at the early developmental stages of these social networks. These networks are shaped early, segregating groups through class, race, and gender often as early as elementary school (Donahue & Costar, 1977). Therefore, it is critical that disadvantaged groups have opportunities to start developing social capital at a young age – to enhance the outcomes of their actions (Lin, 2001), and potentially increase a their career prospects in the labour market (Hogan et al., 2005; Oakley, 2000; Saloner, 1985; Simon & Warner, 1992). As Lin (2001) suggests, by facilitating the flow of *information,* social ties located in certain strategic locations and/or hierarchical positions) can provide an individual with useful information,opportunities, and choices otherwise not available (Lin, 2001). By exerting *influence* on others who have access to these social networks, these once excluded groups share commonalities relative to the network itself and their membership may influence decisions pertaining to opportunities and choices (Lin, 2001). Third, access to these networks often validates a candidate's *social credentials*, some of which reflect the individual's accessibility to resources through social networks and relationships (Lin, 2001). Finally, according to Lin (2001), access to social networks "reinforce identity and recognition" (p. 7); thisassures "one's worthiness as an individual and a member of a social group sharing similar interests and resources", providing emotional support and "also public acknowledgment of one's claim to certain resources" (Lin, 2001, p. 7).

How, then, can less privileged groups in society develop social capital at an earlier age and stage? Recently, the internet has been heralded as a powerful enabler – to provide 'open access' to knowledge and resources that were previously unattainable by certain groups. Advocates claim that it can break down barriers of race, class, and gender, creating connections and facilitating knowledge exchange between diverse individuals and communities. One important connection that can be facilitated by the internet is that of mentor and protégé. Generally thought of as a relationship between an older, more experienced individual (i.e., the mentor) and a younger, less experienced individual (i.e., the protégé), electronic mentoring (or e-mentoring) has become increasingly popular to link up youth, (minority groups, females, low-income populations) with seasoned professionals who can provide valued career advice and transfer knowledge. Direnzo, Linnehan, Shao, & Rosenberg (2009), for example, studied the longitudinal effects of an e-mentoring program for lower-income middle and high school students in the United States (n=1381) and found that e-mentoring, (with no face-to-face interaction), was effective for transferring knowledge and building confidence: self and task efficacy improved with respect to financial knowledge, college-related information, career-related knowledge, and school-related topics. Edirisingha (2009) found that e-mentoring was effective in building social networks with less privileged students who were preparing for higher education. The e-platform broke

down barriers so that students could access "hot knowledge"[1], thereby facilitating their transition. O'Neill (2004), in his work with K-12 grade students, found that e-mentoring built social capital through the establishment of on-line learning communities. Called "mentoring in the open", he advocates the notion of interactive knowledge communities whereby students and mentors grapple with problems in a collaborative way. Finally, DiRenzo, Weer, and Linnehan (2013) discovered that e-mentoring relationships can positively affect career aspirations of underprivileged youth: these e-mentorships contributed to the individuals' social capital in compensatory and complementary ways.

While this research highlights some of the possibilities of e-mentoring for building social capital among marginalized groups, a number of challenges and questions remain. First of all, the older generation, (the source of most mentors), has been shown to have much lower rates of internet usage than the younger generation and may not be comfortable or interested in using an e-platform. For example, an American study in 2009, showed that the majority of internet users were Gen X and Gen Y, with only 13% of older boomers being represented[2] The younger generation also has different usage preferences and patterns. Internet users ages 12-32 are more likely to read other people's blogs and to write their own; they are also considerably more likely than older generations to use social networking sites (Jones & Fox, 2009). Another challenge is finding mentors to whom the protégés can relate. That is, the pool of experienced, executives is small, primarily white male, very busy, and not.representative of the diversity of our society. Furthermore, these executives are over-worked, particularly women. At the same time, the mentoring literature suggests that women prefer to be mentored by women. Research has shown that they receive more psychosocial support and career-development support than do women mentored by men (Fowler, Gudmundsson & O'Gorman, 2007; Okurame, 2007; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990; Scandura, 1992; Scandura & Williams, 2001; Tharenou, 2005; Thomas, 1990). Tharenou (2005) suggests that career support of women by women is most useful because "women protégés gain from being sponsored, challenged and coached by someone like themselves who has incurred the particular difficulties women can face" (p. 101).

2. Research purpose

Given these challenges, we felt that surveying Women in the Lead was a unique opportunity to interact with an elite group of women executives who would otherwise be inaccessible. Just as a protégé might wish to garner advice from a mentor, we wanted to collect the thoughts and ideas from these women of influence - for the young leaders of tomorrow. As well, we were hoping to gain insight into which media, (e.g.,specific books, magazines, websites), the female leaders preferred and recommended to the next generation. For example, what electronic applications would be the most effective in transferring knowledge to young North Americans so that they can build their social capital? creating equal access to information, influence, social credentials, and reinforcement within social networks?[3] And what are the skills and competencies that will be most useful in taking North-America forward into the 21st century?.Through this study, we hope to propose some answers to these questions. .

3. Methods

Sample

Women in the Lead, published in 2009, is a national directory of women whose professional expertise and experience recommend them as candidates for positions of senior level responsibility and as members on corporate boards. The Women in the Lead database was comprised entirely of professional women who had voluntarily subscribed as members. Of the 630 women asked to participate, 210 responded to the survey. Respendents were contacted by email and asked to participate in an online study about mentoring the next generation. Fluid Survey was used for the online survey. Of the 210 responses, 189 were from the English version of the survey, while 21 were from the French version. This allowed for a 33.3% response rate from the sample. The 210 women who responded were from 14 different industries in Canada and the US. The next generation was described as soon to be graduates of high school.

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[1] Hot knowledge refers to "socially embedded" knowledge prevailing in networks and social groups such as among close friends, family, relatives and neighbours. Cold knowledge, conversely, originates from formal and official sources such as career services, published literature (e.g., leaflets and brochures) and university websites (Edirisingha, 2009)

[2] However, the the older population was seeming to adopt internet-based technology more readily then they had been 4 years prior. (Jones and Fox, 2009)

[3] Lee, Long, & Mehta (2011) for example, have proposed a model for an e-mentoring Facebook application for students, faculty, and Information Technology (IT) professionals.

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Questionnaire

The questionnaire was admistered using Fluid Survey. An invitation was sent via email, and a reminder email was then sent one week later. The questionnaire was comprised of three sections: the survey consent form, a series of questions regarding advice to be given to the next generation, and demographic information. Refer to Appendix 1 for a sample of the administered questionnaire.

Content Analysis

Content analysis of the open-ended questions was used. The categoriesfor each of the questions were created in accordance with the responses provided by the participants. To develop a valid set of categories, two independent researchers discussed the data and reached consensusd on which responses fell into which categories. At this stage of the analysis, it was important to keep in mind that new categories could arise. Once all the responses had been placed in their appropriate category, the data were examined once more to make sure that none of the responses had been misplaced. The statistical package SPSS version 20 was used to calculate relative frequencies for each category. The initial sample was composed of 210 respondents currently living in North America. Of these participants, 23 did not consent to participating in the study and were excluded from the sample. A further 73 respondents were excluded because they responded to none of the questions. The final sample consisted of 114 respondents. Participants ranged between 37 and 85 years of age with a mean age of 57 (SD=7.96). Nine had an undergraduate university degree (7.9%), 26 had a graduate degree (22.8), and 5 had a doctoral degree (4.4%). Forty (64.9%) respondents did not provide information about their level of education. Almost half of the participants worked in the finance/insurance industry (41.2%). See Table 1 for a complete list of the industries in which they worked..

Table 1: Industry Sector

Industry Sector	Frequency	Percentage
Finance and Insurance	47	41.2
Retail Trade	9	7.9
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	8	7.0
Management of Companies and Enterprises	5	4.4
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	4	3.5
Information and Cultural Industries	4	3.5
Utilities	3	2.6
Manufacturing	3	2.6
Wholesale Trade	2	1.8
Educational Services	2	1.8
Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction	1	.9
Construction	1	.9
Transportation and Warehousing	1	.9
Other	14	12.3
Missing	10	8.8
Total	114	100.0

4. Results

"Books" The respondents recommended a long list of books that students should read. In total, the 114 respondents made 121 specific book recommendations. In addition, 29 respondents reported that it depends on the person and/or provided a general type of book rather than a specific book (ID 170, "Read for enjoyment. Whatever books interest you, as long as you continue to read" and ID 162, "Any biography; diverse genres including fantasy for creativity, crime fiction for problem solving in chaotic situations, 20th century history for context, etc."). The books were categorized into 12 subjects: (1) Business/Management/Leadership, (2) Self-Help: Career, Self-management & Personal Finance, (3) Novel, (4) Self-help: Well-being, (5) Biography/Memoire, Religion, (6) History, (7) Global

Affairs/Economy, (8) Social/Cultural, (9) Political, (10) Language, (11) Mentoring, and (12) Environmentalism. The two most frequently mentioned categories were (1) Business/Management/Leadership; and (2) Self-Help:Career, Self-management & Finance. The five most frequently mentioned books were (1) "Good to Great" by Jim Collins, (2) "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" by Stephen R. Covey, (3) "What Color Is Your Parachute? 2012: A Practical Manual for Job-hunters and Career-changers" by Richard N. Bolles, (4) "The Leadership Challenge" by James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, and (5) "The Four Agreements" by Don Miguel Ruiz. See Table 2 for a complete list of suggested books (by subject) and the frequency with which each book was recommended.

Table 2: Suggested Book Subjects

Book Subjects	Frequency	Percentage
Business/Management/Leadership	30	20.0
Self-Help: Career, Self-management & Personal Finance	23	15.3
Novel	23	15.3
Self-Help: Well-being	11	7.3
Biography/Memoire	10	6.7
Religion	6	4.0
History	4	2.7
Global Affairs/Economy	4	2.7
Social/Cultural	3	2.0
Political	3	2.0
Language	2	1.3
Mentoring	1	0.7
Environmentalism	1	0.7
General/Depends on the person	29	19.3
Total	150	100.0

"Magazines" Women in the Lead were even more forthcoming with magazine recommendations, providing 171 responses. Publications on politics and international affairs comprised a very large percentage of the suggestions, with news and business publications coming second and third respectively. The top five most commonly recommended magazines were:

Rank	Magazine
#1	The Economist
#2	Maclean's
#3	Harvard Business Review
#4	Time
#5	The New Yorker

. Refer to Table 3 for details.

Table 3: Suggested Magazine Type

Magazine Type	Frequency	Percentage
Politics/International Affairs	69	40.4
News	38	22.2
Business and Management	35	20.5
Science	11	6.4
Culture	8	4.7

Magazine Type	Frequency	Percentage
Literature	2	1.2
Other	8	4.7
Total	171	100.1

"Educational courses" When asked "What educational course or courses if any should they take?" A total of 125 specific course recommendations were made by the respondents' in addition, 41 respondents indicated that it depends on the person and that people should take a wide range of courses (e.g., ID 30, "as much education and as many courses as they can manage" and ID 97 "get as much formal education as possible, in areas of interest"). Therefore, a total of 166 comments were made. The five most frequently reported educational courses were language, business, mathematics, history, and finance. See Table 4 for a list of recommended educational courses and the frequency with which each course was mentioned.

Table 4: Recommended Educational Courses

Educational courses	Frequency	Percentage
It depends on the person/Take a wide range of courses	41	24.7
Arts: Language	14	8.4
Management: Business	9	5.4
Science: Mathematics	8	4.8
Arts: history	8	4.8
Management: Finance	8	4.8
Science: Science (general)	7	4.2
Arts: Philosophy	7	4.2
Social sciences: Economics	6	3.6
Arts: Communication	5	3.0
Arts: literature/writing	5	3.0
Management: Management	5	3.0
Art: Art (general)	5	3.0
Engineering: Technology/computer/IT	4	2.4
Social Sciences: Humanities	3	1.8
Law	3	1.8
Social sciences: Political science	3	1.8
Career choice	2	1.2
Leadership	2	1.2
Self-awareness/self-development	2	1.2
Mediation	2	1.2
Management: Accounting	2	1.2
Total number of comments*	151 /166*	91.0*

* NOTE: Only responses with frequencies of 2 or more were presented here (151). However, the overall total of 166 includes another 15 responses with a frequency of 1. The percentages in column 2 are calculated out of 166; therefore, it does not total 100%.

"Experiences to embrace" The five most frequently mentioned life experiences to embrace were (1) traveling and experiencing different cultures (e.g. ID 37, "Travel-best way to learn about the world and your own culture as well as that of others"), (2) volunteering (e.g. ID 68, "Volunteer. Give your time to someone or something in need, particularly humanity..."), (3) engaging in experiences to gain work experience (e.g. ID 5, "working in many different areas during the summer months, short holidays"), (4) embracing many different experiences (ID 13, "wide breadth of experience"), and (5) participating in sports (e.g. ID 12, "Get involved with sports - teaches team work - imperative!"). See Table 5 for a

complete list of experiences students should embrace with the frequency with which each experience was mentioned.

Table 5: Experiences to Embrace

Experiences to Embrace	Frequency	Percentage
Travel/experience different cultures	59	32.1
Volunteer/philanthropy	34	18.5
Gain work experience	18	9.8
Embrace many different experiences	10	5.4
Participate in sports	9	4.9
Learn constantly	8	4.3
Participate in theatre/art/music	6	3.3
Experiences you enjoy	6	3.3
It depends on the person	5	2.7
Engage in outdoor activities/nature	4	2.2
Learn another language	4	2.2
Learn from a mentor	4	2.2
Read	3	1.6
Public speaking	3	1.6
Experiences that are risk aversive	3	1.6
Get involved in politics	2	1.1
Participate in extracurricular activities	2	1.1
Other	4	2.2
Total number of comments	184	100.0

"Blogs" The Women in the Lead were asked what blogs they would recommend to high school students. The responses were grouped into categories, with the most frequently mentioned blogs being in the areas of business and technology (frequencies of 9 and 6 respectively). However, the number of responses was not high overall, (n=79), with 47 providing no recommendations or indicating "Not applicable". Also noteworthy was the fact that career sites were not recommended; and three participants reported that they "avoid blogs" altogether. Overall, these data suggest that, as a group, the Women in the Lead are not overly active or enthusiastic bloggers. Refer to Table 6 for details.

Table 6: Recommended Blogs

Blogs (by Subject)	Frequency	Percentage
Business/Management/ Marketing/ Finance	9	11.4
Technology	6	7.6
News	3	3.8
Literature	2	2.5
Arts/Music	2	2.5
Politics	3	3.8
Social Activism	2	2.5
Career	0	0
Avoid Blogs	3	3.8
Blogs about successful people	2	2.5
None/Not Applicable	47	59.5
Total	79	100

"Facebook" When asked about Facebook pages that they would recommend to high school students, very few suggestions were provided. In fact, the most common response was "none or not applicable", followed by "do not know" and "avoid using Facebook/limit use/be careful" (a total of 64% of the comments). While these results could be partly explained by the lack of success that Facebook has had in marketing their social networking site as a legitimate application for news or commerce, it also suggests that the respondents are not familiar with, or favourable towards Facebook as an educational resource. Refer to Table 7 for additional details.

Table 7: Recommended Facebook Pages

Facebook Page	Frequency	Percentage
None/Not Applicable	21	32.8
Avoid using FB/limit use/be careful	10	15.6
Do not know	10	15.6
News	6	9.4
It depends	4	6.3
Their own Facebook Page	3	4.7
Friends	3	4.7
Literature	2	3.1
Finance	1	1.6
Arts	1	1.6
Political Satirist	1	1.6
University	1	1.6
Food Industry	1	1.6
Total	64	100.0

"Websites" The participants were also asked to comment on websites – which ones they would recommend to high school students. Overwhelmingly, it was news websites (together, news websites represented 45.5% of their suggestions). The top five sites were:

Rank	Websites
#1	Globe and Mail
#2	BBC
#3	New York Times
#4	TED
#5	CBC

Table 7: Recommended Websites (by Subject)

Website (by Subject)	Frequencies	Percentage
News	43	36.1
Other*	16	13.4
It depends	15	12.6
Business/Management/ Finance	13	10.9
Not applicable	11	9.2
International News	10	8.4
Technology	4	3.4

Website (by Subject)	Frequencies	Percentage
Health	2	1.7
Government	2	1.7
Do not check websites!	2	1.7
Literature	1	0.8
Total	119	100.0

* Many websites were mentioned only once and could not be combined with any other response to form a category.

"Skills" Participants were asked to recommend any skill(s) that students should develop to better prepare them for their lives ahead – both personally and professionally. A long list of recommendations was provided. Interestingly, many are skills that are considered to be "soft skills"; and certainly these skills could be seen to be broader in terms of their applicability across both spheres of life, (personal and professional), than other more content or domain-specific skills. Communication competencies – verbal, written, and comprehension - are the most commonly mentioned. Also noteworthy is the frequency with which "moral philosophy" and ethics-related topics are suggested. These are not courses that are typically taught in high school; but have been introduced to many university business programs over the last number of years (e.g., Business schools).

Table 8: Recommended Skills

Skills	Frequencies	Percentage
Communication/Public Speaking	34	19.9
People Skills (listening skills)	25	14.6
Moral Philosophy (ethics, tolerance, moral intuition, empathy)	20	11.7
Thinking/Problem Solving	16	9.4
Attention to Detail	13	7.6
Self-Management (independence, multitasking, organization)	12	7.0
Writing Skills	11	6.4
School Subjects - Computer, business, math, science, languages. (Note that writing skills warranted a separate category because of frequency it was mentioned).	8	4.7
Leadership	8	4.7
Personal Finance	6	3.5
Coping/Flexibility (coping, resilience, open-mindedness)	5	2.9
Other	5	2.9
Hobbies	2	1.2
Sales	2	1.2
Creativity	2	1.2
Mediation	1	0.6
Depends	1	0.6
Total	171	100.0

5. Discussion of findings

Although respondents provided an array of advice for the next generation of workers, there were certain topics that arose more frequently than others. In discussing the results from the survey, a focus will be made on the prevalence and frequency of certain topics. We will also address the question of media preference and explore the notion of ementoring as a means of developing social capital for under-represented groups.

Print Media:

Books: Fourteen categories were used to group the books recommended by the respondents. Amongst these categories, respondents typically suggested business/management/leadership books (30%). Although this advice is not surprising given the background of the respondents, many women stated that the next generation of workers should read what interests them or they should read a wide range of material (29%). This group had a tendency to emphasize the importance of reading regularly, as opposed to reading specific types of material. Novels were also recommended frequently (23%), with respondents putting a significant weight on classic novels. Self-help books that were intended for professional development were encouraged frequently as well.. In short, the most common advice given to the next working generation was: read about business/management/leadership, read what is of interest, (but more importantly read frequently), read novels and classic literature, and read books that will aid in the development of a professional/career skills-set.

Magazines: Respondents provided many recommendations regarding print magazines to read. Fourty percent were in the area of Politics/International Affairs, with News making up another 22 percent. These results suggest that Women in the Lead believe strongly in the importance of political engagement and gaining an informed, international perspective about the global economy. However, the younger generation may not be as interested in using these print (magazine) media as Women in the Lead. For example, Coleman and McCombs (2007), found that the youngest generation, (age 18-34), used traditional media such as news-papers and television significantly less frequently than the two older generations. The younger age group also used the Internet significantly more often. Regardless of the actual media preference, however, the youngest generation's "agenda" was still influenced primarily by "the media".

Skills, Experience, and Education:

Courses: Many high school students place different priority on continuing education after graduation, and this influence is often linked to the individual's perceived opportunities – and barriers – in the formulation and pursuit of career and educational goals (Arbona, 1990; Astin, 1984; Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). As mentioned earlier, access to social capital often offers members more opportunities, choices, and information regarding potential career streams (Lin, 2001). Of the respondents who provided information regarding their education, all possessed some level of post-secondary education. Although no conclusion can be drawn that respondents valued their own personal education, their advice consisted primarily of education at the undergraduate level, thus inferring that the next generation should pursue post-secondary education. Respondents encouraged the next generation to pursue their interests and to enrol in a variety of courses at the university level (41%). Although personal interest was important, the second most frequent piece of advice was to develop language skills (14%). This suggests that Women in the Lead are attuned to the ever-increasing diversity of the workplace and globalization of the economy.

Experiences: When asked to provide advice to the next working generation regarding which experiences should be embraced, three suggestions were frequently mentioned. Respondents emphasized the importance of travel and to experience various cultures (32%), a rate higher than any other recommended experience. The second most prevalent suggestion was to engage in volunteering/philanthropy (18.5%). The third most reoccurring piece of advice was to gain work experience (9.8%). Often respondents suggested traveling to volunteer in areas and communities in need and to embrace cultures that were different from that of North-America. These results reinforce a major theme which is emerging from results: Women in the Lead are advising young men and women to expand their understanding of the world – by travelling, learning more about other countries' language, culture and politics,*Skills:* Consistent with the findings above, Women in the Lead advised that communication skills were of prime importance. Rather than emphasizing particular content areas which are critical (e.g., math, physics, marketing), or particular hands-on skills (e.g., carpentry, sewing, computer programming), they identified competencies that relate to communicating with others, listening, developing empathy, solving problems, and moral reasoning. All of these fit well with a vision of the future that requires strong, tolerant leaders who are culturally sensitive and have a broad international perspective.

Electronic Media

Blogs, Facebook and Websites: The Women in the Lead do not appear to be enthusiastic about recommending specific blogs or Facebook pages to the future generation. In fact, some of their comments are quite negative, warning young North Americans about the potential perils of using electronic media (particularly Facebook). These findings are perhaps not too surprising, given the significant inter-generational differences in internet usage: older generations (e.g., "old boomers" and "young boomers") use the internet substantially less than the younger generations; and they are much less likely to use blogs or social media (Jones and Fox, 2009). Nonetheless, rates of adoption among older adults are increasing, so this bodes well for the future (Jones and Fox, 2009),

What do these results tell us about women leaders and the potential of using the internet to provide ementoring to those who are less fortunate? We have presented a number of studies which show that ementoring can, in fact, build social capital for underprivileged youth (DiRenzo et al., 2013; Edirisingha, 2009) minority group members, and low income middle and high school students (DiRenzo et al., 2009). However, the results of the present study are not particularly optimistic, for several reasons. Firstly, the Women in the Lead do not seem to be well informed about certain modes of electronic media, and may not be interested in communicating with youth on these platforms. For example, Lee et al., (2009) contend that there are over 500 million active Facebook users and propose a Facebook-based mentoring scheme. But this may not be advisable for Executive-level women, as many of the respondents in this study were not strong supporters of social media. Secondly, given the types of skills and competencies that the Women in the Lead recommended for future leaders, an electronic platform may not be the optimal means of mentoring – for these types of skills, anyway, Competencies such as public speaking, listening skills, empathy, and moral reasoning demand a more interactive, face-to-face mode of communication. Nonetheless, other types of ementoring may be entirely appropriate (career advice, certain types of problem solving, transitioning from school to university or employment). As well, electronic mentoring holds much promise in terms of gaining access to a powerful group such as Women in the Lead insofar as it breaks down barriers: it minimally disrupts work, eliminates "windshield time", (travelling to and from mentoring meetings), and can reduce any sensitivities around gender or race mentoring (Kasprisin et al., 2008).

6. Study limitations

This research provided a unique opportunity to gain access to Women in the Lead, an influential group of women in leadership roles across North America. However, an initial directory of 630 women generated only 114 completed surveys, a response rate of 18%. As a result, the advice is limited to those those 18% who contributed. Further, the effectiveness of the advice may have been limited by the generality of the instructions provided to participants. That is, by giving more details about the needs and characteristics of the "protégé" who was being advised, the respondents could have better customized their advice. Lastly, the availability of high-quality advice will not necessarily lead to higher rates of women and visible minorities accessing the survey information or being able to action it. Increasing one's social capital takes time and ongoing support. Therefore, accessing this advice is merely a first step.

7. Conclusion

Research has consistently documented that women are disproportionately represented in upper management and in positions of power and still continue to dominate traditionally "female" occupations, such as administrative support and service workers (Burke, 2002; Hsieh, C-W & Winslow, E., 2006; Jacobs, 1999; Leck, 2002; MacRae, 2005; Shein, Vueller, Lituchy & Liu, 1996). Although women are significantly under-represented in upper management, visible minorities are also experiencing limited career advancement. In 2001, 13% of Canada's workforce was made up of visible minority workers, with the proportion said to grow to 21% by 2017 (Catalyst, 2007), Although visible minorities are set to occupy a larger portion of the workforce, the proportion of senior management positions occupied by visible minorities is expected to plateau at 3% (Catalyst, 2007). While these numbers may be staggeringly low, research has continuously pointed to a need for earlier intervention in the shaping of these social networks in order to remove barriers preventing equal access to social capital in the job market and various career streams. This study has taken the advice of 114 women, either enroute or currently holding executive-level positions or corporate board memberships, in order to provide insight to high school students looking to graduate. The gathered information will serve as a unique resource for high school students looking to either validate advice

they have already received or inform them of a possible alternate route. Moreover, universal access to high-quality and non-discriminatory advice is essential in ensuring that segregated groups gain information, influence, social credentials, and reinforcement before entering the job market.

Appendix 1

Instructions: Drawing on your own background and life experiences, we are interested in the advice you would give to a member of the generation that is currently in high school. The questions beginning below seek to draw on your perspective. Specifically, what would you recommend to them to be better prepared for life after high school as they go on in both their personal and professional lives. For each of the questions we ask for your one best recommendation if you care to offer one. If you wish though, you may make more than one.

ADVICE
1.   Which books (or books) if any would you recommend they read?
2.   Which print magazine (or magazines) if any would you advise them to read regularly?
3.   Which blog or blogs if any would you suggest they follow?
4.   Which Facebook page or pages if any would you suggest they frequent?
5.   What website or websites if any would you recommend they regularly check in on?
6.   What educational course or courses if any should they take?
7.   What life experience or experiences if any should they try to embrace?
8.   What life experience or experiences if any should they avoid?
9.   What skill or skills should they develop?
10.   Is there any other advice or recommendations you would give to someone currently in high school that would make their lives better in the coming years?

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1.   Age
2.   Mother tongue
3.   Number of siblings
4.   Number of children / step-children
5.   Educational level
6.   Employment sector
7.   Province in which lived longest
8.   Country where high school education was completed
9.   Citizenship status
10.   Ethnic and cultural origin

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