

Women and Leadership: An Exploration of Social Capital

A Study Conducted by College of Saint Mary
Master in Organizational Leadership Students



Women's Fund of Greater Omaha

Spring 2008

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Purpose of the Study	2
Significance of the Study	2
Research Questions	3
Review of Literature	3
Operational Definition	4
History of Social Capital Concept	5
Reciprocity.....	8
Importance of Social Capital	9
Factors that Impact Use of Social Capital.....	11
Demographic Variables Which May Influence Social Capital.....	35
Research Design	40
Ethical Considerations	41
Action Research Steps and Timeline	41
Limitations	44
Delimitations.....	44
Role of the Researchers	45
Data Collection/Information Gathering	46
Data Analysis	48
Strategies for Validating Findings	48

Findings and Discussion.....50

Value of Purposeful Networking 51

Roles of Courage, Bravery, and Fear..... 53

Benefits of Common Associations and Affiliations 55

Similarities and Differences within Social Roles 57

Summary and Conclusions 60

Strategies for Building and Using Social Capital 60

Appendix A:Written Survey 73

Appendix B:Focus Group Script 75

Master in Organizational Leadership Students

Danielle Tighe, Jessica Huscroft, Maureen Holstein, Marybeth Goddard,
Brenda McLey, Luta Pleiss, Vanessa Dobles, Candace Adams, Mary Akers,
Janelle Domeyer, Nichelle Griffith, Ravin Henry, Keisha Holloway,
Terri Khan, Julissa Lara, Gina Lypaczewski, Tricia Rabel, Julie Reager
Jean Russell, Kristin Schroeder, Brianne Stephan, Jannette Taylor

Under the Supervision of

Tammy Moerer, Ph.D., MOL Program Director
Sue Schlichtemeier-Nutzman, Ph.D.
Viv Ewing, Ph.D.
Denise Hill, J.D.

Introduction

In 1990, women leaders in Omaha established the Women's Fund of Greater Omaha. The mission was to create opportunities for the economic, physical, emotional, social, artistic and personal growth of women and girls. Their goal was to enable women to achieve full partnership in the Omaha community (para.1, History, n.d.).

The Women's Fund of Greater Omaha is known for reliable, respected research about issues impacting women (para.1, Research Studies, n.d.). In 1996, the Women's Fund of Greater Omaha conducted its first survey on women and leadership in the workplace. A follow-up study, conducted in 2006, was designed to delineate the progress of women's workforce leadership between 1996 and 2006 (Women & Leadership, 2007, pg. 14). The 2006 follow-up study revealed that "women in Omaha have made limited progress in the leadership ranks, but barriers that were identified ten years ago still exist today" (Women & Leadership, 2007, p. 3). One common theme which emerged from the interviews conducted during the 2006 study involved the importance of relationships in career development. Many of the leaders interviewed discussed the importance of having someone who encouraged them early in their lives. During their careers, the leaders mentioned mentors and networking as keys to their development (Women & Leadership, 1997, pp. 43-44).

In response to these findings, the 2008 Master in Organizational Leadership class at College of Saint Mary was asked to conduct additional follow-up research. The commission of this research was an effort to better understand phenomenology of career networking relations in the form of social capital.

Statement of the problem

A 2006 longitudinal study, conducted 10 years after the original research effort by the Women's Fund of Greater Omaha, found that "there have not been many gains for Omaha women in accessing networking and social opportunities to further their careers..." (p. 59). According to Caiazza and Putnam (2002), Nebraska ranked 6th overall on the social capital index, which measures connectedness among individuals. However, on the Status of Women index, a measure of women's political participation, employment and earnings, and health and well being, Nebraska drops to 29th (Status of Women Index in Putnam, 2002). The research presented in the current study addresses what factors prevent women from attaining and using social capital, and how they can successfully build, then utilize, social capital.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research study was to examine the social capital networks of businesswomen in the Omaha area. By investigating the achievements and challenges of professional women in local organizations, the researchers discovered obstacles that inhibit the building of social capital and identified key methods of gaining and leveraging social capital.

Significance of the Study

The Women's Fund 2006 Report is consistent with research and mass media reports across the country in noting that women are not making much headway moving up the corporate ladder. Lack of social capital and an inability to utilize the social capital they earn appear to be important issues in what has been referred to by some local female middle managers as the "treadmill effect." Distilling specific strategies for acquiring, then utilizing social capital would

hold great value for women in this community. Successful strategies could be shared more broadly, promoting multiple level social capital generation.

Research questions

Primary Question: How can women in the greater Omaha area develop and use social capital to enhance their advancement opportunities in organizations?

Guiding Questions:

1. What are the facilitators to women building social capital?
2. What are the barriers to women building social capital?
3. What are the facilitators to women using social capital?
4. What are the barriers to women using social capital?
5. What strategies can women use to expand and enhance their formal and informal networks?

Review of Literature

The status of women's careers has been evolving throughout the past 50 years. "Throughout recorded history, individual women have reached summits, and their accomplishments have been touted as evidence that women could achieve greatness" (Goldin, 2005, p. 5). Goldin proceeds by stating, "Until recently, the vast majority of women - even college graduates - occupied the valleys, not the summits. They had *jobs*, not *careers*" (Goldin, 2005, p. 5). In July 2006, the *Boston Globe* stated that, "Women's progress in getting the top jobs in American business is so slow that at the current rate they are becoming corporate officers, it would take 40 years before women catch up with men..." (Associated Press, 2006, p. 1).

According to Catalyst, in 1998, it was reported that only 2.7% of the highest-paid officers at Fortune 500 companies were women, and that women continued to dominate lower paying occupations such as domestic, clerical support, and administrative-type occupations (Heathfield, 1998, p. 11 in Cuizon, 2008.) The *Washington Business Journal* states, “Since there are more women than ever with the skills and experience needed at the top, this should be the decade for women to rise to leadership roles. Yet only eight of the Fortune 500 CEO positions are held by women and barely 5% of the top earners in the Fortune 500 are women” (2006, p. 10).

A phenomenon is said to exist when women do not pursue leadership roles in exchange for maintaining friendships. Some believe that this occurrence, known as the *exchange concept*, is one factor in the slow growth rates for women reaching advanced levels. In exploring this concept, the researchers collected literature on the growth of women in the workplace, the history of the social capital concept, development of social capital, women’s relationships, barriers and facilitators for women, the evolution of networks, and the value women place on relationships.

Operational definition

Putnam defined social capital as “connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (Caiazza & Putnam, 2002, p. 5). These connections involve relationships in both personal and professional networks. In relation to career development, the author notes that these networks play an important role. A follow-up study concluded that there is a strong tie between certain indicators of the status of women and their social capital (Caiazza & Putnam, 2002). Lin (2001) has focused more on what can be done with social capital. Her definition “resources embedded in a social structure which

are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions” reflects the importance of utilizing one’s social capital.

History of social capital concept

The family of capital theories originally proposed by Marx has spawned a series of contemporary capital concepts, including intellectual capital, emotional capital, human capital, cultural capital, and, of interest in this study, social capital (Lin, Cook, & Burt, 2001). Marx (1933/1849 in Lin, et al., 2001) defined *capital* as “part of the surplus value captured by capitalists or the bourgeoisie, who control the means of production, in the circulation of commodities and monies between the production and consumption processes.” According to Lin, et al.:

Capital, as part of the surplus value, is a product of a process; capital is also an investment process in which the surplus value is produced and captured. It is also understood that the investment and its produced surplus value refer to a return/reproduction of the process of investment and of more surplus values. It is the dominant class that makes the investment and captures the surplus value. Thus, it is a theory based on the exploitative nature of social relations between two classes (p. 4).

Social capital originated in the social sciences and was later embraced by journalism and mass media, economics, and political science. Here is a brief conceptual timeline (Putnam, 2002; Lin, 2008; Halpern, 2005; Grootaert, Narayan, Jones, & Woolcock, 2004):

1832 – Alexis de Tocqueville (French writer) described the vibrant associational life that underpinned American democracy and economic strength.

1844 – Karl Marx (German philosopher, political economist, revolutionary) proposed the theory of historical materialism, which focused on associational forms developed by workers.

This gave rise to explanations of strengths and weaknesses of solidarity among the oppressed.

1904-1905 – Max Weber (German political economist and religious sociologist) advised German negotiators on the Treaty of Versailles. He suggested concepts of authority and charisma, as well as emphasis on a *shared style of life* as a fundamental component of status groups.

1916 – L. J. Hanifan (State Supervisor of Rural Schools in West Virginia) urged the importance of community involvement for successful schools and may have been the first person to use the term social capital.

1933 – Emile Durkheim (French sociologist) noted the transition from *mechanical solidarity* of the feudal world to *organic solidarity* of 19th century capitalism in which people entered into purposeful connections and interactions.

1966 – Coleman, Campbell, and Hobson examine the concept of social capital regarding equality of educational opportunity.

1972 – Pierre Bourdieu (French writer who echoed Marx) refocused academic attention on the various forms of capital including cultural capital, economic capital, and symbolic capital.

1976 – Glenn Loury (Economics Professor) completed his dissertation pioneering the economic analysis of social capital. He defined it as “the informal social ties and relationships that make lives more productive and successful.” Although the concept of social capital had a long history, Loury was the first to interpret it in economic terms, looking at the social legacy of slavery and arguing that as long as whites possessed greater and unrestricted access to social

capital, they would continue to enjoy a disproportionate advantage in the labor market no matter what laws were enacted against discrimination.

1988-1989 – James Coleman (Sociologist) embraced Loury’s definition of social capital and began to focus on social capital as it relates to overall human capital. He connected sociology and economics in the context of studying adolescents.

2000 & 2002 – Robert Putnam (Harvard University Public Policy Professor) studied the collapse and revival of American community and popularized the term, *social capital*.

Interest in the concept of social capital has grown exponentially in the past 25 years. Harper (2001) conducted a content analysis of articles listing social capital as a key term. His findings are shown in Table 1. Authors have noted that it would be impossible to get an accurate count today.

Table 1. Academic References to Social Capital as a Key Word

Year(s)	Number of Journal Articles Listing <i>Social Capital</i> as a Key Term
Prior to 1981	20
1991-1995	109
1996-1999	1003

Source: Harper, 2001

Putnam (2002) has noted that social capital is a good thing and the collapse of social capital is a bad thing. In *Bowling Alone* (2000), he proposes that the major villain in the collapse is television, but that there are many “minor villains” including cars, loss of free time, and aging of the generation that confronted collective challenges like war and the Depression. According

to Coleman (1994), religious organizations are among the few remaining organizations in society, outside of the family, that cross generations. Thus, he argues, they are among the few in which the social capital of an adult community is available to children and youth. Coleman laments the decline in natural solidarity and relates this phenomenon to naturally occurring mentoring vs. formalized mentoring programs.

Reciprocity

In her book, *In a Different Voice*, Carol Gilligan discusses the differences in the ways men and women relate to others (2005, p. 4). This perspective has been used to study relationships within the workplace. Regarding the effects of women's perspectives on relationships, Gilligan believes that women really do thrive on acknowledging their connection with other people and that the need for connection has encouraged greater outreach in terms of networking "... for the greater good" (2005, p. 5).

Reciprocity is a key element of most contemporary definitions of social capital. Putnam (2000) devotes an entire chapter to "Reciprocity, Honesty, and Trust." He asserts, "The touchstone of social capital is the principal of generalized reciprocity. I'll do this for you now, without expecting anything immediately in return and perhaps without even knowing you, confident that down the road you or someone else will return the favor."

Taylor (1982 in Putnam, 2000) has pointed out,

Each individual act in a system of reciprocity is usually characterized by a combination of what one might call short-term, altruism and long-term self-interest. I help you out now in the (possibly vague, uncertain, and uncalculating) expectation that you will help me out in the future. Reciprocity is made up of a series of acts each of which is short-run

altruistic (benefiting others at a cost to the altruist), but which together typically make every participant better off (p. 212).

Lin, et al. (2001) outline the complexities of measuring social capital, especially if reciprocity is assumed. The authors refer to Bourdieu's (1983/1986, p. 248 in Lin, et al., 2001) structural view of social capital as a "representation that makes sense only when it is assumed that all members maintain strong and reciprocal relations."

Importance of Social Capital

According to a report published in 2006, a key benefit of higher social capital is the exposure to job opportunities that yield higher pay (O'Connor & Sauer, 2006). Paradoxically, many people learn of professional opportunities when they are not searching. These positions often would not be known to the prospective candidate if the network were not in place that led to this knowledge. McDonald and Elder (2006) researched the phenomenon of people locating job opportunities when they are not searching. The authors found that these candidates had not been considered in prior studies examining the role of personal networks in locating available positions. The existence of the non-searchers is referred to as "the invisible hand of social capital" considering that past research had been more focused on job searching instead of "job matching" (McDonald & Elder, p. 522). The study further reports that women, more often than men, encounter changes or breaks in employment during their careers. Because of this, the levels of social capital for these women often decline (McDonald & Elder, 2006).

Most researchers agree that there are strong professional benefits to developing a personal network. Uzzi and Dunlap (2005) developed a structured approach for analyzing the strength of one's network. The authors suggest that there are three advantages of having a

network: private information, access to diverse skill sets, and power. The information regarding job opportunities gained by those not searching is an example of having access to information through a personal network.

Bierema (2005) conducted a study on women's networks and career development. The following is an excerpt from the study that focuses on the evolution of women's networks and how important it is for females to possess social capital:

Women's issue of inequality within the workplace has increased awareness within our society. As a result, more organizations are adopting settings to address concerns surrounding diversity and supposedly increasing opportunities for women and other diverse groups. Nevertheless, accomplishing improved organization equity through the use of networks is more complicated than simply creating a network. As a result, the evolution of female social networks has just begun, and will continue to develop. It is imperative that organizations understand the importance of allowing women this social gain (p. 210).

Social capital has been widely accepted as an important asset for career advancement, as well as creating and maintaining healthy communities and robust organizations. Although the numbers of women entering the workforce continue to rise, statistics reveal that women continue to lag behind men in career development, in levels of compensation, and achieved status. It can be argued that women are hindered in their attempts to achieve success and job advancement as a result of their inability to access social capital (Timberlake, 2005). Social capital serves as a valuable source of knowledge, resources, and networks that are essential for personal career development and women advancement in the workplace.

According to Cohen and Prusak, many organizations benefit from having high social capital in the work place (2001). They will have a better knowledge sharing due to established trust relationships, common frames of reference, and shared goals. Ultimately, they will have lower transaction costs, due to a high level of trust and cooperative spirit (both within the organization and with its customers and partners). Also they will have lower turnover rates, reducing severance costs and hiring and training expenses, avoiding discontinuities associated with frequent personnel changes, and maintaining valuable organizational knowledge and greater coherence of action due to organizational stability and shared understanding (Timberlake, 2004, p. 36-37).

Today, women and men populate the workforce in equal numbers; however, the social networks of females are minimal in comparison to their male counterparts. Broadly stated, social capital is a product of the sociological presumption that social context matters for individuals' beliefs and behavior. Social capital is the contextual attribute; human capital is the individual attribute (Burt, 2000, p. 3). With the fundamental changes in female labor force participation throughout the last century, it has become imperative for women to develop social relationships in order to further their careers (Fernandez, 2007, p. 1).

Factors that Impact Use of Social Capital

Tharenou wrote in 1999 that women executives consistently report of barriers in advancement and exclusion to networks. Therefore women have less social capital for gaining information and, consequently, fewer opportunities to advance (*Gender Differences in Advancing to the Top*, 1999, pp. 118-119). Because of this exclusion and reported barrier, women have to work harder to become included and work harder to cultivate social capital (1999, p. 118). Focusing on human capital and social capital and their effects on advancement,

social capital is rated more frequently as the barrier to women's advancing or not. Women executives in the USA and Canada rated exclusion from informal networks as the first or second most frequent barrier to their advancement over their careers, in contrast to their male CEOs (1999, p. 122). Women executives report that it is hard to network, requiring substantial formal effort, unlike men, who reported it was automatic and informal (1999, p. 122).

Social scientists who began systematic observations of group formation and network ties in the 1920s and 1930s noted that school children formed friendships and play groups at higher rates if they shared similar demographic characteristics (McPherson, Lovin, & Cook, 2001, p. 1).

Individuals can learn about corporate culture through building relationships and by forming a variety of social networks as a means of building a community of support. Networks serve psychological and developmental functions for men and women. However, it is still well established that women are excluded from men's networks. Additionally, women must work harder than men to advance, and enjoy less power, prestige, and pay. To be effective today, organizations must comprehend that by functioning with a high awareness of gendered power relations, the organization will be in a better position to accomplish their goals.

Some research suggests it is women themselves that are preventing their career advancement. Joyce states, "Women still practice unconscious behaviors that keep them in middle management rather than the executive suite. It's high time they figure out what they have to do to let themselves thrive at work" (2006, p. F06). In order for women to thrive at work, they need to be aware of some potential barriers that may exist, such as, the *sticky floor*, the *old boy network*, and the *glass ceiling*. These factors may keep women in low level non-managerial and support roles and prevent them from seeking or gaining promotion or career development,

according to Joyce. Some barriers to the advancement of women may include family commitments, attitudes, stereotyping, and organizational structures, the author suggests.

Research continues to suggest that the glass ceiling is the barrier that is preventing advancement of women on the corporate ladder. Catalyst reported in 1994:

Researchers have found that gender and racial bias at senior levels of corporate management may be exacerbated by informal culture, selection and recruitment practices, task assignment, performance evaluation and salary decisions. Most employers do not consider monitoring for equal access and opportunity at the higher levels to be a corporate responsibility, nor do they focus a great deal of attention on programs and policies directed to employee development (p. 4).

The case study further notes, “Among the reasons cited for the existence of the glass ceiling were the belief that women are too easily diverted from their careers by family considerations; stereotypes about women’s ability to function in the tough, competitive world of business; and a caste system that relegates women to roles peripheral to core business activity” (Catalyst, 1994, p. 1).

Finally, some would suggest that the “old boy” network is at fault. Kaip (2007) notes, “The *old boy* network may be one reason why women are underrepresented in positions of power. America’s corporate boardrooms are like secret clubs. You have to be invited to serve on the board, and the only way to get invited is to demonstrate that you will work within the established system. To a large extent, female board members have to support and protect the status quo” (Kaip, 2007, p. 2).

Whether it is the *glass ceiling*, the *sticky floor* (Joyce, 2006), the *old boy network* or women themselves, there are barriers keeping women from achieving positions of power.

Researchers believe that understanding the dynamics of these obstacles is a key factor in overcoming them. Powell (2004) quotes Barbara Kellerman, Research Director of the Center for Public Leadership: “Forty years after the birth of the women’s movement, women need to look at themselves, rather than at men or at society, for reasons why there aren’t more women heading companies, earning top dollars, or running governments” (p. 1). “And that something may be choice.” He continues to quote, “When given the choice, many women at some point in their careers leave the work force to have babies and raise their families” (p. 5). Finally, he quotes, “Many women prefer to spend more time with their children.”

Joining a formal women’s network has been stressed as vital in helping women navigate traditionally patriarchal environments. Hanson (2000) advocates networking for several purposes: landing a job, connecting with diverse colleagues over shared interests, cultivating a support system, and integrating oneself into a career. Mitchell (1999) also states that women were involved in networks to help with business problems, to solicit advice, and to change career direction. However, professional network success for women is dependent on the organizational culture.

Unfortunately, many professional or in-company networks have failed or been disbanded. Bierema concluded in a 2005 study at the University of Georgia, that network dynamics might impact women’s attitudes, awareness, and participation; as well as the resiliency of the patriarchal culture within the organization. In the groups studied, participation was affected by the attitudes toward the network, awareness of gendered power relations (the degree to which individuals and organization recognize how gender differences create privileges for men and oppress women), and willingness to take action. Many of the women members fretted about the consequences of their participation and the impact on their image. In cultures that were male

dominated, the women's network was discriminated against and unsupported. The women experienced the network with apprehension and the organizations proved to be more an obstacle than a support system (Bierema, 2005). Unexpectedly, the networks may contradict the original intentions of helping women. Therefore, complex dynamics associated with the professional network's organization, such as the culture of the organization, may present a negative image on women's networks and their objectives. It is possible that these networks may fail because the power becomes diminished by association of a "women's group."

"According to a past study, women in 2003 and women in 1996 cited the same barriers to women's advancement to senior leadership levels: lack of general management or line experience; exclusion from informal networks; and stereotyping and preconceptions of women's role and abilities" (WomenOf.com, 2003, p. 6). "CEOs and women agree that in order to move forward senior leaders need to assume accountability for women's advancement" (WomenOf.com, 2003, p. 6). "Too often, women work very hard and wait to be noticed. They often become frustrated when they see less-deserving people promoted ahead of them" (Valterra, 2005, p. 5). "Women have been trained to not "toot their own horn," or draw unnecessary attention to themselves.

Networking is the single most important life skill in obtaining personal and professional success, according to Michel (2007). In her article, "Perfecting Connecting: Learning to Speak the Language of Others," Michel focuses on the role human temperament plays in creating the human networks and cites Berens as breaking down all human temperaments into four distinct categories: improviser, stabilizer, theorist, and catalyst. Michel contends that by becoming familiar with Berens's temperament clues, one can interact fully with others, and thereby expand her network. Michel further asserts that one's network must not be made up of merely

“transactional” connections that cease to exist when a transaction is complete, but rather, “connectional” networks that grow into important interpersonal relationships; sincere and mutually beneficial.

In their article entitled, “Women’s Status and Social Capital across States,” Caizza and Putnam (2002) assert that a woman’s social capital is directly related to her status within her community. They believe that a woman’s status is a complex concept whose factors include economics, politics, health, and education. The authors found that women’s social capital was simply greatest in those states where women enjoyed the greatest status. Conversely, a woman’s social capital was least in those states where women possessed marginal status. Finally, the authors state:

Women fare better where civic engagement is greater, and they fare worse where people are isolated and disconnected from their communities. Engaging more women in civic and political participation may be a crucial tool for advancing their status more generally—and improving women’s status may be important to improving the overall civic health of the country (Caizza and Putnam, 2002, p. 6).

Reimers-Hild, Fritz, and King (2007) assert that to succeed in their professional lives, individuals, and especially women, must invest in their own human capital, namely their education. Secondly, the authors state that women must invest in their social capital; they must build networks that connect them to key individuals within and outside of their organizations. Finally, the authors believe that both women and men can further their own career development by using distance education as a facilitator to be a life-long learner.

Metz and Tharenou (2005) examine whether human and social capital are related to advancement of women in four management levels at Australian banks. The authors credit

Becker (1993) as defining human capital as the “knowledge and skills people accumulate over time.” This includes education, training, and work experience. Metz and Tharenou adhere to Portes’ (1998) definition of social capital as the “ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures.” In their literature review, Metz and Tharenou find that although human capital may be equivalent between men and women seeking similar banking positions, it is the caliber of the social capital that will be a factor in promotion to senior positions. Further, the authors hypothesize that human capital is related to women’s attainment of low managerial positions while social capital is related to women’s attainment of high managerial positions.

Quantitative results from the study found that human capital credentials are most important to women’s advancement in all four levels of banking management while social capital is most effective in helping women obtain only a junior managerial level. However, qualitative results from Metz and Tharenou’s study suggest that the male hierarchy still exists in banking institutions and social capital, most notably mentor support and personal tactics (agency) are contributing, but not the major factors in women obtaining high levels in bank management. The authors recommend strategies banks can implement to assist women in obtaining human capital and removing barriers such as negative stereotyping and possible gender discrimination that have prevented women in the banking industry from realizing their full potential.

In her publication entitled, “Gender Differences in Advancing to the Top,” Tharenou (1999) theorizes that the primary reason for women not advancing to the executive ranks is their apparent lack the relevant social capital. She states further that women have a more difficult time than men in obtaining quality social capital, and must spend more time cultivating social capital.

Kilpatrick, Field, and Falk remind us of Putnam's work, "The 'dark side' of social capital with its negative normative associations and norms of exclusion should be part of any analytical framework based on social capital" (2003, p. 431).

In their article entitled, "Women, Sexism, and Persistence in Golf," McGinnis, McQuillan, and Chapple (2005) explore the fact that although golf is not a gender-driven sport; men play and excel at golf more so than women. In fact, less than four percent of the members in the Professional Golf Association (PGA) are women (Kinney, 2003 in McGinnis, et al.). The authors speculate that the environment women experience on the golf course is very similar to the environment they experience in an occupation that is largely made up of men; golf like many occupations is perceived as masculine.

According to McGinnis, et al. (2005), a review of literature reveals both sexism in sport and sex segregation in the workplace to include tokenism, social closure, and a form of stereotyping called *statistical discrimination* in which an individual is treated as if she or he possesses all of the qualities and characteristics typical for their collective group.

To collect the data for their study, the authors interviewed 10 women golfers living in the Midwest. The majority of the women in the study were affluent and White and the women exhibited a wide range of golfing abilities. The authors found that despite the fact that the women they interviewed did, indeed, experience tokenism, social closure and statistical discrimination on the golf course, they were persistent in their efforts to continue to play golf. The women employed strategies such as playing with same-sex golf partners, playing on women-friendly courses (par threes), and limiting their participation to off-tee times.

The authors concede that although this article did not research racism within golf, this is certainly an area worthy of investigation and state that the same strategies used to eliminate

gender and race discrimination in the workplace can readily be applied to the golf course. The authors suggest that there is much to be done within the institution of golf to make it more inviting to women. They are hopeful that golf courses and golf's governing bodies will engage in gender-equity strategies providing an example for gender equity in all sports.

Hymowitz (2007) explores the question of exclusion in "High Power and High Heels," published in the *Wall Street Journal*. Hymowitz writes about "women only" networking opportunities conducted through organized activities such as shoe shopping. Male executives will often conduct business during sports, such as golf or hunting, or doing typically male activities such as scotch tasting and cigars. Hymowitz raises the question of whether or not women only events are just as exclusionary as male only events but concludes whatever the answer, the participants tend to review the networking opportunities as positive (2007).

Bierema's (2005) research focused on an in-company women's network whose mission included improving the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women. Despite best efforts, the women's network failed; it did little to improve the women's standing within the organization and faced an uphill battle as the company adhered to a patriarchal structure. Bierema further found that the network was damaged by its members' attitudes about participating in an all-women's group and the accountability they may face from their involvement. Bierema's conclusions regarding women's networks within an organization include: "(1) networks may serve to reproduce patriarchy, not erode it; (2) the level of gender consciousness impacts participation and receptivity; and (3) network success is impacted upon by organizational culture" (2005, p. 220).

The topic of women and professional networks established within organizations is reviewed by Brady and McGregor (2007). They found that women's networks are often

ineffective and usually viewed as little more than social groups. Corporations have good intentions to attract women to help them develop their network and thereby foster growth among their employees, but too often “the groups may become little more than social gatherings, and have trouble attracting heavy hitters” (Brady & McGregor, para. 2).

However, a world-renowned women’s networking summit is a good example of how to create a meaningful experience for top female executives. Sponsored by General Electric (GE), high-ranking women from all over the corporate world are invited to the Leading & Learning Summit where high-profile speakers address a crowd of the nation’s top 150 corporate women. The participants herald the concept as a great way to find out what other women leaders are doing in their organizations (Brady & McGregor, 2007).

As effective as GE’s efforts are, in most workplaces across the country there is often the feeling of exclusion of networks. Tharenou reports, “Women executives in the USA and Canada rated exclusion from informal networks as the first or second most frequent barrier to their advancement over their careers” (1999, p. 122).

Although women find barriers to networking, Tharenou raises a point made by Kanter (1977) that is worth examining: Do managers choose people socially similar to themselves to advance, and therefore, most often it is white males who are already in executive positions hand-selecting other white males (p. 121)?

There is no question that women are involved in activities, both within the workplace and outside of it. However, these activities are usually different from men’s activities as there still seem to be instances of system-imposed exclusion. That said, women are developing their own networks, perhaps stronger networks, and hoping to make advances in their careers.

An action group was formed to address women's issues and advancement in one organization, but the "Network" generated little involvement in women's issues beyond meetings and planning. Executives noted there was lack of energy. Many women were simply too tired to take on one more challenge, particularly when their personal career cost seemed too high. Per Bierema (2005), participants blamed lack of energy for the Network idleness. "The people themselves, the women themselves, don't feel like they have the time, don't feel like they have the background, don't feel like they.... pick something, therefore they couldn't possibly stand up and be counted on this" (2005, pp. 214-215). The level of gender consciousness impacts participation and commitment (2005, pp. 118-119). The majority of the executives recognized gendered power relations, but chose not to take any action. Women only spoke behind closed doors regarding the biases. Although the network was designed to foster change, there was little evidence that women were willing to challenge the culture. According to Bierema, all-women networks need to develop strategies and policies that help move toward high awareness and an action state (2005, p. 220).

In a high-trust organization, it is possible to develop a wide range of social relationships and organizational configurations. In an organization lacking trust and social capital, formal control and rules are required and often must be installed through negotiation and litigation and maintained through mechanisms of enforcement (Timberlake, 2004, p. 36). Thus the absence of social capital and trust generates costs for organizations and should be considered when weighing the cost associated with the development of organizational trust and social capital (Timberlake, 2004, p. 36). Some strategic behaviors designed to improve the status of women include finding sponsors within their organization (Burt, 1992) or employing strategies that engender the support of other women (Kathlene, 1995 in Timberlake, 2004).

Although there is a considerable body of work addressing the development and utilization of social capital within private organizations, there is a general and pervasive lack of data relating specifically to public organizations where there are often differences in personnel management, decision making, information systems, and accountability. There are untold benefits and rewards that may be generated once a workplace is democratized and equalized so that women, as well as men, may make a full use of their skills and abilities and contribute equally to the growth and development of private companies and public sector organizations (Timberlake, 2004, p. 43).

Possible networks for women to become involved in a work force are groups called *communities of practice* (COPs). Here people gather and groups come into existence when they are interested in a common work-related area and feel a need to share. These common interest groups' participants are volunteers (Lesser & Stork, 2001). The authors define social capital in terms of three primary dimensions:

- There must be a series of connections that individuals have to the others and perceive themselves to be part of a network.
- A sense of trust must be developed across these connections.
- The members of the network must have a common interest or share a common understanding of issues facing the organization (Lesser & Stork, 2001, p. 832).

These conditions apply quite aptly to communities of practice and justify the hypothesis that the vehicle through which communities are able to influence organizational performance is the development of social capital among the participants. Members have interest in COPs and their volunteer participation shows commitment (2001, p. 832).

An interest in utilizing social capital draws women to join women's boards. These are not trustee positions on strategic boards that focus on long range planning. Women's boards or women's associations are primarily about fundraising. While the term, women's board, can seem diminutive, the women involved realize their tremendous impact within the non-profit organizations they serve. "It's an anachronism in this day and age. Why would any woman want to be on a women's board?" says Audrey Rubinstein, 51, president of Ravina Festival Association's women's board, which has raised \$3 million since 2000. To answer her own question, she adds, 'It's wonderful. The boards are filled with very smart women'" (Bertagnoli, 2006, para 3). "Maureen Dwyer Smith... simply called on her social network to help launch Joffrey Ballet's women's board, which has 161 members" (Bertagnoli, 2006, para 8). Clearly a desire to work with other women in a meaningful way is the underlying motive for joining or running women's boards.

In the article, "Perfecting Connecting," (2007), Michel notes in that when cultivating new contacts, some networkers will give up too early, failing to see the strengths that their personality patterns and natural talents bring to the network process. Real connectors know that good things come to those who can hang in there (p. 31).

In addition to studying the effect of the changing role of women, Putnam (2002) also looked at increased education levels of Americans since 1972 with the number of adults with fewer than 12 years of education cut in half. Education increases social capital, he asserts (2002, p. 3). Although the evidence is merely circumstantial, heavy TV viewing correlates with less engagement in their communities. TV is the only leisure activity that seems to inhibit participation outside the home. TV watching comes at the expense of nearly every social activity

outside, especially social gatherings and informal conversations. TV viewers are homebodies, according to Putnam (2002, p. 12).

In seeking differences in gender and social capital and formal groups, Norris and Inglehart (2003), found that women spent time with family members and immediate relatives which does not lead to people to joining formal organizations. In contrast, their male counterparts' time spent informally with workmates and friends was positively correlated to participation in formal associations (p. 14).

Keeping a balance between work and family life can deter women from growing their social networks. "What we are going to have to do is get to a place where we create environments for women to network among government and other business entities that are during the hours that make sense for women, (like) during the work day so we're not interfering with family life" (Moran, 2006, p. 17). Traditional formal networks with regular meetings in evenings or on weekends require working women to choose between building social capital and caring for their families.

An important type of social capital is *reproduction social capital*. This is related to bonding social capital, which is closely associated with family and women (Adkins, 2005, p. 2). Many women have family obligations and gaining the social capital they need is difficult unless other women or people are in their situation and understand their needs. Most women do gain the social capital they deserve, but they do not want to miss out on quality family time. Most women stated that their family is more important than their job (Adkins, 2005, p. 9). A good number of women look for support outside the work organization, which may build peripheral social capital, but it may not be the type that can be cashed in at work.

As women strive to balance work and family, they join informal networks for support in the areas of child care and domestic responsibilities. While they may not have the time to commit to a formal civic organization, women are building “informal connections formed to help with family care” (Smith, 2007, p. 8). There is a higher level of commitment in these networks based on the higher level of reciprocity. These, “networks of care” (Smith, 2007, p. 12) are arguably just as valuable as traditionally male dominated groups like golf foursomes.

One researcher believes that there is commonalty between social capital and community development. McClenaghan (in Kilpatrick, Field, & Falk, 2003) asserts that social capital and community development are both abstractions that denote a homogeneous social structure implying common process in the generation and acceptance of fundamentally positive social norms, values, and practices. The particular knowledge and skills, or human capital, that are the expected outcome of community development education are the very knowledge and skills that can be used to promote personal development in others, build networks, and set up procedures and structures that enable people to work together for mutual benefit (Kilpatrick, et al., 2003). That is, community development education is expected to foster the building of social capital, the authors conclude.

Social capital makes us smarter, healthier, safer, richer, and better able to govern a just and stable democracy (Putnam, 2000). The Status of Women in the States uses 30 indicators to create composite indices of women’s status in five areas: political participation, employment and earnings, economic autonomy, reproductive rights, and health and well-being (Caiazza & Putnam, 2002). In general women’s status is strongest in the states of Northeast (including Maryland, Connecticut and Vermont) and West (including Washington and Hawaii). It is weakest in several Southern states, including Mississippi, West Virginia, Arkansas, Kentucky

and Tennessee (Caiazza & Putnam, 2002). Engaging more women in civic and political participation may be a crucial tool for advancing their status more generally and improving women's status may be important to improving the overall civic health of the country (Caiazza & Putnam, 2002).

Most of the research on social capital has reinforced the struggle of the female worker to find balance between work and home life. The increased number of women in the workforce has directly led to "the vastly diminished role of women in the volunteer community" (Smith-Mello & Schirmer, 1994, p. 154). Women are shifting out of traditionally female social networks, "as work lives consume more of the time that might have otherwise been devoted to social and civic activities" (Smith-Mello & Schirmer, 1994, p. 154). The hours spent in school association meetings in past generations are now spent at the office. However, women are still engaged enough in these traditional networks and other newly formed "networks of caring" (Smith, 2007, p. 12) that they have little time for business networks.

Social capital can be built in any type of daily interaction from the informality of a grocery store visit to working as team mates on a strategic planning committee at work. Women need to continue to build these relationships in their existing networks, and then find ways to bridge the value gained in all facets of work and home life. The concept of social capital points to the way in which social relationships serve as a resource. These resources allow individuals and groups to cooperate in order to achieve goals. Otherwise, the goals might have been attained only with difficulty, if at all (Kilpatrick, et al., 2003).

As many companies are becoming aware of the situation more resources are available for women to use. Methods for developing social capital include the use of mentors, the community, and networks inside and outside the organization. Many disagree that women stand on the same

playing field as men. This in turn shows that women have to work harder to show their leadership abilities. The challenge is to find an equal balance where women are still authentic.

Men tend not to care about whether or not someone is hurt, as long as their needs are being met (Lowndes, 2004). Women tend to have a greater purpose, setting a path for other women who are trying to gain more social capital. Once women are shown that their opinion counts and they feel trust within the company, their commitment level increases. Most women want work to be flexible enough to cater to their other needs. In return, women prefer not to be looked upon as weak for expressing their feelings (Lowndes, 2004, p. 55).

According to Helgesen (1990), women lead in a much different way than men. She identifies eight different characteristics of how women lead compared to Mintzberg's (1997 in Helgesen, 1990) research on male leaders. One of these differences involves work- life balance and another involves maintaining energy in and focus on one's role. Another characteristic Helgesen describes is maintaining and developing a social network. The women interviewed in her study described their roles as complex and multifaceted. Helgesen emphasized the need for women to maintain time for activities not directly related to work. The four successful women described in Helgesen's diary studies explained the need to have the skills to play many different roles: that of a successful leader, a mother, and a person. This observation is also made by several other researchers who claim that work-family balance is an ongoing struggle between parental roles and professional roles (Comer & Stites-Doe, 2006). Comer and Stites-Doe (2006) further describe this struggle as "a perpetual process of aligning and readjusting...in a manner that maximizes inter- role facilitation and enhancement and minimizes inter- role conflict and depletion" (p. 2). They note that women show their constant give and take through their many roles: mother, wife, and professional. Another characteristic Helgesen describes about these

women is their ability to make their families a priority and at the same time maintain their successful careers. This is described as setting a priority about what is most important in their business duties and what can wait in order to have balance in their lives.

Zacharias (2005, p. 30, in Helgesen, 1990) explored the impact on work-life balance policies and social expectations for women. She found that companies do not support individuals who attempt to utilize policies that would allow an employee to take non-paid time off for personal reasons without consequences. She attributes the use of this time off as “career death.” She described the traditional homemaker-breadwinner model that is expected once couples have children. In this model, women are given permission to limit their work. However, when a female does return to work, she often cannot return to the same position. Zacharias’s findings support the argument that mothers who remain in their working position are often perceived as not being good mothers and have difficulty in balancing work and home life. She described that the social expectation for women to have children is so great that women abandon their career dreams.

Van Steenbergen, Ellemers, and Mooijart (2007) formulated the hypothesis that work and family can facilitate each other in a positive correlation. Gender differences were found. The authors reviewed the literature and found that most studies focused on the negative aspects of work-life balance. Work-life balance has been studied from the prospective of the scarcity theory related to human energy. This theory states that we only have so much time, energy, and attention (Van Steenbergen et al., 2007). The scarcity theory supports that if individuals give their attention to one of their roles, then the other roles in their lives would be neglected. The researchers chose to study the positive outcomes related to energy and work-life balance within professional and family roles. Their findings support that women and men respond differently to

their roles. In addition, they are energized by different successes at home or work that contribute to increased success in their other roles. In this study, women reported more strain-based and psychological conflict than men. This was defined as one role, either home or work, making it difficult to fulfill the other. The psychological conflict involved being distracted or preoccupied with one role while performing another. Van Steenbergen, et al. found that women experienced increased satisfaction and energy when the work or home role supported the other role. There are many potential organizational implications for assisting women in facilitating the two roles. The research also supported that leaders should recognize and capitalize on how both roles increase opportunities to acquire new skills and develop behaviors such as networking that can help women better perform at work.

Thompson and Cavallaro (2006) examined work support, work-family conflict, emotional exhaustion, and family environment. They found that work-based support was an accurate predictor of employees' reports of increased family cohesion and reduced family conflict. Emotional exhaustion did not correlate with quality of family life. The level of emotional exhaustion needed to be very high before it became problematic. In terms of gender differences, Thompson and Cavallaro (2006) also found that men reported higher levels of family conflict when they had a wife who worked outside of the home. It appears that husbands are negatively impacted by the demands of their wife's work. Furthermore, the researchers found that supervisor support was important in reducing women's work-family conflicts, but not men's. Overall, there is limited research regarding companies that employ "family-friendly" benefits and the potential connection with a reduction of work-family conflict. In general, most of the research focuses specifically on the topic of work-family conflict, but minimal attention has been

paid to linking work-family balance with family-friendly benefits and this would offer fertile ground for future research (Breugh & Frye, 2007).

It is interesting to note that older women in the workforce seem to differ from younger women in their appraisal of work-family conflict (Gordon, Whelan-Berry & Hamilton, 2007). They view the interaction between work and family as positive. They seem to have developed strategies whereby their work enhances their family life and vice versa. The researchers also found that organizational support played a key role in helping this cohort achieve balance. Sometimes, if they didn't receive the support they needed, they felt comfortable asking for it. This skill is lacking for most younger women; it could make a big difference in what benefits women receive.

In 2004, The Work/Life and Women's Initiative Executive Committee of the American Institute of Certified Public Accounting (AICPA) conducted a national survey of the Certified Public Accounts (CPA), other accounting professionals in public accounting and in business and industries to determine the availability, operation, and acceptance of work-life and professional programs (Badiga, 2005). The research included subjects who responded to a national survey. According to Badiga (2005), both women and men rated the promotion process to be extremely fair or very fair and they felt they knew the rules to obtain a promotion. These rules were quality of work, development of business with new clients, and development of trust among partners. The research showed that female professionals ranked the rule of developing trust among partners higher than the rule for developing new clients. According to the Badiga, 87% of women and 78% of men were more interested in work-life balance than in promotions. The professionals reported three main reasons for leaving their profession:

- 1) Working conditions

- 2) Work-life balance
- 3) Desire for change

As a result of the survey, many firms have developed plans to assist in the advancement and retention of female professionals. Examples include professional development plans, flexible work schedules, and more formal networking opportunities. Female professionals reported that they did not mind working from home on some evenings and weekends in exchange for having more time for family events. The research emphasized the importance of recognizing the need for women to have work- life balance in order to retain the top performers. Many companies force women to make choices between their work and their families (Schwartz, 1992). In doing so, they are losing potential leaders and perpetuating the myth that it is not possible to combine career with family. Businesses cannot afford to lose their female workforce. It is truly in their best interest to assist women in creating a balance through such initiatives as on-site child care and flexible work hours.

O'Neill, Harrison, Cleveland, Almeida, Stawski, Snead, and Wentworth (2007) discovered that organizations which support and have work-life benefits have higher employee retention, higher stress reduction, and higher job satisfaction. Those corporations identify the following three dimensions and assist in finding balance experience increased employee satisfaction:

- 1) there is a requirement for managers to understand the need for work-family balance;
- 2) there is a requirement for managers to help employees dismiss the negative connotation felt by fellow employees who make use of the work-family benefits; and
- 3) there is a need to set boundaries for time expectations that require employees to make sacrifices.

Whitmarsh, Brown, Cooper, Hawkins-Rodgers, and Wentworth (2007) conducted qualitative research on 27 women, 10 in female-dominated professions such as teaching and social work and 17 in a gender-neutral group such as medicine, law, or higher education. Their goal was to examine women's career planning and decisions and to discover themes to support new strategies in helping women choose a career path. The following six themes emerged from their research: variations of career/family patterns, career encouragers, career obstacles, personal compromises, career changes, and career decision making patterns (Whitmarsh et al., 2007). Their study showed that women in female-dominated professions were encouraged to pursue their careers by family members while those who chose gender neutral careers were encouraged outside the family to achieve these goals. Women in female dominated professions stated that they did not experience career obstacles, whereas women in neutral roles did.

In 2006, the Women's Fund of Greater Omaha conducted a qualitative, longitudinal research study 10 years later with leaders in the community. The purpose was to identify women in leadership roles, to establish a baseline for the community regarding female representation, to learn about the paths that the female leaders had taken in order to achieve success, and to identify social and psychological aspects that contribute to obtaining leadership positions (Women's Fund of Greater Omaha, 2006). One aspect of the study was to identify common themes that crossed all sectors of leadership. One of themes that emerged was balancing work and life. This research study supports Hewlett's (2002) findings that most women take an average of 2.2 years of extended break for childbearing purposes. The women also described a reduction in pay and status when they returned to work after having children.

According to Tharenou (1991) female executives report stereotypes, male-dominated cultures, and exclusion from networks as the major barriers to their advancement. This exclusion

can be exacerbated by gender-stereotypes based upon the female's social role in our society. Tharenou's findings concur with the research findings of Catalyst (1992). Both report that the perception of white males in senior positions and their lack of 'comfort' with women may decrease the latter's ability to advance into higher positions. This perception is related to women's work and family commitments.

Light (1998) describes a powerful network of women in New Zealand who had been involved in an initiative called "Women Who Count." Light (1998) describes their goal as development of a strategic plan to advance women in their company. These goals included helping women develop networks and investigating work and family issues. Some of their initial initiatives were parental leave, flexible working practices, family friendly facilities, information, and support initiatives such as childcare information. These initiatives were put into place by the organization recognizing that 50% of its recruits were women. Since the study was conducted in 1998, their current web site indicates that these same principles are driving forces within their organization to attract and retain female recruits. Their steering group has identified four key goals which will help them meet their objectives. These goals are:

- 1) To raise their profile (internally and externally)
- 2) To promote and achieve life balance choices linked to individual circumstances
- 3) To ensure that the personal and professional development needs of women are identified and addressed
- 4) To influence the company's processes to promote progression, development, and retention of women.

This network of women has undertaken a number of projects to help them meet these goals. Some initiatives include profiling key statistics which are relevant, championing

mentoring schemes within the company, employing *Dress for Success* principles (Malloy, 1996), and ensuring that their new building has suitable facilities for new mothers.

It appears that networking is a means by which women can support each other in finding ways to promote work-life balance and a means by which to advance in their careers. It is possible, however, that women have not been given adequate information on how to network. Kent (2003) provides practical ways to gain confidence in networking and states that asking for what you want is essential. Johnson and Spizman (2007) provide a strategy which entails many time consuming steps. Perhaps most women simply do not want to expend the energy necessary to create these networks given their energy has to be distributed among so many roles.

Some may argue that one of the reasons women do not accumulate and utilize as much social capital as men is because this requires too much time and effort. Perhaps women are more fatigued than men, given their home-life obligations. Lowndes (2004) contends that women draw on their social capital for the daily management of their own and their family's lives, that there is not enough left for them to use in the political arena.

There are pioneers among women who have been able to successfully manage their diverse roles. These women have been able to balance family, health, and achieve their career goals of becoming executives in their organizations. Women's caring responsibilities helps them be perceived as community activists, but wider potential connections, as in the political arena, may go unrecognized. Mackay, as cited in Lowndes (2004), referred to "privileged irresponsibility" to denote the fact that male councilors had others to take care of them while the women councilors had to struggle to combine family responsibilities with long, often late night meetings. Lowndes (2004) concludes that women use social capital to get by, to help with the management of their personal lives while men use social capital to get on with their careers.

Demographic Variables Which May Influence Social Capital

“Top business women in America give three main explanations for why so few of them reach ‘C-level—that group of executives who preface their titles with the word ‘chief.’” First comes the exclusion from informal networks” (Special Report - Women in Business, 2005, p. 64). Explanations, in short, of barriers to women “suggest that women participate less in associational groups because they can’t (‘No time!’), because they won’t (‘Not interested!’), or because nobody asked them (‘Come along to a meeting?’)” (Norris & Inglehart, 2003, p. 2).

Regarding the first explanation above, (i.e. time), is often a work-family balance issue. Perhaps the most destructive result of the work-family balancing act that so many women must perform is that it leaves little time for socializing with colleagues and building professional networks. The social capital that accrues from such ‘nonessential’ parts of work turns out to be quite essential indeed. Eagly and Carli (2007) extracted the following description of managers who advanced rapidly in hierarchies: Fast-track managers ‘spent relatively more time and effort socializing, politicking, and interacting with outsiders than did their less successful counterparts...(and) did not give much time or attention to the traditional management activities of planning, decision making, and controlling or to the human resource management activities of motivating/reinforcing, staffing, training/developing, and managing conflict. This suggests that social capital is even more necessary to managers’ advancement than skillful performance of traditional managerial tasks (p. 68-69).

Lin (2001) reports that the literature confirms the “disadvantages of females and minority group members in social capital” (p. 793):

Inequality in social capital is also evident across racial and ethnic groupings. Whites have the largest networks, blacks the smallest, and Hispanics and others were intermediate (Lin, 2000, p. 788). Cognitive awareness of these resource restrictions may motivate some members of disadvantaged groups to establish social ties with members of advantaged groups to gain better information and influence (Lin, 2000, p. 787).

While many are attempting to increase their social capital, others are declaring that social capital, on the whole, is waning. “Social capital has been on the decline in America for the last 30 years. People are spending less time together outside of work” (Elman, 2005, p. 3).

In today’s context, the many social and economic changes and the advances in technology that have occurred in recent decades have resulted in a striking erosion of social capital (Kiechel, 2000). Causes for the decline are listed as: more time at work, pressures of time and money, commuting and/or suburbanization, and television. However, the most significant contributor is “because each new generation has been interacting less with its peers and society generally” (p. 149).

Putnam in *Bowling Alone* (2000) argues that social capital in the United States is declining. He also relates that to generational succession.

Generational succession is, in sum, a crucial element in our story. However, it has not contributed equally powerfully to all forms of civic and social disengagement. The declines in church attendance, voting, political interest, campaign activities, associational membership and social trust are attributable almost entirely to generational succession. In these cases, social change is driven largely by differences from one generation to another, not by changing the habits of individuals. By contrast, the declines in various forms of schmoozing, such as card playing and entertaining at home, are attributable mostly to

society-wide changes, as people of all ages and generations tended to shift away from these activities. The declines in club meetings, in dining with family and friends, and in neighboring, bowling, picnicking, visiting with friends, and sending greeting cards are attributable to a complex combination of both society-wide change and generational replacement (Putnam, 2000, p. 265-266).

In addition to socioeconomic status, human capital may affect social capital. The relationship between human capital and social capital is interrelated (Lin, 2005). Literature suggests that education is considered a component of human capital, which may complement social capital (Glaeser, Laibson, & Sacerdote, 2002). If human capital is not linked to social capital, it is weakened as an asset (Schuller, 2007). This makes sense in that if education is considered a component of human capital, a degree alone, at least the paper copy, will not get an individual very far. It is the relationships or the social connections that develop which will promote social capital.

A study discussed in the *Economic Journal* demonstrated that “the relationship between income (or education) and social capital investment is uniformly positive. This might not be surprising, if one imagines that the same people who invest in standard forms of human capital (e.g. college educations) also invest in social capital” (Glaeser, 2002, p. F454). In addition, Stone and Hughes (2001) found that the relationship between education and networking is directly related. Individuals with high levels of education (tertiary education) have larger non-family networks and have a greater number of memberships and institutional ties. Similar results were found in a study conducted by Ajrouch, Blandon, and Antonicci (2005), which confirmed the correlation between individuals with higher education leading to larger networks. Moreover, Parks-Yancy (2006) revealed that a higher level of education may relate to social capital

“because individuals may have a greater number of social ties (from extensive schooling interactions) from which to draw for employment information, influence, or opportunities” (p. 536).

The previous research indicates the importance of higher education as a means to increasing social capital. A study presented in the *Advancing Women in Leadership Online Journal* indicated the importance for women to invest in their human capital; the need to “actively seek out and obtain knowledge through formal education,” is necessary to build their credentials (Reimers-Hild, 2007, p. 2). This presents the topic of human capital related specifically to women and education. Thus, it may be inferred that an increase in human capital, such as education, may lead to an increase in social capital and the formation of greater networks. Women may promote growth in social capital through obtaining human capital in the form of education.

In examining further the demographics of professional women in leadership roles, it is necessary to determine how professional leadership training and management training contributes to social capital. It has been argued that professional training can help build social capital, but it is the actual network itself that builds social capital and proves to be more effective in furthering professional employment. While a great deal of policy research has focused on the effects of training and education, some analysts contend that social capital is equally if not more important than human capital for socioeconomic advancements (Lin, 1999; Lin et al., 1981).

It must not be overlooked that *trust* is a key element in developing, building, and maintaining social capital. As one study participant stated in regard to the Management Leadership Program training designed by the University of Ottawa, “...it’s really been helpful so we’ve been able to build a level of trust” (Terrion, n.d., p. 8). The researchers also found that

participants' "interactions with the network they had established during the training continued long after the module was completed and greatly contributed to their learning process" (Terrion, n.d., p. 8). The training sessions are double-fold in that the benefits for social capital and networking are not only short-term; but in addition, they serve as long-term connections.

For women entrepreneurs that partake in formal training for start-up programs for their new businesses, the development of social capital to grow their business is crucial. Since many women "lack the management experience and access to networks, they have a greater need for ongoing support. Many women identify personal skill shortages such as marketing and sales skills, management skills and acquiring skilled labour, as constraints on the development of their firms" (Carter, p. 332). Self-employed women and female entrepreneurs would greatly benefit from continued support in the form of shared networks and skills training pertinent to their ventures. "The continuation of self-help groups, or peer mentoring, after formal start-up programs have finished is an innovative and low-cost means of providing ongoing support to new firms" (Carter, p. 332). While women attend start-up programs, they can brainstorm ways in which they might forge partnerships, provide mentoring for one another, or possibly create a forum to discuss business challenges and successes, learning from one another. The social and professional networks created through these collaborative efforts will inevitably create social capital.

It may be concluded that external training arenas, mentioned above, most likely provide more networking opportunities to increase social capital, than those of internal organizational training. Internal trainings may strengthen the current network making it denser, but not necessarily broader. While social networks can naturally happen while in small group problem-solving activities or getting involved in small-talk over lunch and exchanging business cards, for

example, the key is to transform this seemingly isolated experience into a contact or network that can be utilized and reciprocated. Research notes, "...to be productive, social capital must be successfully marshaled by those situated individuals who can convert it into a meaningful resource" (Dinovitzer, 2006, p. 4). Furthermore, Barr's (1998 in Timberlake, 2005) approach limits women to either borrowing social capital from their male counterparts or relying on their close network of associates within the organization; it is unlikely that either of these measures will lead to the transformational change necessary bring women into full equality with men in the workplace (Timberlake, 2005, p. 40).

On the other side, a not-so-common theme found in literature regarding social capital is that it can have its *dark side* and prove to have a negative impact on groups and individuals. Focusing on professional and leadership trainings, it may be harmful to be too exclusive and too inclusive at the same time; trainings may be most effective by creating a balance of bringing the old in with the new. In the work of Gargiulo and Benassi (2000 in Marx, 2004), it is noted,

Changing the composition of social capital often implies creating new ties while lessening the salience of old bonds...The more intense and productive the ties with the old contacts were, the more difficult will it be to part with those relationships. Such is the paradox of social capital: the brighter its bright side, the darker the potential effects of its dark side" (Leenders, 2005, para. 2).

Research Design

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach. Information was gathered through 21 initial interviews with business leaders, written surveys returned by 56 respondents,

and a series of eight concurrent focus groups involving 83 purposefully selected business men and women who work in various fields through the Omaha area.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations included inviting an array of focus group participants and assuring them that comments they made in the focus groups would not include identifying information, if they were used in the project.

Action Research Steps and Timeline

This action research project was embedded into a six-module Master in Organizational Leadership program. The steps and timeline for each segment of this project are outlined below:

Module 1 –

Introduce peer-reviewed academic journal articles and their components

Collect two journal articles per student regarding social capital

Introduce qualitative research methods

Introduce APA style

Introduce IRB process

Supplementary readings: *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among the*

Five Traditions and Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods

Approaches by J.W. Creswell

Module 2 –

Introduce *Action Research* model

Develop one primary research question and two guiding questions per pair of students

Supplementary readings: *Action Research*, 4/Ed by G. Mills and *The Female*

Advantage by S. Helgesen

Introduce step-by-step written journal article reviews

Introduce operational definition concept

Develop operational definition of “social capital” for use in this research

Develop written survey

Work in seven small groups to write five thematic sections of the Literature Review, the Demographics section of the Research Design component, and complete the IRB form:

- 1) Exchange concept (loss of connection vs. 10% salary increase)—connectors vs. detachers, etc.
- 2) Activity choices/obstacles- self-imposed, other-imposed, and system-imposed (i.e. hunting, fishing, golf, etc.)
- 3) Commitment or level of interest in gaining and optimizing social capital
- 4) Energy levels vs. fatigue factor (anthropological research on work/life balance)
- 5) Gaps? Other themes that should be addressed?
- 6) Demographic variables (gender, generation, educational background, previous leadership and/or management training, etc.)
- 7) IRB application preparation

Submit completed IRB documentation for approval

Disseminate written surveys

Finalize Literature Reviews

Module 3 –

Develop a demographic profile to qualify group participants (e.g. gender, position, industry, potential interest level)

Organize logistics: Assign facilitators and recorders, secure rooms, order food, etc.

Identify potential focus group participants (4 per student), secure their cooperation

Identify potential electronic or telephone survey respondents (4 per student), secure their cooperation

Introduce focus group facilitation training

Develop focus group script

Rehearse focus group effort (including testing of audio equipment)

Facilitate focus groups (secure appropriate information and signatures)

Supplementary readings: *Social Intelligence* by D. Goleman and *Focus Groups* by R.

Krueger

Module 4 –

Begin data analysis

Supplementary readings: *Survey Methods* and *Bowling Alone* by R. Putnam

Module 5 –

Review Measures of Central Tendency and Dispersion (Appendix B from Action

Research supplementary text)

Complete analysis of the data

Organize and report findings

Begin writing narrative descriptions

Module 6 –

Begin editing Findings and Discussion sections of the report

Following Module 6 –

Integrate all segments and edit for content and flow

Limitations

Limitations of this study include participants having viewpoints that are similar to or possibly the same as researchers' views. Because the selected audience was educated, experienced, and professional in nature, dissenting or diverse thought may have been suppressed. Participants were solicited from various organizations that support women in their careers, thus selected participants might be biased toward building and enhancing women's networks. Those openly against building the social capital of women were solicited, but not heavily recruited. Because the participants were not a random sample, but rather a convenience sample, the results may differ from a study of randomly solicited participants.

Delimitations

Delimitations of this study include the vast boundaries of studying the field of social capital. Educating the study participants regarding the definition that the study utilized in the predetermined timeframe was challenging. Identifying the target audience among known contacts created opportunities for acquaintances to be in focus groups. These potential contacts prior to the study may have affected the response of focus group participants without the knowledge of the researchers.

Role of the researchers

Surveys using self-report measures may have self-report bias (Donaldson & Grant-Vallone, 2002). Another possible shortcoming of the study that could not be controlled included the time allowed to acquire participants. Regarding the focus groups, facilitating, rereading and validation of the transcripts were relatively new experiences for researchers. This added to nervousness and other displays of emotion that may have impacted the interpretation of results. Personal bias played a major role due to knowing and living in the city of Omaha. All of the researchers were familiar with the previous Women's Fund studies, so preconceived ideas on social capital and women in Omaha may have also impacted the research. As informal research was conducted before the study, these experiences may have contributed to bias in the study. All of the focus group participants were known to some degree by the researchers and as well known as prominent leaders in the community, so there may have been the potential for those from the community within researchers' interlocking networks to be aligned with the researchers' views on many topics discussed and investigated.

There was some pushback during the focus groups due to participants who did not fully understand a question and that impacted the responses of others in the group. These questions related to differences between having and using social capital. Overwhelmingly obvious were preconceived notions of the width and breadth of Omaha's "Good Old' Boys (GOB) Network" (Omaha Women's Fund Study, 2006). Assumptions were validated by qualitative analysis, but quantitative and qualitative analyses through future research are necessary. Some participants expressed that the GOB network is used as an excuse or reason (barrier) for women not getting involved in networking organizations. The bias toward this discovery being primarily system-imposed rather than the self-imposed (barrier) is validated in the Omaha Women's Fund study

(2006). Other biases included the personal experiences of researchers who experienced the need to pursue access to those individuals who could affect one's career. On the matter of researcher demographics, the researchers were professional, educated, female graduate students focusing on issues related to other women; many had experienced barriers related to careers, as well as hardships involving work-life balance.

Data Collection/Information Gathering

Two primary data collection/information gathering tools were used to complete this project on social capital. Triangulation was ensured by utilizing eight different focus groups involving 83 purposefully selected business men and women, as well as a written survey of 130 women with a response rate of 43% (56 surveys returned), and 21 individual interviews.

One primary question (PQ) and five guiding questions (GQs) were addressed in this study. (See summarized guiding questions in the triangulation matrix in Table 2):

Table 2. Triangulation Matrix

PQ: How can women in the greater Omaha area develop and use social capital to enhance their advancement opportunities in organizations?

	DATA SOURCE #1	DATA SOURCE #2	DATA SOURCE #3
GUIDING Q #1 Facilitators to Building SC?	Eight concurrent focus groups	80 Individual Interviews	Written Survey
GUIDING Q #2 Barriers to Building SC?	Eight concurrent focus groups	80 Individual Interviews	Written Survey
GUIDING Q #3 Facilitators to Using SC?	Eight concurrent focus groups	80 Individual Interviews	Written Survey
GUIDING Q #4 Barriers to Using SC?	Eight concurrent focus groups	80 Individual Interviews	Written Survey
GUIDING Q #5 What strategies can women use to expand and enhance their formal and informal networks?	Eight concurrent focus groups	80 Individual Interviews	Anecdotal Notes

--	--	--	--

Each student constructed her own individual interviews based on the written survey (see Appendix A), framed by the primary research question and delineated by the five guiding questions. A specific focus group script was developed for use by all facilitators in the focus group sessions (see Appendix B). Demographic data and ordinal data relating to the themes that had emerged in each group were collected.

Data Analysis

Focus groups were recorded and verbatim notes were taken by one or more note-takers in each session. Transcripts were completed for each group and researchers identified recurring themes for each guiding question.

Strategies for validating findings

Validity was ensured by addressing Guba's (1985) four criteria for ensuring validity in qualitative research, as outlined in Mills (2007).

Credibility

Guba defines this dimension as the researcher's ability to take into account all the complexities that present themselves.

- Researchers received training in how to conduct focus groups, practiced their skills, then provided ground rules to participants, in order to overcome distortions produced by the presence of the researchers.

- They listened carefully and took verbatim notes to identify pervasive, as well as atypical, responses.
- The classroom provided opportunities for peer debriefing, giving the researchers opportunities to test their insights with one another.
- Eight concurrent focus groups were conducted, allowing for triangulation and comparison of a variety of information sources.
- The focus group script was revised several times to ensure structural coherence and prevent internal conflicts and contradictions.
- Referential adequacy was established by including all student researchers in the Review of the Literature. Each student was familiar with a set of secondary sources and had been exposed to the history of the *social capital* concept prior to facilitation of the focus groups.

Transferability

Guba defines this dimension as the researcher's beliefs and understanding that everything they study is context bound.

- Detailed descriptive data were collected that permitted comparison of multiple contexts to which transfer might be contemplated.
- Detailed descriptions of the context allowed researchers to make judgments about fittingness with other contexts.

Dependability

Guba defines this dimension as the stability of the data.

- Interviews, written surveys, and focus groups were all conducted, in order to provide an overlap of research methods.
- Establishing an “audit trail” was one of the greatest challenges of this project, as 22 graduate students and four faculty were working on different segments at different times.

Confirmability

Guba defines this dimension as neutrality or objectivity of the data.

- Triangulation was practiced by engaging seven different focus groups. Inter-rater reliability was ensured by providing facilitator training, as well as a script that was used by all facilitators.
- Reflexivity was practiced by acknowledging that this study was based on underlying assumptions that arose from the longitudinal Women’s Fund of Greater Omaha study.

Findings and Discussion

While a number of themes emerged from the examination of responses from surveys, interviews, and focus group responses regarding facilitators, barriers, and strategies to Omaha women building and using social capital, the following four themes were most prevalent and, therefore, worthy of the following discussion. The themes include:

1. Value of Purposeful Networking
2. Role of Courage, Bravery, and Fear
3. Benefits of Common Associations and Affiliations
4. Similarities and Differences within Social Roles

Value of Purposeful Networking

Networking is a skill that can and should be taught. Women in particular, a focus group participant stated, need to be cognizant of the value and importance of taking the time to build their social capital. Doing so, the participant noted, will result in both personal and professional rewards (personal communication, January 12, 2008).

Another participant observed that boys are taught from a very early age to ask for what they want. Girls, on the other hand, are groomed to believe they must not ask outright for what they want, but rather wait to be asked as to what they desire. This phenomenon is transferred to the workplace where the professional networking habits of many women consist of merely just “sitting back and waiting to be invited.” Another focus group participant noted, “If you want to get ahead, you have to ask for it” (personal communication, January 12, 2008).

When building social capital to further a professional career, one must make a conscious effort to seek out the “right” individuals. According to a participant, a man may think “I’m using this network to better myself,” while a woman may think the connection is more social—she may use that connection to achieve support or affiliation, but nothing more. This is aptly summarized in one statement, “If you are saying that one needs to do certain things for the specific purpose of gaining social capital, I think you are probably right” (personal communication, January 12, 2008).

Additionally, mentoring was identified as a facilitator for building social capital. For example, one participant stated the importance of, “...having a person in your life, it could be a mentor, and it could be a coach, but someone who is supporting you and ...focusing on the steps to moving you toward your dreams.” Another said, “I think that people entering the workforce today are more active in seeking out mentors and coaches.”

An additional facilitator for helping women improve their networking skills is to observe how networking is accomplished and how effective it can be for one's career. As expressed by a participant:

I think that formally if you are in an environment where you can watch men and women network and you can see that person and you can go “wow,” look what he or she has just set up. I think that as you learn and grow, having someone to watch is powerful.

Sometimes that is planned and sometimes not, but just being able to watch someone else do it makes a difference.

Finally, reciprocity was identified as a key to building and using social capital. “You can build social capital by giving it” (personal communication, January 12, 2008). Women who have strong networks can also “pay it forward” by using their connections to help other women. According to Kilpatrick, Field, & Falk (2003), individuals need to use these social relationships as resources and cooperate in order to achieve goals.

A barrier to intentional networking included a woman feeling uncomfortable “using” an already developed relationship strictly for the purpose of professional gain as women who employ this tactic may sometimes be labeled as too aggressive, cold, or career-driven.

Additionally, lack of time was identified as a barrier for women building social capital. In fact, more than 90% of survey responses from women (Appendix A) cited the lack of time as a major factor in preventing them from participating in groups that could further their career growth. This is not surprising as women today, and most likely for the foreseeable future, are responsible for the majority of child-rearing and roles in the home—taking time away from their children to be out in the community building relationships and using their social capital, is for some, just not possible. A focus group participant stated:

Some women still think that they need to manage the homes themselves...they fear relinquishing those duties to others and how others will view that stepping away from the home. That becomes an excuse sometimes to not network. We get invited and we say that we can't because we are too busy with other things. We worry about how others will view us socially in terms of a wife and mother.

Role of Courage, Bravery, and Fear

In determining facilitators and barriers for women in the Omaha metropolitan area to building and using social capital, the theme of courage, bravery, and fear is identified as a common thread woven throughout responses from eight focus groups.

Definitions according to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th edition, supports the relatedness of the themes. That is, courage is the strength to withstand fear; fear is anxious concern; and bravery is the quality or state of courage.

Facilitators for women building and using social capital include the ability to be brave and step out of their comfort zone; to let their needs and wants be known; and to learn strategies that assist them in navigating uncomfortable situations. Additionally, it was noted that even though it may mean risking their vulnerability, it is critical that women ask for and receive support from those around them.

Fear was often cited as one of the factors that prevented women from building social capital. One participant felt that she was fearful to ask for help because she felt she should be able to handle everything, juggle everything. Reaching out to others would be an admission of her inability to do so. One thought it was a sign of weakness to ask for help. One participant expressed that women lack confidence. "A woman often will feel awkward when offering a handshake. She will wait for others to make the first move," the participant stated. Similarly,

women are reluctant to pick up the phone and call a person who could potentially help them. They have all the networks in place, but they need someone to push them forward. Also, when women encounter a bad reaction or unsupportive behavior from someone, they tend to see it as a setback. In addition, women often mistakenly see these episodes as being personal attacks or affronts. It takes a certain degree of courage to move on and then try again.

Fears discussed included the fear of rejection, of hearing “no,” of risk, of “getting shot down,” of loss of position and gender-based, stereotypical fear of being perceived to be pushy, (i.e. out of appropriate range of behavior for women). A participant noted: “...if she actively pursues networking ties, in addition to her career, others may look unfavorably upon her—perceiving her as relinquishing her duties as a wife and/or mother” (personal communication, January 12, 2008). One participant referred to the fear as a lack of emotional security. A focus group member summed it up in this way: “Just have courage. Have courage to go out and ask anyone for help and build those networks. Find volunteer groups. Just get out and do it” (personal communication, January 12, 2008).

Barriers to using social capital for women in Omaha include experiencing a less than helpful situation and not being able to put it aside and “get back on the horse again.” Additionally, it was noted that many times women are not brave enough to approach individuals who they assume are inaccessible. One individual stated: “...I think everyone struggles with the same things...I don’t care how confident you are...it is still hard to network” (personal communication, January 12, 2008). A second individual noted: “...women are more comfortable asking another woman for support or assistance...asking a man to be a mentor can be very intimidating” (personal communication, January 12, 2008). Overall, the focus groups’ dialogue indicated a fear of non-acceptance due to gender role.

Ultimately, the focus group respondents had more views on the manner in which the external world is able to control a woman's barriers to building and using social capital due to pre-conceived perceptions, assumptions, and obligations. Further, our findings indicate that the facilitators to a woman building and using social capital point to a woman's acceptance of her responsibility to move outside of her own perceptions, assumptions, and obligations, a concept strongly supported in the literature. In doing so, she will be able to create initiative and momentum, not only on behalf of herself, but on behalf of the good women that will follow her.

Benefits of Common Associations and Affiliations

Focus group participants almost unanimously stated that group affiliation and involvement are integral in building and using social capital. Study participants listed five types of groups suggested for involvement: volunteer/cause-oriented, faith-based, professional/educational, social/common interest, and sports/recreational. Discussion about these groups found a consensus about the importance of participation in associations. Many groups emphasized networking in their organization in order to build connections.

A male participant said:

I just saw that the guys in an organization got together more often and they used recreational athletics as that avenue, and I don't know if women have that same avenue...that was something that I noticed, that people who started at the same time that were females were not getting the same face time with the upper level management and executives that I was just because...I was on a basketball team or softball team (personal communication, January 12, 2008).

Getting involved with organizations that meet one's interests is the best way to make use of limited time. "Find something, some cause that you're really interested in. Particularly if you are a professional person, find something almost immediately at the leadership level. Once you are up there, find those people at organizations and get to know them" (personal communication, January 12, 2008). It was also stressed to reserve energies for the most important groups and consider the importance of giving back. "Anybody, women or men, generally has that sense of 'I do have something to contribute' and they can bring that to the table," (personal communication, January 12, 2008).

"Omaha has a lot of good churches and volunteer organizations... try to find a good church and also a place to volunteer," (personal communication, January 12, 2008). "That's the first step given, get out there and start volunteering, and get with what's going on," said another participant (personal communication, January 12, 2008).

However, even in volunteering, women can find barriers to social capital. One woman stated, "I think that particularly in volunteering, women, and men for that matter, confront what I believe is a sociological structural barrier. And that is the expected gender roles in our society...a man and a woman are serving on a board, the man gets elected to president of the board and the woman gets elected to be secretary" (personal communication, January 12, 2008).

A primary barrier to gaining social capital through group affiliation and involvement was the idea of being invited. One participant said that all things being equal between a male and female employee, "I don't think that she potentially would have the same invitation or the same opportunities to join those groups" (personal communication, January 12, 2008). A female participant declared, "I like to be invited to something" (personal communication, January 12,

2008). In summary, it is clear from respondents that if a woman waits to be invited, she will many times miss a valuable opportunity.

Similarities and Differences within Social Roles

According to Ruderman and Ohlott (2002), women who want to achieve executive roles in the workplace many times face social-related issues including making difficult choices and trade-offs, experiencing pressures that influence their decisions, and deciding which options would enable them to have meaningful lives. The subjects of the focus group identified facilitators, barriers, and strategies to expand women's social capital related to social roles.

Successful business women have built on their gender-specific strength of building relationships, also viewed as a facilitator to expanding social capital, and taken every opportunity to develop a relationship for this purpose. One subject supported this idea, "I think that we women have to remember that the relationships we build with each other, as well as, in the business area, our male co-workers, and peers are critically important for the establishment of social capital..." (personal communication, January 12, 2008).

Several gender distinctions outline the established female social roles that create barriers to women utilizing their social capital. One barrier that was identified is that men ask intentionally for what they want in organizations—a promotion or the opportunity to lead a new a project—and women do not. "Establishing connections with those who can help you achieve your goals will greatly increase your chances of emerging as a leader in an organizational context," (Hackman, 2004, p. 367). There was some debate about whether women who are successful should help other women in their organization. Some female subjects stated it is not

their responsibility to pull other women with them, while other women felt it was imperative to promote women to leadership positions for the good of the gender.

The concept of possessing social capital *awareness*, described by several participants as intentional interactions and intentional relationship-building for one's own benefit, was seen as not inherent to women. Subjects described that women often do not recognize the impact social capital has on their career or they view those relationships as personal versus professional. This gender-role barrier for women is a skill that men seem to use almost effortlessly and subconsciously in their professional dealings. Successful women leaders also tend to be *naturals* at this exchange. However, participants noted that there are negative perceptions about women using social capital strategically: it will be viewed as "social climbing – I'm aggressive, pushy" (personal communication, January 12, 2008).

"Guys are really quick to exchange business cards," one of the focus group participants explained. "I think there is a perception when a woman gives her business card to a man - it implies something different sometimes" (personal communication, January 12, 2008). One male participant indicated that he never accepts (or keeps) women's business cards, because when he empties his pockets at home, his wife is uncomfortable with them. When asked what businesswomen should do to provide their contact information, he said, "I don't know... that's a dilemma!" Several women participants shared that it is difficult to know when a male leader shows interest in them, if it is a mentoring role or a sexual role.

Demographic barriers debated by participants described how gender and ethnicity affect social roles: "It's the same thing in the black community and in the minority community. In the business world, women are still minorities—they still need support groups to overcome barriers that they're facing" (personal communication, January 12, 2008). While one male participant

stated that he did not understand why there is either a women's or men's group rather than an integrated effort, another male participant went as far as to say that talking about a women's group "sounds a bit *pre-historic*" (personal communication, January 12, 2008).

Differences may also be viewed as socio-graphic barriers, in part due to one gender not welcoming or trusting the opposite gender in specific social or professional group settings and *blocking* them from participating. Other participants described *acceptance* as a barrier based on not being the right gender, race or not the same demographic profile as the senior leadership team. This was also described as the "law of numbers."

Not to be ignored is the social role that women play in the familial structure. Women have opportunities to achieve leadership roles, but a barrier for women to arrive and remain at this place is her time-consuming role as a mother and/or wife, and her placing high value on household responsibilities. One participant noted, "I've told certain women in leadership: you know, this would be a great thing for you to get involved with and they've said, 'I can't do it! I have to take care of the house.' You know, so it's kind of like a *self-imposed confinement*" (personal communication, January 12, 2008). The female-specific role of picking up children and being the caregiver was also described as a barrier of time and energy needed to build and utilize social capital, especially after work hours.

Living in a male-dominated society was a reoccurring theme throughout all focus groups and a barrier that was identified equally by female and male participants. There were many different descriptions that endorsed this finding. Whether focus group participants labeled it the 'good ole boy network,' challenges with breaking through the 'glass ceiling,' 'closed well-established networks,' or 'the five suits' that run Omaha (personal communication, January 12, 2008), there was overwhelming consensus that this was a strong psychographic barrier

**STRATEGIES FOR
BUILDING AND USING
SOCIAL CAPITAL:**

1. *Display confidence.*
 2. *Introduce yourself.*
 3. *Promote and support women mentors, coaches, and advocates*
 4. *Seek out mentors*
 5. *Get involved in activities that count*
 6. *Invite yourself to social events*
 7. *Educate male leaders on benefits of increasing women's access*
 8. *Choose organizations which promote diversity*
 9. *Ask questions about the focus on diversity of leadership*
 10. *Share family responsibilities*
 11. *Know your own personality*
 12. *Demand MORE*
-

inhibiting women from building and utilizing their social capital.

As one participant stated, “the networks are pretty well a hierarchy, or status-wise, pretty male-oriented at the top,” (personal communication, January 12, 2008). However, one woman viewed this phenomenon as a chance to seize a networking opportunity, or a facilitator in building her social capital. She purposefully learned how to play golf because she believed we (women) ‘self-exclude.’ The golf course, drinks during happy hour, hunting trips were other environments identified where some formal communication and business deals happen.

Summary and Conclusions

Several strategies promoted by the focus groups built upon the facilitators and the barriers of social roles shared by each of the groups.

Some of the shared strategies included the need to display confidence in any setting, the ability to participate in “male-only” behavior if a woman is on a male dominated team, the importance of educating women about their strength of relationship-building, and how to use it effectively. One female participant, who described herself as an introvert, said it is hard work for her to go around and introduce herself in a room so she

walks in a room and makes an X so she can meet almost everyone in 15 minutes. Other strategies included: promotion of women mentors, coaches, and advocates; proactively seeking out mentors; involvement in community activities, such as board memberships; inviting yourself to social events, don't wait to be invited; taking initiative and full advantage of the same opportunities available to your male counterparts; helping educate male leaders on the benefits of increasing women's access; choosing organizations which promote diversity and asking questions about the focus on diversity of leadership within the organization; sharing familial responsibilities between partners to allow both individuals time to build their social capital; and knowing your own personality. A male participant when responding about wives seeking out networking activities said, "Two words actually, *demand more*," (personal communication, January 12, 2008).

In closing, it is the hope of these researchers that the preceding discussion of identifying facilitators and barriers to Omaha women building and using social capital will provide a springboard from which the conversation started by the Women's Fund of Greater Omaha will continue to flourish and that the suggested strategies will increase women's career advancement opportunities in the Greater Omaha area in the future.

References

- 504 Statement by the President on the Establishment of the President's Commission on the Status of Women. December 14, 1961. American Reference Library. Retrieved October 3, 2007 from military and Government Collection database.
- Adkins, L. (2005). Social capital: The anatomy of trouble concepts. *Feminist Theory* 6(2) 195-211.
- Ajrouch, K., Blandon, A., & Antonucci, T. (2005). Social networks among men and women: The effects of age and socioeconomic status. *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*, 60B, S311-S317.
- Azcharaias, N. (2005). Work-life balance policies: Are they doing more harm than good? *IEE Engineering Management*, (December), 30-33.
- Badiga, N. R. (2005). Opportunity and balance: Is your organization ready to provide both? *Journal of Accounting*, (May), 39-44.
- Belle, F. (2002). Women, managers and organizational power, *Women in Management Review*, 17, 151-156.
- Bertagnoli, L. (2006, May 27). Women's place: Their own boards? *Chicago Business*.
- Bierema, L.L. (2005). Women's networks: A career development intervention or impediment? *Human Resource Development International*. 8(2), 207-224.
- Brady, D. & McGregor, J. (2007). What works in women's networks. *Business Week*. Retrieved September 10, 2007 from EBSCO Host Research Database.
- Breaugh, J.A. & Frye, K.N. (2007). An examination of the antecedents and consequences of the use of family-friendly benefits. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 19(1), 35-36.

- Brune, N. (2005). Building social capital through human capital development programs in rural Nicaragua: An evaluation of MSH management and leadership programs in Waslala and Pantasma. ALVA, S.A.: Management and Leadership Project, Harvard School of Public Health and U.S. Agency for International Development.
- Burt, Ronald S. (2000). The network structure of social capital, *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 3(2).
- Caiazza, A. & Putnam, R. (2002). Women's status and social capital across the states. *Institute for Women's Policy Research*. Retrieved September 23, 2007 from EBSCOhost database.
- Capell, P. (2004). Test your career savvy: What holds women back? Retrieved November 14, 2007 from, <http://www.careerjournal.com/myc/diversity/20041021-capell.html>
- Carter, S. (2000). Improving the numbers and performance of women-owned businesses: some implications for training and advisory services. *Education & Training*, 42 (4/5), 326-333.
- Chatzky, J. (2006). Make money, not excuses. Retrieved November 14, 2007 from, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/15016540/page/1/>
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among the five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. (2nd edition), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Coleman, J. (1994). *Foundations of social theory*. Harvard University Press.
- Comer, D.R. & Doe-Stites, S.(2006). Antecedents and consequences of faculty women's academic-parental role balancing. *Springer Science and Business Media*, (June), 1-4.
- Cuizon, G. (2008, May 2). *Labor force participation of women*. Retrieved September 7, 2008 from socyberty.com/work/Labor-Force-Participation-of-Women.11839312-42k

- Dinovitzer, R. (2006, June 1). *Social capital and constraints on legal careers*. Retrieved November 5, 2007, from All Business: <http://www.allbusiness.com/legal/3586394-1.html>
- Donaldson S. I. & Grant-Vallone, E. J., (2002). Understanding self-report bias in organizational behavior research, *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 17(2), 245-160.
- Eagly, A. H. & Carli, L. L. (2007). Women and the labyrinth of leadership. *Harvard Business Review*, 75(9), 63-71
- Elman, C. B., (2005). Together we're better. *Women in Business*, 57(6).
- Falk, I., Field, J. & Kilpatrick, S. (2003). Social capital: An analytical tool for exploring lifelong learning and community development. *British Educational Research Journal*, 29(3), 17-433.
- Fernandez, Raquel (2007). *Culture as learning: The evolution of female labor force participation over a century*, Retrieved November 10, 2007 from <http://logec.repec.org/scripts/paperstat...>, 1-2.
- Frappaolo, C. & Wilson, I.T. (2000). After the gold rush: Harvesting corporate knowledge resources. *Intelligent KM*, April 2000. Retrieved November 4, 2007 from <http://www.intelligentkm.com/feature/>.
- Gender stereotypes block women's advancement. Retrieved November 14, 2007 from <http://www.management-issues.com/2006/8/24/research/gender-stereotypes-block-womens-advancement.asp>
- Glaeser, E., Laibson, D., & Sacerdote, B. (2002). An economic approach to social capital. *The Economic Journal*, 112, F437-F458.

- Goldin, C. (2005). *From the valley to the summit - a brief history of the quiet revolution that transformed women's work*. National Bureau Economic Working Paper. Retrieved November 14, 2007 from, www.bos.frb.org/economic/nerr/rr2005/q1/section/pdf
- Gordon, J. R., Whelan-Berry, K. S. & Hamilton, E. A. (2007). The relationship among work-family conflict and enhancement, organizational work-family culture, and work outcomes for older working women. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 12(4), 350-364.
- Grootaert, C., Narayan, D., Jones, V.N., Woolcock, M. (2004). *Measuring social capital*. World Bank Working Paper. No. 18. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- Halpern, D. (2005). *Social capital*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- Hanson, S. (2000). Networking. *Professional Geographer*, 52(4), 751-758. In Seeking Top Jobs, Women Lack Communication Networks. *ProSolutions*. Retrieved November 14, 2007 from, http://www.womenof.com/News/cn_6_9_03.asp
- Harper, R. (2001). *Social capital: A review of the literature*. London: Social Analysis and Reporting Division, Office for National Statistics.
- Helgesen, S. (1995). *The female advantage*. New York. Doubleday.
- Hewlett, S. (2002). *Creating a life: Professional women's quest for children*. New York: Hyperion.
- History. (n.d.) Retrieved June 9, 2008 from <http://www.omahawomensfund.org/aafinal/whoweare/history.html>
- Huffman, D. & Goette, L. (2007). Affect and the motivational foundation of social capital. *Review of General Psychology* 11(2), 142-154.

- Hymowitz, C. (2007, March 26). High power and high heels; companies move beyond sports, steak and scotch to cultivate new clients. *Wall Street Journal* (Eastern Edition), B1. Retrieved November 06, 2007 from *Wall Street Journal* database.
- Jandeska, K.F. & Kraimer, M.L. (2005). Women's perceptions of organizational culture, work, attitudes, and role-modeling behaviors. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 17(4). 466.
- Johnson, T. & Freedman Spizman, R. (2007). Successful networking. *Women in Business*, 59 (1), 35-37.
- Joyce, A. (2006, April 2). Stuck mid-level and eager to climb. *The Washington Post*, F06.
- Kaip, S. (2007). *Women and the "old boy" network*. Retrieved November 14, 2007 from <http://www.womensmedia.com/new/Old-Boy-Network.shtml>
- Kennedy, J.F. (October 3, 1963). *Remarks in Heber Springs, Arkansas, at the dedication of Greers Ferry Dam*. The American Presidency Project. Retrieved on September 7, 2007.
- Kent, S. (2003). Networking: The difference between who's who. *Canadian Manager*, 28(4), 21-22
- Kiechel, W. (2000, July/August). The new new capital thing. *Harvard Business Review* 78 (4), 149-154. Retrieved November 2, 2007, from EBSCOhost database.
- Kilpatrick, S., Field, J., & Falk, I. (2003). Social capital: an analytical tool for exploring lifelong learning and community development. *British Educational Research Journal*. 29(3) 417-433.
- Leenders, R. a. (2005). *PovertyNet Library*. Retrieved November 8, 2007, from The World Bank: <http://povlibrary.worldbank.org/library/view/11855/>
- Lesser, E.L. & Stork, J., (2001) Communities of practice and organizational performance, *IBM Systems Journal*, 40(4), 831-841.

- Light, E., (1998). The female facade: Can business accommodate women? *NZ Business*, (September), 10-18.
- Lin, N. (2000). Inequality in social capital. *Contemporary Sociology*, 29. Retrieved November 8, 2007, from <http://www.jstor.org>
- Lin, N., Cook, K., & Burt, R. (2001). *Social capital theory and research*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers.
- Lin, S., & Huang, Y. (2005). The role of social capital in the relationship between human capital and career mobility. *Journal of Intellectual Capital*. Retrieved November 4, 2007, from <http://emeraldinsight.com>
- Lowndes, V. (2004). Getting on or getting by? Women, Social Capital and Political Participation. *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*(6), 45-64.
- Malloy, J. (1996). *New women's dress for success*. New York: Warner Books.
- Marx, K., (2004). *The role of social context for strategy making: Examining the importance of embeddedness on the performance of strategic initiatives*. Doctoral Dissertation. Wissenschaft: Gabler Edition, 59.
- McDonald, S. & Elder, J. (2006). When does social capital matter? Non-searching for jobs across the life course. *Social Forces*, 85(1), 522 – 549. Retrieved September 17, 2007 from Academic Search Premier database.
- McGinnis, L., McQuillan, J., & Chapple, C. L. (2005). I just want to play: women, sexism, and persistence in golf. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 29(3), 313-337. Retrieved from Sage Publications at Creighton University on September 28, 2007.
- McPherson, M., Smith-Lovin, L., & Cook, J. M. (2001). Birds of a feather: Homophily in social networks. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27, 417.

- Metz, I., & Tharenou, P. (2001). Women's career advancement: The relative contribution of human and social capital. *Group & Organization Management*, 26(3), 312-342. Retrieved from Creighton University's Ebsco Host on September 27, 2007.
- Michel, S. (2007). Perfecting connecting: Learning to speak the language of others. *Women in Business*, 59, 30-37. Retrieved from College of Saint Mary Academic Search Premier database on September 24, 2007.
- Mills, G. (2007). *Action Research: A Guide for the Teacher Researcher*, 4/Ed. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Mitchell, H.J. (1999). Group mentoring: does it work? *Mentoring and Tutoring*. 7(2), 113-120.
- Moran, M. (2006) It's who you know and how you know them. *Njbiz* (19)46, 17.
- Norris, P., Ingelhart, R., (2003) *Gendering social capital: Bowling in women's leagues?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1-27.
- O'Connor, K. & Sauer, S. (2006). Recognizing social capital in social networking: Experimental results. *Academy of Management*. Retrieved August 27, 2007 from Business Source Elite database.
- O'Neill, J.W., Harrison, M.M., Cleveland, J.N., Almeida, D., Stawski, R.S., Snead, A. (n.d.). *Work-family climate, organizational commitment, and turnover: The multilevel contagion effect of leaders*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University.
- Parks-Yancy, R. (2006). The effects of social group membership and social capital resources on careers. *Journal of Black Studies*. Retrieved November 4, 2007 from <http://jbs.sagepub.com>
- Powell, A. (2004, February 19). *Women's movement, or lack of it*. Harvard University Gazette, 1,4,5.

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone*. New York, NY: Simon & Shuster Paperbacks

Putnam, R. D., (2002). The strange disappearance of civic America,

The American Prospect, pp 1-15.

Reimers-Hild, C. I., Fritz, S. M., & King, J. W. (2007). Entrepreneurial career development:

Using human capital, social capital, and distance education to achieve success. *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal*, 23, 1-15.

Research Studies (n.d.) Retrieved June 9, 2008, from

http://www.omahawomensfund.org/aafinal/research/research_studies.html

Ruderman, M. & Ohlott, P. (2002). *Standing at the crossroads: Next steps for high-achieving women*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Schuller, T. (2007). Reflections of the use of social capital. *Review of Social Economy*. Retrieved November 1, 2007, from <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals>.

Schwartz, F. N., (1992). Women as a business imperative. *Harvard Business Review*, 76(3) 3- 11.

Smith, J. and Gardner, D. (n.d.) Work-life balance initiatives. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology* 36(1).

Smith, M. K. (2007). Social capital. *The Encyclopedia of Informal Education*, www.infed.org/biblio/social_capital.htm

Smith-Mello, M. & Schirmer, P. (1994). Building social capital. *The Context of Change*, 154-158.

Special report women in business. (2005, July 23). The conundrum of the glass ceiling. *The Economist*.

Steiner, P. (2007). 'Queen bee,' 'crab' syndromes hold women back. *Pacific Business News*.

Retrieved November 14, 2007 from

<http://www.bizjournals.com/pacific/stories/2007/07/23/editorial4.html>

Stone, W. & Hughes, J. (2001). *The nature and distribution of social capital: Initial findings of the families; social capital & citizenship survey*. Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Study: Women underrepresented in leadership jobs. *Associated Press*. Retrieved November 14, 2007 from

http://www.boston.com/business/globe/articles/2006/07/27/study_women_underrepresented_in_leadership_jobs/

Terrion, J. L. (n.d.). The development of social capital through a leadership training program.

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Retrieved November 1, 2007.

Tharenou, P. (2005). Does mentor support increase women's career advancement more than

men's? The differential effects of career and psychosocial support. *Australian Journal of Management*, 30(1).

Tharenou, P. (1999). Gender differences in advancing to the top. *International Journal of*

Management Reviews, 1(2), 111-132.

Thompson, B. M., & Cavallaro, L. (2006). Gender, work-based support and family outcomes.

Stress and Health, 23, 73-85.

Timberlake, S. (2005). Social capital and gender in the workplace. *Journal of Management*

Development. 24(1), 34-44.

Uzzi, B. & Dunlap, S. (2005, December). How to build your network. *Harvard Business Review*,

79(4) 53-60. Retrieved September 23, 2007 from EBSCOhost database.

Valterra, M. (n.d.) *Being visible means more money!* Retrieved November 14, 2007 from,

http://www.womenearning.com/resources/articles/being_visible.php?header=noprint

Van Steenbergen, E. F., Ellemers, N., & Mooijaart, A. (2007). How work and family can facilitate each other: distinct types of work-family facilitation and outcomes for women and men. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 12.(3), 279-300.

Whitmarsch, L., Brown, D., Cooper, J., Hawkins-Rodgers, Y., & Wentworth, D. K. (2007). Choices and challenges: A qualitative exploration of professional women career patterns. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 55, 225-236.

Women & leadership in Omaha (2007). Retrieved September 5, 2007, from

http://www.omahawomenwork.org/pdf/RESEARCH_report.pdf

Women's work: Six MD judges talk about the profession (March 29, 2005). *The Daily Record*.

Retrieved November 15, 2007 from EBSCOHost .

Why women are doomed to failure. (n.d.) Retrieved November 14, 2007 from

<http://www.management-issues.com/2007/7/18/research/why-women-are-doomed-to-failure.asp>

Women in leadership. Women's Fund of Greater Omaha Study (1996, 2006, 62) Retrieved October 3, 2007 from

http://www.omahawomenwork.org/pdf/MEDIA_conclusions_and_recommendations.pdf

Women's Fund of Greater Omaha (2006). Women and leadership in Omaha. Retrieved

September 5, 2007 from www.omahawomenwork.org

Zippay, A. (2001, December). The role of social capital in reclaiming human capital: a

longitudinal study of occupational mobility among displaced steelworkers. *Journal of*

Sociology and Social Welfare. Retrieved November 8, 2007, from Find Articles:

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0CYZ/is_4_28/ai_83530633

APPENDIX A:

SURVEY

The current College of Saint Mary Master in Organizational Leadership class is conducting follow-up research to expand the Women's Fund of Greater Omaha Report on Women and Leadership. Please take a few minutes to answer these questions, then pass your survey to the end of the row, where it will be collected. Your input is important to us! Thank you! (Please do not include your name.)

1. Which types of organizations or groups do you belong to? (Please check all that apply.)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professional association – general (ABWA, BPW, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood group – mostly social |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professional association – specific to my type of work | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood group– task/cause oriented |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Informal social group at work | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious or spiritual group |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Informal group at work – specific to my type of work | <input type="checkbox"/> Political group |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art, music, theatre, and/or film group or association | <input type="checkbox"/> Investment, finance, credit group |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ethnicity/heritage based group or association | <input type="checkbox"/> Health-related group: prevention, support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education group (focus: children—PTA, Bridges to Success) | <input type="checkbox"/> Civic group _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education group (focus: myself – class, study group, alum) | <input type="checkbox"/> Cause-related group (Food Pantry, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

2. Circle the 2 categories above that are most important to you.**3. In what ways are the people in these groups similar to you? (Check as many as apply.)**

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Same gender | <input type="checkbox"/> Do same specific type of work | <input type="checkbox"/> Similar income level | <input type="checkbox"/> Similar age |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Similar education | <input type="checkbox"/> Same general workplace | <input type="checkbox"/> Live in same area | <input type="checkbox"/> Relatives |

(over)

4. What are the main benefits you receive from participating in these groups? (Check 2.)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Improves my household's current livelihood | <input type="checkbox"/> Allows me to be mentored |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Improves my household's access to services or resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Boosts my self-esteem |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Allows me to learn and grow intellectually | <input type="checkbox"/> Enriches my spiritual life |
| <input type="checkbox"/> It's the right thing to do; makes me feel good | <input type="checkbox"/> Helps other individuals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Helps me network for current connections | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefits the community |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Helps me network for future connections | <input type="checkbox"/> Improves my social status |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gives me experience that makes me more marketable | <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Further develops my career | <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoyment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gives me an opportunity to mentor others | <input type="checkbox"/> Chance to "let my hair down" |

5. Compared to 5 years ago, how much time do you spend participating in the groups

listed in item #1? (Check 1.)

- Much more time / More time / About the same amount of time / Less time / Much less time

Reasons:

6. Please consider the factors below. Check all those that prevent you from participating

in groups that might further your career:

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Time to attend group meetings/activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Not a priority to me | <input type="checkbox"/> Wardrobe requirements |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My gender | <input type="checkbox"/> Money | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know anyone there |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of information about the groups | <input type="checkbox"/> Not invited | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't feel welcome |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Distance to attend meetings/outings | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't see the value | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

7. What one main factor do you think most encourages women to get involved in groups

that might further their careers? _____

APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP SCRIPT (Updated 1/10/08)

January 12, 2008 – College of Saint Mary – Hixson-Lied Commons

9:20 am

(As participants gather in the room, introduce yourself, show them where to hang their coats, explain the location of the restrooms, and ask them to feel free to grab some refreshments. Let them know that there will be no official break and to please feel free to take one as needed. Let them know “we’ll start promptly at 9:00 a.m.” and to please turn off cell phones.)

Introduction

Welcome. I would like to thank you for sharing a portion of your Saturday morning to participate in this focus group today. We know you are very busy and we really appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to be with us today. My name is _____ and I will serve as your facilitator. Also, serving as co-facilitator today is _____. We are current Master in Organizational Leadership students. I will describe my role in more detail momentarily. First, I would like to start with a definition of “social capital”.

Refer to flip chart

Definition

Social capital is defined by Robert Putman as “connections among individuals - social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them”.

For example: your contacts who may put you in touch with someone else in order to do something you otherwise could not have done alone. We have invited you here today because we are interested in hearing what business leaders in the Omaha and surrounding areas have to say about social capital.

Ground Rules

Before we begin our discussion, I want to point out that there will be about 2 minutes for each person's response to the questions. Also, a Parking Lot Flip Chart will be used for follow-up items that come up in our discussion.

Refer to flip chart

There are several things you can do to help me so that I do an effective job and get the most of out of our discussion today. I'd like to share some Ground Rules which are posted on the wall.

Refer to flip chart

Flip
chart
will
include
only
under-
lined
words.

- 1) Please **share your opinions openly and honestly**. Do not be afraid to be frank or say things you're afraid we do not want to hear.
- 2) **Be respectful of others' views.**
- 3) **Allow everyone a chance to respond.** It's important we hear from all participants.
- 4) Since we are taping today's conversation, **please try to speak up and speak clearly** so that the tape can pick up your comments.
- 5) Your comments will be kept anonymous and your name and any specific identifying words will be blocked out within the transcript. In this regard, **specifics discussed here today should be kept confidential** by the focus group participants.

The time allotted is only about one hour to get through a full list of questions so there may be times when I ask you to summarize or shorten your remarks. If I redirect the discussion or change the subject, it is not because I am disinterested in what you have to say. It means we have to move forward to get through all of the questions.

To get started, I'd like you to share with us a **60-second** introduction of yourself including your name, where you work, your title, and the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word "networking."

Focus Group Questions

(Note: be sure to state each question twice.)

I'm going to ask the first question. We have about 2 minutes for each person to respond. The first question is:

1. Please share with us what you believe are the FACILITATORS for women BUILDING social capital in Omaha.
 - a. What factors or conditions do you believe help women BUILD social capital in this area?
 - b. How important is it for women to include men when developing their social capital?

(Co-facilitator states key points taken in notes on laptop for question

1.) – 60 seconds

2. Please share with us what you believe are the BARRIERS to women BUILDING social capital in Omaha.
 - a. Do women have the same social capital or networking opportunities as men? (Please elaborate.)
 - b. What do you think of when you hear the term “Good Old Boys’ Network” in Omaha?

(Co-facilitator states key points taken in notes on laptop for question

2.) – 60 seconds

3. Now that we have talked about *building social capital*, please share with us what you believe are the FACILITATORS for Omaha women USING their social capital.
 - a. Assuming women are successful in building social capital, what factors help them use it for positive results?
 - b. Based on your experience in the Omaha workplace, how do you see social capital impacting women leaders?
 - c. How do the facilitators impact women’s professional development in terms of reaching top executive level positions in Omaha?

(Co-facilitator states key points taken in notes on laptop for question

3.) – **60 seconds**

4. Please share with us what you believe are the BARRIERS to Omaha women USING their social capital.
 - a. Assuming women are successful in building social capital, what factors prevent them from using it for positive results?
 - b. What similarities do you see in how social capital affects men and women?
 - c. What differences do you see in how social capital affects men and women?
 - a. How do the barriers impact women's professional development in terms of reaching top executive level positions in Omaha?

(Co-facilitator states key points taken in notes on laptop for question

4.) – **60 seconds**

Facilitator: Eliminate #5, if needed.

5. Can you briefly describe an occasion/experience where someone helped you build your social capital or helped you get connected with someone— with positive results?

- a. Did you proactively seek out this opportunity, or did the individual initiate the exchange?
- b. The term *social capital* typically includes some form (or degree) of exchange or reciprocity. Did the experience you just shared involve reciprocity?
- c. How did you reciprocate or perform a good deed for the other individual?

(Co-facilitator can eliminate stating key points taken in notes on

laptop for question 5, in the interest of time.)

6. If a professional woman moved to Omaha and knew no one, what advice would you give her related to BUILDING and USING social capital and networking?
 - a. What do you believe the community values?
 - b. What is unique about Omaha's business or organizational culture?

- c. Drawing from your leadership experience, if you could share only one tip for women professionals regarding social capital and building their careers, what would it be?

(Co-facilitator can eliminate stating key points taken in notes on laptop for question 6, in the interest of time.)

Wrap-up

10:15 a.m.

Thank you for your input this morning. What have we missed regarding questions to ask? (*Write responses on the flip chart titled Additions*). Before we end, I need your help in itemizing our main points.

We have been taking notes throughout the discussion and will list them on the flip chart in four categories:

- Facilitators for Women GETTING Social Capital
- Barriers to Women GETTING Social Capital
- Facilitators for Women USING Social Capital
- Barriers to Women USING Social Capital

First we'll look at Facilitators for Women GETTING Social Capital. Beginning with the (yellow) sheet, please rank order the letter of each factor based on how important you believe it is. #1 = Most Important.

Write just one rank number for each letter of the alphabet.

Please turn that sheet over and go on to the (pink) sheet. This time, we'd like you to look at the Barriers to Women GETTING Social Capital. Once again, please rank order the letter of each factor based on how important you believe it is. #1 = Most Important.

Please turn that sheet over and go on to the (blue) sheet. This time, we'd like you to look at the Facilitators for Women USING Social Capital. Again, #1 = Most Important.

Please turn that sheet over and go on to the (green) sheet. Finally, we'd like you to look at the Barriers to Women USING Social Capital. Again, #1 = Most Important.

Now we'd like each of you to stack your four colored rank-order sheets plus your demographic sheet and staple them together. We will collect your "packets."

Closing

This concludes our focus group. Again, thank you very much for joining us today and sharing your experience and expertise.

Your comments will be combined with those from all the other focus groups being conducted on campus today. The data will be analyzed to identify common themes. Based on what is learned from the data, recommendations will be developed and presented to the Women's Fund of Greater Omaha Board. If additional clarification is required in any area, separate follow-up questions may be pursued. The outcome of this study will be documented in a report that will be published by College of Saint Mary and the Women's Fund during 2008.

Are there any questions before we close our discussion today?

10:28 a.m.

All focus group participants are asked to return briefly to the Hixson Lied Commons for a few closing comments. Again, my sincere thanks for your participation.

(Stand up and shake participants' hands as they leave the room and thank them again individually.)