Is "Social Justice" Helping or Hurting?
Mentorship Programs: Girls and the Human Responsibility
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Abstract: Girls continue to face educational, economic, and social barriers which make them less confident than males, more prone to poverty than males, less likely to work in "male-dominated" professions and more susceptible to gender-based violence. The challenges are deep rooted and I argue that there is an urgency to respond. This article also explores the possibilities that exist when girls in the developed[1] world consciously act in solidarity with even one girl in the developing world. I argue that such conscious support positively impacts those involved and creates an opportunity for societal transformation. It's the girl effect. This article is broken into two distinct sections, a discussion of gender socialization and an examination of conscious social action. Both sections begin with a story that captures key concepts leading to the need to maintain a focus on girls.

The section on gender socialization reminds us that boys and girls are socialized differently, from birth, creating implications for the economic and educational success of females. In a prior article, "Doing Just Fine? Giving Attention to the Needs and Interests of Girls", I discussed the continued messaging through media and boards of education to focus on boy's educational outcomes. While I do not advocate that educators should not give attention to the boys, I illuminate the need to not forget girls and the barriers that they face in a continued patriarchy. This section continues that conversation, but also adds another dimension: the need to focus on all girls from both developed and developing countries.

The section on social justice emphasizes the need for girls to support each other globally in a socially conscious fashion. Among other things, this means that the support offered is one that does not perpetuate negative stereotypes of children living in poverty or from racialized communities, nor can it be void of a knowledge of historical or political context. Although a formula for conscious social justice does not exist, this section offers a few guiding questions for educators and mentors to think about when engaging in these types of initiatives as part of our social and human responsibility.

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[1] It was with much deliberation that the terms "developed" and "developing" are being utilized in this article. I also considered terms that more accurately define the community, as opposed to what it lacks, such as "north" and "south" or "majority" and "minority". However, I wanted to use terms most readily understood and used by a wider population.

Section 1: Blue Pyjamas, Pink Pyjamas and Gender Socialization
Although it was a winter day in January, there was a warm sun piercing the sky and embracing everything that it touched. As we drove to the store, just the two of us, my 3 year old son was eagerly pointing out all of the flags, the gas stations and planes. I often used these moments to converse with him and to discover what was going on in his head. I excitedly told my son that his preschool was offering two programs, a dance program and a soccer program and I intended to enrol him in both. He instantly replied, "What? Not dance, that's for girls and soccer is for boys." He paused as if to consider his next protest before he spoke "I don't like dance". I tried to mask my shock, "No he didn't really just say that," I attempted to convince myself. We arrived at the store so I thought we could talk more about this later. My son jumped out of the van and held my hand as we entered the store. Our task was simple, to get him and his new sister a pair of pyjamas. He went straight to the pyjamas with sports balls all over them. "Okay," I deliberated "Well, he does have a passion for sports. This doesn't mean anything". Then it was time to pick out his little sister's pyjamas. I strategized to myself: "Let me put him to the test, I know that my son can't be gender socialized already – right?" It is important to note that we were already standing in the *boy's* section when I pointed to the *boy's* pyjamas that were his sister's size and said "These will fit her, which one should we get her?" You can imagine my disbelief when he walked out of the *boy's* section, directly to the *girl's* section and selected a beautiful pink sleeper. Then he said, "This one is so cute, let's get it!"

"How can this be?" I thought. He spent the entire summer watching his older sister play soccer and we watched the women's soccer Olympic qualifier together, yet he believed soccer was for boys? He has danced in the kitchen, family room and at social events numerous times with his father and brother, yet dancing is for girls and he doesn't like it all of a sudden? He has blue, brown and pink stuffed animals on his bed, his sister wears his blue hand-me-down dinosaur sleepers, yet pink is for girls? I thought back to the few days after my daughter was born and before we named her - he would only call her princess. He was quite adamant about it and he calls her *princess* to this day. Where did he get that from? When we arrived home and I nursed my almost 3-month old to sleep, I wondered at what age she would begin to grapple with the need to like pink, to be like a princess and to select which sports, if any, were for girls? Of course I knew this was only the beginning of the gender stereotyping because at some point she might question if she was not as good at mathematics as the boys in her class, if certain professions were designated for men only and if she had to have a certain appearance to be successful or to be liked. In addition, the fact that she is a girl of colour would add many more challenging dimensions to her journey with identity. If my son was barely three and had already internalized complicated gendered notions, when would it begin for her or had it already? My son and daughter were constantly receiving messages from the media and the greater community (family, preschool etc…); messages that I thought they were sheltered from and that we, as parents, combated at their young age. However, even though I am their mother, I am only one voice. Countering the very powerful dominant notion is what teachers and parents are up against when we choose to work with girls, and boys, around issues of gender construction. Therefore, despite what I taught my daughter, the world would teach her something else. Herein lies the need to continue a focus on not just boys, but also on girls.

Education and Economic Implications for Girls and Women

Regardless of the socio-economic status, racial identity or geographic location of a girl, common barriers (perpetuated by an understanding of gender) exist to varying degrees. These barriers include, but are not limited to, education, job opportunities, job salaries, access to sports, and female sexualization leading to abuse, harassment and human trafficking (Stats Canada, 2010; CTV 2012). Although these areas are not mutually exclusive and can cause different types of barriers for girls and women, the focus in this article is on education and economics. Before exploring these topics, it is important to remember and consider carefully that women are not a homogenous group and therefore do not have the same experiences. The way that a barrier impacts one woman will manifest differently for minoritized[2] populations. Racialized[3] women, women living in poverty, Aboriginal women, single women, single mothers, disabled women and immigrant women are all subjected to heightened barriers and their educational and economic successes are often further marginalized. Therefore, when thinking about girls and women it is necessary to consider the diversity within this social category and how various girls might experience the world differently based on their multiple identities (Simmons, 2002).

Economics
A girl's economic stability is a key factor in access to opportunities as well as success and control over one's own life. Although there have been many gains for women's rights in many areas, the *UN's Gender Equality Report* indicates that over the last 25 years economic equality is not an area where progress has occurred (2012). According to Statistics Canada, females continue to earn an average of 30% less than males. This is compounded by the fact that minoritized female populations earn less than their non-minoritized counterparts. In addition, Plan Canada indicates that on a worldwide scale the gap widens significantly to 30-60% less earnings than males. When we consider the economic divide between the sexes, it becomes no surprise that women are more likely to live in poverty than males around the world (FIFIA, 2010). Again research clearly demonstrates that minoritized female populations have a higher poverty rate than non-minoritized women. On a global scale, Plan Canada suggests that more than 70 percent of the 1 billion people living in extreme poverty are women and girls. As a human family there is much work to be done for

> *According to Statistics Canada, in 2008:*
> - Women earned only 71% of what men earned. This was approximately the same percentage in 1999.
> - Visible minorities were more likely to be unemployed.
> - Visible minority women were more likely to be in a low-income situation (28%) compared to (14%) of non-visible minority women.
>
> *According to Plan Canada*
> - Women between the ages of 25-65 are less confident when it comes to managing money.

equity in economics to be achieved as a lack of income has severe implications for girls and the

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[2] "Minoritized, unlike minority, emphasizes the process of *minoritizing/Othering individuals and* setting individuals apart from society because of their connection to a group of people who have been viewed as marginal based on race, language, nationality, creed, gender, etc

[3] "A racialized group is a group of people who may experience social inequities on the basis of their perceived common racial background, color and/or ethnicity, and who may be subjected to differential treatment in the society and its institutions." (TDSB Achievement Gap Task Force Report, p.3)

Canadian economy. In fact, there has been some discussion that the economic impact of increased financial literacy also means an increase in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Thus a starting point, with a direct focus on girls, is two fold. First, we must consider how a girl's socialization leads to her economic instability as well as how a males' socialization perpetuates this instability. Second, given that many Canadian girls finish school with little confidence in money management (BIAAG, 2012) and that single women between the ages of 25-65 are less confident when it comes to managing their finances than men (Canadian Financial Capabilities survey by Statistics Canada, 2009), we must consider how to increase a girl's financial literacy through education and other means.

The fact that research suggests women are less likely than men to earn money and be self-sufficient, particularly in developing countries, has striking repercussions for generations of girls, and boys as well. In many developing countries, just like in developed countries, a women's socialization may perpetuate weak economic positioning, and create a cycle of discrimination that potentially continues throughout their lives. According to Plan Canada, a girl's poverty also increases as there is preferential feeding of boys which leads to a three times higher malnutrition rate for girls. In many countries girls have less opportunity to be educated, are more at risk for gender-based violence and face greater risks of economic and sexual exploitation which continues to diminish access to economic resources and potential wealth. It is important to note that sexual violence perpetrated on girls is not isolated to countries traditionally recognized as 'impoverished'. In Canada some girls believe harassment by males in school is "okay", and they do not have the confidence to say "no" to sexual advances (CBC, 2009). A recent Canadian documentary by CBC shared the thriving sex trade and trafficking of Canadian girls in York Region, a suburb north of Toronto. As the documentary suggests, these are "everyday girls", lured by pimps, who are forced to work in the sex industry. According to this documentary, almost 90% of the women in the trade are there by force (W5, 2012). Again females from impoverished circumstances and minoritized populations are more likely to be victimized by violence perpetrated by males (Falconer, 2008; Collins, 2004). Therefore, when we consider the large barriers that socialization and subsequently income place on females in both the developed and

According to Statistics Canada, in 2008:

Education
- Only 22% of the graduates in architecture and engineering were women.
- Only 30% of the graduates in university mathematics, computer and information science programs were women…this is down from 35% in 1990.
- Although 25% of women achieve a university degree, Black and southeast Asian women fall below the average.

According to Plan Canada, BIAAG modules (2011):
- Women make up 52% of the population, but only 22% of members in parliament.

Societal Influence
- Women's magazines have over 10 times more ads and articles promoting weight loss than men's magazines.
- 55% of commercials show boys building and fixing toys or fighting, while 77% of commercials show girls laughing, talking or observing.
- Different cultural ideas about what it means to be a girl can reinforce gender equalities.
- Girls are more likely than boys to be bullied on line.

developing worlds (in terms of monies earned compared to males) and the reality of female poverty, it highlights the necessity to focus on girls in order to curb the social and economic inequities women experience on a local and global level.

Education and Occupational Attainment
A common barrier among all girls resides in the arena of education. In a North American education context, there is a prevailing notion that girls are outperforming boys in terms of achievement in almost all areas. Many interpret such achievement statistics as an indication that girls will probably be just as, if not more, successful in life as boys. It is important to look at this notion more critically in light of the economic barriers that girls continue to face on a societal level. Ontario's latest Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) data (2010-2011) indicates that girls outperform boys in reading, writing and mathematics at the elementary level. The same is true of the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT). However, this same data shows that boys have consistently outperformed girls in the EQAO grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics and continue to do so. Despite such "success", girls are still underrepresented in mathematics, engineering, architecture and computer programs at the university level. In addition, while females enter university at higher rates than males, males enter graduate school at a higher rate than females. Despite these academic gains and the perception of equality among the sexes, as stated above, women will still earn less money. This is a long-term trend that is predicted to continue (Drolet, 2007; Kerr 2010). There is much discussion around the factors that have contributed to the statistics. Societal messaging, due to gender socialization, is largely at play ie: girls should listen; girls should not be too curious; girls should be pretty; girls should get married; girls should not earn more than their husbands; and girls are more suited for language-based careers and care-giving professions (Brown, 2003). There is a need to directly counteract these messages for equality among the sexes to be achieved.

Among educators there is also a prevailing notion that girls take on numerous leadership roles within the school walls and will likely continue in leadership roles in the future. While female students take on and are effective at numerous leadership roles in public education, such leadership does not translate to other areas of society, including the federal government and upper level management. Women make up 52% of the population, however, according to Plan Canada, only 22% of Members in parliament are women.In fact, Canada has fewer women in parliament than Rwanda, Iraq, Afghanistan and most countries in Europe. In the business world a women's presence on boards of directors is limited despite evidence that women on such boards increase the success of the company (UN, 2012). A fortune 500 census studying women on boards of directors indicated that women held 15.7% of the seats. Of that 15.7% only 3 percent were held by women of colour (catalyst, 2012). Lipkin (2009) in her exploration of gender socialization suggests that schools may be complicit in perpetuating gendered stereotypes that do not give girls the skills to be economically independent in the future: "Girls diligence in school may pay off in better grades, but does it come at the cost of reinforcing a stereotypical femininity that works against them once they are out of the school system." (p.33). Therefore, it is important for educators and mentors to consider what society is teaching girls (and boys), and to support them in being critical of the messaging.

While girls in Canada continue to face numerous barriers, such barriers exist on a larger scale for women living in poverty (UN, 2012). Indeed, girls face obstacles in education that may be the

result of both poverty and how girls are socialized. According to Plan Canada, globally, over 60 million girls are denied access to primary school. Moreover, there are issues with the education that some girls do receive such as the academic curriculum containing negative gender stereotypes and girls being given more domestic responsibilities leaving them less time for school work than boys. It is important to note, for girls in developing countries an extra year of education will increase their income by 10-20 percent (BIAAG, 2012). Therefore, when we grapple with the fact that globally females face educational barriers, and that increased schooling for girls means an increased likelihood of economic stability, access, and independence, we would be remiss as a society if we did not give attention to the needs of girls. This is particularly important when we consider that women, on average, reinvest 90% of what they earn back into their family and community (Plan Candada, 2012). Thus, future generations of females and males benefit when a girl's education is enhanced more so than with a boy.

Research suggests the continued need to focus on girls in developed and developing countries as gender inequity and its negative implications frames the academic and economic success of girls and women. One possible way to address these inequities is girls participating in both local and global 'conscious social action initiatives'. The following section will illuminate what conscious social action might look like, as well as, why girls working in solidarity with other girls can have significant impact.

Section 2: Doing it differently and Conscious Social Action
This story takes place at an equity conference in Toronto.
   "Thanks everyone that was a great discussion. Let's take the next few minutes to think about a lesson, a unit or an initiative at your school. Once you have identified something, we will be thinking about ways to move what you have selected along the James Banks Continuum (Banks, 1990)."
   The groups resumed their conversation while my co-presenter and I exchanged a knowing look at the back of the large room where 50 participants chatted. We knew this was always a difficult part of the presentation because we were about to ask teachers to critique the activities they've utilized with students and consider whether or not these activities are inclusive of the students' cultural identities. They would be asked to interrogate if the work their school engaged with was a *contributions*[4] verses *transformative* approach or even social action at the highest level. We often defined *transformative* as looking at the curriculum from multiple perspectives and "social action" as an approach which provokes students to think about power structures which cause injustices and how we, as educators or mentors, might support students in raising awareness and addressing the injustices. The conversation in our workshop became more animated as teachers finished sharing their practices, so we moved into a dialogue about a continuum of inclusion. Some teachers became visibly uncomfortable as they realized that although social action was the highest level of the continuum, their social action did not embody how Banks defined it. Much of the work that teachers had completed in their schools was strictly charity and thus they had some work to do.
   I was about to pull the group back together and review the Banks Continuum when off to the left, close to the window I saw her hand shoot straight up as the bangles on her wrist clanged together. For a split second I thought, "Maybe I'll just pretend that I don't see her hand and keep

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[4] The Contribution Approach is often characterized by limiting diverse content to special days ie: posters of Martin Luther King during Black History Month (Banks, 1990)

talking." As if my co-presenter could read my mind she shot me a look and I knew this was not an option. Before the participant spoke, I had circulated the room during the preceding discussion and already had a sense that she was experiencing some "guilt" and was struggling with why charitable social action might be problematic. I also knew she was looking for some validation from me, which I could not offer.

"Yes, please share. Did you have a comment?" I asked.

She spoke very passionately about the work her school did to raise funds and send money to Haiti following the catastrophic earthquake in January 2010.

"How could this be wrong; not even on the continuum?" she inquired and then continued. "These are good things where our students can contribute and we can help those in need."

I just nodded and I could see other participants vehemently agreeing.

"And our school," another voice chimed in "built a well – are you telling us that this doesn't rate on the continuum?"

I had to admit these initiatives, in isolation, didn't seem wrong. Of course we should give and support those in need. It is our social responsibility after all. Despite knowing that charity is one social action approach, to me and many social action theorists, how we approached action could help or hinder. I hoped that the participants might be able to come up with their own ideas that might complicate this *noble* act of giving. So, I did my standard facilitator manoeuvre and redirected.

"Based on your discussion and the continuum" I began "what does everyone else think? Is charity work wrong? Any thoughts?"

Secretly I prayed that someone might pose a counter opinion that we could work from. Then as if a ray of sun flooded into the room an articulate voice emerged from the back.

"Sometimes social action for Haiti makes me feel bad, like my people aren't capable." He eloquently said.

You could hear a pin drop. Clearly this young man was Haitian and was conflicted about the entire situation. Haiti needed support, but he was embarrassed that they needed it. Like many of the educators sitting in the room, all he saw around him about Haiti was a single story. This story, often presented in the media, was filled with images of poverty, despair and the inability of a people to fend for themselves. We knew the presentation we had planned would need to take a significant detour, as the original focus was not social justice. So my co-presenter suggested that we toss the rest of the presentation out the window, paint a new picture of Haiti and think about what conscious social justice might look like. We announced that it was time for "But, why? … Because…."

"But why was Haiti decimated after an earthquake when a more powerful earthquake hit Chile not long after and the damage was not remotely comparable?" we asked.

"Because the infrastructure in Haiti was not well made." a participant responded

"But why was the infrastructure in Haiti not well made?" we asked.

"Because Haitians are poor and couldn't afford it" was the reply.

"But, why are Haitians poor and why can't they afford it?" we retorted.

The conversations halted for a moment and nobody seemed to know the answer. You could see the wonder on their faces. I am sure some of them were thinking that Haitians are just poor and Black, that's it! But that isn't it. We waited a few more seconds (that felt like minutes) and a participant responded with a wealth of information.

"The enslaved Africans of Haiti (then called Sainte Domingue) formed an army and fought for their freedom beginning in the late 1700's. It was not until the early 1800's that Haiti

received it's independence from France; the first independent and Black-led country. They were brave soldiers who fought for their freedom, but at a cost. France, Britain and the United States, who did not want anything to do with a Black independent state, imposed an embargo which crippled the Haitian economy. Haiti was also under the constant threat of being re-enslaved. It wasn't until 20 years later that the embargo was lifted and the threat of being re-enslaved was removed if Haiti paid 150 gold Francs to France (equivalent to 90 billion US dollars today). For decades Haiti paid the money and this, in addition to the initial embargo, was another act which crippled the Haitian economy. Despite efforts to become more economically stable, acts like the American occupation as well as another Canadian and US embargo continued to destabilize Haiti."

As he spoke I was amazed at the accuracy of his Haitian knowledge (based on many resources including the film Aristide), I also could not stop thinking specifically about the women and girls of Haiti who suffered further implications solely as a result of their gender. Girls who are unable to attain an education due to household chores; women who were more readily victimized and females who were some of the most impoverished in the world.

My co-presenter closed the workshop by suggesting that another story of Haiti needs to be told alongside every fundraising effort. A story which included that Haiti was the first Caribbean island to fight against the oppression of slavery and win. A story which describes Haitians as militant, intelligent and strategic resisters who took back their land and set an example for all enslaved Africans. One which held accountable the racism and hatred imposed on Haiti that caused Haitians to pay a price that they could never recover from. It is a story which also includes thoughts about how the West might play a role in continuing to keep Haiti from economic progress. This is the "other" story.

It is our job as educators to tell any story from multiple perspectives, engage students in dialogue about the various perspectives and think about ways to address the injustice. A conscious social action initiative might include the fundraising as well as protesting future aid embargos imposed by Canada. It includes placing "emphasis on the structures that create and perpetuate the conditions that make them so" (James, 2012, pg. 18). While fundraising alone might help Haitians in the interim, the other pieces help students understand how various people and policy may be complicit in someone else's poverty; how they can have a voice in governmental policies and how they can be active in not just fundraising, but in contributing to a transformation of policies and practices which foster poverty and institutional racism. Thus when we discuss girls from developed countries moving in solidarity with girls in developing countries, a conscious approach is necessary so that the experience is mutually beneficial and doesn't perpetuate stereotypes and reinforce the mentality that leads to unequal and oppressive relationships between individuals and nations. For example a girl from Canada who sponsors a girl from Haiti to receive an education should understand not only the impact of educational attainment for a girl in Haiti, but also for girls in Canada. She must also understand the circumstances that caused barriers to education for girls in both the developed and developing world. This causes her to become more socially aware of existing issues, how power and privilege frames the world that she lives in, and how she can intervene to change those power dynamics.

The Social Action that helps?

In thinking specifically about the marginalization of Canadian girls in tandem with conscious social justice in underprivileged spaces, it is important for us to consider how we conceptualize this social justice work within the construct of education. According to Kumashiro (2000), the

general purpose of social justice is to address oppression and the marginalization of others. In public education, such initiatives are approached in a variety of ways - some simplistic and some complex - from charity drives to directly addressing causes of injustice (North, 2008). The question for educators and/or mentors is: what role should social action take in classrooms and schools? To me, education and social justice can not be separate if "the purpose of education is to create socially and politically conscious young people, who can … use [their] knowledge to actively participate in the transformation of their community and to work against oppression and for a socially just world" (Gaymes San Vicente, 2010). One way to assist young girls with the goal of becoming transformative change makers is to focus on the inequities girls continue to face, and engage in a process of finding ways to redress these injustices on a local and global scale.

An avenue to redress the oppression of girls could occur through girls in the developed world thinking about their own educational barriers and how they are both similar and different to girls in other parts of the world. Here, social action is two-fold: first to address their own barriers in a variety of ways and second to support impoverished girls[5] in a variety of ways. For the purpose of this article I would like to focus on girls supporting girls with respect to education and subsequently economics. Why a focus on education? As discussed in the previous section, education is the key to lifting girls everywhere out of poverty; it is the key to higher levels of income and it is the key to reinvesting in communities resulting in economic gain for everyone (UNICEF, 2012). Nelson Mandela once said that "education is the most powerful weapon that we can use to change the world." He made, in my opinion, a very meaningful yet complicated statement. It is complicated because we must double our efforts to give girls equal access to education as this is a crucial stepping stone to positively changing the landscape for girls on a global scale. Thus, we can only use education as a weapon of change if it is within our grasp.

If we are to engage in social justice, specifically to support girls educationally, there is much to consider in an attempt to be both respectful and conscious. Giambrone (2012) offers a description of four approaches to social justice education that reflect various conceptualizations of social justice as it relates to teaching and learning: social justice *as charity*, learning *about* social justice, learning *for* social justice and, learning *as* social justice. *Learning for Social Justice* and *Learning as Social Justice* approaches provoke critical thought and offer students the opportunity to be conscious change-makers in solidarity with others. In these constructions of social justice, students are asked to discuss possible causes of injustices; critique power structures that perpetuate injustices; make their own decisions about a course of action; base action on a clear knowledge of the issues; raise awareness about not just the problem (i.e. poverty), but also the symptoms; and finally, attempt to redress injustice through a variety of ways. When looking at the various approaches, it becomes clear that when educators encourage children to engage only in charity work, students may fail to understand the causes of the oppression or effective ways to address it, ultimately perpetuating negative notions of those in the developing world and allowing the problem to persist. Therefore, when working with girls on social justice initiatives that support girls in underprivileged countries there are some guiding questions to think about which may support girls in more conscious action as outlined by Giambrone.

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[5] It is important to note that there are wealthy girls in developing countries, who also face numerous barriers by merit of their gender.

The following guiding questions may support educators in a challenging quest to ensure conscious action when working with students.

First, what are the existing power structures which caused the injustice? It is important that girls learn about the existing power structures which created the oppression they are fighting against. For example, when a girl from Canada supports a girl in a developing country to gain an education, they should understand that in certain countries educating and feeding girls is not as valued as feeding a boy and why. Similar to the Haiti story shared earlier, girls should also be aware of the factors that lead to poverty.

Second, how does this injustice manifest in privileged countries? Girls must begin to understand their own oppression as females living in Canada. For example, they should be aware that attaining a high academic standard or certain professions are pushed more for boys than girls in certain cultures. They should also question and interrogate how gender socialization has created gender gaps in mathematics, science, politics and a self-confidence which favours boys in Canada.

Third, what are some of the implications of the injustice they are attempting to redress? Girls might consider that a lack of education and an unstable home (similar to Canadian girls at varying degrees) in developing countries can lead to early marriage, young pregnancies and entry into the sex trade.

Fourth, what are the advantages of intervening? For example when a girl from a disadvantaged environment is educated they earn more money and are more likely than boys to reinvest in their communities. A final question to consider is how is Canada complicit in the injustices being addressed? This calls into question our own actions as Canadians and asks us to be accountable for the role we have played.

> **Four Guiding Questions of Girls Supporting Girls through Social Action**
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> 1. What are the existing power structures which caused the injustice?
> 2. How does this injustice manifest in privileged countries?
> 3. What are some implications of the injustice they are attempting to redress?
> 4. What are the advantages of intervening?
> 5. How is Canada complicit in the injustice?

These guiding questions are possible ways to create social justice initiatives where girls are learning, growing and making a conscious difference. To me, this type of social action is the social responsibility of all those who are privileged and reside in the developed countries; it is one facet which leads to the purpose of education which was defined in prior sections. As indicated earlier, students who do engage in this type of work also benefit. Not surprisingly, research suggests that social justice has the capacity to significantly improve a student's academic achievement when taken up in specific ways (Carlisle et. al., 2010).

Conclusion

There is a prevailing notion in North America that girls are doing just fine in school and that they will probably be just fine in life. This notion is simply not true on many levels. First, there are areas of schooling where girls continue to lag behind the boys; secondly, the fact that girls do

well in many subjects does not translate into equal opportunities or equal compensation. Statistically, girls will become women who will earn less than their male counterparts and be less present in fields such as mathematics, information sciences, politics and executive boards. In addition, Canadian girls from minoritized populations are more likely to be disadvantaged than their non-minoritized counterparts. One way to begin the process of changing such outcomes is to remove barriers through conscious social action. Implementing initiatives that are focused on equity in education for girls both locally and globally has the capacity to level the playing field.

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