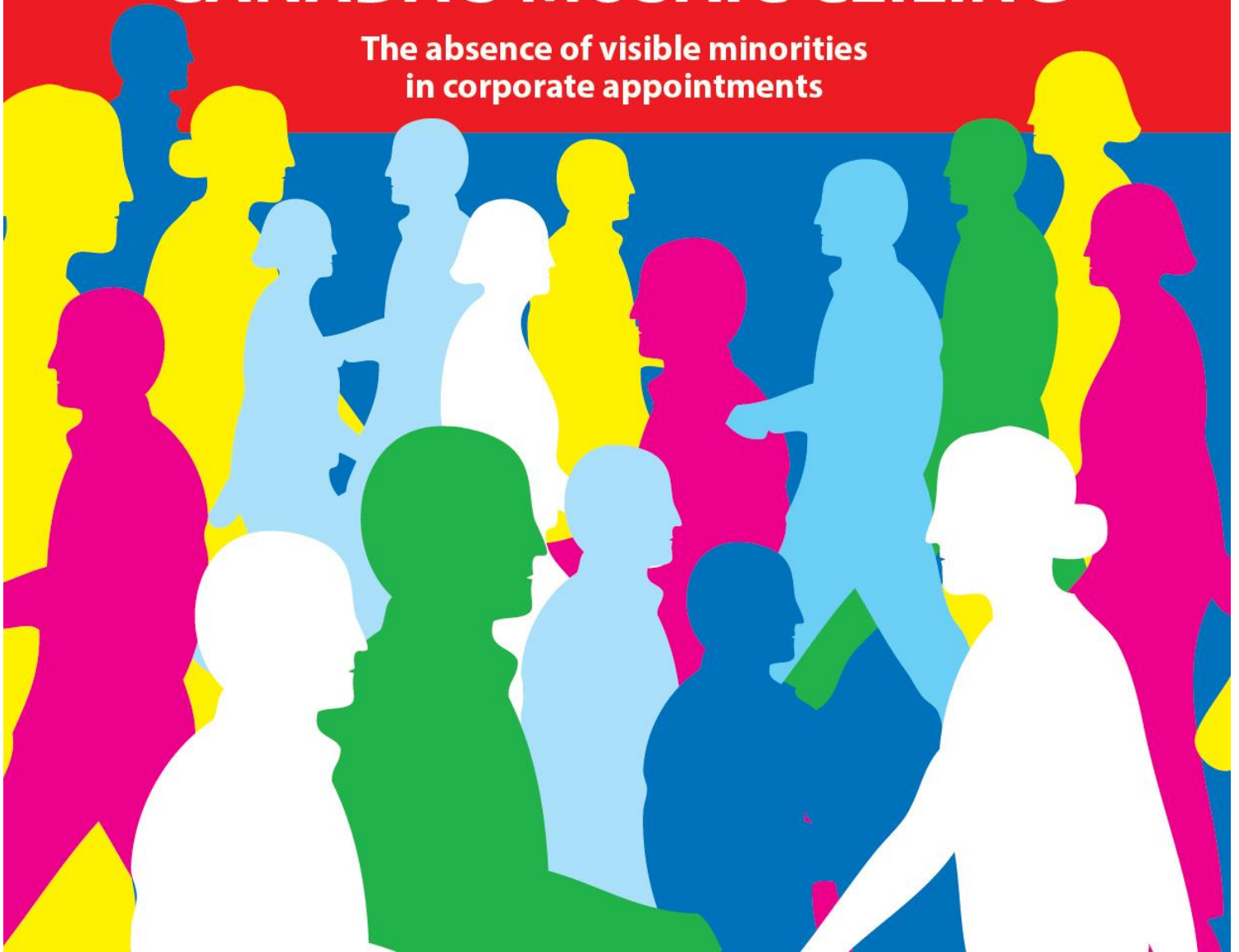




Kai L. Chan, PhD

CANADA'S MOSAIC CEILING

The absence of visible minorities
in corporate appointments



Canada's mosaic ceiling: The missing visible minorities of corporate Canada¹

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Corporate culture in Canada (and throughout the world) is dominated by males. The plight of women's under-representation in senior positions in the business world is well documented. For this and other reasons, the business community has taken notice of the glass ceiling and many HR departments at companies now work diligently to ensure that women's career paths are less obstructed.

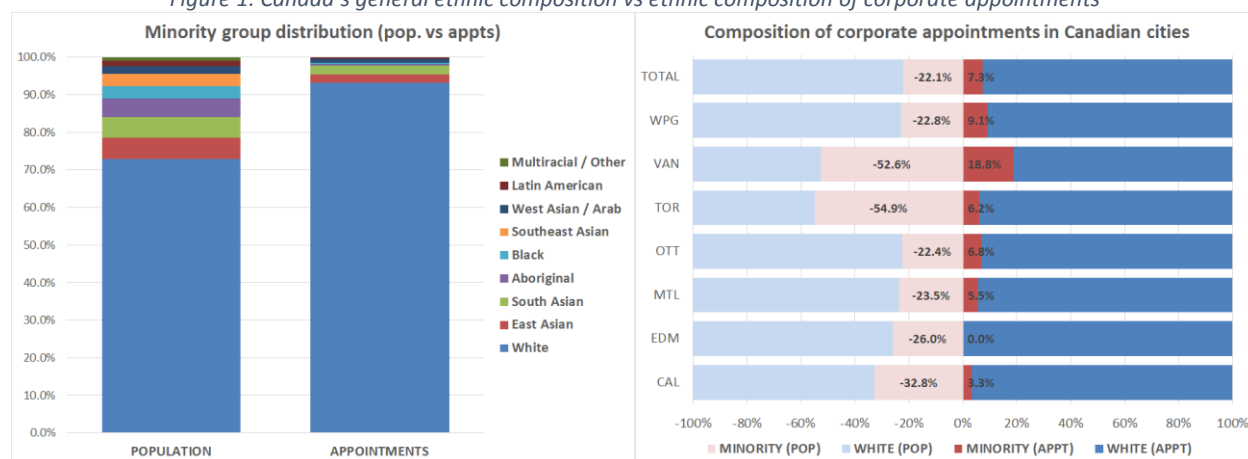
However, in spite of the heightened awareness of the glass ceiling for women, less has been said of the "mosaic ceiling" – the barrier faced by minorities (i.e. visible minorities and Aboriginals) in getting promoted through the ranks of corporate Canada (and elsewhere). An examination of corporate appointments (ranging from junior to c-level positions) in one of Canada's leading business newspapers suggests that while women are enjoying improved levels of success moving up the corporate ladder (30% of appointments), minorities are virtually absent in the ascent of the corporate ladder.

Although minorities account for a quarter of the national population, they constitute less than 7 percent of corporate appointments in Canada. The dearth of minorities is even more acute when considering that they account for 37 percent of the population of Canada's business centres (Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto and Montreal) – which collectively account for about 80 percent of the appointment notices.

Education does not explain the gap as immigrants (big overlap with minorities) actually have higher average education levels than native-born Canadians. Even Canadians of East and South Asian backgrounds – the two most numerous minority groups and both of whom have high levels of educational attainment – are mostly absent (2 and 3 percent of appointments apiece, respectively).

The data suggest an underutilisation of talent and/or that systemic barriers (possibly in the form of absence of cultural capital and/or discrimination) may be impeding the success of minorities. Some benign factors are also examined to explain the invisibility of visible minorities in corporate life.

Figure 1: Canada's general ethnic composition vs ethnic composition of corporate appointments



Source: Globe & Mail, Statistics Canada

¹ Most recent version available for download at www.KaiLChan.ca/economics/immigration/