

Shaw, S., & Hernandez-Gantes, V. (2021). The status of female executive leadership in postsecondary education. *Educational Research: Theory and Practice*, 32(2), 1-16.

The Status of Female Executive Leadership in Postsecondary Education

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to examine the current status of female leadership representation in four states identified from four regions of the United States. A descriptive approach to content analysis was used to examine postsecondary institutional website profiles with public access for females in executive leadership positions. Findings describe the current landscape of representation of female postsecondary leaders in presidency and vice presidency positions in Nevada, Wisconsin, New York, and Florida, and how each state's representation compares to documented national percentages of female leader representation.

Key Words: female, leadership, postsecondary, community colleges, Nevada, New York, Wisconsin, Florida

INTRODUCTION

Female equity advancements and female career leadership trajectories have undergone inconsistent patterns of progress over the past two decades despite women's substantial growth in college enrollment, degree attainment, and workforce participation (Cooper & Correll, 2017). According to Francis' (2018) comprehensive gender overview, the growth of 18-24-year-old female undergraduate representation in the late 1980s to early 90s more than doubled, thereby increasing the college-going rate for females to over 50%. Currently, females comprise approximately 56% of undergraduate enrollment on college campuses in the United States. This increase has also impacted female graduate students with recent research indicating representation at approximately 58% (Francis, 2018; Johnson, 2017). Thus, females are now more likely to graduate with doctoral degrees. As such, women and men now enter into the workforce with approximately the same educational attainment, which largely accounts for the labor market increase for women in recent decades (Kramer & Kramer, 201; The Global Gender Gap Report, 2016). Despite evidence of the inaccurate narrative that there are too few women qualified for advancement in postsecondary education, decreasing opportunity and promotion barriers tied to advanced education still linger (American Council on Education, 2017).

Women continue to be the minority in the postsecondary education sector regarding participation within institutional executive leadership (American Council on Education, 2017). Despite the reported female expansion trends in the workforce, postsecondary faculty and executive leadership positions still reflect a disparity in representation between genders. Though female representation in faculty ranks have increased, males currently continue to hold a higher

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percentage of associate professor, full professor, and executive leadership positions in postsecondary education settings (Johnson, 2017). Females comprise approximately 32% of full professorships, 44.7% associate professorships, 51% assistant professorships, and 56.8% of instructor positions at 4-year institutions (Francis, 2018). Conversely, 58% of females comprise full-time faculty positions within community colleges (AACC, 2007); however, female community college presidents and 4-year college and university presidents' percentages are similar at approximately 29% (Weisman & Vaughan, 2007). It is evident that the percentage of women in more senior academic positions dropped the higher they climbed (Catalyst Research, 2008). The same holds true for women in executive leadership positions in higher education, with women more likely to hold positions as coordinators and directors than as dean, vice president, and president (Searby et al., 2015; Drakes, 2008). Even with the substantial gains made since affirmative action legislation, the number of female presidents in the community college sector is comparatively low to their male counterparts (Ashburn, 2006).

Multiple theories have hypothesized reasons for the underrepresentation of females in leadership positions, including: shifting criteria (Uhlmann & Cohen, 2007); think manager, think male theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002); glass ceiling perceptions; the labyrinth (Eagly & Carli, 2007); leaky pipeline (i.e., large numbers of female postsecondary leaders have not been in the profession long enough, or quit the profession, to bring about equal numbers of women at the top) (Joecks, Pull, & Backes-Gellner, 2014); and intentional invisibility (Ballakrishnen, Fielding-Singh, & Magliozi, 2019). Across theories, one commonality among gender equity literature is that participation of women is important in leadership positions to bring critical perspectives and insights often overlooked by traditionally male-dominated structures (Madsen, 2012). It has been argued that women's limited participation in executive positions in the global economy is a misuse of talent and human capital that has led to missed opportunities for gender parity and skill advancement (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2016). Thus, in the postsecondary education sector, it is imperative to understand the persistent underrepresentation of female leaders in positions influencing decision making and policy. More specifically, community colleges and 4-year colleges can provide a unique context for further research.

Extant research indicates that community colleges have seen a more equitable increase regarding participation of females in executive leadership positions than their postsecondary institutional counterparts, such as doctoral-granting universities. According to Townsend (2009), after disaggregation of all postsecondary faculty data, female faculty comprise 48-52% in community colleges. Furthermore, the AACC (2013) report revealed that 56% of the leadership in community colleges was female; however, though higher than other postsecondary institutions, female community college presidents have not seen a substantial increase (Moltz, 2011). Although data indicate community colleges have greater numbers of female representation in leadership positions, consistent equality may not be the case throughout the United States (Moltz, 2011). In this context, it is also important to understand factors associated with regional characteristics providing context for the promotion of gender equity in leadership ranks. For example, are states with large populations and metropolitan areas more prone to promote gender equality? What can we learn from a regional analysis of community college and 4-year college systems and gender representation in leadership ranks?

To gauge if a systemic issue exists in leadership ranks regarding the participation of women in leadership roles, the purpose of this exploratory study was to identify gender characteristics of postsecondary institutional leadership in four selected states in different regions of the United States. Although the United States can be divided into more than four regions, this study included

only four broad regions of the Northeast, the South, the Midwest, and the West; one state was selected in each region. The purpose aligned with emerging interests regarding female equity, related systems of restraints and supports, and access to underrepresented careers and positions from a state perspective (Athanasopoulou, Moss-Cowan, Smets, & Morris, 2018). The following research objectives guided the inquiry:

1. Describe female representation in postsecondary executive leadership positions, including president and vice president, in community college systems across selected states: Nevada, Wisconsin, New York, and Florida.
2. Compare female representation in executive leadership positions in community college systems by selected states: Nevada, Wisconsin, New York, and Florida.
3. Describe female equity demographic profiles of selected states: Nevada, Wisconsin, New York, and Florida.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

GENDER EQUITY IN POSTSECONDARY EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

Postsecondary education typically includes community colleges, technical colleges, and 4-year colleges and universities. The different levels of postsecondary education offer multiple pathways for certification and degree attainment for students. Technical colleges provide students a variety of training and certification opportunities, commonly associated with vocational or currently referred to as career and technical education (CTE) to support human capital and workforce needs. Community colleges often support community needs by offering certifications, 2-year degrees, as well as a pathway for 4-year degree articulation. Higher education, 4-year colleges, and universities support more of a liberal arts education and provide opportunities to advanced and terminal degrees (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Currently, females comprise more than half of the student population on college campuses across the United States, and in recent decades are as likely to graduate with undergraduate and graduate degrees as their male counterparts (Allan, 2011; Johnson, 2017).

Female participation in faculty trends have not translated into leadership positions in postsecondary education. Postsecondary institutions have reported difficulty in recruiting qualified candidates for key leadership roles, although evidence indicates there are more than enough qualified women to fill the positions because of both workforce experience and advanced degree attainment (Madsen, 2012; Johnson, 2017). That acknowledged, for the first time in recent history, community colleges face a massive shortage of executive leaders to fill available open positions (Ashburn, 2006).

Strom et al. (2011) purported that the retirements of community college presidents have incrementally increased through the decades, potentially leaving vacancies and advancement opportunities for females interested in occupying those positions. Moreover, these retirements trickle down to other community college executive leadership positions (American Association of Community Colleges, 2008) including deans, chief academic officers, provosts, vice-presidents, and presidents (Strom et al., 2011; American Association of Community Colleges, 2008). McNair et al. (2011) discussed that difficulties in finding equitable participation may be due to limited advanced degrees focused on community college leadership. McNair et al. (2011) indicated other reasons including the expanding complexities of the mission and diversity of student populations, requirements for a doctoral degree, and the inability to relocate given limited local opportunities (e.g. partners, children, and aging parents). Thus, it is critical to support the growing need to

develop the next generation of community college leaders and the opportunity to focus on equity issues (Strom et al., 2011).

Equity in postsecondary executive leadership historically has been problematic given the masculine characteristics among the professoriate and leadership (Madsen, 2012). Though considerable research has been done on leadership, there is little regarding female leadership, especially in postsecondary contexts. Considering impending retirements, it is advisable to explore the leadership development and leadership succession pipeline for female leaders' advancement in community colleges. Legislation, policies, and initiatives have supported the succession of women into these top executive positions; however, research explicates that implicit biases and systems of restraint still act as barriers for female ascension through leadership ranks. Higher education institutions struggle to find qualified and competent candidates to move to key administrative positions (Madsen, 2012). Although a large number of researchers have attested to the outstanding capabilities of women and leadership opportunities for tenured faculty and administration, leadership identity still conforms to the image of a masculine administrator.

Postsecondary institutional data, like community colleges, indicate more diversity within leadership than their doctoral degree-granting university counterparts. Since community colleges have experienced more equitable growth and have more inclusive missions for diversity compared to other institutions in the sector, it is essential to examine if the structure of leadership can provide a blueprint for female leadership pathway expansion. According to Townsend and Twombly (2007), community colleges are more fertile environments than their university counterparts for female advancement because of factors such as more females in administrative roles at all levels. This presence of women creates a more gender inclusive environment to support prospective leaders. Thus, community colleges are optimal institutions to research female leadership pathways, advancement procedures, and structural diversity and inclusion measures.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIABILITY AND GENDER EQUITY

Researchers have dedicated a wealth of information to gender equity, particularly among countries. Gender equity continues to be a global policy concern and was ratified in the Sustainable Development Goal 5: "*Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.*" Goal 5's pathway is high on the international policy agenda because of growing evidence that closing inequality gaps and improving economic stability and welfare of women can lead to improvements in pediatric nutrition and mortality rates, increased school enrollment, improved maternal and children's health, and improved natural resources (Fisher & Naidoo, 2016, p. 1). Fisher and Naidoo (2016, p. 1) suggested a "critical first step" to "accelerate the policies of programs that relate to gender" is to understand more holistically how gender inequality manifests in different contexts around the world. To this point, research indicates missed efforts in the attainment of Millennium Development Goal (MDG) III— "*promote gender equality and empower women,*" and data revealed decreased opportunities for increased welfare of women in some countries globally (Fisher & Naidoo, 2016, p. 1). Fisher and Naidoo (2016) found that globally, across 47 countries, males who headed households had significantly more asset wealth than their female counterparts. Females also had an extreme disparity of land ownership compared to their male counterparts, thus highlighting the persistent gender inequities globally.

From global gender perspectives, it is apparent that culture plays a significant role in gender equity. Limited research has been done regarding cultural differences by United States regions, however, and regional variability is an important factor to consider when assessing gender equity in the United States. Though considerably more stable because of regional age compared to other

parts of the world, interregional U.S. differences are attributed to historical culture, ethnic distribution, economy and labor force, and political agendas. There are significant impacts of geographical regions on culture because each region has distinct collections of attitudes, languages and dialects, and history (Garreau, 1981).

Pope and Sydnor (2010) examined and found geographical variation in gender standardized test scores in the United States. Moreover, gendered differences were found within states. For instance, the four states included in this study were ranked in order largest to least regarding male-female stereotype gender differences: Nevada (14), Florida (19), New York (26), and then Wisconsin (39). A priori geographical grouping by states gives a census of understanding of how environments affect stereotypical gender adherence. Discussion of the study permits possibilities that environment has a substantial effect on test scores rather than innate abilities. Cultural factors can support gender stereotypes in early childhood and education and have lasting effects on workforce outcomes.

In consideration of this study, the researchers focused beyond the broad picture of gender equity, and on how gender equity is described in smaller geographical units such as states. That is, while a national trend may clearly align with the particular situation of a region or state, other areas may not conform to related developments. Thus, it is critical to consider state variabilities in terms of characteristics and size of community college systems as contexts for understanding gender equity in executive leadership in community colleges.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study was framed by Gender Parity and Human Capital Frameworks. Historically, women have received less formal education and support systems for career preparation than men, as well as having been described as having less human capital than men (Probert, 2005). Human capital is generally measured by education, professional credentials, and work experiences (Becker, 1975). In addition to the tangible elements, intangible factors that are not as concrete include talent, wisdom, judgement, habits, and personality traits. Although females are as likely as their male counterparts to achieve postsecondary education and advanced degrees, to have work experience, and to encompass other invaluable assets, there is still no translation into economic and professional ascension (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2016).

The development of socially inclusive human capital is an important element of economic growth in all countries. The Global Gender Gap Index (2016) indicated that it is difficult for countries to rank high in human capital when they have large gender gaps and gender disparities among female populations. The United States ranked among the top countries that scored high on the Human Capital Optimization Index and high on the Gender Gap Talent Composite Score; countries occupying the other top spaces were Finland, Australia, Canada, Norway, and the Philippines. According to the report, there is near gender parity in technical and professional workers, however, senior roles are only documented as being held by 33% of women (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2016). Greater gender equality in any country or state through investment in human capital could enhance economic growth. From this perspective, states with high indicators of social and human capital should have small gender disparities in areas such as leadership roles.

Investment in human capital and the social inclusivity of diverse populations is an important element for economic growth in the United States. Further, gender equality through investment in human capital could enhance economic growth. According to Ward, Lee, Baptist, and Jackson (2010), countries that exhibit gender equality in the workforce are not as likely to be as wealthy as those countries that do. A more productive workforce yields a higher rate of return

and increased growth (Ward et al., 2010). Therefore, the researchers use this framework to guide the analysis of individual states within the United States and their investments on gender parity and human capital in postsecondary education leadership.

METHOD

APPROACH

The review of leadership positions was informed by a descriptive approach and content analysis through a review of information available electronically through online websites. Using a descriptive approach, the researchers described the representation by gender of identified leadership positions. This provided the researchers a frame to examine if different states operated pursuant of equitable representation among their leadership administration. Content analysis as a methodological approach involved “specialized procedures for processing scientific data” with the purpose of providing knowledge, insights, representing “facts”, and guiding practice (Krippendorff, 1980, p. 21). This approach allowed for the analysis of public postsecondary websites for categorical information about institutional executive leadership representation.

FOCUS AND SCOPE

Postsecondary institutions were the focus and scope of this research study. Given the broad definition of postsecondary, the researchers focused on community colleges and colleges that did not offer graduate and doctoral degrees since the research indicated a more equitable representation within these institutions. This choice to omit graduate and doctoral-granting degrees was purposeful and directed toward clarity of the postsecondary institution sample.

The researchers identified four states in different regions as described by the U.S. Census Bureau as a starting point for state variability. With the exclusion of doctoral-granting degree institutions, 99 institutions were identified and analyzed to accomplish this study within the four identified states.

REVIEW OF CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES

These four states were selected due to contrasting geographic locations and cultures. Further, these states are situated in the four regions identified by the US Census Bureau. Importantly, the authors note that each state may not be indicative of those regions but was realized as an appropriate point of exploration in this study. For instance, we understand that Nevada is different than its regional neighbor California, and do not contend it is a regional representative. These states were chosen using purposive sampling and based on the following criteria: diversity of regionality and location, and rankings according to the Status of Women (2015) report and State Fact Sheet that reported gender equity data (ex. Nevada was ranked in the bottom half of the report; whereas, New York was ranked near the top of the report), and state size and population. The researcher identified the following states: Nevada, Wisconsin, New York, and Florida.

The researcher then used online search engines to identify community colleges in the selected states and searched terms including “Florida community colleges/colleges,” “Nevada community colleges/colleges,” “Wisconsin community colleges/colleges,” “New York community colleges/colleges,” and “United States community colleges/colleges”. The researcher surveyed community college/college links listed in each state and reviewed the postsecondary website for information about the president, vice president(s), provost(s), and dean(s). Postsecondary institutions identified within the search criteria were documented; colleges with

broken URL links were not included in this study. The researcher documented all colleges that had accessible online websites, along with their known president, vice president, provost, and dean information, and excluded those where leadership information was unavailable. The researcher excluded universities and institutions where graduate degrees were granted.

The following criteria was used to classify postsecondary institutional information in each region: institution's name and president, vice president, provost, and dean name(s). The researcher obtained postsecondary institutional websites by using the state(s) name and "community college/college". The researcher then surveyed the listed community college and college links within each state and reviewed the website for information about the president, vice president(s), provost(s), and dean(s). Community colleges and colleges identified within the search criteria were documented.

DATA PROCEDURES AND ANALYSIS

A code book was generated to organize postsecondary institutions by state. The following information was included and was labeled by column: name of institute, name of president, vice president(s), provost(s), and dean(s), and a categorical identity of male or female. Within each institutional website, the researcher looked for tabs such as president's welcome, leadership, and administration. Then, the researcher identified any leadership position listed on pages with the study's criteria of president, vice president, provost, and dean. If the leadership of the institution under review was not indicated on the website within the search parameters, the codebook was left blank. Also, since vice president and provost leaders often had dual titles, those cases were documented for each position in the title. For example, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost were documented twice in each column as vice president and provost. Moreover, vice president positions varied according to the titles of positions and were documented as Vice President of Student Affairs, Vice President of Administration, Vice President of Institutional Advancement, etc.; all documented under the general vice president column.

Next, the researcher indicated in the codebook Male (M) or Female (F) for the leaders based on name, biography picture, and/or google search for indicated gender. When all data for this study was entered, it was summarized using frequency count and percentages in tables. As it is common to collect all of the data before examining it to determine what it reveals (Chamberlain et al., 2004), extensive data was missing on postsecondary websites about provosts and deans. Because of the missing data, the researcher chose to exclude those positions based on the inaccuracy of the percentage represented. Although vice presidency data was also missing it was included. The remaining two positions of president and vice president were imported into tables by state.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

OVERALL FEMALE REPRESENTATION

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 1. Describe female representation in postsecondary executive leadership positions in community college systems in selected states within the United States, including president and vice president.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 2. Compare female representation in executive leadership positions in community college systems by selected states of the United States.

FEMALE REPRESENTATION BY SELECTED STATES

NEVADA. As shown in Table 1, six Nevada postsecondary institutions were included in this study and represented the fewest number of institutions among the four states in this study. Females represented 33% of the presidencies and 70% of vice presidencies. Although few institutions were included within the state, Nevada reflected the U.S. average for postsecondary presidencies. Further, Nevada had the highest reported percentage, in this study, for vice presidency positions (above the national average). Nevada's postsecondary institutional websites did not have accessible information for some leadership positions and the number of institutions sampled was 65% less than Wisconsin, the next highest state sampled. Given the gathered data, Nevada was the only state with a majority representation in the two highest executive leadership positions of 56.25%.

WISCONSIN. Wisconsin was second lowest of postsecondary leadership institutions sampled with 17 institutional websites that indicated a president was either part of their leadership structure or had a presidential welcome page. Forty-one percent of presidential positions were occupied by females, over 10% more than the national average for community college presidents. Twelve institutions did not give information on their vice-presidents; however, of those data located, forty-nine percent were female. Wisconsin had the highest percentage of female presidents according to the data gathered and approximately half of reported data indicated that vice presidents were female. Wisconsin's overall female representation in the two highest executive leadership positions was third highest of the states at 47.1%.

NEW YORK. Forty-four postsecondary institutions were included in New York's sampling frame, the highest amount used in the study. Of the 44 institutions examined, thirty-four percent of females occupied the presidency rank, paralleling the national average of female community college presidents, and consistent with research indicating the stalled growth of female representation. Fifty-three of the located and documented vice president positions were women. New York's overall female representation in the executive leadership positions examined was 47.3%, the second highest.

FLORIDA. Florida was the second highest sample with 31 postsecondary institutions representing the southern geographical region. Twenty-two percent of females occupied the institutions' position of presidency, an approximate 25% decrease from the national average. Further, forty-nine percent of vice president positions were occupied by women. Florida had the smallest percentage of female presidents and vice presidents in the study in relation to the number of institutions examined in each state. Florida's overall female representation in the executive leadership positions examined was the lowest of the four states at 41.2%.

Table 1

Total Number of Presidents and Vice Presidents by Gender by State

Gender	Vice			%
	President	President	Total	
Nevada n = 6				
Male	4	3	7	43.75
Female	2	7	9	56.25
Percent Female	33%	70%		56.2%
Wisconsin n = 17				
Male	10	17	27	52.9
Female	7	17	24	47.1
Percent Female	41%	50%		47.1%
New York n = 44				
Male	29	51	80	52.6
Female	15	57	72	47.3
Percent Female	34%	53%		47.3%
Florida n = 31				
Male	24	36	60	58.8
Female	7	35	42	41.2
Percent Female	23%	49%		41.2%

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 3. Describe female equity demographic profiles of selected states: Nevada, Wisconsin, New York, and Florida.

To more accurately describe states, state profiles were compiled to provide additional data on each state for context and comparison. Each profile contains geographic characteristics, population, and published equity indicators. These data were gathered pursuant of further describing identified states, with high or low indicators of social and human capital, and if aligning gender disparities were apparent in postsecondary female leadership roles in the identified states.

NEVADA'S GENDER EQUITY PROFILE

Nevada is approximately 284,448 sq. km, while Florida is approximately 139,670 sq. km; Florida is about half the size of Nevada. While the *population* of Nevada is ~2.7 million people, 16.1 million *more* people live in Florida. Wisconsin is approximately 140,663 sq. km. and, thus, Nevada is twice the size of Wisconsin.

The *population* of Wisconsin is ~5.7 million people and its population is almost twice that of Nevada. New York is approximately 122,283 sq. km, less than half the size of Nevada, but the *population* of New York is ~19.4 million people, over seven times the population of Nevada. Nevada had the smallest population included in the study and the least number of postsecondary institutions sampled.

Though Nevada ranked the highest by percentage (lowest sample of n=6), at the time of the study, in female executive leadership representation, state demographics have them ranked near the bottom of several gender equity indicators, except for reproductive rights. According to the Status of Women in the States (2015), Nevada was ranked 45th among the states in employment and earnings, 42nd in political participation, poverty, and opportunity, 40th in health and well-being, 23rd with work and family, and 17th in reproductive rights. According to this comprehensive report, Nevada ranked near the bottom in each of the data indicators except for work and family and reproductive rights. Work and family data included information about paid leave, average childcare, dependents, disabilities, and women being the breadwinner. As of 2015, women employed full-time in Nevada made 80 cents to the similarly full-time male employee's dollar. Nevada had a higher percentage of women working in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) at 31% than the national average of 28.8%. Furthermore, 22.2% of women had a bachelor's degree or higher, an increase of 6% since 2000 data sources. Since this data was published, there was a change of women's political representation in Nevada and Nevada is a women's majority state in legislation, a first in the nation.

WISCONSIN'S GENDER EQUITY PROFILE

Wisconsin is approximately 140,663 sq. km, while Nevada is approximately 284,448 sq. km, over twice Wisconsin's size. The *population* of Wisconsin is ~5.7 million people, while the *population* of Nevada is ~2.7 million people. Wisconsin is approximately 140,663 sq. km, while Florida is approximately 139,670 sq. km, and the *population* of Wisconsin is ~5.7 million while 13.1 million *more* people live in Florida. New York is approximately 122,283 sq. km, or about 87% of Wisconsin's size. The *population* of New York is ~19.4 million people, while the *population* of Wisconsin is ~5.7 million people, or about 30% of New York's population. Wisconsin had the third largest population of the four states included in the study and the third largest postsecondary institutions sampled.

Wisconsin ranked last by percentage of the four states examined, at the time of the study, in female postsecondary executive leadership representation. State gender equity indicators and demographic data ranked Wisconsin, compared to the rest of the United States, in the middle of its state counterparts. Wisconsin was ranked 19th among the 50 states in employment and earnings, 7th in political participation, 20th in poverty and opportunity, 41st in reproductive rights, 16th in health and well-being, and 17th in work and family (Status of Women in the States, 2015). The state ranked in the top half in every indicator except for reproductive rights. Key findings on Wisconsin's 2018 fact sheet indicated that the state had made significant advances within the past decade in areas such as employment and earnings; however, opportunity and poverty had decreased since the last published report in 2004 where they were ranked as best, and they ranked 20th in 2015. The report concluded that improving the pay gap between women and men of 80 cents to the dollar in favor of men, and the much wider gap for Hispanic women and white men of 53 cents to the dollar in favor of white males, would greatly improve poverty within the state (Status of Women in the States, 2015). The fact sheet also reported that a growing number of women were obtaining college degrees and 41% were participating in managerial and professional

occupations that required at least a 4-year degree and usually provided higher wages. Wisconsin continues to be underrepresented regarding women in the state legislature (25%), with no minority women in statewide elected executive offices and one woman of color in the U.S. Congress.

NEW YORK'S GENDER EQUITY PROFILE

New York is approximately 122,283 sq. km, while Nevada is approximately 284,448 sq., over twice New York's size. New York's *population* is 19.4 million, while Nevada is ~2.7 million people. At 122, 283 sq. km, New York is slightly smaller than Wisconsin (140,663 sq. km) and its population is almost *four times* the population of Wisconsin's 5.7 million. Florida is larger than New York at 139,670 sq. km and approximately *576,792 less* people live in Florida than New York. New York had the largest population of the four states included in the study and the most postsecondary institution samples.

New York had notably the largest sample of postsecondary institutions examined (n=44), and the second highest percentage of female postsecondary executive leaders. State gender equity indicators and demographic data ranked New York, compared to the rest of the United States, near the top of in several gender equity indicators. According to the Status of Women in the States Fact Sheet, New York ranked 5th among the 50 states regarding women's employment and earnings, 22nd in political participation, 15th in poverty and opportunity, 7th in reproductive rights, 30th in health and well-being, and 1st in work and family. As of 2016, women made 89.6% of men's wages. According to the 2018 Fact Sheet, at this rate, women in New York will not reach equal wages until 2046. If New York women were paid as much as their male counterparts, women's poverty would decrease by more than half and by nearly a half among employed single mothers.

Approximately thirty-seven percent of women in New York held a bachelor's degree or higher (Status of Women in the States, 2016). A growing number of women, approximately 45%, were in managerial or professional positions. The state ranked number one regarding the work and family index, an amalgamation of composite scores of Paid Leave Index, Elder and Dependent Care, Childcare, Labor Force Participation Rates, etc. Men were twice as likely to work in STEM fields. Further, 26.8% of women in New York work in low-wage jobs.

FLORIDA'S GENDER EQUITY PROFILE

Florida was approximately 139,670 sq. km, about half the size of Nevada. The *population* of Nevada was ~2.7 million people, while 18.8 million, or 16.1 million *more* people lived in Florida. Wisconsin was approximately 140,663 sq. km, and although similar in size to Florida, the *population* of Wisconsin was ~5.7 million people while 13.1 million *more* people lived in Florida. New York was approximately 122,283 sq. km, while Florida was approximately 139,670 sq. km. The *population* of New York was ~19.4 million people with *576,792 fewer* people living in Florida. Florida had the second largest population of the four states included in this study and had the second largest number of postsecondary institutions sampled.

Florida ranked second to last by percentage of the four states examined, at the time of the study, in female postsecondary executive leadership representation. State gender equity indicators and demographic data ranked Florida, compared to the rest of the United States, in the lower half of the 50 states. Florida had a ranking of 36th among the 50 states in employment and earnings, 27th in political participation, 34th in poverty and opportunity, 30th in reproductive rights, 32nd in health and well-being, and 43rd regarding work and family (The Status of Women in the States, 2015). Florida's majority population was female. Given its geographic location, it also had more racially diverse populations, including immigrants.

As of 2016, women in Florida made 87.5% of what men made, ranking them at number 3 in the United States; given this statistic, women will not receive equal pay until 2038. Men are 2.3 times more likely to work in a STEM field. Approximately 26.7 percent of women in Florida have a bachelor's degree or higher, an increase of about 7 percentage points since 2000. Florida's employment and earning's ranking dropped from the last 2004 States Report. As of 2018, Florida ranked 36 among the states. As of 2019, women comprised 30% of Florida's legislature. In congruence with other states, women in Florida are less likely than men to be in the labor force and live in poverty (The Status of Women in the States, 2015).

Demographic data present an image of a state's population that can provide insight into the needs of females and policy changes that would improve their status. For example, Florida is more racially and ethnically diverse than the United States as a whole and has a large and growing population of immigrants, which has specific implications for advocates, philanthropists, and policymakers. It is essential that women of color and immigrant women in Florida—populations that on average have lower incomes and higher poverty rates—have adequate access to education, health care, employment, and other services. Florida also has an older population than the United States as a whole, making it crucial for policymakers and advocates to focus on changes such as improving the availability and affordability of elder health care and protecting Social Security benefits to ensure the economic security of older.

LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

With the strengths of content analysis come its limitations. First, the researcher could only access postsecondary institutional information that had open-access on websites. Information that was not accessible, available, up to date, or correct could create a reliability risk of the current status. Considering the time of year of this analysis, leadership roles may have changed or websites may not have been current as the fall semester had not begun. Also, even with the understanding of the differences between "sex" and "gender" identification, the researcher did not have access to self-reported categorical sex and gender data and therefore the categorization of the leader's gender was subjective given the information on the websites. There may be misjudgments due to gender norms biases when analyzing names or when evaluating information about the leaders. Further, there was an understanding of gender incongruence and internal perceptions of oneself, and an awareness that assigned sex and gender identity are not the same.

Regarding delimitations, the researcher used an internet search engine to investigate female leaders' names to pursue accurate gender identification. Specifically, the researcher investigated names that did not have a photograph or biography and where a pronoun was used on the postsecondary website. Further, the researcher excluded the provost and dean positions because of the amount of missing categorical identity data on most postsecondary websites and because the information was not listed on the leadership or administration pages.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

As of 2019, this study appears to be the first study that examined these four states and described and compared female leadership participation in postsecondary institutions at president and vice presidency levels. We searched all available websites for our target population. Because of limitations such as inaccurate information and overlapping leadership structures, readers should not assert overall equity conclusions. This study was conducted to describe and compare these

states and regions and to build and add to existing data on gender equity in postsecondary education. Gender equity is a complex issue and to fully understand its contexts, the four profiles were created for state comparisons.

The findings of this study suggest female vice presidents outnumber female presidents, supporting extant literature reporting that female representation drops at higher leadership positions. Both Nevada's 33% and New York's 34% presidential percentages are reflective of the current data on female leaders in postsecondary education, signaling little to no growth (ACE, 2017). Wisconsin's forty-one percent was the highest reported percentage of female presidents among the four states included in this study. According to the status state profiles, Wisconsin was ranked in the top half of states regarding employment and earnings. The State Fact Sheet (2018) reported that Wisconsin has made considerable efforts toward equality in the past decade; however, inequality has widened regarding opportunity and poverty. Conversely, Florida reported the lowest percentage of 23% female presidents, below the nation's average (ACE, 2017), and Florida's overall female representation was lower than the national average (Johnson, 2017). Additionally, Florida reported in the bottom half of states in every indicator, including 36th in employment and earnings and 34th poverty and opportunity.

New York had the most institutions surveyed and was consistent with the current research regarding representation. According to New York's state profile, New York's rankings were all in the top half, except for health and well-being, possibly indicating state improvement efforts toward equity measures. Nevada had the least number of institutions surveyed but aligned with the national average of representation of female leadership in postsecondary education. These data reflect, however, that on average, females represent over half of the vice presidents reported on available institutional postsecondary websites. Given the limitations of the study, the researchers were aware that these data are a snapshot of leadership at a given moment in time and that these data may have evolved.

Regarding presidential appointments, the percentage of females currently holding the role of vice president supports an expanded leadership pipeline, and further supports the pipeline myth (i.e., not having enough female talent in the leadership pipeline with experience). Drake (2008) purported that women were significantly less likely to hold positions of dean, vice president, and president. Townsend (2009) noted that despite increases of women in administrative roles, it is "not proportionate to their presence as students in the classroom or in the community college faculty ranks" (p. 736). According to percentages of females in examined institutions in the four states, however, vice presidency roles are perhaps more female inclusive than the presidential role.

Given the findings of the four states represented, future research should target and investigate new states in each region, and further investigate regional similarities and differences. This could survey possible similarities within and differences between and among regions to explore patterns of gender equity that may be influenced by regional and subcultural patterns. The inclusion of race and ethnicity would provide more data and a deeper understanding of inequities among leadership staff in postsecondary institutions. Further, it would be beneficial to critically analyze the career trajectories of Wisconsin's presidents and their institutions' historical leadership pathways. Further analysis of these female presidents' pathways may contribute deeper data on experiences within their leadership trajectory that may support future female leaders. To mimic or replicate those institutions, further examining them for policy and procedures within their institutions and how they hire and promote may be beneficial for diversity recruitment and retention initiatives.

Postsecondary leaders should consider more fluid and transparent institutional website designs for information. Poorly done websites were not easy to navigate, which not only made data collection difficult for researchers but makes it difficult for students to find key information. This has implications for student enrollment, class completions, and degree attainment as accessing leaders, degree programs, resources, and opportunities is important for student retention.

Analysis of the large gap of female presidents compared to vice presidency positions among the postsecondary landscape should be further investigated. Understanding leadership pathway progressions within the community college context can further highlight career trajectories for future female leaders. Given the research on the retirement of community college leaders and the optimizing of vacancies, future research should include institutions with first time female presidents. This could prove important to related literature on opportunities for females and postsecondary career advancements. Lastly, given that current studies support advanced community college leadership degrees as being instrumental for the development of the next generation of postsecondary leaders, understanding the recruitment practices and opportunities for female enrollment can fill gaps in the research.

CONCLUSION

Although gender and leadership researchers have revealed extensive knowledge on how organizations are failing females in their career trajectories, there is an ongoing and consistent under-representation of females in the presidency positions in postsecondary education. Vice presidencies were well represented by females in the community colleges included in this study. This could be attributed to the inclusive and dynamic nature of leadership within the postsecondary context and the considerable history of normative masculine identity associated with the position, or, perhaps, a lack of understanding of how postsecondary institutions can turn research into practice. Further understanding the complexities of postsecondary leadership and one's navigation can provide more details for future postsecondary leaders and provide postsecondary institutions with practical applications. As the postsecondary environment continues to change, it is important that leadership reflects that changing environment by utilizing talent within the pipeline.

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