

Study on Past and Future of Women in the Profession from an International Standpoint

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Abstract: *In the context of commerce and management, the representation of women has evolved from nuanced discussions to powerful narratives of achievement and ambition. The commerce system, renowned for its rigorous traditions, has always been a bastion of male dominance. Nevertheless, by the display of tenacity, expertise, and an unwavering commitment to equity, women have progressively attained a position of high status and respect inside its esteemed confines. This article aims to analyze the progression of women in the commerce profession, beginning with pioneering individuals from the past and continuing to contemporary advocates who are actively striving for parity and equitable rights. This article explores the difficulties, significant achievements, and future opportunities for women in the commerce profession, based on insights from renowned commerce authorities Monika McCarthy, Danielle Hall, Valerie Hletko, Jonice Gray Tucker, and Lynette Hotchkiss. The panel discussion, titled "See Her, Hear Her: Historical Evolution, Advocacy, and the Path Ahead," occurred during the American Bar Association's Business Law Fall Meeting in Chicago on September 8, 2023. The analysis is set in the broader framework of societal transformation and the continuous quest of gender equality.*

Women have made significant advancements in the commerce profession. However, there is still a need for additional efforts, especially in terms of transitioning from law school to becoming a practicing lawyer and in obtaining higher positions within law firms. Women, with the assistance of mentors, representation, and progressive workplace dynamics, are in a favorable position to not only navigate but also assume leadership in the future commerce landscape.

Keywords: Women, Commerce, future prospects, gender diversity

I. INTRODUCTION

The commerce profession has a notable historical background characterized by the groundbreaking accomplishments of women. Throughout history, women have repeatedly established their own routes, dismantled conventional obstacles, and asserted their rightful position in a sector that was previously dominated by men.

Leaders in the Commerce arena

Margaret Brent is notable for being the first female lawyer in America in 1648. An influential individual in Maryland, her accomplishments laid the foundation for future developments. Arabella Mansfield, in 1869, became the inaugural female to gain admission to a state bar in the United States, thus emulating her predecessor. Charlotte E. Ray's achievement of being the first African American woman lawyer and the first woman admitted to the bar in the District of Columbia in 1872 contributed to the further expansion of diversity. In the twentieth century, notable events occurred, such as Florence E. Allen's historic achievement of becoming the inaugural female justice to hold a position on a state supreme court in 1920. Additionally, Pauli Murray, renowned for her significant contributions to civil and women's rights, achieved the distinction of being the first African American to receive a Juris Doctor degree from Yale Law School in 1965. In contemporary times, Sandra Day O'Connor achieved the distinction of being the inaugural female justice to have a position on the United States Supreme Court. She was appointed by President Ronald Reagan in 1981. Additionally, Paulette Brown holds a significant milestone as the first African American woman to attain the presidency of the American Bar Association in 2014.

Academic Advancement—with Obstacles

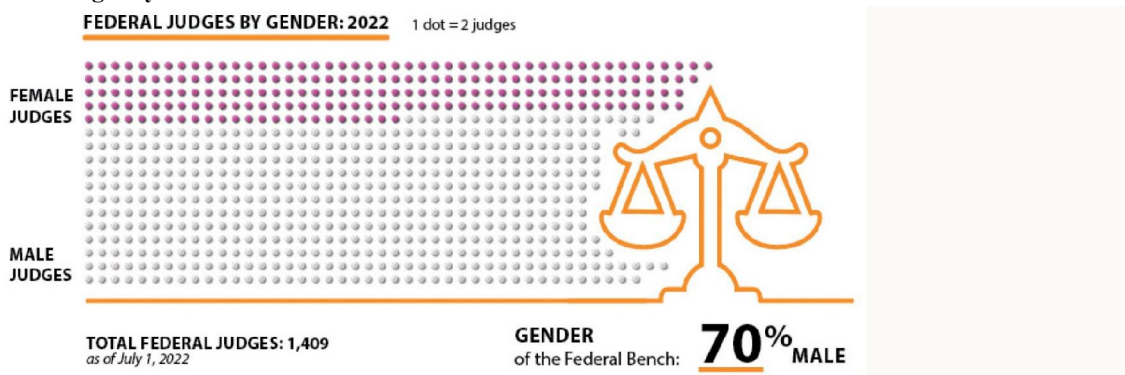
When immersing oneself in the realm of commerce academia, the prevailing patterns are equally captivating. Although there was an increase in the number of women pursuing commerce education at the beginning of the 21st century, there is a concerning decline in the rate at which they transition from law school to becoming a professional attorney. Nevertheless, over the past twenty years, there has been a notable increase in the number of female deans in law schools, suggesting a shift in the leadership dynamics.

The Diverse Nature of Corporate Commerce Departments

Outside of commerce firms, the internal and judicial environments exhibit a combination of advancement and lack of change. The notable proportion of women, namely percent, who hold general counsel positions, stands in stark contrast to the limited presence of women in the judiciary, particularly at the federal level.

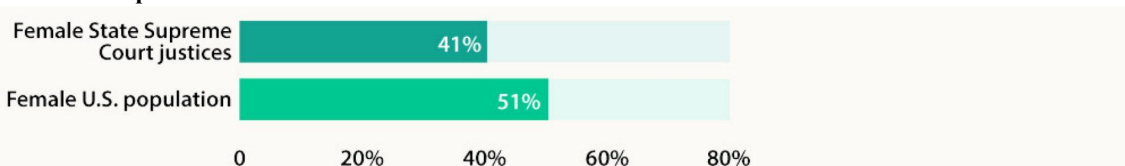
The rise in the number of female general counsels can be ascribed to several variables. In recent decades, there has been a growing recognition within corporate environments of the significance of diversity in decision-making processes. Companies have the belief that having a diverse leadership team fosters a range of viewpoints, which in turn encourages the development of innovative solutions and enhances decision-making. Furthermore, there has been an increase in the prevalence of corporate mentoring programs and initiatives aimed at cultivating female talent. These programs and efforts aim to equip women with the essential resources, assistance, and opportunity required to advance to high-level commerce positions inside organizations. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that firms are displaying a growing inclination towards employing general counsels that possess extensive experience. In 2020, 41 percent of general counsels hired externally possessed prior experience. Subsequently, this figure has surged to 60 percent. However, although the business sector may be making advancements, it is apparent that the judiciary still has room for improvement. The underrepresentation of women in the federal judiciary can be ascribed to a range of historical, institutional, and sociological issues that have historically constrained their chances.

Federal Judges by Gender: 2022



In 2022, of 1,409 federal judges as of July 1, 2022, 70 percent were men.

Female State Supreme Court Justices: 2022



In 2022, only 41 percent of state supreme court justices were women, though women made up 51 percent of the population.

The narrative of women in the commerce profession is a chronicle of unwavering resolve, notable achievements, and enduring obstacles. There are numerous monuments, but the pursuit of complete gender equality is still in progress. The

objective is not just to attain numerical parity, but rather to establish a future that guarantees just allocation of work, impartial compensation, and an all-encompassing atmosphere for everyone.

Advocacy and activism

"Whenever a woman asserts her own rights, even if she is unaware or not explicitly asserting them, she is effectively advocating for the rights of all women." Maya Angelou

The imperative for gender equality persists within the complex fabric of the commerce profession. The frontline of this changing narrative is characterized by advocacy, activism, and allyship. This section illuminates the crucial significance of these pillars, with a specific emphasis on the tactics that women can utilize to advocate for themselves and their peers. Moreover, it underscores the crucial role of men as allies, actively supporting and working in conjunction with their female counterparts. Through the integration of self-advocacy, collective action, and purposeful allyship, our objective is to steer the commerce community towards a framework that not only exhibits fairness but also flourishes through the combined power and solidarity of its members.

The prospect of women the commerce profession

"The issue at hand is not who will allow me, but rather who will impede my progress." Ayn Rand
The contemporary commerce environment is significantly more comprehensive than it was a century ago, while the task remains incomplete. The commerce profession is currently experiencing significant changes due to the advancements in technology, the process of globalization, and the evolving societal values. Contemporary female commerce professionals are not solely engaged in practical practice, but also serve as pioneers, intellectuals, and catalysts for change. The panelists provided their perspectives and forecasts for the future while examining the paths that women have taken in the field of law.

Hall underscored the significance of acknowledging and confronting the unique experiences of women belonging to racial and ethnic minority groups in comparison to their white counterparts. Amidst the changing commerce landscape, it is crucial to progress, acknowledge, and truly comprehend these subtleties, persistently driving women of color towards progress.

Hletko's vocal tone introduced a sense of immediacy, expressing apprehensions over the possible obstacles that diversity, equity, and inclusion ("DEI") initiatives may encounter, particularly following particular commerce actions and rulings. Recognizing the essential importance of these programs, she emphasized the urgent requirement for companies to come together in order to safeguard and enhance DEI efforts. Tucker's expedition enhanced the conversation much more. The author's analysis of her unforeseen nomination as an autonomous director for a prominent corporation illuminated the need of women broadening their perspectives and the value of inclusivity in varied boards and platforms. The narrative emphasized the significance of mentorship and sponsorship, demonstrating how influential individuals can create unexpected opportunities.

Emphasizing an additional aspect of the conversation, Hotchkiss brought forward a concerning disparity: the disparity between the representation of women in law schools and their presence in professional practice. According to her, comprehending the causes of this inequality is equally important to devising tactics to eradicate these obstacles. Furthermore, she highlighted the emergence of remote work, which has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as a potential transformative factor. This change in our work approach provides a fresh outlook on achieving a balance between work and personal life, which has the potential to greatly transform the roles of women in the commerce field. The future prospect of the commerce profession, despite its inherent difficulties, exhibits potential. With the guidance of mentors, support from representation, and the backing of progressive workplace dynamics, women are well-positioned to not just navigate but also take charge of the future commerce landscape. The forthcoming journey, albeit challenging, presents unprecedented prospects and accomplishments for women in the field of law.

II. CONCLUSION

The development of women in the field of commerce is a story of persistent resistance against established norms, while also representing the possibility of a more equal future. The women shown in this article symbolize individual achievements and societal advancements in overcoming barriers and shaping a future marked by equity, respect, and opportunity. When considering past events and anticipating future changes, it is important to recognize the shared responsibility of the business profession as a whole, regardless of gender, in order to maintain a balanced relationship

between strict adherence to laws and the values of inclusivity and fairness. While significant progress has been made, the future path requires continuous vigilance, consistent advocacy, and unwavering commitment to ensuring that every viewpoint within the business sector is recognized and heard. The stories of these remarkable women not only inspire us, but also motivate us to work together and build upon the foundation they have laid, aiming for a more inclusive and extensive business environment.

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