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A Case Study of California's Major Wineries: Assessing the Progress and Prospects for Winemakers who are Women

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Summary

*Women's recent higher acclaim as winemakers in California was hypothesized to open doors for other winemakers who are women and increase their presence as lead winemakers among its established wineries. Using a case study approach, winemaker data from 1999 and 2014 were coded and then compared for the same set of 480 recognized California wineries. Wineries for the case study were those included in James Laube's (1999) comprehensive book, *Wine Spectator's California Wine*.*

Two approaches were taken in providing data for testing the study's hypothesis. The first approach compared the proportion of wineries in the case study having lead women winemakers in 1999 with the proportion having lead women winemakers in 2014. The second approach, designed to illuminate factors associated with an increased presence of women winemakers, focused on position availability during this time period and the pattern of gender hiring among these positions. We viewed the second approach as providing an assessment of changes in the "lack of fit" stereotypes about women as winemakers and a best guess scenario of the rate of their progress in this field. We hypothesized that a sizeable proportion of wineries with available positions would report having appointed women as lead winemakers in 2014 but we were unsure about whether that proportion would approach or signal a shattering of the glass ceiling.

As hypothesized, the overall percentage of wineries with women as lead winemakers was somewhat higher in 2014—14.7% vs. 10.0% in 1999, but the percentage gain was modest at best. When only the available positions among these wineries were considered, the percentage was significantly higher, close to 21%. The pattern of gender hiring, however, indicated that male winemakers were hired far more frequently into

available positions. Thus the opening of doors for talented winemakers who are women appeared to co-exist with a conventional traditionalism.

The case study provided clear empirical evidence that some progress is indeed being made but the proverbial glass ceiling is far from being shattered. The absolute number of lead winemakers who are women remained relatively small among the wineries in the case study, and the pattern of hiring suggested a best guess scenario of around 20% for the near future.

Introduction and Purpose

It is well documented that women's career trajectories in male-dominated fields have been restricted by stereotypic views of women's abilities and roles, which in turn affects their chances of being hired and promoted (Budig, 2002; Eagly & Sczency, 2009). Both gender stereotypes and the assumed mismatch of these stereotypes with desirable work roles are known to underlie biased workplace practices (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011; Heilman & Eagly, 2008).

The traditional field of winemaking is no exception. Our first study showed that only 9.8% of California's 3200 wineries have lead woman winemakers (Gilbert, 2011), despite the fact half the graduates of its enology and viticulture programs have been women since the 1990s (Kauffman, 2009). Subsequently, we provided evidence that despite the small number of California wineries with lead women winemakers, their wines are more highly acclaimed, proportional to their representation in the field, than wines produced by their male counterparts (Gilbert & Gilbert, 2012).

The high level of talent among California winemakers who are women has received considerable recognition and visibility (Layman, 2013; Pinney, 2012). One example is the induction of Merry Edwards, a Sonoma winemaker, into the Vintner's Hall of Fame in 2013. She became the third women to be inducted into the Vintner's Hall of Fame, established in 2007. A further example is the recent article on the "Top 100 most influential U.S. winemakers" (Cervin, 2014). The list included 73 winemakers from California, 12 (16.4%) of whom were women. Asimov (2015)

Such significant positive attention can provide increased opportunities for well-qualified women and open more doors to them (Unger, 2006). Their recognized success in a traditional field can help change stereotypical perceptions of women's abilities and

provide opportunities to counter the “lack of fit” gender role traditionalism that can influence hiring and promotions (Ely & Padavic, 2007). Gilbert and Gilbert (2014), for example, reported that among the 386 newer California wineries, namely, those established since our 2011 study, there was some evidence of an increased percentage of winemakers who are women in two of the eight wine regions studied.

The Present Study and Its Hypotheses

In 1999, James Laube published his impressive book, *Wine Spectator’s California Wine*. According to the author, the book “lists alphabetically all the major and many of the minor wineries and brands,” providing facts about each winery, including who were the winemakers and owners at the time. Laube’s (1999) carefully researched book provided us with a comprehensive list of major wineries in California together with their winemakers and owners in 1999. Studying this same set of wineries in 2014, fifteen years later, provided a unique case study of the progress of women winemakers among these recognized wineries.

Two approaches were taken in providing data for testing our hypothesis of progress. The *first* approach compared the proportion of wineries in the case study having lead women winemakers in 1999 with the proportion having lead women winemakers in 2014. We hypothesized that the proportion of wineries having lead women winemakers, when we restudied them in 2014, would be greater than in 1999.

The second approach, designed to illuminate factors associated with hiring opportunity, focused on *position availability* during this time period and the *pattern of gender hiring* among these positions. We were fortunate to have the opportunity to look at these two variables within a set of established wineries within a 15-year time frame. We viewed this approach as providing an assessment of changes in the “lack of fit” stereotypes of women as winemakers and a best guess scenario of the rate of their future progress in this field. We hypothesized that a significant proportion of wineries with available positions would report having appointed women as lead winemakers in 2014 but we were unsure about whether that proportion would approach or signal a shattering of the glass ceiling.

Method

We used the information provided in Laube (1999) to develop a database that included all 543 wineries. We next verified whether each of the wineries still existed in 2014. Information available from *Wines & Vines* (<http://www.winesandvines.com/>), winery websites and calls to wineries, web searches, and visits to wineries were used in making these determinations.

Of the 543 wineries included in Laube (1999), 480 (88.4%) were still in operation in 2014. Of the other 63 wineries, 13 (2.3%) had been sold, 28 (5.2%) had closed, and no information was available on 22 (4.1%).

The 480 wineries that we could confirm still existed constituted the set of wineries for the case study. Information provided by Laube (1999) was used to code whether a winery's main or lead winemaker was a female or a male or a female-male co-winemaking team in 1999. Whether the lead winemaker (or co-winemakers) was the winery owner was also coded, as was the wine region in which the winery was located. . (There was no difference in the percentage of wineries with women winemakers for the 543 initial set of wineries and the 480 wineries included in the study.) For 2014, we again coded the sex of the lead winemaker and whether the lead winemaker was the winery owner. We also coded the current production range of the winery.

We were able to code the sex of the winemaker for all 480 wineries in 1999 and in 2014. We omitted from the data analyses those wineries that had a female-male co-winemaking team (2.5% in 1999 and 3.0% in 2014). In a number of these cases, the co-winemakers represented spousal pairs or family members.

Six wine regions were used in the coding: Central Coast, Inland California (Central Valley and Sierra Foothills), Mendocino/Lake County, Napa, Sonoma/Marin, and Southern California. Most of the wineries were located in Napa Valley (41.4%), Sonoma/Marin (28.5%), and Central Coast (21.3%), with a small percentage in each of the remaining wine regions (Inland CA, 4.3%; Mendocino/Lake County, 3.9%, and Southern California, 1.4%).

The case production of a winery was coded into the five ranges provided by *Wines & Vines*. These ranges extended from less than 1000 cases to more than 500,000 cases per year. Approximately half the wineries (51%) included in the case study currently produce 5,000 to 49,999 cases per year, with 20% producing either 1000 to

4,999 cases or 50,000 to 499,999 cases, and 5% producing either less than 1000 cases (limited production) or more than 500,000 cases (large).

Finally, approximately half the wineries in the case study are listed in *Opus Vino* (Gordon, 2010), indicating that as a group they represent high-quality wineries. Criteria provided in *Opus Vino* included making wines of very high or outstanding quality; having a long track record for quality, relative to its region; being a leader in its region in grape-growing and/or winemaking techniques; and performing particularly well in a special wine category. (Approximately 10% of California wineries are included in *Opus Vino*.)

Results

Approach 1: Comparisons of wineries in the case study having lead women winemakers in 1999 and in 2014

As we had hypothesized, some increase in the percentage of wineries with lead women winemakers had occurred over this 15-year period. The percentages were 10.5% (N=49) in 1999 and 14.7% (N=69) in 2014. The chi-square analysis used to test the hypothesis was statistically significant, $\chi^2(1, N=933) = 4.03, p < 0.05$, and provided support for the hypothesis.

Given that most of the wineries (91%) in the case study were located in Napa, Sonoma/Marin, and Central Coast, most of the changes were among wineries in these wine regions. The increased number of wineries with women winemakers was particularly noticeable in Sonoma/Marin, where the number increased from 12 to 22 wineries. Napa increased from 28 to 36 wineries, and Central Coast from 7 to 8 wineries. Mendocino/Lake increased from 1 to 2 wineries, and Inland California and Southern California remained constant with 1 and 0 wineries, respectively.

We next looked at the availability of lead winemaker positions and the pattern of hiring in positions when available.

Approach 2: Availability of lead winemaker positions and patterns of gender hiring

In order for women winemakers to have moved into lead winemaker positions during this time period, such positions needed to be available. Two categories of wineries would potentially limit the number of available openings (see Table 1 below). The first category is wineries whose winery owner was also the lead winemaker in both 1999 and

2014. The second category is those wineries that retained the same winemaker over this 15-year period.

To identify these wineries, the following categories were coded. (Recall that we only coded the winemaker or winemaker/owner for each winery in 1999 and then again in 2014.)

- (1) Same Male or same Female *owner/winemaker* over this time period
- (2) Same Male winemaker or same Female *winemaker* over this time period

Table 1 below provides summaries of the number of wineries in the case study falling into these two categories.

Table 1. Availability factors*

	Number of wineries in study 2014	Minus wineries with <i>same Owner/WM</i> 1999, 2014	Minus wineries with <i>same WM</i> in 2014 as in 1999	Number of wineries remaining
Male WM	396 (85.2%)	122	76	198
Female WM	69 (14.8%)	13	5	51
Total	465	135	81	249

*Note: The 15 F/M winemaking teams in 2014 are excluded from the total number of wineries.

As can be seen from the Table 1, 135 wineries were in the category of same owner/winemaker over the time period, and 81 wineries in the category of having retained the same winemaker. In both categories, most winemakers were male. Removing these two categories of wineries from the total number of wineries provided the number of wineries (249) with available lead winemaking positions.

A visual summary of position availability among the wineries in the case study is provided in Figure 1. As can be seen from the Figure, slightly over half of the wineries were coded as having had available positions. Of these, 51 or 20.5%, had a woman winemaker in 2014, a percentage significantly higher than the 14.7% calculated using the first approach, $X^2(1, N=714) = 3.69, p < 0.05$.

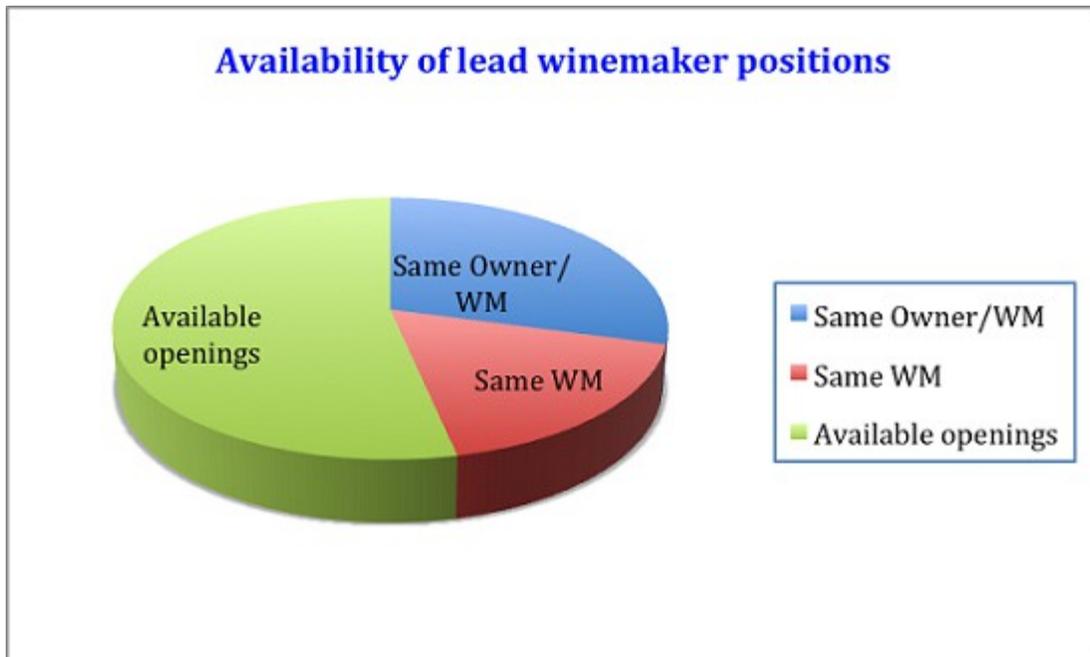


Figure 1. Availability of lead winemaker positions for wineries in the case study.

The pattern of hiring in available positions

To better understand the pattern of hiring into available positions, three categories were coded from the winery data available in 1999 and in 2014.

- (1) Change from a Male winemaker to a different Male winemaker
- (2) Change from a Female winemaker to a Male winemaker
- (3) Change from a Male or Female winemaker to a Female winemaker

Figure 2 depicts the results of the coding for wineries having available positions (i.e., not having an owner/lead winemaker and not retaining the same winemaker over the 15-year time period). Across all the wine regions, the most frequent pattern of change was from Male winemaker to Male winemaker: 69% of wineries with an available position reported a male lead winemaker in 1999 and a different male winemaker in 2014. The second most frequent pattern was a change from a Male or Female winemaker to a Female winemaker (21.6%) (Of these, only 1.6% was a Female to Female

winemaker hiring). Least frequent was a change from Female to Male winemaker (9.3%).

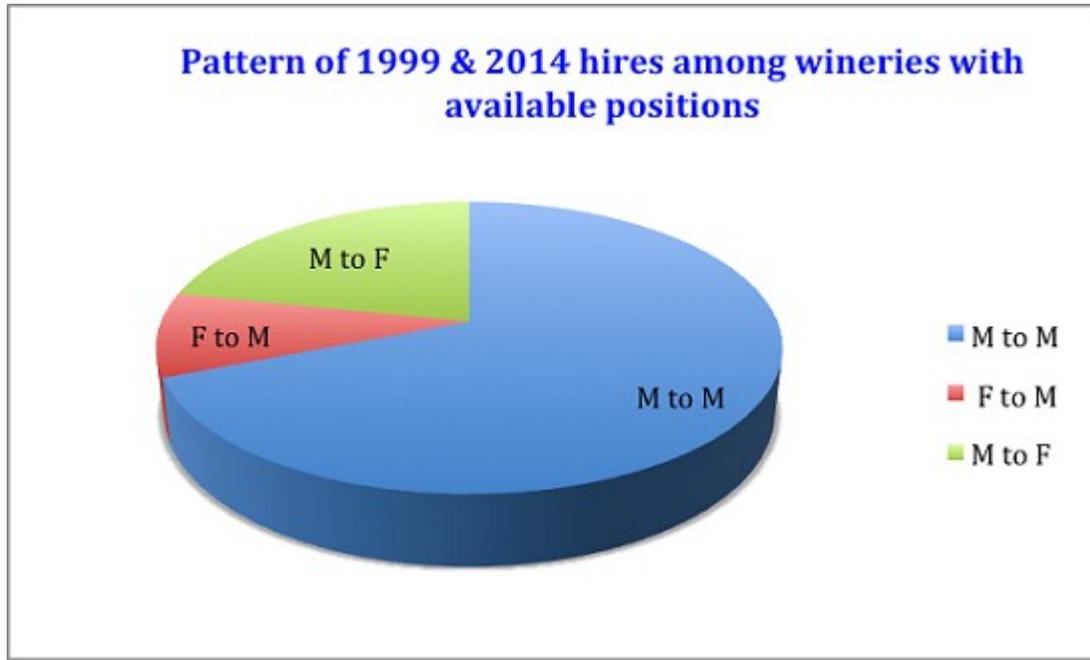


Figure 2. Proportion of wineries with available positions and the pattern of hires.

The pattern was similar for the Napa, Sonoma/Marin, and Central Coast wine regions, with the Male winemaker to Male winemaker pattern being most frequent and the Female to Male winemaker the least frequent.

Main Findings and Their Significance

This case study of winemakers at established California wineries has particular importance. First, it is rare that one has the data to conduct such a study of wineries and their winemakers, and can investigate factors that may facilitate or hinder change in this important area of the wine industry. Second, the study used a methodology that not only calculated women winemakers' progress in two distinct ways, both of which provided evidence of their progress, but also helped illuminate factors that help explain why the apparent progress will be relatively slow.

Consistent with the underlying theory that women winemakers' recent higher acclaim would open doors for other well-qualified women, both the Napa and Sonoma/Marin wine regions showed increases in the percentage of wineries with lead women winemakers. Women winemakers in these two wine regions have received particular recognition and visibility. The increase of 20 winemakers over the 15-year period among the wineries in the case study, while small numerically given the large number of wineries in California, was large given the small number of women winemakers at these wineries in 1999 (a total of 49).

Data from the case study were used to calculate progress overall and progress based on the availability of lead winemaking positions. The overall progress from 10.0% to 14.7%, while quite modest, could be viewed as discouraging were it not for the data on available positions, data that rarely if ever are available in making these kinds of calculations. That 21% of wineries in the case study with available positions had hired a lead women winemaker further underscores the extent of progress that has been made.

We also used the case study to examine the pattern of lead winemaker appointments among those wineries. The context of hiring is crucial in gender incongruent areas of employment, and any number of factors may limit women's advancement. In this case study, the pattern that emerged from our coding of winemaker sex in 1999 and in 2014 helped illuminate the influences of two factors associated with tradition in male dominated fields: (1) Winemaker longevity decreases the number of possible openings, and in the past men held nearly all of the lead wine making positions; and (2) men appear to be hired more often than women when positions do become available. Both these factors will diminish in influence over time, but likely not in the next decade.

Finally, in this case study, as in our two earlier studies on California winemakers who are women (Gilbert, 2011; Gilbert & Gilbert, 2012), the number of lead women winemakers (including owner/winemakers) is relatively small. Dynamics tied to gendered perceptions and social norms are still operative with regard to women gaining access to lead winemaking positions, particularly at well-known wineries (Eagly & Sczesny, 2009; Heilman & Eagly, 2008). A perhaps unconscious pattern illuminated in the study, hiring another male winemaker to fill an open lead winemaker position, could inadvertently

serve as a gatekeeper. Future studies would do well to learn more about the hiring process for lead winemakers and steps that can be taken to increase the number of qualified women in the pool of candidates being considered.

Conclusion

Women have made notable advances in the field of winemaking, and some of the most esteemed winemakers in California are women. A growing group of female winemakers hold positions as lead winemakers at well-known California wineries. As the empirical data from the current study help make clear, progress appears steady, but slow, at least among the major wineries in California that were included in Laube (1999). The future appears bright, but the glass ceiling is far from being smashed. The absolute number of lead winemakers who are women remains relatively small and the pattern of hiring suggests a best guess scenario of around 20% for the near future.

Note: Portions of this paper were presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Psychological Science, New York City, NY, May 2015.

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