

A More Representative Democracy: Cultural Factors Conducive to the Election of Women

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Social Sciences and Humanities Oral Presentation*

Abstract: There is a large gender gap between the number of women in America and the number of female legislators serving in state legislatures and Congress. Often, legislation reflects this divide and leads to the implementation of policy that fails to address the wants and needs of women across the country. The effects of primarily male-led legislative bodies has been strongly seen after the 2016 election, producing a record number of women running for office in the midterm elections. Thus, the aim of this study is to analyze what cultural factors are the most conducive to the election of women by answering the question of why some states elect more women to their state legislatures and to Congress. Based upon the literature that has been reviewed, the concept of culture ranges from traditional to moralistic, and to explore these classifications more in-depth this study will analyze factors that shape culture, such as religiosity, and the levels of education in the state, alongside control variables such as the percentage of women in the state, and the main ideology prevalent in the state. To test these variables, an SPSS dataset was built from operationalized survey data obtained from the Pew Research Center, and linear regressions were ran to determine the causal relationships between cultural factors and the number of women in the legislature from each state. Analyzing these results will work to provide a better understanding as to why there are state-by-state discrepancies in the gender gap occurring in legislative bodies across America.

Faculty Sponsor: *Dr. Dinorah Azpuru*