

**Representative Government and Gender Diversity
in State Legislative Bodies**

by

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INTRODUCTION AND SIGNIFICANCE

The current makeup of state legislative bodies in the democratic United States does not accurately reflect the population diversity present within the country. Variations in the rates of gender representation in state legislative bodies are evident across the nation. Women may be participating in state government and politics on an array of levels, yet such diversity is not reflected in the composition of many state legislatures. “Political systems have been slow in responding to the movement of women in political life, and even after a half century of access women are still largely represented by men” (Darcy and Choike, 1986, p.237). While our country and its states have made concerted efforts in the past century to remedy any legal causes for this situation, the discrepancy in political representation of women has not been remedied.

The concept of representative government is inherent in democracy. A public official is elected to represent the members of his or her district. The needs and desires of the constituency are to be priority, and “government must respond to those desires unless there are good reasons to the contrary” (Kendrigan, 1984, p.93). While it is impossible for an elected official to represent the unique and diverse needs and viewpoints of every constituent, the official should be representative of the majority. The success of a democratic, representative government is reliant upon the participation of the citizenry, in terms of voting and in public service. White males have historically dominated the political arena in the United States. Over time, the political playing field has been altered by societal and legal demands to include minorities and women, and while the physical makeup of elected office has diversified, it has yet to equally represent the racial and gender structure of the American states.

Rates of gender diversity cannot be easily rationalized, nor should they be inextricably grouped and compared with rates of ethnic diversity. The choice of a female candidate for political office cannot be superficially linked to predominance, as is often apparent in discussions of ethnic diversity, in that districts may be commonly referred to as being “historically black,” “predominately white,” or “heavily Hispanic.” Women account for 51% of the population nationally (CQ’s State Fact Finder), a percentage with only slight variations from state to state. While not a significant majority, an equal footing in terms of numbers is clear. Despite this presence, only 22.4% of state legislators across the nation are women (CQ’s State Fact Finder). Furthermore, this percentage fluctuates widely among the states, from a low of 7.9% to a high of 38.8% (CQ’s State Fact Finder). Since gender majority can be eliminated from consideration, what, then, are the factors that may lead to higher levels of gender diversity in state legislatures?

Are there environmental points of evidence or specific circumstances that correlate to levels of gender representation?

Societal influences and barriers to better gender diversity are complex, stemming from long-standing norms and generalizations. Such perspectives vary within the states, possibly accounting for historical and contemporary inconsistencies in rates of gender representation in state legislatures. Identifying the factors that support or impede a more balanced representation of gender in state legislatures is important to better understanding the current state of women in politics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dialogue surrounding gender and politics is noticeably based in theories of democracy and feminism. The concept of gender representation has been utilized in arguments for women's rights and suffrage. Because of this, it may be easy to assume that gender representation is a feminist issue. It is not: gender representation is an issue relating to the foundations of democracy in the United States — equality and representative government. “A government that is democratically organized cannot be truly legitimate if all its citizens from all races and classes and both sexes do not have a potential interest in and an opportunity for serving their community” (Thomas and Wilcox, 1998, p.1).

The case for gender representation in democracy is presented by Hernes⁽¹⁹⁸⁷⁾. The author's key argument is that greater gender diversity in politics reflects equal justice and challenges sexual segregation^(Hernes, 1987). Phillips supports this argument, posing that “if there were no substantial differences between men and women, or between black people and white, then those elected would undoubtedly be a more random sample from those who elect. Consistent under-representation of any social category already establishes that there is a problem”^(1991, p.63). In terms of gender and ethnicity, Phillips' statement signifies the theory of representative government in our democracy: if the concept of representative government is inherent to democracy and our laws and political ideals encourage it, a greater diversity among our elected officials would be certain.

Jane Mansbridge's research bolsters Phillips' argument. The author's work focuses on the theory of “descriptive representation”, wherein elected officials are selected because “their own backgrounds mirror some of the more frequent experiences and outward manifestations of

belonging to [a] group” (Mansbridge, 1999, p.628) . A representative should mirror the likenesses of those being represented; by speaking for their interests, democracy can truly be closer to the people. To signify that descriptive representation is not merely a superficial matter of color or gender, Mansbridge stresses the importance of shared experience in the theory. The mentality of “being one of us” is key to descriptive representation, as illustrated by the author with the constitutional requirement that a President of the United States must be a natural-born citizen of the nation (Mansbridge, 1999) .

Descriptive representation (“standing for”) can be distinguished from substantive representation (“acting on behalf of”) according to Pitkin (1967) . Shapiro presents the concept of social representation of gender as being interest-based and substantive (1981) . Resembling Mansbridge’s descriptive representation, the author argues that women are better represented as a collective whole, an interest group, rather than on an individual basis (Shapiro, 1981) . Analysis by Reingold addresses the reality of these theories. In her study of Arizona and California state legislatures, she finds that female elected officials are “likely to accept the link between descriptive and substantive representation of women — the link between being a woman and actively representing women’s concerns” (Reingold, 1992, p.531) .

While scholars argue the differences between descriptive and substantive representation, the problems with such positions are clear. Such a stance speaks for females collectively, without accounting for differences in opinion on issues or policy. Social or substantive representation may compliment the principles of representative government, but grouping individuals only on the shared characteristic of sex assumes mutual interests are a constant and belittles the importance of individuality. It may also create a polarized environment surrounding gender in politics. Collective representation may present a gender liability, as addressed by Phillips (1991) , who notes that the “notion that women represent women or express a specifically women’s point of view” weakens individualism (p.72) . Despite this, Kendrigan claims “social representation is unavoidable for women and minorities” in that any minority candidate inescapably “becomes a representative of his or her race or sex” (1984, p.97) . Mansbridge concurs, noting human cognitive processes as being prone to presume homogeneity within groups (1999) .

Ideological tendencies may be present in the minds of the electorate, creating a gender bias or association that influences their choice as voters. Religious beliefs, values, and traditional concepts of gender roles may continue to influence the selection of a female candidate for public office (Thomas and Wilcox, 1998) . As found in Rosenthal’s study of political gender consciousness, “those who are older and hold more conservative political views are less likely to

favor a female representative. By contrast, those who have higher socioeconomic status [and] hold feminist views...are more likely to indicate a preference for female representation” (1995, p.607). Rosenthal also discovers that women of the “baby boom” generation are attracted to female representation, yet the sources of these attitudes are undisclosed (1995). While not a focus of Rosenthal’s study, this evidence of an apparent generational phenomenon within the gender gap supports the influence of ideology in gender representation.

In addition, gender association, a phenomenon long present in psychology and gender studies, may sway voter choice since males and females are often judged by opposing measures of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ (Thomas and Wilcox, 1998). Stereotypes of gender roles and bias may enter into the voter’s mind. For instance, male candidates may be viewed as aggressive while female candidates are thought to be considerate. “Some voters believe that women and men have distinct roles for which they are best suited, and that politics is a role best left to men.” (Thomas and Wilcox, 1998, p.57) By focusing on the male versus female comparison, the heterogeneity of women may be obscured (Dolan and Ford, 1997), relating back to the problem of representational conformity discussed above.

The work of Celinda Lake presents a more practical approach to understanding the troubles of gender representation. Instead of focusing on societal factors, the author’s 1994 study examines a more internal angle of why more women do not run for office. It finds that women do not consider running for office as often as men and that personal factors, such as impact on family, timing demands, and a lack of confidence, are very influential in swaying women from public service (Thomas and Wilcox, 1998). Lake’s findings are supportive of a conclusion made by the National Women’s Political Caucus (NWPC) the same year: “The reason there aren’t more women in public office is not that women don’t win, but that not enough women have been candidates in general elections.” (Newman in Duerst-Lahti, 1998, p.17-18) During the previous four election cycles before the NWPC study was conducted, only 20% of state legislative candidates were women (NWPC, 1994). Darcy and Choike buttress Lake’s findings, in terms of legislative turnover. The authors conclude that “the proportion of women in the legislature is not only influenced by the extent to which new women candidates come forward; it is also influenced, sometimes dramatically, by the extent to which women, once elected, stay in office”, (Darcy and Choike, 1986, p.252). Darcy and Choike’s incumbency argument poses that stabilizing the number of women in legislative office over time should be as imperative as electing new female candidates in achieving more consistent gender representation. Additionally, the incumbency argument on the state level may impact gender representation on

the national level, since “state legislatures are...crucial to women because they are key entry points to higher elective office” (Darcy, Welch, and Clark, 1994, p.51)

Variations in rates of representation among the states are important to consider. Reingold’s analysis of the state legislatures of Arizona and California focuses on the influence of ideology and gender proportions in rates of female representation. Patterns of gender representation do vary across the states, as that analysis proved. In 1990, women comprised 16% of California’s state legislature while 30% of Arizona’s legislators were female (Reingold, 1992). In addition to a clear disparity in female representation, the two states showed significant variations in patterns of gender differences. For example, women legislators in California were more likely than those in Arizona “to feel that female legislators are more capable of, more willing to, and (we might infer) more responsible for representing women’s concerns”, (Reingold, 1992, p.531). The author poses that this finding may relate to the liberal nature of California and its political agenda being more accepting of gender issues (Reingold, 1992). As Reingold found, party affiliation and political culture within the states may play a considerable role in rates of gender representation. The relationship between a state’s rate of gender diversity among its legislative officials and its political and cultural characteristics is worthy of consideration.

METHODOLOGY

To establish the presence and/or degree of a relationship between rates of gender diversity and a state’s environment, an analysis of demographic, cultural, and political characteristics is contrasted with recent rankings of gender representation within state legislative bodies. The study attempts to explain why gender diversity is more prevalent in specific states than in others, focusing on the relationships and commonalities between neighboring states.

Observations for this study are based on available data concerning proportions, rates, and rankings of gender diversity among state legislatures, per the most recently available figures. A selection of twelve states is used. According to data available from the NCSL Women’s Legislative Network, the three states with the lowest percentages of women in state legislatures during 2003 are Alabama, Kentucky, and South Carolina. To add comparative value, the adjoining states of Georgia, Indiana, and North Carolina are studied. Hypothetically, these states will present similar or corresponding demographics and environments to each of the states with low female representation. These proposed similarities will hypothetically portray the concept of regionalism. Regionalism may be best typified as exhibiting analogous characteristics: physical

qualities like environment and terrain, ideologies (both political and religious), government structures, and economies. Each state and its chosen neighbor theoretically should share mutual characteristics. Studying these identified variables and the variations among the expected regional traits may aid in explaining inconsistent rates of female representation.

States with high percentages of women in legislative office are also studied. The states of Colorado, Maryland, and Washington were selected based on the same 2003 data from the NCSL Women's Legislative Network. Here, the neighboring states of Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Utah are included for analysis.

An examination of existing demographic, environmental, and political data pertaining to each state is also conducted. The variables of voting trends, education level, population, economy, and culture are analyzed. More specifically, measures of partisanship within the legislature, education level, population location, personal income per capita, and religious presence are of interest. These areas of examination are intentionally broad to allow for a more general overview.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Figure 1 displays in detail the rates of gender diversity present within the twelve states.

Figure 1: Women in State Legislatures, 2003

State	Total Members	Women Legislators	Senate	House	Percent Women
Alabama	140	14	3	11	10.0%
Georgia	236	51	13	38	21.6%
Kentucky	138	15	4	11	10.9%
Indiana	150	26	12	14	17.3%
South Carolina	170	16	2	14	9.4%
North Carolina	170	34	6	28	20.0%
Colorado	100	34	9	25	34.0%
Utah	104	23	5	18	22.1%
Maryland	188	62	15	47	33.0%
Pennsylvania	253	35	8	27	13.8%
Washington	147	54	20	34	36.7%
Oregon	90	28	8	20	31.1%
US TOTAL	7,382	1,641	400	1,241	22.2%

Source: Center for the American Woman and Politics (CAWP) and the National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL), December 2002.

To measure the presence of voting trends, population, economy, and education levels among the 12 states, the following variables were selected from each state and are listed in Figure 2:

- 2004 pre-election Democratic composition of state legislatures
- 2000 metropolitan population
- personal income per capita from 2000
- citizens aged 25 or older holding bachelor's degree or greater in 2000
- religious adherents in 2000

Each measure, with the exception of personal income per capita, reflects a ratio of the state population, a measurement that parallels the ratio of female legislatures within the entire legislative body. Each measure is relatively current, making the entirety relevant to the 2003

rates of gender diversity within state legislatures utilized in the study. The United States Census Bureau defines metropolitan area as “a large population nucleus, with adjacent communities that have a high degree of economic and social integration”^(Census Bureau website). For further clarification, the terminology “religious adherent” refers to “all members, including their children and the estimated number of others who are not considered members; for example, the ‘baptized,’ ‘those not confirmed,’ ‘those eligible for communion,’ ‘those regularly attending services,’ and the like”^(Glenmary Research Center website). The data is non-denominational and is based on responses from 149 religious bodies in a study by the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB)^(Glenmary Research Center website).

The measures were selected not to illustrate the biography of each state, but to examine variables that are created at an individual, citizen level. Each variable reflects characteristics of the citizenry of each of the twelve states — demographical and cultural characteristics that, hypothetically, influence voting choice. Secondly, although not a focus of the study, these descriptive measures may relate to the personality of a political candidate as well and provide insight into the makeup of a successful political candidate, male or female.

Figure 2: Data Set

State	Dem. Comp ¹	Metro Pop ²	Income/Capita ³	Education ⁴	Religious Adherence ⁵
AL	62.9%	69.9%	\$18,189	19.0%	54.8%
GA	55.9%	69.2%	\$21,154	24.3%	44.8%
KY	58.7%	48.8%	\$18,093	17.1%	53.4%
IN	46.0%	72.2%	\$20,397	19.4%	42.9%
SC	42.4%	70.0%	\$18,795	20.4%	47.6%
NC	51.2%	67.5%	\$20,307	22.5%	45.4%
CO	45.0%	83.9%	\$24,049	32.7%	39.5%
UT	25.0%	76.5%	\$18,185	26.1%	74.7%
MD	69.7%	92.7%	\$25,614	31.4%	43.3%
PA	45.5%	84.6%	\$20,880	22.4%	57.9%
WA	51.7%	83.1%	\$22,973	27.7%	33.0%
OR	44.4%	73.1%	\$20,940	25.1%	31.3%

¹ “2004 Pre-Election Partisan Composition of State Legislatures” National Conference of State Legislatures

² U.S. Census Bureau

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ “Religious Congregations and Membership: 2000” Glenmary Research Center

The following hypothesis aims at evaluating this data collectively:

The rate of gender diversity among the states will increase with higher Democratic Party composition among the state legislatures, higher levels of metropolitan population, higher rates of per capita income, and higher measures of educational attainment, while decreasing with the rate of religious adherence.

This hypothesis focuses on the influence of these variables in rates of gender diversity across state legislatures.

- The political variable is historically based in the concept that women are more likely to support Democratic Party principles and candidates for office.
- Metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas of a state may differ in their needs and political ideologies. Metropolitan areas can be highly integrated, leading to a greater possibility of shared beliefs, values, and objectives not always found in non-metropolitan areas.
- Following Rosenthal's findings on the connection between socioeconomic status and gender representation preferences, the hypothesis relates personal income as an influence on gender diversity.
- Higher levels of education would lead a candidate to feel better prepared and qualified for the demands of public office just as educated voters would be able to select candidates based on informed decisions.
- As mentioned previously, some religious ideologies and their focus on traditional concepts of gender roles may impact gender associations, possibly leading some to reject or be uncomfortable with a female holding political office.

Figure 3: Correlation of Collective Data

		Religion	Ed	PCI	DemComp	GenderDiv	MetPop
Religion	Pearson Correlation	1	-.294	-.588(*)	-.377	-.556	-.166
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.353	.044	.227	.061	.607
	N	12	12	12	12	12	12
Ed	Pearson Correlation	-.294	1	.836(**)	-.035	.884(**)	.782(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.353	.	.001	.913	.000	.003
	N	12	12	12	12	12	12
PCI	Pearson Correlation	-.588(*)	.836(**)	1	.354	.812(**)	.757(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.044	.001	.	.259	.001	.004
	N	12	12	12	12	12	12
DemComp	Pearson Correlation	-.377	-.035	.354	1	.018	-.029
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.227	.913	.259	.	.955	.929
	N	12	12	12	12	12	12
GenderDiv	Pearson Correlation	-.556	.884(**)	.812(**)	.018	1	.627(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.061	.000	.001	.955	.	.029
	N	12	12	12	12	12	12
MetPop	Pearson Correlation	-.166	.782(**)	.757(**)	-.029	.627(*)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.607	.003	.004	.929	.029	.
	N	12	12	12	12	12	12

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Figure 3 provides a statistical evaluation of the relationships posed between the named variables and gender diversity within the legislatures of the twelve states. The results show statistically significant, positive relationships between the rates of gender diversity and the personal per capita income and educational attainment variables. Also of note, yet with slightly less significance, is a positive correlation between metropolitan population and the rates of gender diversity. These findings support the hypothesis that the rate of gender diversity in a state increases with higher rates of educational attainment and per capita income and, though not as strongly, metropolitan population. No statistically significant relationship is obtained for the remaining variables.

Comparisons of States

The data from the states are examined collectively to aid in identifying commonalities that may be more universal to the issue of gender diversity. Also, each state is compared to its neighbor in analysis. In doing so, the following hypotheses are set forth:

1. *Of the three states reporting low measures of gender diversity, their ‘sister’ states chosen for analysis will not represent considerable differences in demographic and cultural measures because the states are collectively representative of a unique region of the United States.*

This hypothesis is based in regionalism, and being that the three states with the lowest rates of gender diversity in the United States are Southern, the likelihood of regional tendencies being an explanation seems plausible. However, the inclusion of Indiana as a comparison state may limit this consideration in that the state is not typically considered a part of the Southern region. Nonetheless, if the data in fact seem to be shared and somewhat universal to the 6 states, the ‘sister’ states (Georgia, Indiana, and North Carolina) should show no strong variations in relation to the data obtained from their neighbors (Alabama, Kentucky, and South Carolina).

2. *In comparisons of the 3 states with high levels of gender diversity to their counterparts, the data will reflect that the neighboring states share corresponding rates of demographical and cultural measures.*

Like the hypothesis for low ranking states, this hypothesis reflects the concept of regionalism in state rankings. However, in this scenario, the three states (Colorado, Maryland, and Washington) are not geographically related, making the argument for similarities within vicinity applicable only in terms of comparison. The hypothesis indicates that the comparison states of Utah, Pennsylvania, and Oregon will hold similar measures of demographic and cultural data in relation to Colorado, Maryland, and Washington, respectively.

Comparisons of Low Ranking States

Figure 4: Alabama and Georgia

<u>State</u>	<u>Dem. Comp.</u>	<u>Metro Pop.</u>	<u>Income/Capita</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Religious Adherence</u>
AL	62.9%	69.9%	\$18,189	19.0%	54.8%
GA	55.9%	69.2%	\$21,154	24.3%	44.8%

Despite their shared border and joint presence in the Southern landscape, the states of Alabama and Georgia vary greatly in demographic and cultural measures. The state of Georgia boasts a gender diversity rate of 21.6% in its legislature, compared with a rate of 10% in Alabama. With the exception of metropolitan population, the variables indicate a remarkable variation in the environments of the two states. A possible, partial explanation for this scenario may be the impact of metropolitan Atlanta, which, with its strong position as a business and

educational center in the Southeast, could understandably cause an appreciation in personal income per capita and education levels for the state.

Figure 5: Kentucky and Indiana

<u>State</u>	<u>Dem. Comp.</u>	<u>Metro Pop.</u>	<u>Income/Capita</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Religious Adherence</u>
KY	58.7%	48.8%	\$18,093	17.1%	53.4%
IN	46.0%	72.2%	\$20,397	19.4%	42.9%

Kentucky and Indiana present rates of gender diversity at 10.9% and 17.3% respectively. In addition to possessing a more gender diverse state legislature, Indiana claims higher rates of metropolitan population, per capita income, and education while Kentucky holds higher measures of religious adherence and Democratic composition in the legislature. These variations are of interest in a cultural and political context: Kentucky’s larger measure of religious adherence could theoretically reflect an influence of political ideology in the state’s rate of gender diversity.

Figure 6: South Carolina and North Carolina

<u>State</u>	<u>Dem. Comp.</u>	<u>Metro Pop.</u>	<u>Income/Capita</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Religious Adherence</u>
SC	42.4%	70.0%	\$18,795	20.4%	47.6%
NC	51.2%	67.5%	\$20,307	22.5%	45.4%

While not as widely varying as the previous state comparisons, North and South Carolina do present differing values in the measurements, with North Carolina holding stronger personal per capita income and education levels. North Carolina also holds a more gender diversified state legislature at 20%, twice that of South Carolina at 9.4%.

The comparisons of these neighboring states do not appear to support the hypothesis that a low rate of gender representation in state legislatures can be explained by region. In addition, only a few of the measures within the comparisons show similarities. Each comparison demonstrates variations in the measures that are not merely marginal, leading one to believe that while the 3 states with the lowest national rates of gender diversity among their state legislatures may be in the same region, the extreme nature of their rate differences is not a regional phenomenon. In fact, 2 of the 3 comparison states reflect rates of gender diversity that are in line with the national average of 22.4%.

Comparisons of High Ranking States

Figure 7: Colorado and Utah

<u>State</u>	<u>Dem. Comp.</u>	<u>Metro Pop.</u>	<u>Income/Capita</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Religious Adherence</u>
CO	45.0%	83.9%	\$24,049	32.7%	39.5%
UT	25.0%	76.5%	\$18,185	26.1%	74.7%

Colorado and Utah report wide variations in every measure indicated, implying no evidence of regional similarities in the measures of Democratic composition of the state legislature, metropolitan population, personal per capita income, educational attainment, and religious adherence. From the data listed, one can infer that the two states differ greatly despite their common border. The most drastic variations occur in Democratic composition of the legislature, personal per capita income, and religious adherence (a measure that could reflect the importance of the Mormon Church in Utah's culture). Colorado's rate of gender diversity, 34%, is notably greater than Utah's rate of 22.1%, which is a measure more reflective of the national average.

Figure 8: Maryland and Pennsylvania

<u>State</u>	<u>Dem. Comp.</u>	<u>Metro Pop.</u>	<u>Income/Capita</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Religious Adherence</u>
MD	69.7%	92.7%	\$25,614	31.4%	43.3%
PA	45.5%	84.6%	\$20,880	22.4%	57.9%

A visual comparison between Maryland and Pennsylvania finds dissimilarities between the measured variables within the states. Female state legislators in Maryland account for 33% of the elected officials and 13.8% of those in Pennsylvania. Maryland's citizenry are significantly more metropolitan and educated than their Pennsylvanian neighbors, factors that may be linked to the former's substantially higher personal income per capita measure.

Figure 9: Washington and Oregon

<u>State</u>	<u>Dem. Comp.</u>	<u>Metro Pop.</u>	<u>Income/Capita</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Religious Adherence</u>
WA	51.7%	83.1%	\$22,973	27.7%	33.0%
OR	44.4%	73.1%	\$20,940	25.1%	31.3%

Within the comparisons of states with high levels of gender diversity and their neighbors, the comparison of Washington and Oregon presents some variation, albeit not as spacious as the previous two comparisons. Levels of religious adherence and educational attainment are comparable. So are the rates of gender diversity, being 36.7% in Washington and 31.1% in Oregon. Of the comparison states, Oregon's rate of gender diversity is alone in surpassing the national average of 22.4%.

The evaluations of these state pairings do not show support for the influence of regionalism in their recorded higher rates of gender diversity within the state legislative body. Furthermore, with the possible exception of the Washington-Oregon comparison, the analyses of the identified measures illustrate more differences than similarities among the 6 states examined in regard to higher rates of gender diversity.

CONCLUSIONS

Inconsistency among rates of gender diversity within state legislatures cannot be readily explained using the demographic and cultural measures of this study. The examinations of the twelve states reflect the idiosyncratic nature of culture in and among all states, creating difficulty in explaining comparisons and measurement. As understood in the evaluation of low-ranking states (all of which are located in the South), the measures of culture and demographics in relation to legislative gender diversity vary despite values common to the region. The comparisons between high-ranking states and their selected neighbors maintain this finding. Regional characteristics may play a role in the diverging rates of gender diversity between low- and high-ranked states; however, denoting rates of gender diversity as regional phenomena is unverifiable.

The study does return a key finding, however. A positive relationship between the rate of gender diversity and both educational attainment and personal per capita income is strongly suggested. A positive correlation between gender diversity and metropolitan population is also revealed. These findings, as support for efforts to increase diversity in state legislatures, suggest the significance of education and economy in better gender representation. As our populations are becoming more metropolitan and suburban, and higher education is within grasp to many, our nation and states are progressively realizing an environment wherein opportunity is more readily available to citizens of any race or gender. Because of this reality and societal changes

that are less constricting of gender roles, it is encouraging that future generations of legislative bodies may better reflect the population.

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