Paper proposal

A Case of the State of Washington

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Startling Dearth of Diversity in Washington State Legislature

**Justification/Description**

The topic chosen for this paper addresses the issue of diversity in Washington State Legislature. This topic fits within the context of the class because the issue of race and gender representation, particularly in Washington State, has been extensively discussed. The state of Washington is one of the largest states in the United States with a population of approximately 7.17 million people. However, in the state’s legislature, a small percentage of the legislature comes from the minority groups. In this case, the minority groups entail minority ethnic communities such as African-Americans and Hispanics as well as women.

**Research Question**

Despite having more than seven million people from diverse cultures, why do a small percentage of minority groups represented in the Washington State legislature? The minorities, in this case, include people of color and women.

**Thesis statement**

The state of Washington is growing fast, and racial and ethnic minorities are increasing faster than the white population. However, the legislature of the state is failing to keep up with these demographic changes as people of color and women are disproportionately represented.

**Argument Preview**

**Introduction**

The state of Washington is growing at a high rate. Similarly, demographics of the state are also evolving. Census report from 2013 shows that ethnic and racial minorities in the region are increasing at a skyrocketing rate compared to the population of white people. Although there is no report monitoring the ethnic or racial backgrounds of legislators of Washington, it’s clear that there is disproportion. According to the roster of state representatives, out of 147 state legislators in the state House and Senate, 13 are people of color. All the 13 are Democrats. People of color and women have helped create public policy that disproportionately affects them. Underrepresentation of this group has resulted in discrimination and prejudice.

1. Role of Washington State legislators

A. The legislators ensure equitability of resources and opportunities.

B. They enhance shared prosperity for all residents of the state (Krook, 2017).

C. In the face of historically entrenched and deeply rooted racial inequities, the legislators must be practical in establishing public policy that enhances fairness, equality, and justice.

2. Race and representation

A. People of color represent over 30% of the residents of the state (Griffin, 2014).

B. Between 2010 and 2012, population growth for Asians, Latinos, and African-Americans were 8.1%, 6.9$, and 6.2% respectively.

C. Less than 70% of the state’s residents are white. 89% of the legislators are white (Kucklick, 2014).

D. Only 2 % of the Hispanics are represented in the legislature while 1% of the African-Americans are represented in the legislature.

E. The whites represent most people of color (Broockman, 2014).

3. Gender and representation

A. Women in the state of Washington account for 54% of the total voters, but only 36% are represented in the state legislature.

4. Leadership positions in the Washington State legislature

A. Whites control all key leadership posts in the Senate and the House of Representatives.

B. Whites also hold 100% of chair and vice chair positions in WA state Senate.

5. Ways to enhance racial and gender equality in Washington State legislation (Hochschild, Weaver, 2007).

A. Policies should be established that promotes justice, fairness, and equity in the state’s legislature.

**Conclusion**

Racial and gender inequality in the state’s legislation is evident as people of color, as well as women, are disproportionately represented in the state legislation. Although the population of people of color and women is increasing at a high rate, the number of their representation in the state legislature is stunted. The whites are representing the people of color in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. Underrepresentation of this group negatively affected them regarding equal opportunities and shared resources. To enhance racially and gender equality in Washington State legislation, policies should be established that promotes justice, fairness, and equity in the state’s legislature.

**Preliminary Sources/Annotated Bibliography**

Annie Kucklick, A. (2014). Candidates address startling dearth of diversity in State Legislature - The Seattle Globalist. The Seattle Globalist. Retrieved 19 May 2017, from <http://www.seattleglobalist.com/2014/08/01/washington-state-legislature-diversity/28169>

In this article, Kucklick addresses the issue of diversity in the Washington State legislature. The author asserts that despite the high growth rate of the population of people of color and women, this group is still underrepresented in the state’s House of Representatives as well as the Senate. She cites that only 13 people of color out of the 147 legislators are represented in both houses.

Griffin, J. D. (2014). When and why minority legislators matter. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *17*, 327-336.

This article analyzes how the race and ethnicity of legislators affect the representation of ethnic and racial minorities’ priorities and interests to the mass public. Griffin also examines how the race of the legislators affects political involvement of these groups. He argues that the presence of legislators significantly affect the decisions of the voters as well as the nature of public policy. This article asserts that minority legislators play an important role in American politics.

Broockman, D. E. (2014). Distorted communication, unequal representation: constituents communicate less to representatives not of their race. *American Journal of Political Science*, *58*(2), 307-321.

In this article, the author argues that communication from constituents greatly affect the representation politicians offer. He asserts that if politicians hear less from some constituents as opposed to others, unequal communication will arise and thus may result in unequal representation. The author cites that constituents are less likely to communicate to the politicians that from a different race. From his findings, the author concludes that both whites and blacks are less likely to communicate to the representations from a different race.

Hochschild, J. L., & Weaver, V. (2007). The skin color paradox and the American racial order. *Social Forces*, *86*(2), 643-670.

Hochschild and Weaver (2007) argue that African-Americans have lower socioeconomic status, diminished prestige, more castigatory relationships with the criminal justice system, and are less likely to hold elective office as opposed to their white counterpart. This concept of ‘colorism’ occurs within the black community and is conveyed by outsiders and most African-Americans are aware of it. However, blacks’ perceptions that their fates are associated with the color of their skin vary.

Krook, M. L. (2017). Electoral Quotas and Beyond: Strategies to Promote Women in Politics. In *Women, Politics, and Democracy in Latin America* (pp. 15-27). Palgrave Macmillan US.

The author states that there has been substantial progress in women’s political representation in the United States in recent years. However, although the progress is inspiring, they are still far from equal representation. The author analyzes the strategies put in place in promoting women in politics. He argues that political financing regulations and gender quotas will assist in enhancing equal representation.

References

Annie Kucklick, A. (2014). Candidates address startling dearth of diversity in State Legislature - The Seattle Globalist. The Seattle Globalist. Retrieved 19 May 2017, from <http://www.seattleglobalist.com/2014/08/01/washington-state-legislature-diversity/28169>

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