

## **Different Faces, Different Priorities: Agenda-Setting Behavior in the Mississippi, Maryland, and Georgia State Legislatures.**

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### **Abstract**

This work explores the agenda-setting behavior of African American state legislators, female state legislators, and African American female state legislators and examine the degree to which these lawmakers have been able to translate election to office into substantive representation. Using the records of legislation sponsored in the lower houses of the Mississippi, Maryland and Georgia state legislatures in the 2001 sessions, I categorize the legislation sponsored by each legislator according to its content. I find that female legislators and African American legislators behave cohesively and demonstrate different agenda-setting behavior than do their white male colleagues. Female legislators are as likely as male legislators to achieve passage of their legislation. African American legislators generally, and African American female legislators in particular, are less likely to achieve passage of their legislation, giving support to both the double disadvantage and social distance theories.

### **Introduction**

Since 1970, the ethnic and gender composition of state legislatures around the nation has changed from their former composition as virtually exclusive enclaves of white male privilege. The total number of African Americans in all the lower houses of state legislatures increased from 162 (2.9 percent) in 1971, to 442 (8.1 percent) at the end of 2001. The female percentage increased even more dramatically, from 300 (5.5 percent) in 1971 to 1,277 (23.6 percent) in 2006 (Center for American Women in Politics, 2002; 2006; Cox, 1996; Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, 1971; 2001).

The increasing presence of African Americans and women in state legislatures has sparked considerable research into whether the presence of these groups makes a difference in the priorities and development of legislation. Prior research has concluded that the increase of African Americans and women in state legislatures has made a difference in state policymaking (Carroll, Dodson, and Mandel, 1991; Kathleen, 1994; Miller, 1990; Nelson, 1991; Saint-Germain, 1989; Thomas, 1991, 1994; Thomas and Welch, 1991, and Bratton and Haynie, 1999; Bratton, 2002).

Over the last three decades, a number of scholars (Werner, 1968; Diamond, 1977; Mezey, Adams: *Agenda Setting Behavior...* 58

1978; Shapiro and Majahan, 1986; Thomas, 1991; Thomas and Welch, 1991; Kahn et al., 1994; Williams and Colliins, 1996; Woods, 1996; Bratton and Haynie, 1999; Smooth, 2001; Barrett, 2001; Carroll, 2003) have studied the agenda-setting behavior of minority and female state legislators. Given that the presence of relevant numbers of women and minorities among the membership of legislative bodies is a relatively new phenomenon, the extant literature on the subject is far from exhaustive, and yields few concepts of general consensus.

### **Research Objective**

Following the lead of Bratton and Haynie (1999), who used a six-state, three-year sample and found that African Americans and women share a set of distinctive policy interests above and beyond those policy interests that are motivated by constituency and party pressures, this research examines the impact of race and gender upon the legislative agendas of state legislators in the lower houses of the Mississippi, Georgia, and Maryland state legislatures. More specifically, this research investigates the agenda-setting behavior of African American legislators, female legislators, and African American female legislators and seeks to identify the differences and similarities among the legislative agenda-setting behavior patterns of these groups of legislators in terms of the type of bills they introduce and the degree to which these lawmakers have been able to translate election to office into substantive representation. It's aim is to contribute to the literature on race and gender in state legislative bodies by building upon the research of Bratton and Haynie (1999) and the recent works of Wendy Smooth (2001) and Edith Barrett (2001) by utilizing a new combination of measures for assessing the impact of race and gender upon legislative agenda-setting behavior.

Unlike previous works, this study includes an indicator, the Comparative Emphasis Ratio, which measures the amount of emphasis a legislator places upon specific categories of legislation (Adams, 2003).<sup>1</sup> Bratton and Haynie (1999) investigated the agenda-setting behavior of female and African American state legislators using a six-state, three year sample, but did not include a discussion on the agenda-setting behavior of African American female legislators separately. Wendy Smooth (2001) and Edith Barrett (1995; 2001) both paid close attention to the legislative agendas of African American female legislators, but both scholars relied upon

survey data using legislators as survey respondents.<sup>2</sup> The present study utilizes original data compiled from the 2001 legislative records of the lower houses of the Georgia, Mississippi, and Maryland state legislatures. Legislative records (i.e. bills) are used rather than survey data because bills are indicators of pro-active legislative emphasis while survey results are reactive responses to choices presented to the surveyor.

This work analyzes the agenda-setting behavior of individual legislators with particular attention to the introduction and passage of category-specific legislation by African-Americans, female, and African American female legislators. Whereas Bratton and Haynie (1999) categorized certain legislation in terms of African American interest, this study uses the broader category of minority interest. In recent years most African American legislators and other progressives have tended to draft legislation that includes benefits for all minorities.

Bachrach and Baratz (1963) maintain that agenda-setting is an important element of any political process. Bratton and Haynie (1999) assert that agenda-setting can serve to redirect or even redefine institutional priorities and perspectives. Agenda-setting as manifested in legislative bill sponsorship, is a proactive expression of policy preferences, whereas, roll call votes and survey responses are reactive expressions of policy preferences. This implies that bill sponsorship is a truer indicator of the actual priorities of a given legislator or a group of legislators than is floor action. According to Swers (2002) “representatives have complete control over the number and context of the bills they sponsor,” as opposed to floor or committee actions that may be limited by restrictive rules. Legislators may sponsor legislation with any one or combination of the following public policy motivations: 1) to demonstrate their expertise on the issue; 2) to develop support for the legislation; 3) to draw attention to the issue; 4) to satisfy relevant interest groups; 5) to add the prestige of a member to the issue. Additionally, electoral considerations may enter into the legislator’s decision to sponsor legislation in order to demonstrate the sponsor is working for his constituent’s interest, to appeal to specific groups of voters, or to immunize the member from opposition criticism (Swers, 2002). In contrast with the multi-dimensional processes inherent in bill sponsorship, members make floor decisions in a “one-dimensional framework” constrained by institutional considerations (Talbert and Potoski, 2002).

### **Why Mississippi, Maryland, and Georgia?**

The lower houses of the Mississippi, Maryland and Georgia state legislatures were chosen for this study because in 2001, they each had relatively high percentages of African American and African American female state legislators.<sup>3</sup> In Mississippi, the number of African Americans in the lower house had grown from one (0.8 percent) in 1971 to thirty-five (29 percent) in 2001. Maryland increased in African American representation from fourteen (10 percent) in 1971 to twenty-nine (20.5 percent) in 2001. Georgia's lower house African American membership increased from thirteen (7.2 percent) to thirty-six (20 percent). Female representation in Mississippi and Georgia lagged behind the national average in 2001. In 1971, there were four women (3.2 percent) in the Mississippi house, ten women (7.0 percent) in the Maryland house, and two women (1.1 percent) in the Georgia assembly (Cox, 1996). By 2001, the female legislator numbers had increased to only sixteen (13.1 percent) in Mississippi and forty-one (22.7 percent) in Georgia, while Maryland had reached forty-six (32.6 percent) (Adams, 2003; Center for Women in American Politics, 2002; Joint Center for Economic and Political Studies, 2001).

### **Race/Gender- Distinctive Policy Preferences**

Much of the literature on women and minorities in elected offices analyzes the types and the quality of representation. Hannah Pitkin (1967) defined *descriptive representation* as the presence of legislators with similar physical traits as an ethnic or gender group. *Substantive representation* is typified by the responsiveness of a representative to his/her constituents. The participation of appreciable numbers of African Americans and women as members of state legislatures is not only a relatively new development in American politics, it is also a new dynamic affecting both descriptive and substantive representation in state legislatures.

African American legislators and female legislators form distinctive and cohesive voting groups (Harmel, Hamm and Thompson, 1983), and therefore, usually bring to the legislative table a set of under-represented opinions and experiences. For instance, women, on average, tend to support Democrats, favor social programs, and oppose militarism, more so than do men (Brady and Sniderman, 1985; Shapiro and Mahajan, 1986). Welch and Foster (1987) found that

African Americans are overwhelmingly Democratic, favor affirmative action (Kinder and Sanders, 1990) and oppose the death penalty. Bratton and Haynie (1999) posited that these distinctive preferences among African American and women voters would translate into similar preferences among African American and women policymakers. No longer an exclusive bastion of white males, state legislatures, in recent decades, have come both to look and to act slightly more like the electorates they serve.

### **Agenda-setting By Race**

Research stimulated by the post-Voting Rights Act increase in descriptive representation of African Americans has generally concluded that black representatives do make a substantive difference in state policymaking (Hamm, Harmel, Thompson, 1983; Miller, 1990; Parker, 1990; Carroll, Dodson, and Mandel, 1991; Nelson, 1991; Thomas and Welch, 1991; Kathleen, 1994; Bratton and Haynie, 1999). Hamm et. al., found that minority representatives are not disproportionately active in introducing legislation and that majority members are not substantially more successful in passing their legislation.

When analyzing the activity and success of legislation introduced by African American legislators in the 1977 Texas and Louisiana legislative sessions and the 1977-78 South Carolina legislative sessions, Harmel, Hamm, and Thompson (1983) found that African American legislators form distinctive and cohesive voting groups. Gurin, Hatchett, and Jackson (1989) concluded that members of the black electorate are more supportive than are white voters of anti-discrimination legislation, economic initiatives targeting racial and ethnic minorities, and increased spending for social welfare and public education programs.

African Americans have distinct health concerns (Kahn, 1994; Williams and Collins, 1996; Woods, 1996)<sup>4</sup> and are more likely to face poverty, employment discrimination, housing discrimination and crime (Hacker, 1992; Massey and Denton, 1993). There are also racial differences in political opinions and behavior: African Americans are more progressive, tend to vote Democratic, are more likely to favor social programs and affirmative action and are less in favor of the death penalty (Brady and Sniderman, 1985; Shapiro and Mahajan, 1986; Welch and Foster, 1987; Kinder and Sanders, 1990).

In 1971, Sokolow reported that over twenty-two percent of the health and welfare bills, twenty-one percent of education bills, and eighteen percent of crime bills introduced in the 1969 California state legislature were sponsored by black legislators. Since that time, however, black political attitudes have increasingly diversified and “black issues” have become less clearly defined (Kilson, 1989; Tate, 1993).

### **Agenda-setting By Gender**

In the 1970's and the 1980's, research on women in politics dealt with the problems women faced as candidates and policymakers and the numerical under-representation of women in elected office. The assumption was that, as women's numbers increased, the impact of women's substantive representation in policy outcomes would become greater (Thomas, 1991; Carroll, 2001).

Women's advocacy groups such as the National Organization of Women, Emily's List, and WISH have long held that women have distinctive policy concerns that are more likely to be addressed when women are elected as policymakers (Carroll, 2003; Carroll, 2001). Studies of public opinion and electoral behavior have revealed a substantial “gender gap.” Women in the voting public are less supportive of militarism, more likely to oppose the death penalty, more supportive of gun control, more concerned about the environment, more supportive of welfare programs, and more favorable toward laws to regulate social vices such as gambling, prostitution, drugs and pornography (CAWP, 2000c; Carroll, 2001). These policy preferences seem to carry over from voters to policymakers. Thomas and Welch (1991) observed a clear gender gap among state legislators. Using 1988 survey data from 322 members of the lower houses of twelve state legislatures, Thomas and Welch found that women give more priority to issues relating to women, children, families, while men were more likely to focus on issues of business and commerce. Early research on the behavior of women legislators discovered that female policymakers have different policymaking priorities than do their male counterparts, and that they tend to act cohesively in support of these policy priorities (Werner, 1968; Diamond, 1977; Carroll and Taylor, 1989; Mlandenka, 1989). Since that time, the gender gap has widened and while the number of women policymakers has substantially increased, issues concerning women, children,

and families continue to be of consistently higher priority to women office holders than to their male counterparts. Bratton and Haynie (1999) speculate, however, that larger numbers of women in legislatures may cause them to be less likely to act cohesively.

Despite the apparent gender gap, “women’s interests” remain difficult to define absolutely. However, the *attitudes* of women policymakers and their policy priorities, taken in the aggregate, continue to differ measurably from those of their male counterparts, even as female numbers increase (Carroll, 2001).

### **“Double Disadvantage” or “Unique Perspective”?**

Much has been written about the peculiar role of African American women as “double minorities” (Githens and Prestage, 1977; Epstein, 1973; Baxter and Lansing, 1981; Carroll and Strimling, 1983; Higginbotham, 1982). Gay and Tate (1998), bell hooks (1984, 1989) and others argue that the “double disadvantage” of being black and female in America has caused African American women to be oppressed by both racism and sexism to the point that they must produce a far greater effort to attain comparable status with white people or men. There are two schools of thought regarding the effects of the “double disadvantage” hypothesis on African American women. One school asserts that “black women must forgo their particular concerns in favor of advancing the situation of black males” (Darcy and Hadley, 1988; King, 1975). Here, racism becomes their first priority. The other school asserts that “sexism is an equal or greater barrier to black women and that black women should not subordinate their struggle for equality to any other group” (Darcy and Hadley, 1988; Terrelonge, 1984).

Patricia Hill Collins (1998) claims that the “unique perspectives” afforded African American women in American culture has actively enabled them to become “outsiders within” and reject the burdensome yoke society has placed upon their shoulders in favor of new social roles that are self-defined and self-determined. African American women have obviously endured oppression both as women and as African Americans throughout U.S. history. It is this crucible of experience that has forged a distinctive and prevailing world view among African American women that sets them apart from other racial and gender subdivisions of American culture (Adams, 1999; Adams, 2003).

The recent arrival of African American women in state legislatures is unique in American history. In 1966, Matthews and Prothro found that “Negro women tend to be frozen out of southern politics” (p.68). In 1976, Chrisman and Johnson wrote that “if women are scarce in government, minority women are even scarcer.” By contrast, black men served in state legislative bodies beginning with Reconstruction, and by 2001 African Americans made up 7.1 percent of the membership of the lower houses of all state legislatures. White women first entered legislative service in 1895 and by the year 2001, women held 23.3 percent of seats in state lower legislative chambers throughout the nation (CAWP, 2002; Cox, 1996). Until recently, the literature regarding black legislators focused almost exclusively upon men, and the literature on women legislators was the study of a virtually all-white group (Barrett, 1995). It was not until the effects of *Baker v. Carr*<sup>5</sup>(1962) and its progeny and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 reached the state legislative level, only in the last two decades or so, that African American women have been elected to the legislative chambers of several states in noticeable numbers (Darcy and Hadley, 1988). In 2002, 2.4 percent of state legislative seats were occupied by African American women (CAWP, 2002).

African American women still represent only a small percentage of the total legislative seats in the country. Today only 245 of the 5,441 lower house seats in state legislatures are occupied by African American women (CAWP, 2006). In 2001, African American women occupied 133 of the 5,440 lower house seats nationwide. In most state legislative bodies, African American female numbers remain extremely small or nonexistent. In 2002, in twelve states, there were no African American female legislators serving in their legislative body (CAWP, 2002). However, in the lower houses of the Mississippi, Maryland, and Georgia legislatures, African American women serve as a significant percentage of the membership. In Mississippi, eight of 122, or 6.5 percent of state representatives, are African American women. In Maryland, ten of 141 delegates or 7.1 percent are African American women. In Georgia, thirteen of 180 representatives, or 7.2 percent are African American women. (Mississippi Official and Statistical Register 2000-2004; (<http://www.legis.state.ga.us>) ; (<http://mlis.state.md.us>); Adams, 2003).

While still far short of parity with the African American female population of each state, these percentages constitute sufficient numbers to have an impact on the legislative agenda in each state. African American women legislators provide symbolic, descriptive representation for vast numbers of citizens who had not previously seen individuals similar to themselves in such roles. Beyond that, African American women are providing policy initiatives that substantively represent traditionally under-represented constituencies (Moncrief, Thompson, and Schuhmann, 1991; Barrett, 1995; Barrett, 2001).

### **Passage of Legislation as a Measure of Effectiveness**

If African Americans and/or women are a significant presence in the lower houses of the Mississippi, Maryland, and Georgia legislatures and if these legislators are more likely than their colleagues to sponsor social welfare/ progressive legislation, the next logical step in an analysis is to measure the effectiveness of these three categories of legislators in securing passage of the legislation they sponsor. Success in the passage of legislation is an obvious indicator of effectiveness (Francis, 1989). Bratton and Haynie (1999) used bill passage as a measure of success rates of legislators by race and by gender. For the purposes of this study, success in the passage of legislation is achieved only when the legislation actually becomes law. Voters support candidates with the expectation that they will perform effectively in office. A comparison of the success rates of African American and/or female legislator-sponsored bills to the success rates for non-minority legislator-sponsored bills is a key indicator of effectiveness of representation.

### **Expectations and Explanations**

The underlying expectations of this study are that African American legislators, female legislators and African American female state legislators each exhibit distinctive policy preferences, and that the agenda-setting behavior of these groups manifests itself in the types of legislation introduced by members of each group. It is expected that that African American legislators and female legislators will be more likely than their white male colleagues to introduce legislation pertaining to education, health care, children's issues and welfare (Carroll, 2004;

Carroll, 2001; Bratton and Haynie, 1999; Thomas, 1991, 1994; Nelson, 1991; Miller, 1990). African Americans and women are likely to seek public office in order to address perceived policy shortcomings in the white male dominated status quo. Education, health care, children's issues, and welfare have traditionally been of lower priority to white men.

Secondly, it is expected that African American legislators will be more likely than white legislators to focus upon minority interest legislation and female legislators will be more likely than male legislators to introduce women's interest legislation (Bratton, 2002; Bratton and Haynie, 1999; Sapir, 1981).<sup>6</sup> The basis for these expectations is rooted in the concept of group interests. Further, this research expects that African American female legislators will be more likely than African American male legislators or white legislators to introduce legislation that focuses upon education, health care, minority interests, welfare, and children's issues (Orey and Adams, 2000; Bratton and Haynie, 1999). This expectation is grounded in the knowledge that African-American women have traditionally played a forceful matriarchal role in the advocacy of family related issues.

Taken as a whole, these differences in legislative agendas are the likely result of the different social/cultural experiences and perspectives of the individual racial and gender groups. This researcher expects that a certain amount of group cohesion is present within each gender and racial grouping.

Regarding passage rates, it is expected that African American legislators will be less likely than their white colleagues to achieve passage of legislation and that African American female legislators will be the least likely to secure passage of bills they introduce (Orey and Adams, 2000; Bratton and Haynie, 1999; Williams, 1964; Bogardus, 1958). One possible explanation for this disparity is a disinclination on the part of white legislators to support legislation introduced by and favoring the interest of African Americans due to social/cultural differences. The phenomenon of "social distance" is defined as "feelings of unwillingness among members of a group to accept or approve a given degree of intimacy in interaction with a member of an outgroup" (Bratton and Haynie, 1999; Williams, 1964; Bogardus, 1958;). Guinier (1994) argues that the mere election of African Americans to office is not enough to advance the African

American agenda. She maintains that citizen involvement, a substantial legislative presence, and legislative accomplishments in representation are also prerequisites to African American success in legislative settings.

The final expectation of this research is that female legislators will be as likely as male legislators to achieve passage of the bills they introduce (Bratton, 2002; Kinder and Sanders, 1996; Thomas, 1991, 1994; Saint-Germain, 1989).<sup>7</sup> The disparity in attitudes along gender lines is far less pronounced than the gulf between races (Hacker, 1992; Massey and Denton, 1993). Consequently, female legislators face far fewer obstacles when compared to African Americans. While a gender gap exists, there is a much greater gap between the attitudes of African American legislators and white legislators (Kinder and Sanders, 1996; Harmel, Hamm, and Thompson, 1983).

## **Hypotheses**

One of the objectives of this work is to develop a model to measure the impact non-traditional legislators are making upon legislative bodies. Using original data compiled from the 2001 legislative records of the lower houses of the Georgia, Mississippi, and Maryland state legislatures, six hypotheses concerning the relationship between race, gender, policy preferences and likelihood of passage of sponsored legislation are tested using ANOVA difference of means test. They include:

1. **African American legislators and female legislators will be more likely than their white male colleagues to introduce legislation pertaining to education, health care, children's issues and welfare.**
2. **African American legislators will be more likely than white legislators to focus on minority interest legislation and female legislators will be more likely than male legislators to introduce women's interest legislation.**

3. **African American female legislators will be more likely than their legislative colleagues to introduce bills that focus on education, health care, minority interest legislation, welfare, and children's legislation.**
4. **African Americans legislators will be less likely than their white legislative colleagues to achieve passage of legislation that they introduce.**
5. **Female legislators will be as likely as male legislators to achieve passage of the bills they introduce.**
6. **African American female legislators will be less likely than their legislative counterparts to secure passage of legislation that they introduce.**

### **Analysis of Data**

The data in this analysis consist of all the 4,725 bills introduced in the 2001 legislative sessions of the lower houses of the Mississippi, Maryland, and Georgia state legislatures. Only substantive proposals for new laws were counted as bill introductions. Non-binding resolutions, commemorative bills and bills proposed by the Governor and his agencies were excluded from this analysis.<sup>8</sup>

The number of bills introduced and passed for the 2001 legislative session was gathered from the *Mississippi House Journal Index*, the Mississippi House of Representatives web site (<http://www.ls.state.ms.us>), the records of the clerk of the Georgia House of Representatives and the Library and Information Services of the Maryland General Assembly. ([www.ls.state.ms.us](http://www.ls.state.ms.us)). Data were gathered from the Mississippi Official and Statistical Register 2000-2004, the Georgia House of Representatives web site (<http://www.legis.state.ga.us>) and the Maryland General Assembly web site (<http://mlis.state.md.us>) to identify the race and gender of each member.

In the Mississippi House of Representatives, there were 1,712 bills introduced in the 2001 legislative session and only 280 passed into law. In the Maryland House of Delegates Assembly, individual legislators introduced 1,170 bills in 2001, with only 320 bills achieving passage. In the Georgia House of Representatives, 1,843 bills were introduced and 795 achieved passage in the 2001-2002 legislative session. {See Appendices A and B for Bill Content Analyses}

### **Categories of Types of Legislation**

Using Bratton and Haynie's style of categorization, this study coded each bill according to its substantive content, the category "black interest" has been broadened and is called "minority interest" to reflect contemporary changes in attitudes. Modern-day state legislation tends to address minority interests not exclusive to African Americans. Some specific examples include a bill expanding the powers of the Holocaust Commission, a bill amending the American Indian Concerns Council, a bill that recognizes the Southeastern Cherokee Council as a legitimate American Indian Tribe and a bill that prescribes courses on the history of African Americans and Hispanics in the US.<sup>9</sup>

This study concentrates on six issue categories: **minority interests, women's interests, education policy, health care policy, children's policy, and welfare policy**. An additional category labeled "**other**" was included for those bills whose contents were outside the realm of the six aforementioned categories. The "**other**" category is a "catch-all" category that includes legislation pertaining to appropriations, election laws, transportation, criminal procedure, public employees retirement plans, etc. Bills could have been placed into more than one category. However, legislative intent was used as the determining factor for categorization. For purposes of consistency, legislation dealing with domestic violence, rape, the disclosure of sexual assault victims, sexual harassment, and stalking are categorized under "women's interest". Child support legislation is always categorized under children's issues. Legislation pertaining to pornography and obscenity were categorized as child protection policies within the children's interest category. When a distinction was made between primary and secondary sponsor, only primary sponsors were included (though bills could have multiple sponsors).<sup>10</sup>

“**Education** measures generally were those involving education curriculum, institutions of higher learning, education personnel, regulation of students, school board policies and regulations, and the financing of education, from kindergarten through higher education (including vocational and adult education). **Health policy** legislation generally included measures addressing illnesses (including occupational and environmental illnesses): policies regarding the handicapped and disabled: health insurance, Medicare, regulation of medical facilities, personnel, equipment, training, and treatment. **Children’s policy** included such issues as juvenile court policy, child protection policy, child care, [child safety], child support, foster care and adoption of children, or children’s health. **Welfare policy** included measures that may alleviate poverty and measures regulating government aid to the poor, such as those dealing with public aid, Medicaid, AFDC, utility lifelines, SSI, food stamps, low-income housing, unemployment, minimum wage, workers compensation, and retirement plans.<sup>11</sup> Women’s interest legislation includes those bills that may decrease gender discrimination or alleviate the effects of such discrimination, and those that are intended to improve the socioeconomic status of women (Bratton and Haynie, 1999).” Some specific examples include: a bill that encourages the accommodations of breast feeding in public places, a bill that creates a commission on the Economic Status of Women, a bill to increase the number of women’s restrooms in state buildings, and a bill protecting victims of domestic violence or sexual harassment.

For purposes of this study, “minority interest” legislation includes those bills that may “decrease racial [or ethnic] discrimination or alleviate the effects of such discrimination, and those that are intended to improve the socioeconomic status of African Americans” [and other minorities] (Bratton and Haynie, 1999). Bills that were likely to have a negative effect on the social, economic, or political advancement of minorities were excluded from the analysis. Similarly, “women’s interest” legislation includes those bills that may “decrease gender discrimination or alleviate the effects of such discrimination, and those that are intended to improve the socioeconomic status of women” (Bratton and Haynie, 1999).

While the general focus of this research examines the effects of race and gender in three state legislatures, this work is particularly concerned with the policy preferences/ agenda-setting

behavior and passage rates of legislative groups (i.e., white women, African American women, white men, African American men). An underlying premise intrinsic in this work is that different racial, gender or racial-gender groups will focus on different types of legislation, and the success rates in terms of passage of legislation will also vary by racial, gender, and race-gender groups.

## **Methods**

### *Introduction*

The statistical method employed in this research is a difference of means test (one way ANOVA). Difference of means is used to determine if there are significant statistical differences between racial and gender groups and the types of legislation they introduce, and the success rates of the legislation.

When testing hypotheses one, two, and three, the actual bill type (i.e., minority interest, women's interest) serves as the dependent variable. The dependent variable is a calculated score for each bill type also known as the **Comparative Emphasis Ratio (CE Ratio)**. The CE ratio is expressed as a compound fraction. The numerator of the compound fraction is the total number of bills in a specific category (e.g. minority interest, women's interest) introduced by a legislator divided by the total number of bills introduced by that legislators in all categories. The denominator is the total number of bills introduced by the entire legislature in a specific category (e.g. minority interest, women's interest) divided by the total number of bills introduced during the legislative session (Adams, 2003).

Four explanatory variables are used to explain racial and gender differences in the terms of introduction and passage of legislation. These variables include RACE, GENDER, AFWOMEN, BLKANDWMN.

**RACE:** This variable identifies a legislator by race. In the three legislative bodies under study, members are either African American or non-African American. The variable RACE is essential in order to differentiate between agenda-setting behaviors by each racial group. It reveals whether African Americans have a distinctive set of policy preferences which are likely to set them apart from their non-African American colleagues. The variable RACE is coded 1 for African American legislators and 0 for non-African American legislators.

**GENDER:** This variable identifies a legislator as either male or female. Gender is included as an explanatory variable because women have distinctively different legislative priorities than do men on issues of women, children and family (Bratton and Haynie, 1999). The attitudes of women policymakers and their policy priorities, taken in the aggregate, differ measurably from those of their male legislative colleagues, even as female numbers increase (Carroll, 2001). The variable GENDER is coded 1 for female legislators and 0 for male legislators.

**AFWOMEN:** This variable differentiates African American female legislators from African American male legislators and white female legislators. This differentiation is necessary in order to determine whether African American women do indeed pursue a distinctively different legislative agenda than that of their legislative colleagues. This variable is included in the analyses because like the larger groups of all women or all African Americans, the group of African American female legislators is likely to reflect the uniquely distinct societal roles of African American women in their agenda-setting behavior. The variable AFWOMEN is coded 1 for African American female legislators and 0 for all other legislators.<sup>12</sup>

**BLKANDWM:** This variable differentiates African American and women legislators from white male legislators. The shared experiences of non-traditional legislators in seeking to function effectively in a white male dominated institution may create common areas of interest between African Americans and women (Heider, 1958; Bratton and Haynie, 1999). African Americans and women in the legislature may combine their influence on certain issues in order to more effectively counterbalance the contrary influences of the white male majority. White males may have different legislative priorities and passage rates than African American and women legislators. Generally, white males have placed less emphasis on agenda items addressing women issues, minority issues and children's issues than have non-traditional legislators (Barett, 2001, Orey and Adams, 2000, Bratton and Haynie, 1999). The variable BLKANDWM is coded 1 for African American and female legislators and 0 for white male legislators.

#### *Passage*

When testing hypotheses four, five, and six, bill passage is the dependent variable.

Individual passage ratios and relative passage ratios are computed to assess a member's effectiveness. The individual passage ratio for each legislator is computed by dividing the total number of bills that legislator has introduced by the number of his/her bills that achieved passage. This measure reflects the individual effectiveness of a legislator. The relative passage ratio for each legislator is computed by dividing the state passage ratio by the individual passage ratio.<sup>13</sup> Relative passage is a measure of how an individual legislator compared to the legislative body as a whole in regard to passage rates.

## **Findings**

The findings in Table 1 seem to confirm some of the assumptions and to refute others set forth in hypothesis one. Hypothesis one makes the claim that African American and female legislators will be more likely than their white male colleagues to introduce legislation pertaining to education, health care, children's issues and welfare. The results in Table 1 suggest that there are no significant differences between African American and female legislators and their white male legislative counterparts when introducing measures pertaining to education and welfare. African American and female legislators (1.32) were almost twice as likely as their white male counterparts (.766) to introduce welfare legislation, but the differences in the means failed to reach statistical significance. The fact that education does not emerge as a distinctive policy consideration of African Americans and women is consistent with claims in the literature, that education is an issue of near-universal concern across racial and genders lines (Scicchitano and Bullock, 2002). A possible explanation for the insignificant finding regarding welfare legislation is that African American female legislators in the Georgia House of Representatives did not introduce any welfare legislation.

On measures pertaining to health care and children's interest legislation, African American and female legislators were more likely than their white male colleagues to introduce such measures. The differences between the two groups on these measures did reach statistical significance. African American and female legislators were more likely than their white male colleagues to introduce legislation pertaining to health care and children's issues.

Table 2 confirms the assumptions set forth in hypothesis two, which asserts that African American legislators will be more likely than white legislators to introduce minority interest legislation, and that female legislators will be more likely than male legislators to introduce women's interest legislation. Both the racial and gender components of hypothesis two are confirmed. Table 2 indicates that there are statistically significant racial differences in the introduction of minority interest legislation. African Americans (4.22) are far more likely than are white legislators (.476) to introduce minority interest legislation.

The findings in Table 2 also indicate that there are statistically significant gender differences in the introduction of women's interest legislation. Female legislators (2.36) were five times more likely than male legislators (.403) to introduce women's interest legislation. These results corroborate the findings of Bratton and Haynie (1999) and Orey and Adams (2000) and lend support to the theory of social distance along both gender and racial lines. White legislators do not share the same level of interest in minority interest legislation as do African American legislators, and male legislators do not share the same enthusiasm of female legislators for women's interest legislation.

Hypothesis three posits that African American female legislators will be more likely than their legislative colleagues to introduce legislation that pertains to minority interest, education, health care, children's interest and welfare. The expectation is rooted in the knowledge African American women have traditionally played a forceful matriarchal role in the advocacy of family related issues (Collins, 1998).

According to the results in Table 3, hypothesis three is true only with regards to minority interest legislation. In the combined lower houses of the Mississippi, Maryland and Georgia legislatures in 2001, African American female legislators (8.88) were far more likely than their legislative colleagues (.751) to introduce minority interest legislation. This is a significant finding in that it implies that African American women, in these three legislative bodies, are more in line with the mainstream of legislative agenda-setting than previously thought. On measures pertaining to education, health care, children's interest, and welfare, the mean scores for African American female legislators were modestly higher than those of their legislative colleagues, but the differences failed to reach statistical significance.

The claim made in hypothesis four that African American legislators will be less likely than their white legislative colleagues to achieve passage of the legislation that they introduce is borne out in the data. The findings presented in Table 4 reveal that there are statistically significant racial differences in both the individual and relative passage rates of African American legislators and white legislators. African American legislators were less likely than white legislators to attain either individual passage or relative passage of the legislation they introduced. The finding here tend to lend credence to claims that effectiveness of African American legislators within state legislatures continue to be hindered by institutional norms that disproportionately disadvantage members of minority groups who serve there (Orey and Adams, 2000).

Hypothesis five makes the claim that female legislators will be as likely as their male legislative counterparts to secure passage of the legislation that they introduce. Consistent with this hypothesis, Table 4 presents data that confirms this assumption. According to Table 4, there are no statistically significant gender differences in either the individual or relative passage rates for female and male legislators in the lower houses of the Mississippi, Maryland, and Georgia legislatures combined. These findings support the assertions made by Kathleen Bratton and Michelle Barnello (2002) who finds that women are as equally likely to achieve passage of their legislation as are their male counterparts. The disparity along gender lines is far less pronounced than the gulf between races (Bratton and Haynie, 1999).

Hypothesis six maintains that African American female legislators will be less likely than their legislative colleagues to achieve passage of the legislation that they introduce. The findings reported in Table 5 yield support for hypothesis six in regard to relative passage but not to individual passage. According to the findings in Table 5, there are statistically significant differences in the relative passage rates of African American female legislators and their legislative colleagues. As predicted, African American female legislators were less likely than their legislative colleagues to achieve relative passage of their legislation. Possible explanations for the low passage rates for African American females, relative to other members in the legislatures, is they are the latest arrivals in legislative membership, their numbers in the legislative chambers remain far below the minimum fifteen percent critical mass threshold

(Kanter, 1977) and perhaps they are suffering from a double disadvantage of both racism and sexism (bell hook, 1984).

The results in Table 5 offer no support for hypothesis six in regard to individual passage. Contrary to the hypothesis, there were no statistically significant differences between the individual passage rates of African American female legislators and their legislative colleagues. The fact that the individual passage rates for African American female legislators in Georgia (32.9%) and in Maryland (22.1%) were comparatively high, could explain why there were no significant differences between the individual passage rates for African American female legislators and their legislative colleagues.

## **Conclusion**

State legislatures have changed markedly in their racial and gender composition over the last generation. But what impact has this demographic change made upon the agenda and outputs of state legislative bodies? While multiple factors involving institutional structures and processes, the political cultures of the individual states, and even the personalities of key legislators profoundly influence legislative bodies, the implications of this study would tend to confirm initial assumptions that both race and gender do matter in state legislatures.

African American and female legislators have distinctly different policy-making agendas as state legislators and therefore, bring diversity into the agenda-setting process. In the Mississippi, Maryland, and Georgia legislatures in 2001, African American and female legislators were found to be significantly more likely than were their white male colleagues to introduce legislation pertaining to health care and children's issues. African American legislators were far more likely than were their white legislative counterparts to introduce minority interest legislation. Female legislators were five times more likely to introduce women's interest legislation than were their male colleagues. African American female legislators were far more dedicated to minority interest legislation than were their legislative colleagues.

African Americans were less likely than their white counterparts to achieve passage of the legislation they introduced. Female legislators were as likely as were male legislators to secure

passage of the legislation that they introduced. African American female legislators as a group, were less likely to achieve passage of the legislation that they introduced.

The implications of these findings would tend to support the underlying contentions of the social distance theory. The negative impact of race in society and in these legislative bodies is much greater than that of gender as evidenced by the comparable success rates of the two gender groups as opposed to the disparity of bill passage rates by race. African Americans, overall, suffer the effects of social distance in lower passage rates. African American females, the latest arrivals, suffer most acutely from their double disadvantage as is evidenced by their comparatively low passage rates.

The “double disadvantage” theory, as advanced by Gay and Tate (1992), feminist writer bell hooks (1984, 1989) and others, holds that African American women must combat discrimination both as African Americans (racism) and as women (sexism). Their double disadvantage status in a state legislative setting would tend to make it less likely for African American female legislators to achieve passage of the legislation they introduce. The “unique perspective” theory of Patricia Hill Collins (1998) contends that African American women are “outsiders within” and as such, are possessed of an outlook discernibly different from that of women as a group and of African Americans as a group.

As time progresses, it is reasonable to expect that the racial and gender composition of state legislative chambers will increasingly come to be more reflective of the population served by those legislatures. As diversity and gender balance become integral aspects of the legislature, both in culture and in functions, it is likely that diversity and parity will find expression in the overall legislative agenda. It remains to be seen whether social distance along racial lines will be reduced to a point where legislative success will not be overly influenced by the race of the legislator. In view of the “unique” circumstances of being the latest arrivals to legislative bodies, coupled with social distance and the double disadvantage phenomena, it is evident that at least for the foreseeable future, African American female legislatures are likely to continue to be the “outsiders within.”

### **Implications for Future Research**

While this research has yielded findings applicable to the three legislative bodies under study for the year of 2001, many questions remain regarding the agenda-setting behavior and effectiveness among non-traditional state legislators. The three legislative chambers selected for this study were chosen because they were, in 2001, and continue to be in 2007, the top-ranked chambers in terms of the percentage of African American, and/or African American female legislators in their membership. As a consequence, they are the bodies where social distance, critical mass, and double disadvantage phenomena are likely to be evident. The three legislative chambers studied in this work are in no way intended to be representative of state legislative bodies generally, and the specific findings herein discussed are therefore not generalizable.

What this work has done, hopefully, is provide a detailed analysis of the agenda setting behavior and effectiveness among non-traditional legislators in the three lower chambers of Mississippi, Maryland and Georgia, during the 2001 legislative session. This work demonstrates that in the three states studied, the disparities between the legislative agendas of the still-dominant white male group and women, and African Americans, are clearly present. It presents data to support the conclusion that in these states, the success rates for legislation proposed by African American legislators, especially African American female legislators, are below the institutional norms.

Again, this study examined legislative behavior for only one year, and involved only three of the ninety-nine state legislative chambers in the United States. A truly comprehensive analysis would include legislation from sessions over a period of multiple years, and would involve all state legislative chambers, or at least a representative sample including chambers from several regions, sizes, population patterns, per capita income levels, and general political culture. An even more ambitious application of this research model to all fifty state legislatures would include other minorities, particularly Hispanic legislators, and would provide a massive data set with which to test the hypotheses further. Such an in-depth analysis, undertaken with a companion survey of attitudes among state legislators, would provide a fertile field of data for study into the changing institutional norms, folkways, and patterns of legislative agenda-setting in state

legislatures today. An application of this model to national parliaments and federal-state legislative bodies around the world could yield data that would shed light on the agenda-setting behavior and effectiveness of non-traditional legislators in the broadest possible range of circumstance.

## APPENDIX A

### Bill Content Analysis, 2001

**TABLE A.1**  
**Mississippi Legislature Bills - Total Bills Introduced**

Minority Interest Legislation	Women's Interest Legislation	Health Care Legislation	Education Legislation	Welfare Legislation	Children's Interest Legislation	Other	Total Bills Introduced
20	18	114	188	42	77	1,253	1,712

**TABLE A.2**  
**Maryland Legislature Bills - Total Bills Introduced**

Minority Interest Legislation	Women's Interest Legislation	Health Care Legislation	Education Legislation	Welfare Legislation	Children's Interest Legislation	Other	Total Bills Introduced
10	13	146	146	32	91	732	1,170

**TABLE A.3**  
**Georgia Legislature Bills - Total Bills Introduced**

Minority Interest Legislation	Women's Interest Legislation	Health Care Legislation	Education Legislation	Welfare Legislation	Children's Interest Legislation	Other	Total Bills Introduced
19	18	113	271	20	83	1,319	1,843

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**APPENDIX B**
**Bill Content Analysis for Race/Gender Groups, 2001****TABLE B.1****Mississippi Legislature Bills – Total Bills Introduced By Race and Gender**

<b>Legislature Bills Introduced</b>	<b>African American Female</b>	<b>White Female</b>	<b>African American Male</b>	<b>White Male</b>
<b>Minority Interest Legislation</b>	3	0	16	1
<b>Women's Interest Legislation</b>	3	3	8	5
<b>Health Care Legislation</b>	2	10	22	79
<b>Education Legislation</b>	18	4	45	121
<b>Welfare Legislation</b>	5	11	12	23
<b>Children's Interest Legislation</b>	7	6	16	48
<b>Other</b>	17	69	254	904
<b>Total Bills Introduced</b>	55	103	373	1,181
<b>Total Bills Achieving Passage</b>	1	20	52	207

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**APPENDIX B**
**Bill Content Analysis for Race/Gender Groups, 2001****TABLE B.2****Maryland Legislature Bills – Total Bills Introduced By Race and Gender**

<b>Legislature Bills Introduced</b>	<b>African American Female</b>	<b>White Female</b>	<b>African American Male</b>	<b>White Male</b>
<b>Minority Interest Legislation</b>	2	1	2	5
<b>Women's Interest Legislation</b>	0	10	0	3
<b>Health Care Legislation</b>	12	40	16	78
<b>Education Legislation</b>	13	40	16	77
<b>Welfare Legislation</b>	4	5	4	19
<b>Children's Interest Legislation</b>	4	20	32	35
<b>Other</b>	60	177	68	427
<b>Total Bills Introduced</b>	95	293	138	644
<b>Total Bills Achieving Passage</b>	21	81	37	181

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**APPENDIX B**
**Bill Content Analysis for Race/Gender Groups, 2001****TABLE B.3****Georgia Legislature Bills – Total Bills Introduced By Race and Gender**

<b>Legislature Bills Introduced</b>	<b>African American Female</b>	<b>White Female</b>	<b>African American Male</b>	<b>White Male</b>
<b>Minority Interest Legislation</b>	8	2	4	6
<b>Women's Interest Legislation</b>	2	4	0	12
<b>Health Care Legislation</b>	4	28	8	73
<b>Education Legislation</b>	10	47	13	201
<b>Welfare Legislation</b>	0	4	3	13
<b>Children's Interest Legislation</b>	6	16	8	53
<b>Other</b>	34	152	69	1,063
<b>Total Bills Introduced</b>	64	253	105	1,421
<b>Total Bills Achieving Passage</b>	21	96	31	647

Table 1.

Mean Scores for Introduction of Legislation by Race-Gender  
Groups in the Lower Houses of the MS, MD, and GA Legislatures

	African Americans and Women n = 172	White Male Legislators n = 274	Sig.
Education Interest	.952	1.01	.643
Health Interest	1.15	.802	.039
Children Interest	1.23	.736	.010
Welfare Interest	1.32	.766	.125

Source: *Mississippi House Journal Index* and the Mississippi House of Representative web site (<http://www.ls.state.ms.us>). The Mississippi Official and Statistical Register 2000-2004. Maryland's General Assembly web site; General Assembly of Maryland Sponsor Index of Proposed Legislation, 2001 Session. Georgia's House of Representatives web site; Georgia's House of Representatives Public Information Office.

**Table 2.**

**Mean Scores for Introduction of Legislation by Race and  
by Gender in MS, GA, and MD**

	Black Legislators n = 100	White Legislators n = 346	Sig.	Female Legislators n = 103	Male Legislators n = 343	Sig.
	<b>Race</b>			<b>Gender</b>		
Minority Interest	4.22	.476	.000	2.76	.881	.013
Women's Interest	.328	1.01	.253	2.36	.403	.001

Source: *Mississippi House Journal Index*; Mississippi House of Representatives web site (<http://www.ls.state.ms.us>); Mississippi Official and Statistical Register 2000-2004. Maryland's General Assembly web site; General Assembly of Maryland Sponsor Index of Proposed Legislation, 2001 Session. Georgia's House of Representatives web site; Georgia's House of Representatives Public Information Office.

Table 3.

Mean Scores for Introduction of Legislation by African –American  
Female Legislators Compared to Other Legislators  
in the Lower Houses of the MS, MD, and GA Legislatures

	African American Women n = 31	Other Legislators n = 415	Sig.
Minority Interest	8.88	.751	.000
Education Interest	1.06	.984	.748
Health Interest	1.08	.925	.635
Children Interest	1.19	.905	.438
Welfare Interest	1.76	.922	.225

Source: *Mississippi House Journal Index* and the Mississippi House of Representative web site (<http://www.ls.state.ms.us>). The Mississippi Official and Statistical Register 2000-2004 . Maryland's General Assembly web site; General Assembly of Maryland Sponsor Index of Proposed Legislation, 2001 Session. Georgia's House of Representatives web site; Georgia's House of Representatives Public Information Office.

**Table 4.**

**Mean Scores for Passage of Legislation by Race and  
by Gender in MS, GA, and MD**

	Black Legislators n = 100	White Legislators n = 346	Sig.	Female Legislators n = 103	Male Legislators n = 343	Sig.
	<b>Race</b>			<b>Gender</b>		
Individual Passage	.224	.310	.004	.298	.289	.763
Relative Passage	.759	.981	.025	.934	.930	.965

Source: *Mississippi House Journal Index*; Mississippi House of Representatives web site (<http://www.ls.state.ms.us>); Mississippi Official and Statistical Register 2000-2004. Maryland's General Assembly web site; General Assembly of Maryland Sponsor Index of Proposed Legislation, 2001 Session. Georgia's House of Representatives web site; Georgia's House of Representatives Public Information Office.

**Table 5.**

**Mean Scores for Passage of Legislation by African-American  
Female Legislators Compared to Other Legislators in the Lower  
Houses of the MS, MD and GA Legislatures**

	African American Women n = 31	Other Legislators n = 415	Sig.
Individual Passage	.219	.296	.120
Relative Passage	.622	.954	.040

Source: *Mississippi House Journal Index*; Mississippi House of Representatives web site (<http://www.ls.state.ms.us>); Mississippi Official and Statistical Register 2000-2004. Maryland's General Assembly web site; General Assembly of Maryland Sponsor Index of Proposed Legislation, 2001 Session. Georgia's House of Representatives web site; Georgia's House of Representatives Public Information Office.

**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> The Comparative Emphasis Ratio (CE Ratio) is a ratio computed for each legislator that is expressed as a compound fraction. The numerator of the compound fraction is a total number of bills in a specific category (e.g. minority interest, women's interest) introduced by a legislator divided by the total number of bills introduced by that legislator in all categories. The denominator is the total number of bills introduced by the entire legislature in a specific category divided by the total number of bills introduced during the legislative session. This calculation is an indicator of the relative attention given by each legislator to each category of legislation.

<sup>2</sup> In both her 1995 and 2001 articles on African American women in state legislatures, Edith Barrett relies on survey data. Only Democrats were included in her survey, because "all members of the primary population of interest—African American female legislators---- were Democrats" (Barrett, 1995; 2001). The questionnaire consisted of thirteen policy issues and a 4-point Likert scale was employed. In Wendy Smooth's (2001) dissertation entitled "Perceptions of Influence in State Legislatures : A Focus on the Experiences of African American Women State Legislators," she relies on a national survey of African American women state legislators and case studies of GA, MD and MS in examining the impact of race and gender in determining state legislators' influence. Debra Dodson, in her work, "Acting for Women: Is What Legislators Say, What They Do?", uses data from a national survey of female state legislators and their male colleagues to explore how the interaction of gender and feminism influences policy attitudes and how these factors affect the likelihood of legislators reshaping the agenda.

<sup>3</sup> The three states with the most African American members in their state legislature are Mississippi (45), followed by Georgia (43), Maryland (38) (Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, 2001). The numbers are (35),

(36), and (29) respectively for the number of African Americans in the lower houses of these legislative bodies. Georgia (13), Maryland (10) and Mississippi (8) also account for the highest number of African American women in the lower houses of their state legislatures (Center for American Women and Politics: African American women in 2002).

<sup>4</sup> According to Bratton and Haynie (1999), in the information obtained from the US Department of Health and Human Services 1994, the health concerns of African Americans include a racial gap in life expectancy, a slower rate of decline in heart disease among blacks than whites, and a racial gap between infant mortality rates. They assert that women's distinct health concerns include breast, ovarian, and uterine cancer, and other reproductive health issues.

<sup>5</sup> The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in this case that the federal courts had the power to review legislative apportionment in the states. Prior to this decision, state legislative districts were malapportioned and not balanced according to population.

<sup>6</sup> Sapiro defines the term "women's issues" as usually referring to public concerns that impinge primarily on the private (especially domestic) sphere of social life and particularly associated with children and nurturance.

<sup>7</sup> Evidence supports the critical mass thesis that holds that women act more distinctively once their numbers reach a certain level and that they forge a greater impact once a certain minimal threshold is achieved.

<sup>8</sup> In Maryland, bills listed as "departmental or administration" are bills proposed by the Governor and his agencies. These bills are omitted from the study because the researcher is only interested in substantive bills introduced by legislators.

<sup>9</sup> These examples were taken from the Georgia Legislature. They are HB 723; HB 1337; HB 415; and HB 1173, respectively.

<sup>10</sup> Six members of the Mississippi House of Representatives were not primary sponsors of any legislation in 2001: representatives Larry Baker, Mary Coleman, Reecy Dickson, John Hines, David Livingston, and Chester Masterson. (Representative Hines did not take office until the 2001 legislative session had been underway for three weeks.) In the Maryland House of Delegates, four members failed to sponsor legislation in the 2001 session. They include Representatives Adrienne Jones, Ruth Kirk, Samuel Linton, and Richard Palumbo. The six members in Georgia's House of Representatives who failed to introduce legislation in the 2001-2002 session include: Representatives Ellis Black, George DeLoach, Michael Muntean, Danae Roberts, and Ron Sailor.

<sup>11</sup> Legislation pertaining to public employees retirement systems or public employees insurance programs were placed into the "other" category. Only those bills that addressed general retirement or insurance issues were placed into the welfare interest category. This was done in order to keep all legislation pertaining to public employee personnel matters in the "other" category.

<sup>12</sup> A variable called GENRACE was created that combine GENDER and RACE variables in order to differentiate between the four racial/gender groupings. Each racial/gender group was given a number that ranged from 1 to 4.

<sup>13</sup> The state passage ratio is computed by dividing the total number of bills introduced within the entire legislative body by the total number of bills that achieved passage.

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