

# Where's the Caucus? A Study of Minority Agenda Setting Behavior

by

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In the loving memory of Ella Ruth Brenson

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION . . . . .	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS . . . . .	iii
LIST OF FIGURES . . . . .	ix
LIST OF TABLES . . . . .	x
LIST OF APPENDICES . . . . .	xii
ABSTRACT . . . . .	xiii
CHAPTER	
<b>I. Introduction . . . . .</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Congressional Caucuses . . . . .	3
1.2 Legislative Effectiveness . . . . .	5
1.3 Voting Cohesion . . . . .	7
1.4 Minority Congressional Caucuses . . . . .	10
1.5 Congressional Black Caucus . . . . .	12
1.6 Congressional Hispanic Caucus . . . . .	14
1.7 Minority Congressional Caucuses and Caucus Influence . . . . .	16
1.8 Organization of Dissertation . . . . .	17
<b>II. A Theory of Caucus Agenda-setting . . . . .</b>	<b>19</b>
2.1 Introduction . . . . .	19
2.2 Procedural Cartel Theory (PCT) . . . . .	20
2.3 Assumptions . . . . .	22
2.4 Caucus Leadership Advantage . . . . .	27
2.5 Caucus Influence . . . . .	30
2.6 Hypotheses for Caucus Leadership Models . . . . .	32
2.7 Hypotheses for Caucus Influence Models . . . . .	34

2.8	Caucus Leadership Advantage, Caucus Influence, and Majority Party Status . . . . .	36
2.9	Conclusion . . . . .	37
<b>III. In Their Own Words: Minority Congressional Caucuses . . .</b>		<b>38</b>
3.1	Introduction . . . . .	38
3.2	Purpose of Interviews . . . . .	40
3.3	Merits and Limitations of Qualitative Data . . . . .	41
3.4	Interview Methods . . . . .	43
3.5	Sample Overview . . . . .	44
3.6	Interview Results . . . . .	46
3.6.1	Legislative Priorities . . . . .	46
3.6.2	Cohesion . . . . .	49
3.6.3	Caucus Staff . . . . .	58
3.6.4	Cosponsorship and Coalition Building . . . . .	67
3.7	Conclusion . . . . .	71
<b>IV. Legislative Production and Minority Congressional Caucuses</b>		<b>74</b>
4.1	Introduction . . . . .	74
4.2	Hypotheses . . . . .	76
4.3	Data and Methods . . . . .	77
4.3.1	Dependent Variables for Caucus Leadership Models	78
4.3.2	Independent Variables for Caucus Leadership Model	79
4.4	Results . . . . .	80
4.5	Conclusion . . . . .	92
<b>V. Incorporating Minority Congressional Caucuses in Studying Agenda-setting . . . . .</b>		<b>94</b>
5.1	Introduction . . . . .	94
5.2	Hypotheses . . . . .	96
5.3	Data and Methods . . . . .	97
5.3.1	Dependent Variable . . . . .	98
5.3.2	Independent Variables for Agenda-setting Models .	99
5.4	Results . . . . .	101
5.4.1	Heckman Selection Model . . . . .	108
5.5	Conclusion . . . . .	117
<b>VI. Conclusion . . . . .</b>		<b>118</b>
6.1	Overview of Findings . . . . .	120
6.2	Limitations of Dissertation and Future Research . . . . .	124
6.3	Implications . . . . .	126



6.3.1	Normative Implications for Congressional and Caucus Staff Influence . . . . .	128
<b>APPENDICES</b>	. . . . .	<b>130</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	. . . . .	<b>157</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

### Figure

3.1	Legislative Priorities for CBC Offices . . . . .	48
3.2	Legislative Priorities for CHC Offices . . . . .	48
5.1	Predicted Probability for Minority Interest Bill Passage (White MC)	105
I.1	Example of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Whip's Weekly Email [page 1 of 4] . . . . .	149
I.2	Example of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Whip's Weekly Email [page 2 of 4] . . . . .	150
I.3	Example of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Whip's Weekly Email [page 3 of 4] . . . . .	151
I.4	Example of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Whip's Weekly Email [page 4 of 4] . . . . .	152

## LIST OF TABLES

### Table

4.1	Descriptive Statistics . . . . .	83
4.2	Determinants of Legislative Production (93 <sup>rd</sup> – 112 <sup>th</sup> Congresses) .	84
4.3	Determinants of Legislative Production [By Category] (93 <sup>rd</sup> – 112 <sup>th</sup> Congresses) . . . . .	85
4.4	Determinants of Legislative Production by Majority Party Status (93 <sup>rd</sup> – 112 <sup>th</sup> Congresses) . . . . .	88
4.5	Determinants of Legislative Production by Majority Party Status [Substantive and Significant Bills] (93 <sup>rd</sup> – 112 <sup>th</sup> Congresses) . . . . .	89
4.6	Determinants of Legislative Production by Majority Party Status [Significant Bills] (93 <sup>rd</sup> – 112 <sup>th</sup> Congresses) . . . . .	90
4.7	Determinants of Legislative Production by Majority Party Status [Commemorative Bills] (93 <sup>rd</sup> – 112 <sup>th</sup> Congresses) . . . . .	91
5.1	Descriptive Statistics for Agenda Control Model . . . . .	103
5.2	Minority Interest Bill Introduction by White MCs [Logistic Results] (106 <sup>th</sup> – 112 <sup>th</sup> Congress) . . . . .	104
5.3	Logistic Regression Results for Black MC (106 <sup>th</sup> – 112 <sup>th</sup> Congress) .	106
5.4	Logistic Regression Results for Latino MC (106 <sup>th</sup> – 112 <sup>th</sup> Congress)	107
5.5	Minority Interest Bill Introduction by White MCs (106 <sup>th</sup> – 112 <sup>th</sup> Congress) . . . . .	111
5.6	Minority Interest Bill Introduction by White MCs [Partisanship](106 <sup>th</sup> – 112 <sup>th</sup> Congress) . . . . .	112
5.7	Minority Interest Bill Introduction by Black MCs (106 <sup>th</sup> – 112 <sup>th</sup> Congress)	113
5.8	Minority Interest Bill Introduction by Black MCs [Partisanship](106 <sup>th</sup> – 112 <sup>th</sup> Congress) . . . . .	114
5.9	Minority Interest Bill Introduction by Latino MCs (106 <sup>th</sup> – 112 <sup>th</sup> Congress) . . . . .	115
5.10	Minority Interest Bill Introduction by Latino MCs [Partisanship](106 <sup>th</sup> – 112 <sup>th</sup> Congress) . . . . .	116
A.1	Legislative Priorities for CBC and CHC Offices . . . . .	132
B.1	Example of Minority Interest Legislation by Topic . . . . .	133
J.1	Leadership in the Congressional Black Caucus [92 <sup>nd</sup> -112 <sup>th</sup> Congresses]	154

K.1	Leadership in the Congressional Hispanic Caucus [94 <sup>th</sup> -112 <sup>th</sup> Congresses] . . . . .	156
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## LIST OF APPENDICES

### Appendix

A.	Legislative Priorities for CBC and CHC . . . . .	131
B.	Details on Coding Examples for Bill Sponsorship Data . . . . .	133
C.	Details on Coding by Category (Sources: Brenson 2009; Platt, 2014) . . . . .	134
D.	Interview Instrument Legislative Staffers in CBC and CHC Offices . . . . .	137
E.	Interview Instrument for CBC and CHC Staff . . . . .	139
F.	Interview Instrument for Members of Congress . . . . .	141
G.	Subject Recruitment–Email Script . . . . .	143
H.	Consent Letter . . . . .	145
I.	Example of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Whip’s Weekly Email	148
J.	Leadership in the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) [92 <sup>nd</sup> -112 <sup>th</sup> Congresses] . . . . .	153
K.	Leadership in the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) [92 <sup>nd</sup> -112 <sup>th</sup> Congresses] . . . . .	155

## ABSTRACT

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Chairs: Professor Richard Hall and Professor Vincent Hutchings

Are Black and Latino members of Congress (MCs) effective in representing the interest of their constituents? What role, if any, do minority congressional caucuses play in assisting its members in representing the interest of African American and Latino constituents via agenda-setting?

Scholars have theorized that the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) and Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) matter, but only to the extent that they are able to vote cohesively on a bill, which implies that the CBC and CHC are just labels for MCs with liked-preferences. This dissertation argues against this claim and provide qualitative and quantitative evidence that minority caucuses, as institutions, matter. One way I demonstrate the added value of the CBC and CHC is by illustrating that when caucus members serve as caucus leaders they introduce more bills because of their staff capacity.

The CBC and CHC also matter as agenda-setters. Previous literature have theorized that the CBC and CHC are ineffective in representing the interest of racial and ethnic minorities because these caucus members fail to pass ubiquitous legisla-

tion alleviating racial and ethnic disparities (e.g. Singh, 1998). This dissertation investigates a different mechanism of caucus influence. My primary area of inquiry is the role of members of minority congressional caucuses in articulating and attaining agenda status for their policy priorities. In particular, this dissertation broadens the definition of agenda-setting for members of minority congressional caucuses by considering their ability to assist White MCs in advancing minority interest legislation through the endorsement of this legislation via cosponsorship, which I refer to as *caucus influence*. By studying the influence of minority caucuses via caucus leadership, I demonstrate that these caucuses play a more influential role in political representation than we might expect.

# CHAPTER I

## Introduction

Since the inception of Congress as an institution, its members have met informally on the basis of their common interests and goals (Stevens, Mulhollan and Rundquist, 1981). The decentralization of Congress allows for institutions such as congressional caucuses to emerge and perform a myriad of relevant functions for its members. Distinct from political parties and committees, congressional caucuses are well-suited to assist legislators in representing their constituents. Caucuses are informal networks in which like-minded members of Congress (MCs) coalesce with one another under unofficial rules and powers (Hammond, 1998). Few studies have examined how these voluntary legislative institutions shape the behavior and effectiveness of its members.<sup>1</sup>

This dissertation expands the discourse on minority legislative behavior by examining MCs who operate collectively in race and ethnic-based caucuses in the United States House of Representatives.<sup>2</sup> To date, much of the literature on race, ethnicity, and political representation examines the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation. Pitkin (1967) and other representation scholars define descriptive representation as the degree to which the legislature mirrors the demographic characteristics of the population that it represents (e.g. gender, race, or

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<sup>1</sup>Miler (2011), and Hammond (1998) represent exceptions to this rule.

<sup>2</sup>Race scholars consider historically underrepresented groups in U.S. Congress to be women, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans (Tate, 2004). However, this dissertation refers to only African Americans and Latinos when discussing underrepresented groups in Congress.



religion). A significant body of literature outlines the benefits of descriptive representation for underrepresented groups (Canon, 1999; Mansbridge, 1999; Tate, 2004).<sup>3</sup> These scholars argue that in most circumstances, the “best way” for African Americans and Latinos to receive substantive representation is by achieving descriptive representation.<sup>4</sup> However, Swain (1993) argues that Black faces are not necessary for the substantive representation of Blacks. As an alternative to descriptive representation, Swain advocates for Blacks in Congress to forge relationships with like-minded representatives from different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

The aforementioned studies present conflicting evidence as to whether the race or ethnicity of a MC matters in legislative politics. Part of this confusion stems from the fact that most scholars study minority representation through the lens of roll call data. As several other scholars have concluded, this narrow focus on roll call data neglects the fact that MCs are engaged in a plethora of activities outside of floor votes (Grose, 2011; Hall, 1996; Hall and Heflin, 1994). While some recent studies have examine race and representation “beyond the vote” (Grose, 2011; Hall, 1996; Minta, 2011), most of these studies only examine representation from a dyadic perspective and do not consider the collective influence of minority congressional caucuses. Put differently, minority representation scholars typically treat minority MCs as individuals, when they are, in fact, operating as a part of a networked caucus.

This dissertation argues that an important missing variable in the study of race and political representation are minority congressional caucuses. As one of the founders of the CBC, William Lacy Clay, Sr. put it, the CBC is the “single most

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<sup>3</sup>These studies also study descriptive representation as it relates to substantive representation, which is “color-blind” and can be measured by indicators such as roll call voting and casework (Swain, 1993).

<sup>4</sup>Sinclair-Chapman (2003) finds that Black constituents derive a number of symbolic benefits from descriptive representation. Black constituents who are represented by black MCs are more likely to assess their representatives favorably, to perceive their representative as “responsive,” and (in some cases) experience higher levels of political efficacy (Gay, 2001; Tate, 2004). Hence, many of the arguments for descriptive representation are based on the claim that an increase in descriptive representation will lead to an increase in substantive representation.

effective political entity we have had in articulating, representing, protecting, and advancing the interest of [B]lack people in the past twenty years” (Clay, 1993, p. 352). Notwithstanding the significance of minority caucuses, the CBC and CHC do not supplant the importance of other institutions in Congress such as political parties or committees. Rather, the CBC, CHC, and their staffs supplement the efforts of their members and provide CBC and CHC members another way to express their policy interests. For instance, in addition to their regular responsibilities as MCs, CBC and CHC members are expected to chair a caucus task force addressing a specific policy area (Singh, 1998).

These positions generally coincide with members’ committee assignments, but not always. For those members who have a task force assignment that does not overlap with their committee work, this responsibility can help them learn about new policy areas, and perhaps, gain policy influence on that legislative issue. In addition to running task forces, CBC and CHC members attend weekly one and half to two-hour caucus lunches where members discuss upcoming legislation and spend a substantial amount of time on other caucus-related activities. The caucus staff members are primarily responsible for facilitating the efforts of the task forces and the caucus meetings among other caucus-related activities. Hence, a study of minority representation must not only include the CBC and CHC, but the efforts of their caucus staff members.

## **1.1 Congressional Caucuses**

In order to make the argument for the importance of minority congressional caucuses, it is necessary to understand how caucuses shape policy and how their staffs subsidizes their efforts. Caucuses were initially created to respond to changing demands in Congress (e.g. the growing number and complexity of issues facing Congress; the rise in constituent pleas for responsiveness to legislative issues) that could not be

easily addressed through the committee system (Hammond, 1998). Legislatively, caucus staff members serve multiple purposes. They gather information about topics of interest and make that material available to their members and others outside the caucus (Stevens, Mulhollan and Rundquist, 1981). Caucuses sometimes identify potential solutions to problems as they provide leadership in setting the legislative agenda of Congress (Hammond, 1998). The caucus staff helps members to spread their ideas, testify at hearings, make floor statements, hold informal meetings and seminars, and lobby committees and subcommittees to produce favorable legislative outcomes for the caucus members and their constituencies (Hammond, 1998; Stevens, Mulhollan and Rundquist, 1981). While minority MCs can perform these legislative activities in the absence of caucus staff members, minority caucuses facilitate these activities via the caucus personnel and generally, assist with the exchange of information between caucus members, particularly as it relates to the interests of African Americans and Latinos.

Congressional caucuses have generated little interest to the majority of researchers. The CBC, for a majority of its existence, was written off as weak and ineffective, existing as only a peripheral entity within Congress. Despite the varied roles that caucuses can play in legislative politics, the literature on caucuses has primarily focused on voting cohesion—the extent to which groups display homogeneity in their voting patterns (Gile and Jones, 1995; Hammond, 1998; Levy and Stoudinger, 1976; Miller, 1990; Pinney and Serra, 2002; Singh, 1998; Swain, 1993) or their legislative effectiveness—which has primarily focused on their ability to pass legislation alleviating racial disparities (Barnett, 1975; Levy and Stoudinger, 1976; Singh, 1998; Vega, 1993). In the following section, I discuss the significance of these studies and how this dissertation contributes to the extant literature on minority congressional caucuses.

## 1.2 Legislative Effectiveness

Throughout their history, CBC and CHC members have wrestled with the dilemma of balancing their positions as MCs with the goal of representing the interests of the African American and Latino communities. That is, are CBC or CHC members primarily elected officials who are beholden to congressional norms? If so, does this compromise the interest of Black and Latino constituents? Or is the CBC and CHC primarily a Black and Latino leadership organization that uses the legislative process to win substantive benefits for its national constituencies? Scholars studying the CBC and CHC have acknowledged this tension, but have made different conclusions about the role of these legislators (Barnett, 1975; Champagne and Rieselbach, 1995; Singh, 1998).

Because of these countervailing forces, a prominent question in the literature is: do the CBC and CHC provide substantive or symbolic representation for African Americans and Latinos? Some argue that the CBC and CHC has been unsuccessful in obtaining concrete policy benefits for African Americans and Latinos (Hero and Tolbert, 1995; Levy and Stoudinger, 1976; Singh, 1998; Smith, 1996; Swain, 1993; Welch and Hibbing, 1984) and typically play a symbolic role in politics. These studies contend that the voices of racial and ethnic minorities in a majoritarian institution, such as Congress, are often muted (Guinier, 1994). Thus, resulting in a “triumph of tokenism,” whereby these MCs, who represent mostly racial and ethnic minorities, will find it difficult to gain widespread support on their central issues (Guinier, 1994; Singh, 1998).

Moreover, one of the biggest critics of the CBC, Singh (1998), proposes three reasons for why the CBC has been ineffective in passing legislation that would improve the conditions for African Americans: the failure of the CBC leadership; the CBC’s ideological incompatibility with their Congressional colleagues; and, the structural limitations of America’s political environment; especially as it relates to representing

the interest of marginalize groups. Cohen (1999) and Smith (1996) also critic the CBC's ability to provide substantive representation on matters of concern to Blacks.

The criticisms of minority congressional caucuses presented by Cohen (1999), Smith (1996), and Singh (1998) are vital, and I reviewed them here to specify some of the claims I want to challenge. This dissertation sets out to understand how the CBC and CHC use their caucus leadership in promoting their own, or the caucus's, priorities by virtue of their staff capacity. In addition, I argue for a different metric in measuring the effectiveness of minority congressional caucuses. That is, I posit that the effectiveness of the CBC and CHC is embedded in their ability to assist in advancing minority interest legislation generated by some other actor (who is not a member of their caucus) thereby asserting caucus influence. Hence, I weigh the caucus's ability to assert caucus influence against claims that the CBC is largely ineffective (Cohen, 1999; Levy and Stoudinger, 1976; Singh, 1998; Smith, 1996; Swain, 1993) and conclude that the CBC as well as the CHC can be effective in representing the interest of racial and ethnic minorities. Moreover, I conclude that studies that place the importance of members' participation in the CBC and CHC against individual behavior (Singh, 1998) present a false dichotomy that overlooks the chance of combined strategies that reflect the CBC's and CHC's political maturity (Barnett, 1975).

In summary, outside of their symbolic importance, the aforementioned studies largely view minority caucuses as ineffective and non-pivotal, which is mostly due to their size and presumed ideological homogeneity. However, none of these studies present any definitive evidence of minority caucuses' lack of influence or effectiveness. For instance, one study contends that the CBC is vital because of their possession of a particular national constituency—African Americans—with its unique racial history and distinct policy beliefs, powerfully distinguished the CBC from other caucuses, and ensures it continued prominence in national politics, even in the absence of material

policy achievements (Singh, 1998). This dissertation argues that the CBC and CHC, because of its staff and pooled resources, can be effective in representing the interests of their constituents.

### 1.3 Voting Cohesion

An alternative perspective on minority congressional caucuses contends that they can be influential largely as a result of their ability to cajole members to vote as a bloc (Bositis, 1998; Canon, 1999; Gile and Jones, 1995; Levy and Stoudinger, 1976). The underlying assumption in this line of research is that a voting bloc would convey that CBC or CHC members work together to achieve common legislative goals that benefit African Americans or Latinos. Additionally, a cohesive voting bloc would presumably increase the influence of CBC and CHC members who could use the threat of their collective vote to form alliances that could further the issues they champion. However, previous scholars have merely asserted that the cohesion of the CBC and CHC leads to various policy victories, but few studies actually test this assertion.

Initial efforts to document this influence found that the CBC's cohesive voting patterns in its formative years revealed that although a high degree of cohesion was demonstrated in the 92<sup>nd</sup> Congress (1971- 1973), in terms of substantive accomplishments, the caucus was essentially ineffective (Levy and Stoudinger, 1976). However, subsequent researchers sought to examine the voting cohesion within the caucus over a longer period of time. Building on the work of Levy and Stoudinger (1976), Jones (1987) examined the extent to which the CBC exhibited voting cohesion from 1975 to 1980—which includes the 94<sup>th</sup> through 96<sup>th</sup> Congresses—by examining the voting patterns of the CBC members across five different issue areas (i.e. general legislation, social issues, monetary issues, external affairs (defense), and miscellaneous legislation). Jones (1987) determined that the CBC's degree of voting cohesion was high—especially on social issues—and that cohesiveness was critical to their ability to

operate as an effective force in Congress. Moreover, Jones (1987) concluded that the “bond of blackness,” strengthened by a shared history of oppression, served to motivate the caucus’s cohesive behavior. A more exhaustive study conducted by Gile and Jones (1995) offers an examination of the CBC’s voting cohesion from 1971 through 1990. The results suggested that the CBC voted more cohesive than other regional and gender caucuses. In fact, CBC voted as a cohesive voting unit, with the exception of only one occasion (Gile and Jones, 1995).

Following the 1992 elections and the start of the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress, there was a lot of speculation as to whether CBC members would continue to vote cohesively, or whether the large influx of freshmen, women, and southern members might create dissension in the caucus as a voting bloc. The research on the CBC in the mid-1990s found that the CBC continued to vote cohesively with few exceptions (Bositis, 1998; Canon, 1999; Gile and Jones, 1995). Canon (1999) examined the impact of the new Black majority-minority districts of the 1990s on the power of the CBC and how the nature of Black representation operated in those districts. He concluded that the new size of the CBC has substantially increased its political clout, as they used their numbers to bloc and pass key legislation (Swain, 1993; Canon, 1999). Overall, Canon’s research was consistent with previous research pertaining to CBC cohesion.

While much of the previous research argues that the CBC is cohesive in their voting patterns, few studies demonstrate how the CBC can use its cohesiveness to their advantage. The influx of minority legislators in the 1990s sparked an interest in assessing the CBC’s influence over the passage or rejection of legislation (Canon, 1999; Swain, 1993). As Kweisi Mfume, chair of the CBC in the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress (1993- 1995), put it: “No longer are we going to be looked at as an addendum to the Democratic agenda. We are going to be taken seriously. Anything short of partnership could prompt us to respond in kind. If that means killing an important piece of legislation, then that will be the case” (Lusane, 1994, p. 20). In the 103<sup>rd</sup>

Congress, the CBC played a pivotal role in shaping and then passing legislation on the budget, the space station, crime, and campaign finance reform (Canon, 1999; Swain, 1993). The CBC demanded increased funding for inner cities, the earned-income tax credit, food stamps, and mandatory immunization for poor children (Canon, 1999). While the budget proposal was not amended to include all of the CBC's demands, caucus members viewed the final budget as a substantial improvement over recent budgets, as there was an increase in programs particularly relevant to racial and ethnic minorities (Canon, 1999).

In summary, this stream of research posits that although the CBC is numerically small, their presence as a cohesive voting bloc, at times, compensates for their lack of numbers (Bositis, 1998; Canon, 1999; Gile and Jones, 1995; Jones, 1987). These studies treat cohesion as a “cure all” for minority legislators; implying that if minority caucuses vote cohesive, then they could be successful. However, previous literature has merely asserted that the cohesion of the CBC leads to various policy benefits, but they do not directly test for this nor do they demonstrate it. For instance, Gile and Jones (1995) argues that “bloc voting is a valued political asset that enhances the political stature, leverage, and coalition attractiveness of the unofficial group” (p. 625). Notwithstanding the various issues that scholars have enumerated when using roll call votes (Achen, 1978; Hall, 1996) to study the preferences and political behavior of MCs, one cannot ascertain why, exactly, minority caucus members vote in a similar vein. It could be because of parallelism of interest, pressures from similar constituencies, coincidence, or other factors (Levy and Stoudinger, 1976; Pinney and Serra, 2002). Even if minority congressional caucuses were responsible for the cohesive voting patterns observed in their membership, it's not clear how cohesion leads to policy benefits for racial and ethnic minorities. Hence, I argue that studying minority caucuses as voting blocs is not going to represent a plausible story of why the CBC or CHC should or should not matter. Instead, my dissertation posits that students



of minority caucuses should not just look at the caucus as a voting bloc, but should examine these caucuses as organizations that assist members' individual and collective agenda-setting behavior.

Also, in surveying the literature on minority congressional caucuses, much of the work to date has failed to evaluate both the CBC and CHC. The conspicuous absence of CHC and their constituencies in past research, I posit, is problematic for several reasons, not the least of which is their growing size and significance in the American politics demography. Despite different historical legacies and different patterns of geographic concentrations, Latinos, like African Americans, have suffered from discrimination in and outside of the polity (Casellas, 2007; Rocca and Sanchez, 2007). The omission of the CHC introduces important estimation problems in the systematic study of race and representation. Also, if my theory about the influence of the CBC is correct, then the theories that I posit should also apply to the CHC as well. Hence, studying the CHC is vital because there is no theoretical reason to believe that the theories I isolate should only apply to the CBC. After all, the CHC also has caucus staff and an executive committee that function similar to the CBC's staff. Therefore, it is imperative that I include the CHC in my study of minority congressional caucuses.

## **1.4 Minority Congressional Caucuses**

Despite their institutional longevity and consistent activism, few studies have directly examined whether minority congressional caucuses facilitate the agenda-setting behavior and legislative effectiveness of their members. Of the studies that have investigated minority caucuses, much of this work underestimates their influence. There are several reasons for this. First, these studies only examine agenda-setting through the lens of positive agenda control, which refers to the ability to move introduced bills through the legislative process. This may be problematic; literature has demon-

strated that when compared to their White counterparts, minority MCs are less apt to command positive agenda control (Griffin and Keane, 2009; Rocca and Sanchez, 2007). This may be due to minority MCs' ideological stances—that is, most of their members are extremely liberal (Singh, 1998) or because of the narrow set of bills minority legislators introduce (Volden, Wiseman and Wittmer, 2013).

Second, as mentioned above, much of the previous literature that studies the collective influence of minority congressional caucuses use roll call votes as an outcome variable. This research design makes it difficult to ascertain whether minority legislators are voting for a specific bill because of their own preferences or pressure from their caucus. In general, roll call votes can present a distorted picture of representation, as MCs are presented with a single choice, typically structured by party leaders to attract a majority of votes; hence, polarizing proposals are filtered out (Cox and McCubbins, 2005; Hall, 1996). In addition, the selection inherent in roll call data skews the conclusions about race's impact on representation by systematically excluding proposals that may polarize the preferences of minority and White legislators, this phenomenon is known as the “censored sample problem” (Hall, 1996; Hall and Heflin, 1994, p. 192).

This project contributes to the literature on race and representation by demonstrating the important role that minority caucuses play in subsidizing the legislative behavior of its members. This notion of subsidies from groups readily applies to minority caucuses, as caucuses operate “in the leader's budget line, not his or her utility function” and that it is “more like a service bureau” (Hall and Deardorff, 2006, p. 72).<sup>5</sup> Specifically, these caucuses provide MCs with important informational, networking, and staff support to assist them in representing racial and ethnic minorities within and outside of their constituency, thereby enhancing the capabilities of MCs

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<sup>5</sup>The goals of both interest groups and congressional caucuses are virtually identical—to impact and shape policy on issues of interest. However, this is not to say that interest groups and caucuses are one in the same. Identity caucuses are legislative caucuses that are organized by a shared identity, namely race, ethnicity or gender (Hammond, 1998).

as representatives (Hammond, 1998).<sup>6</sup> Hence, it is not just that Black and Latino MCs have access to their respective caucus staff, but that other MCs do not—this is the subsidy argument.

Before discussing the organization of my dissertation, the following section offers a brief history of the CBC and CHC and details about the internal makeup of minority congressional caucuses (e.g. caucus leadership and their selection, caucus staff, and financing).

## 1.5 Congressional Black Caucus

Beginning in the late 1960s, Black legislators determined that neither the Democratic Party nor the Republican Party was adequately addressing the issues that were most salient to Blacks. In response, Black MCs formed the Democrat Select Committee (DSC). Later, in 1971, the CBC was formally inaugurated with thirteen members from the House of Representatives (Clay, 1993). The creation of the CBC formed a network that facilitates information gathering and coordination on issues important to Blacks nationally. The founding members believed that speaking with a single voice through a congressional caucus would increase their political influence (Barnett, 1975; Clay, 1993; Singh, 1998).

The CBC relies on its leadership, commonly referred to as the executive committee, and the caucus staff, which I will discuss later, to get much of its work done. Each Congress, CBC members elects its executive committee, which comprise of five members: *Chair*, who is responsible for setting, presenting and publishing the CBC's legislative agenda and budget priorities each Congress and presides over all caucus meetings; *First Vice-Chair*, who is responsible for chairing CBC meetings in the absence of the caucus Chair and responsible for special committees as appointed by the

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<sup>6</sup>Identity caucuses are legislative caucuses that are organized by a shared identity, namely race, ethnicity or gender (Hammond, 1998).

Chair; *Second Vice-Chair*, who manages the CBC task forces and caucus messaging and performs the duties of the First Vice-Chair in his or her absence; Secretary, who is generally responsible for record-keeping of official documents and keeps detailed notes of all caucus meetings, and manages all CBC outreach activities; *Whip*, who manages the CBC's floor activities and provides weekly vote recommendations, which promotes unity on votes (Clay, 1993; Singh, 1998).<sup>7</sup> The CHC has a similar leadership structure, which has similar responsibilities, but they do not elect a Secretary.

The CBC receives the majority of its funding from non-congressional sources. The caucus established the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation (CBCF) in 1976 (Clay, 1993). The CBCF sponsors programs under the direction of the caucus leadership. These initiatives focus on education, economic development, public health, and African globalization programs. The bulk of these outside contributors donate during the CBC's annual Legislative Weekend (Singh, 1998). During this weekend, the caucus hosts numerous educational sessions, networking opportunities, and town hall style meetings (Clay, 1993).

Before relying solely on outside funding, in 1981, the CBC achieved Legislative Service Organization (LSO) status (Singh, 1998). LSOs were prohibited from receiving outside funding, but they were allowed to establish tax-exempt foundations (e.g. CBCF) to carry out research and other activities. This allowed for the CBC to have one of the largest staffs of all congressional caucuses. While the majority of caucuses only had one or two staff members in the 1990s, the CBC was one of the few caucuses who had over ten staffers (Singh, 1998).

The staff of the CBC has numerous responsibilities. When the CBC was first established, the functions that individual Black MCs perform for their constituents, the CBC staff would perform for Black Americans generally. In carrying out this mandate, the caucus staff provided casework services, gather and disseminate information,

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<sup>7</sup>An example of the Whip's weekly vote recommendation is provided in Appendix K.

engage in administration oversight, articulate the interest of specialized groups within the black community and develop legislative proposals (Barnett, 1975).

However, in the mid-1990s, the Republican majority in the House abolished all LSOs. Representatives Pat Roberts and Newt Gingrich were among several GOP members that campaigned against the public subsidization of caucuses (Singh, 1998). All caucuses were forced to move out of congressional office space and become Congressional Member Organizations (CMOs) or private corporations. Since then, the caucus staff has reduced in size to an average of three to five members and their job duties are primarily focused on congressional issues such as briefing members on legislative issues and organizing weekly caucus meetings and task forces and constituent casework is typically handled by a member's district office (Grose, 2011). The change in the caucus staff responsibility has to do with reductions in their staff capacities and because the salaries of staff members are paid by the congressional budgets of caucus members.

## **1.6 Congressional Hispanic Caucus**

Seeking to increase their influence in Washington and following in the footsteps of the CBC, the CHC was founded in 1976 by six Hispanic MCs. The CHC charges itself with promoting and advancing policies that address the concerns of the Latino community (Casellas, 2007). The function of the CHC is to serve as a forum for Hispanic MCs to coalesce and develop around a collective legislative agenda. Through the legislative process, the CHC is dedicated to voicing and advancing issues affecting Hispanics in the United States and its territories.

The CHC, like the CBC, has officers who make up their executive board: Chair, First Vice-Chair, Second Vice-Chair, and Whip. Currently, there are twenty-six members of the CHC, the majority of whom come from California, Florida, New York, and Texas. This number is lower than the actual number of Hispanic lawmakers in

Congress because the original Congressional Hispanic Caucus split in two in 2003, when four Hispanic Republican representatives banded together to form their own group—the Congressional Hispanic Conference (CHC(R)) (Lopez, 2003).<sup>8</sup>

The rift materialized over the refusal of Hispanic Democrats to support a conservative Hispanic judge that was nominated by President Bush for the District of Columbia Court of Appeals and differences that Hispanic Republicans had with the leadership of the Caucus, who had visited Cuba and refused to call for democratic elections in the communist state (Lopez, 2003). The split of the CHC along party lines underscores the diversity and differences among Hispanic legislators and the Hispanic MCs at-large.

Unlike the CBC, the CHC has always had a relatively small staff of three, which includes an Executive Director, a Communications Director, and a Legislative Assistant. The CHC has a variety of task forces, including civil rights, corporate America, education, labor, Social Security, and immigration. There is also the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI), which is the caucus’s non-profit that is primarily responsible for fundraising for the CHC. Unlike the CBC, the chair of the CHC is also chair of the CHCI, which has a large staff of its own. The CHCI is also responsible for making policy recommendations, sponsoring internships and fellowships, and hosting the annual gala and public policy conference.

The CHC has received much less media attention than the CBC, resulting in less praise and also less criticism. Soon after the formation of the CHC, the media touted it as the voice of the Hispanic community. It was also suggested that any ethnic differences were less important than the well-being of all Hispanic people (Lopez, 2003). The CHC has also had legislative success, including stopping a bill that would increase job discrimination against minority groups. Like the CBC, the CHC has

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<sup>8</sup>Since the acronym for both the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the Congressional Hispanic Conference is “CHC,” I will refer to the Congressional Hispanics Caucus as the “CHC” and the Congressional Hispanic Conference as “CHC (R).”

received attention from the president with occasional meetings.

## 1.7 Minority Congressional Caucuses and Caucus Influence

As mentioned earlier, much of the previous literature on minority congressional caucuses has posited that they are rather weak and ineffective. Of the studies that find evidence of their relevance, it is mostly in the form of voting cohesion. However, given that members of minority congressional caucuses are located at the tail, left end of the ideological spectrum, and according to the median voter theorem, these members should not matter in legislative politics because they are clear ideological outliers (Downs, 1957). That is, if the process is democratic, then the median or pivotal voter should drive the outcomes that we observe, which means that the CBC and CHC should never be pivotal (Downs, 1957). However, this dissertation argues against that claim.

Similar to the debate between Cox and McCubbins and Krehbiel and others about the importance of political parties, I want to argue for the importance of congressional caucuses as an important variable for agenda-setting. While Cox and McCubbins study how the majority of the majority party can exert influence over the agenda, my study, however, examines the conditions under which the majority party defers to a numerical minority. My dissertation moves beyond the narrow view of minority caucuses as merely voting blocs. It is difficult to ascertain the effect of minority caucus membership from the preferences of individual members because all Black and Democratic Latino MCs are members of the CBC and CHC, respectively.

Similar to Cox and McCubbins's argument about the majority party agenda-setting investment in committee chairs, I argue that caucus leaders get more staff rights, so they are able to sponsor more legislation and claim more credit—I refer to this as the *caucus leadership advantage*. They are able to advance their interest over the race-related interest of the backbenchers in the caucus, but they are also working

as agents of their caucus. The caucus leadership is able to do both things because of the additional staff capacity they get from the caucus staff members. Also, in addition to studying the differences between leaders and non-leaders within a caucus, I contend that minority caucuses assist members in agenda control. That is, members of minority congressional caucuses assist White MCs in advancing minority interest legislation through the endorsement of this legislation via cosponsorship, which I refer to as *caucus influence*. I will explain the leadership advantage and caucus influence in the next chapter, which details my theoretical framework.

## 1.8 Organization of Dissertation

Although there is considerable research on the impact of race and ethnicity on political representation, it generally concerns the extent to which minority members of Congress (MCs) provide substantive representation to its minority constituents. While members of the CBC and CHC spend a substantial amount of time and finite resources on caucus-related activities, much less research has been directed to understanding how these legislative organizations serve member's legislative goals. This dissertation seeks to fill this gap by presenting qualitative and quantitative evidence that suggest that minority congressional caucuses play a vital role in agenda-setting.

In Chapter Two, I draw upon literature on Congress, race and ethnic politics, and congressional caucuses to help explain the CBC's and CHC's role in agenda-setting. I compare and contrast my theory of minority caucuses with previous studies on legislative organizations in Congress, namely the work of Cox and McCubbins (2005) and their theory of negative agenda control. I also sketch out two theoretical tasks. One is about the behavior of the caucus chairs in promoting their own, or the caucus's, priorities by virtue of their staff capacity. The other is about the caucus's ability to assist in advancing a White MC's minority interest legislation. After detailing my



theoretical tasks and its moving parts, I present my research design.

Next, in Chapter Three, I discuss my methodological approach and results from my qualitative interviews. After a brief discussion of previous studies that have employed qualitative data, I discuss my research design, including a note on the merits and limitations of taking a qualitative approach to studying minority congressional caucuses. I then describe how I recruited my sample, as well as the demographic information of my interviewees compared to non-respondents. Next, I detail my interview protocol and discuss the topics covered during each interview. Finally, I discuss the four topics that emerge from my qualitative interviews and conclude with a note about how these results shape the succeeding quantitative chapter.

In Chapter Four, I present the statistical results of the caucus leadership advantage models. I examine the effect of caucus leadership on bill production. I find that caucus leaders are generally positively associated with bill introduction.

In Chapter Five, I present the statistical results of the caucus influence models. In the caucus influence model, I found that the support via cosponsorship of minority caucus leaders help to predict the success of minority interest legislation by a White MC. I run additional analyses to illustrate that their ability to wield caucus influence is confined to issues relating to racial and ethnic minorities.

Finally, in Chapter Six, I offer conclusions and implications of this dissertation. I consider how my caucus leadership advantage and caucus influence and its empirical support illuminates the current debate on the importance of minority congressional caucuses and race, ethnicity, and political representation in general.

## CHAPTER II

# A Theory of Caucus Agenda-setting

### 2.1 Introduction

Legislative organizations in Congress, such as committees and political parties, have been the subject of a great deal of scholarly research (Aldrich, 1995; Cox and McCubbins, 2005; Fenno, 1973; Krehbiel, 1993; Rohde, 1994). However, as Miler (2011) suggests, while parties and committees are important resources in Congress for structuring legislative behavior, their primary role is not representation. Instead she offers a legislator's caucus membership as an important complement to their party or committee assignment, as caucuses provide members of Congress (MCs) with "discretion and flexibility to personalize their caucus membership to best reflect their constituents" (Miler, 2011, p. 888).

While caucuses play a complementary role in representing a member's constituency, caucuses also play a vital role in assisting their members with agenda-setting. Although previous research on caucuses has focused on their impact on legislative outcomes (Hammond, 1998; Loomis, 1981; Stevens, Mulhollan and Rundquist, 1981), there is little systematic empirical work that examines the mechanism by which caucuses affect agenda-setting. I argue that an important missing variable from these literatures is a measurement for the collective influence of minority congressional caucuses and its impact on agenda-setting. My theory about the agenda-setting behavior

of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) and Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) rests on six main assumptions about legislators, all of which stems from our common knowledge of Congress and race, ethnicity, and political representation. In particular, I will borrow the six assumptions that Cox and McCubbins made in constructing the Procedural Cartel Theory (PCT) and amend them to fit minority congressional caucuses.

This chapter is organized in five sections. First, I list the central tenets of Cox and McCubbins's PCT. Second, I detail the assumptions I make in constructing my theoretical framework. In this section, I discuss how I amend PCT and draw on literature from race and ethnic politics and Congress to construct a theory of minority congressional caucus—the CBC and CHC—as agenda-setters. Third, I present two theoretical frameworks—caucus leadership advantage and caucus influence—and discuss the motivations undergirding them. Fourth, I explicitly state the hypotheses regarding the CBC and CHC's role in legislative productivity and caucus influence. Fifth, I discuss how these models are complicated by majority party status. Sixth, I conclude by summarizing my theoretical tasks and introduce the next chapter.

## **2.2 Procedural Cartel Theory (PCT)**

In *Setting the Agenda*, Cox and McCubbins (2005) review the six central tenets of PCT. These six tenets are summarized below:

1. MCs seek reelection, internal advancement within Congress, good public policy, and majority party status.
2. The reputation, or brand name, of a member's party affects both the member's personal probability of reelection and, more significantly, the party's probability of securing a majority.

3. A party's reputation depends considerably on its record of legislative achievement.
4. Legislating—compiling favorable records of legislative accomplishment—is parallel to team production and entails overcoming an array of cooperation and coordination problems.
5. The primary means by which the majority party polices its members' actions, in order to overcome issues of team production in the legislative process, is by delegating to a central authority.
6. The key resource that the majority party uses is their ability to delegate to their senior partners. Hence, the majority party forms a procedural cartel that collectively monopolizes agenda-setting power (Cox and McCubbins, 2005, p. 24).

According to Cox and McCubbins (2005), a majority party creates or inherits a set of offices with agenda-setting powers. Majority party members expect those members in such offices to aid bills that most of the majority party supports. However, most importantly, legislators are expected to never push bills that would pass despite the opposition of a majority of their party; even if said legislators personally support such bills and could get them passed.

The operation of the CBC and CHC works in a similar manner to the majority party, but differ in distinctive ways, as these organizations are informal networks. These caucuses are similar to the majority party in that they delegate to the leaders of the caucus to promote the central issues of the caucus. Also, as we will see in Chapter Three, these caucus leaders do not make public statements on an issue unless all members of the caucus agree on an issue for fear of alienating other caucus members. However, if these leaders wanted to, they could still go to individual CBC or CHC

offices to get support from individual caucus members, but they cannot use the “brand name” of the caucus to promote their position on an issue.

I will detail below the other important ways my theory of the agenda-setting power of minority congressional caucuses differs from Cox and McCubbins’s theory concerning the majority party. Simply put, Cox and McCubbins studies how the lion’s share of the majority party can exert influence over the legislative agenda. *My study, however, questions the conditions under which a numerical minority, such as the CBC and CHC, matters in agenda-setting. While my theory does not contradict their theory, it does challenge their theory to consider how other congressional institutions, like caucuses, help to set the agenda in Congress.*

### **2.3 Assumptions**

Before discussing the assumptions of my model and how they compare to PCT, I want to point out that the second and third assumptions in PCT do not readily apply to minority caucuses because caucuses are informal and its members rely on other factors in getting reelected. That is, caucus members typically do not reference the CBC or CHC in their efforts to get reelected in ways that they draw on their political party or other factors. Also, the third assumption, which posits that the party’s reputation depends significantly on its record of legislative accomplishment, operates differently for minority caucuses. In PCT, Cox and McCubbins discuss the majority party’s ability to get legislation passed that its members want enacted. However, minority caucus’s reputation develops from a variety of factors, which I discuss later. Next I will discuss the other four assumptions and how they operate differently for the CBC and CHC. Later, I will offer additional assumptions that are vital in constructing my theoretical model.

First, like the PCT, I posit that MCs are interested in other goals outside of reelection (Fenno, 1973). Since all Black and (Democratic) Latino MCs join the CBC

and CHC, respectively, seeking reelection does not provide an adequate reason for why these legislators join racial and ethnic-based caucuses. That is, Mayhew's theory of representative government would not suggest that preservers of time and attention would take positions on issues that have an appeal to persons of African and Latin American descent nationally and internationally, especially since it is uncertain how these positions would advance their reelection prospects. Instead, I argue that MCs will pursue a cause or commitment as long as it bears no clear electoral detriment (McCormick and Mitchell, 2007, p. 582). Therefore, caucus membership provides evidence that MCs are not always motivated solely by reelection, but in part, by their ideological preferences of "good" public policy (Fenno, 1973; McCormick and Mitchell, 2007).

Second, like the fourth assumption in PCT suggests, the ability to legislate requires solving coordination and cooperation problems. Minority MCs, like all legislators, have a plethora of responsibilities and goals competing for their time and attention, and have a limited ability to ensure that introduced items reach the agenda and get enacted (Fenno, 1973; Hall, 1996; Mayhew, 1974). For the CBC and CHC, the caucus staff subsidize the legislative work of their members by providing them with useful information and opportunities for coalition-building (Fiellin, 1962; Hammond, 1998; Stevens, Mulhollan and Rundquist, 1981). As I mention in Chapter One, I borrow Hall and Deardorff (2006)'s theory on interest groups and their ability to subsidize members who already support the cause of the group and apply it to the relationship between the CBC and CHC staff and its membership. In short, membership costs in joining and participating in the CBC and CHC are relatively modest because the caucus staff contributes substantially. With this support, the costs of sustaining the activity of the CBC and CHC's membership need only be concentrated on a handful of "entrepreneurial" members willing to assume a leadership role (Cox and McCubbins, 2005), which is filled by their respective executive committees. Extending

the theoretical arguments in these ways assumes that the members of the CBC and CHC represent a, more or less, committed group of members who operate on the basis of conviction, rather than the expectation of direct reelection benefits.

Third, like the fifth assumption in PCT implies, the principal means to regulate a group in Congress is to deputize its authority to a key figure. CBC or CHC members defer to its executive committees in deciding their caucus's position on an issue. As I mentioned in Chapter One, the caucus chair is responsible for setting, presenting, and establishing the CBC or CHC's legislative agenda and is responsible for facilitating the caucus meetings. Also, the caucus staff, which is physically located in the chair's office, assists the chair in making sure that caucus members present a caucus position to persons outside of the caucus that is consistent with the chair's position.

A few questions emerge after learning this new information about caucus leaders. First, how is the CBC and CHC leadership chosen? Are caucus leaders selected randomly? Are members being chosen because of their presumed legislative effectiveness? Fortunately, while interviewing legislative staffers in Washington, D.C., I was able to ask legislative staffers about this. According to one senior staffer in a CHC office,

*The CHC leadership is done by election. However, most of the time it's agreed upon beforehand... there's not really a controversy over who will be the next chair. Generally, the person who is the current First Vice-Chair is likely going to be the Chair next Congress. What actually becomes important then, is becoming the Second Vice-Chair because if you become the Second Vice-Chair, then in four years, you will become the Chair. (laughs) Of course, unless there's a big controversy, which rarely happens, but it happened once and it wasn't even much of a controversy. So, most times it's a shoo-in for the previous [First] Vice-Chair, everyone knows they're gonna give it to that person because it is their turn, but anyone can challenge it... so that's how it is done.*

As these comments suggests, it is difficult to ascertain what is undergirding the initial selection of a caucus member into the leadership. We do know that this process is non-random in its first election, which could be because of their presumed effectiveness or

some other factor(s). However, since members seem to subscribe to turn-taking after the initial election, the effect an non-random initial election is mitigated over time. Evidence of turn-taking can be seen in Appendix I and J. These appendices detail historical CBC and CHC leadership data I gathered and they illustrate that members typically start as Whip of their caucus and move up to higher positions over time.

Fourth, as the sixth assumption of PCT suggests, agenda control is the key to the majority party's influence over the legislative process. The legislative majority party works to control the agenda by giving "senior partners" valuable offices that commands considerable agenda-setting powers. Senior partners are expected to obey a minimal commandment of party loyalty—generally, they are expected not to use their influence to support bills, which would, if considered on the floor, split the party (Cox and McCubbins, 2005). However, agenda control for the CBC and CHC operates in a different matter.

Traditionally, students of legislative effectiveness have measure the effectiveness of a MC as the number of bills he or she passes. However, previous studies on minority legislators demonstrate that their ability to command positive agenda control is not as likely as their White counterparts. According to Tate (2014), institutional barriers, two-party politics, and lingering racism—both at the elite and mass level—helps to explain why it is arduous for CBC and CHC members to pass legislation alleviating racial and ethnic disparities. She then poses the question: "What can they do, then?" While minority caucus members have a difficult time passing legislation, this project posits that minority caucuses can exert *caucus influence*, which refers to their ability in assisting White MCs in advancing minority interest legislation through the endorsement of legislation via cosponsorship. I will discuss caucus influence in further detail below.

Fifth, MCs view caucus membership as beneficial (Hammond, 1998). While different caucuses serve different goals for legislators, all caucuses enhance cooperation



among concordant legislators and provide alternative routes of influencing an issue or cause (Hammond, 1998; Tate, 2014). Other reasons why MCs join caucuses include: cost of participation is rather low; accountability is shared by the group, not a single MC; and MCs can push for or block legislation that implicates their policy interests as a group and therefore reap both the symbolic and substantive benefits, all while not being held accountable for any of the negative press (Hammond, 1998). Given that most MCs serve on at least one caucus (McCormick and Mitchell, 2007), an analysis of legislative behavior without attention to informal networks like caucuses, may prove problematic.

An important and unique benefit that is afforded to minority congressional caucus members is access to the caucus staff (see Chapter One for more details on the structure of the CBC's and CHC's caucus staff). In addition to their personal staff members, CBC and CHC members have access to caucus staffers who work exclusively on caucus-related activities. However, as evidence from Chapter Three suggests, access to the caucus staff is particularly concentrated amongst the caucus leadership—especially the caucus chair. Now, this is not to say that other caucus members do not have access to these staffers, but their primary purpose is to serve the caucus chair. Caucus staffers serve the needs of its membership on a daily basis, which makes it an important institutional tool for CBC and CHC members.

Sixth, members of minority congressional caucuses exhibit an attachment not simply to their own district, but to the racial group with which she identifies. There is both quantitative and qualitative evidence that minority MCs seek to represent all members of the racial or ethnic group with which they identify (Fenno, 2003; Hall, 1990; Mansbridge, 1999; Minta, 2011). For instance, Hall (1990) found that minority MCs often feel the obligation of compensating for past and current underrepresentation. During an interview one staffer of a Black MC stated that, “One of the things he cares about [is] improving the life-chances within the [B]lack community, and he

doesn't care whether they're from Watts or Washington" (Hall, 1990, p. 10).<sup>1</sup> In addition, Swain (1993) found that Black MCs had a much broader perception of who encompassed their constituency than did White MCs. In a more recent study, Minta (2011) develops a theory of "strategic group uplift," in which Black and Latino MCs choose to intervene in congressional oversight hearings on behalf of Blacks and Latinos when most of their constituents are not paying attention. Hence, these studies provide evidence that Black and Latino MCs are motivated to represent the interest of not just Blacks and Latinos in their districts, but of all Blacks and Latinos nationally. This phenomenon is also known as surrogate representation.

In the next two sections, I will use the assumptions mentioned here in constructing my theoretical models of agenda-setting for minority congressional caucuses.

## 2.4 Caucus Leadership Advantage

As I mentioned in Chapter One, previous research on race and political representation has primarily been concerned with the role that race or ethnicity plays in providing descriptive and substantive representation to racial and ethnic minority constituents. These studies present conflicting evidence as to whether race or ethnicity matters in legislative politics. Part of this confusion stems from the fact that most scholars study minority representation through the lens of roll call data and they fail to include a collective measure for minority caucuses. In the proceeding paragraphs, I discuss the importance of minority congressional caucuses and their staff and studying their influence in agenda-setting via bill sponsorship.

This dissertation argues that an important missing variable in the study of race and political representation are minority congressional caucuses. I am particularly

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<sup>1</sup>In another study, a staffer to Congressman Mickey Leland (D-TX) stated that, "Mickey Leland must be the Congressman for the entire Southwest. There isn't another [B]lack congressman in this general vicinity" (Swain, 1993, p. 218). The sentiment of Congressman Mickey Leland was also expressed in other academic studies (Smith, 1996; Cohen, 1999)

interested in the CBC's and CHC's role in agenda-setting. Drawing on the third assumption—the principal means to regulate a institution in Congress is to depute its authority to a key figure—I demonstrate that minority caucuses, as legislative institutions, are an integral part in agenda-setting. I do this by demonstrating that there is a *caucus leadership advantage* for minority MCs who are leaders within their caucuses because they have more access to staff resources. I developed this theory because according to several of my interviewees, the caucus leadership—the caucus chair in particular—has more access to the staff to assist them with their legislative agenda than their colleagues in the CBC and CHC (see Chapter 3).

The test the caucus leadership advantage theory through studying agenda-setting via bill sponsorship. Agenda setting is an important part of the political process (Bachrach and Baratz, 1963). Erbring, Goldenberg and Miller (1980) define agenda setting as a “process by which problems become salient as political issues around which policy alternatives can be defined and supported or opposition can be crystallized” (Erbring, Goldenberg and Miller, 1980, p. 17). The importance of agenda setting via bill sponsorship has been widely discussed in the legislative literature. For the most part, bill sponsorship is viewed as a substantive institutional tool that benefits MCs; these benefits include electoral success, information shortcuts, and legislative influence (Fenno, 1973). The high opportunity costs of bill sponsorship makes it a selective action, signaling a strong commitment of legislators to distinct issues (Schiller, 1995). On the other hand, some scholars claim that in certain instances, bill sponsorship may function symbolically to give a voice to issues rather than to implement new public policy (Sinclair-Chapman, 2003). Along with previous scholars, I contend that bill sponsorship is a selective action that serves as a “thermometer for gauging the intensity of commitments to particular interests” (Hall, 1996; Haynie, 2001, p. 26).

Moreover, bill sponsorship requires substantial commitment of time: securing

cosponsors, attending hearings, and lobbying other members for support (Hall, 1996). MCs have complete control over the number and the content of the bills they sponsor (Swers and Caiazza, 2000, p. 1). And because all members “must suffer under the same resource constraints as everyone else, more or less, they cannot be more involved in everything” (Hall, 1996, p. 206), the decision to sponsor a piece of legislation reveals a high degree of commitment to a policy issue. Therefore, bill sponsorship offers a reasonable approximation of the intensity of preferences of a legislator and her commitment to representing a given interest (Canon, 1999). When CBC and CHC members become the chairs of their caucus, I expect for these chairs to produce more legislation because of the staff resources provided.

As I mentioned in Chapter One, the CBC and CHC caucus staffs act as an important resource to the caucus chair and its membership. However, to the author’s knowledge no study has examined the behavior of these staffers directly. Although numerous studies suggest that congressional staffers have the potential to influence policy processes or policy-making, evidence demonstrating that this is actually the case relies almost exclusively on descriptive accounts and qualitative data of member’s personal staff, not the CBC or CHC’s caucus staff (DeGregorio, 1994; Fox and Hammond, 1977; Grose, 2011; Peterson, 2008; Romzek, 2000; Romzek and Utter, 1997). For example, research suggests that congressional staffers are often involved in “working out the details” of principal legislation (Fox and Hammond, 1977, p. 123); congressional staffers have autonomy and chance to influence the policy process from behind the scenes, although they derive much of their authority from and remain largely accountable to the representatives they serve (Romzek, 2000); and congressional staffers may “achieve recognition as leaders in their own right” depending on the positions they hold, and the expertise they offer to the legislative process (DeGregorio and Snider 1995, 494). Overall, the impression of staff influence implied by these qualitative studies is that staffers assist and facilitate representatives’ pursuits

of their political and legislative objectives. In Chapter Three, I present qualitative evidence that the same is true for CBC and CHC caucus staff.

The caucus leadership advantage theory is vital to this study because it is otherwise difficult to differentiate the effect of minority caucus membership from the preferences of individual members because all Black and (Democratic) Latino MCs are members of the CBC and CHC, respectively. Hence, the theory I employ helps to create necessary variation between members of the CBC and CHC, which is vital as both groups are homogenous in terms of race or ethnicity and political identification. I am interested in the leadership's role in agenda-setting because it is a proxy for measuring the collective influence of minority caucuses. Simply studying the number of bills introduced by Black and Latino MCs would not be sufficient since these variables are not connected to an institutional aspect of the CBC and CHC. However, the chairs of the CBC and CHC and their caucus staffers are essential institutional tools derived from the minority congressional caucuses, as an institution.

## 2.5 Caucus Influence

After establishing that minority caucuses matter in the chairs' legislative production, I want to establish what influence, if any, do the CBC and CHC have in the legislative process? This dissertation argues against the claim that the CBC and CHC are largely ineffective because they rarely succeed in passing ubiquitous legislation alleviating racial and ethnic disparities (Hero and Tolbert, 1995; Singh, 1998, p. 70). Another way we can test whether or not these caucuses are effective is by examining the extent to which minority MCs' ability to block legislation that would contravene the interest of their constituents. This dissertation broadens the definition of agenda control for members of minority congressional caucuses by considering their ability to aid the passage of minority interest legislation introduced by White MCs, which I call *caucus influence*. Moreover, I assert that examining the agenda-setting behavior

of minority congressional caucus members is not just about minority MCs securing policies that their constituencies want enacted, but it is also about them preventing policies that gainsay the interest of their constituents.

When caucus influence occurs, minority congressional caucuses, I argue, are disrupting what would be the normal flow of minority interest legislation. Their ability to censor minority interest legislation could occur at any level of the legislative process. However, the further a minority interest bill introduced by a White MC that is not cosponsored by the caucus leadership gets through the legislative process, the more it would falsify my claim. Hence, if caucus influence exists, then the lack of cosponsorship by the caucus leadership sends an important signal to other MCs (e.g. committee chairs) to not allow these bills to go forward because the CBC and CHC do not support it and MCs know this is an area of interest to CBC and CHC members. Hence, looking forward in the legislative process, a MC knows that their bill is not going to get anywhere because the CBC and CHC does not support it. In Chapter Five, I also analyze non-minority interest legislation to demonstrate that their ability to censor bills is confined to minority interest legislation because this is the policy area in which these caucuses have unique policy expertise. Simply put, I do not expect for there to be a caucus effect in analyses of non-minority interest legislation.

When compared to bill sponsorship, cosponsorship is often seen as a low-cost activity that, at face value, does not mean much. However, bill cosponsorship has been shown to have policy implications. For example, Kessler and Krehbiel (1996) show that it can be used as a tool to signal preferences to colleagues within the House of Representatives. Their study “favors an intralegislative signaling view of the dynamics of cosponsorship rather than the view of cosponsorship as electorally targeted position taking” (Kessler and Krehbiel, 1996, p. 565). Furthermore, Fowler (2006) shows that trends in cosponsorship can be used to detect MCs’ “connectedness,” or the social distance between legislators. This measure, he posits, helps to explain MCs’

roll call votes even when controlling for the ideology and party of each legislator.

While some research has explored constraints that shape cosponsorship (Krehbiel, 1993), relationships and policy expertise, and consequences for cosponsorship (Browne, 1985), few studies have examined the relationship between minority congressional caucuses and bill cosponsorship. For my study, I am examining cosponsorship as a selective tool, where the decision to cosponsor or not is purposeful. I am particularly interested in the extent to which leaders in the CBC and CHC cosponsor a White MC's minority interest bill. I am interested in the leadership in particular because it is a proxy for measuring the collective influence of minority caucuses. Simply studying the number of Black and Latino cosponsors would not be sufficient because a high or low number of cosponsors can exist irrespective of the existence of a minority congressional caucus. However, the executive committees of the CBC and CHC is an institutional by-product of the establishment minority caucuses. Therefore, CBC's or CHC's leader cosponsorship, or lack thereof, of a White Mc's minority interest legislation sends strong signal to other MCs to support a bill. As I mentioned earlier, the lack of cosponsorship by these legislators sends a signal to other legislators that this bill is potentially dangerous for racial and ethnic minorities.

## **2.6 Hypotheses for Caucus Leadership Models**

As discussed in the outset of this chapter, I expect that there is an increased level of legislative productivity that is unique to the CBC and CHC chairs—and not their colleagues on the executive committee—because they have more access to the caucus staff, as well as their personal staff, which gives them the means to introduce more legislation.

*Hypothesis 1. CBC and CHC chairship should be positively associated with their level of general bill introduction.*

Similarly, I posit the following hypothesis about the caucus leadership effect on “substantive and significant” and significant bill sponsorship categories:<sup>2</sup>

*Hypothesis 2. CBC and CHC chairship should be associated with their level of substantive and significant bill introduction.*

*Hypothesis 3. CBC and CHC chairship should be associated with their level of significant bill introduction.*

Commemorative bill introduction is one of the ways that symbolic representation—while, at times, devoid of substance, influences the attitudes and behavior of constituents through feelings of empowerment—can manifest itself. There is a plethora of research that has examined the sponsorship of symbolic legislation for African Americans (Canon, 1999; Tate, 2003). Canon (1999) also examines floor speeches. Much of this research suggest that African American MCs disproportionately sponsor symbolic representation that is relevant to Black constituents. Similar results were found in studies of Latino representatives (Bratton, 2006; Wilson, 2010). For example, Pantoja and Segura (2003), in their study of Latino elected officials in California and Texas, find that feelings of political alienation significantly diminishes as descriptive representation increases for Latinos. Similarly, Sanchez and Morin (2011) find that Latino citizens represented by co-ethnic Mayors are less alienated from the political system than those without descriptive representation. In short, the literature in this area suggests that historically disadvantaged groups may derive a positive effect from seeing members of their own communities in positions of power and, in particular, bonds of trust between legislators and their constituents when there is racial or ethnic congruence.

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<sup>2</sup>I will explain the coding schema for the bill sponsorship in the data and methods section of Chapter Four.



*Hypothesis 4. CBC and CHC chairship should be associated with their level of commemorative bill introduction.*

## **2.7 Hypotheses for Caucus Influence Models**

After establishing the boundaries of how minority congressional caucuses via caucus leadership matters, I also want to examine CBC and CHC's role in agenda-setting. As I mentioned in Chapter One, minority interest legislation sponsored by White MCs have varying levels of support by minority caucus members. That is, some of these bills have a plethora of Black and Latino cosponsors while others have few or none. Irrespective of the number of CBC and CHC cosponsors on their bill, what is more important, I argue, is whether or not said bill has the support of the CBC and CHC's executive committee. This is because the CBC and CHC executive committee members are viewed by White MCs as leaders on legislation relevant to racial and ethnic minorities. Hence, I have the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 5. When a White MC introduces a minority interest bill, the greater number of the CBC and CHC leader cosponsors, the more likely that bill will pass the House of Representatives.*

In this way, I am arguing that a White member's pursuit of minority interest legislation hinges, in part, on the support of leaders in CBC and CHC. These hypothesis perhaps identify cases where White MCs try to move minority legislation in a conservative direction, but minority congressional caucuses act as gatekeepers to maintain the status quo which, I argue, makes the CBC and CHC effective institutions. Also, as I mentioned in Chapter Two, the ability of CBC and CHC members to exert caucus influence is confined to minority interest legislation and the legislative process within the House of Representatives. To bolster my claim, I also run similar analyses for non-minority interest legislation introduced by White MCs and I test

both categories—minority interest and non-minority interest legislation—in predicting the likelihood of a bill becoming law.

I also run similar agenda-setting models for CBC and CHC members. I run these models to demonstrate the same factors that predict the the success of minority interest legislation for White MCs is different for CBC and CHC members. To this end, I develop the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 6. When a CBC member introduces a minority interest bill, the greater number of CBC and CHC leader cosponsors, will not increase the likelihood that bill will pass the House of Representatives.*

Instead, other factors will predict the probability of bill passage for CBC members such as whether or not the bill is commemorative or if they're in the majority party. Also, I do not expect for the number of CBC and CHC leaders to amend the likelihood of bill passage of CBC members because they are expected to already support the efforts of Black MCs legislation.

I have different expectations for Latino MCs. I posit the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 7. When a CHC member introduces a minority interest bill, the greater number of the CBC leader cosponsors, the more likely that bill will pass the House of Representatives. However, I expect for the number of CHC leader cosponsors to have no bearing over the likelihood of a CHC member's bill passing.*

My expectations for CHC members are different than the CBC because leaders of CBC have longer tenure records than CHC leaders. Also, CBC members are more homogenous on legislation in general and have rates of cosponsorship than CHC leaders. In addition, MCs may view CBC cosponsorship and CHC cosponsorship differently. That is, legislators may see CBC leader cosponsorship as representative

of all Black MCs, since African Americans are typically viewed as monolithic, but view CHC leader cosponsor differently since Latinos are seen as a more diverse group than Blacks.

## **2.8 Caucus Leadership Advantage, Caucus Influence, and Majority Party Status**

My theory concerning caucus leadership advantage is complicated by which political party is in the majority. Since most racial and ethnic minorities in Congress belong to the Democratic Party—over 85% of Latino MCs and over 95% of African American MCs who served between the 93<sup>rd</sup> and 112<sup>th</sup> Congresses were Democrats—Black and Latino MCs may be less disadvantaged in sponsoring legislation during Democratic Congresses than Republican Congresses (Rocca and Sanchez, 2007). Therefore, CBC and CHC members should have greater incentive to sponsor legislation during Democratic Congresses than during Republican Congresses (Rocca and Sanchez, 2007).

Majority party status is also related to the ability of the CBC and CHC to wield caucus influence. That is, when CBC and CHC leaders withhold cosponsorship from a White MC, this signal should have a stronger impact during Democratic Congresses than during Republican Congresses. This occurs for a plethora of reasons. First, as I mentioned before, racial and ethnic minorities MCs are concentrated in the Democratic Party. Second, previous literature suggests that Democrats are better representatives of the policy interests of racial and ethnic minorities than Republicans on general ideological issues as well as civil rights issues (Grose, 2011, 2005; Hutchings, 1998; Lublin, 1997). Thus, Democratic Party control of the chamber is necessary, but not sufficient to promote greater congressional attention to minority issues. Instead, “it is the collective commitment by minority legislators to represent national minority populations and to establish a diversity infrastructure to achieve those goals that

makes greater attention to minority issues possible? (Minta and Sinclair-Chapman, 2013, p. 136). Therefore, my study will consider the effect of majority status on CBC and CHC leaders' ability to exert caucus influence.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

In sum, this chapter presents two theoretical frameworks—caucus leadership advantage and caucus influence—and discuss the motivations undergirding them, which I test in Chapters Four and Five. I argue for the inclusion of minority congressional caucuses in studies of race and political representation. In the next chapter, I discuss the qualitative research design and results from my interviews with CBC and CHC caucus staff and other legislative staffers from CBC and CHC members' personal staff. The next chapter provides important context for the statistical findings to come in Chapters Four and Five and provide important qualitative evidence for the assumptions mentioned in this chapter.

## CHAPTER III

# In Their Own Words: Minority Congressional Caucuses

### 3.1 Introduction

Several studies have employed qualitative methods in order to address questions of race and ethnicity in Congress (Fenno, 2003; Glaser, 1996; Grose, 2011; Hawkesworth, 2003; Swain, 1993). These studies have enriched our understanding of the relationship between race and representation by providing more context on the happenings within congressional districts, particularly as it relates to the relationship between Black members of Congress (MCs) and their constituents (e.g. Fenno, 2003). In addition, using qualitative methods to study the relationship between race and representation is vital, as the subtleties of conversational dynamics and norms of race relations are, at times, too complex to capture in quantitative data (Hawkesworth, 2003). Hawkesworth (2003) found qualitative evidence that racial and ethnic minority MCs—especially Black female legislators—are forced to grapple with institutional dynamics and interpersonal relationships that constitute them as subordinate.

To date, little qualitative data exists on race and ethnic-based caucuses altogether. Moreover, there are significant gaps in our understanding of the legislative behavior of minority caucus members, as studies tend to focus on historic analyses (Barnett,

1975), voting cohesion (Levy and Stoudinger, 1976; Pinney and Serra., 1999), legislative effectiveness, which has mostly focused on caucus members' ability to pass legislation (Canon, 1999), and institutional power, which examines how the priorities of caucus members change as they gain more seniority and prestigious positions in Congress (Singh, 1998; Tate, 2014). Generally, these studies argue that minority caucuses are ineffective in a policy sense, as they do not pass ubiquitous legislation alleviating racial or ethnic disparities (Singh, 1998). However, these studies contend that minority caucuses are vital because they foster social relationships between members and provide publicity to the leadership on its central issues (Levy and Stoudinger, 1976; Singh, 1998).

Previous research does not consider members of minority congressional caucuses as agenda setters. I argue that this is an important missing variable for two reasons: first, Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) and Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) members spend a significant amount of time each week on caucus-related activities, specifically as it relates to caucus meetings where members discuss their individual and collective legislative goals; second, the CBC and CHC, unlike other congressional caucuses, have a staff that strictly works on caucus-related issues. Previous research rarely mentions these two important facts and, more importantly, fail to explore how the caucus staff contributes to the members' legislative goals.

To better understand the relationship between Black and Latino MCs and the CBC and CHC, I conducted qualitative interviews with representatives from both groups and asked them questions about their relationship with one another. In particular, I ask the caucus staff about what kind of assistance, if any, they provide their caucus members (for more details on the interview questions see Appendices D, E, F, and G). From the perspective of the MC, I am interested in better understanding their relationships with congressional institutions, with a specific interest in their relationship with the CBC and CHC. To ensure I garnered the most creditable information

possible, I asked interview subjects to recall their concrete behavior, instead of asking them to explain or generalize their behavior (Beckmann and Hall, 2013). This chapter presents multiple illustrations that provide plausibility for the hypotheses mentioned in Chapter Two, which I will subsequently test more rigorously in Chapters Four and Five.

### **3.2 Purpose of Interviews**

The interviews I conducted were semi-structured and asked open-ended questions meant to explore the legislative priorities of CBC and CHC offices, the way these caucuses go about obtaining support on legislative issues, the role that the caucus staff plays in assisting its members, and in general, gain a better understanding of the relationship between caucus staff and individual member offices. Within the literature on minority congressional caucuses and other Congressional Member Organizations (CMOs), there are a number of studies that employ quantitative analysis in an attempt to measure caucus influence. Denoting the limitations of these studies, Singh (1998) states that, “Caucus influence is also rarely amenable to empirical analysis that yields consequential data... since caucuses frequently fail to adopt collective positions in the absence of broad consensus among their members, evaluations of votes where the caucus did or did not assume common positions is not indicative of influence per se... The bargains determined by members, concessions granted or denied a specific group, and reasons for particular policy outcomes are powerfully affected by factors which are frequently not amenable to systematic empirical quantification” (Singh, 1998, p. 83).

My research supports Singh’s assertions about the limitations of quantitative methodological techniques in studying minority congressional caucuses. I think a qualitative approach provides a complimentary account of how the CBC and CHC exert influence through its organizational structure and its relationship with actors

inside and outside of Congress. These interviews gives me important insight to how, exactly, this relationship operates from the perspective of both parties involved. In addition, these interviews provide the author and reader with vital factual information about the inner workings of minority congressional caucuses, which will help me to establish the plausibility of my theoretical arguments I discussed in Chapter Two. In this analysis, “back room” activities and negotiations are brought to the forefront and provide important insight into the CHC’s and CBC’s political and policy function in Congress.

Just as there are differences in opinion within any group, there are diverse perspectives held by individual CBC and CHC members. This chapter explores these unique perspectives through a series of interviews conducted with legislative staffers in CBC and CHC offices and caucus staffers. These interviews reveal similarities and differences on members’ relationships with caucus staff. This variance is important to my theory, as it can demonstrate whether or not being in the leadership leads to members having more interactions with the caucus staff relative to members who do not serve in the leadership. If there is variation among caucus members, then it is plausible that there is something unique about the CBC and CHC, which supports my claim that a caucus level measurement is important for studies of race, ethnicity, and political representation.

### **3.3 Merits and Limitations of Qualitative Data**

At the most basic level, interviews are conversations (Kvale, 1996). Kvale defines qualitative research interviews as “attempts to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples’ experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations” (Kvale, 1996, p. 89). While interviews can take various forms, I decided to conduct face-to-face interviews because the benefits are numerous. First, in face-to-face interviews an interviewee can see directly



whom he or she is dealing with and, more importantly, gauge whether the interviewer is trustworthy (Groves, 2004). An in-person interview also gives both of the participants engaged in the dialogue the opportunity to go off of the predetermined script when necessary and appropriate. I departed from my predetermined script in several instances because my interviewees had different levels of knowledge depending on their employment tenure or their boss's seniority in Congress.

Another advantage of interviews is that researchers can ask follow-up questions or vary the order of questions depending on the flow of the discussion. By picking up on cues from body language, an interviewer can also assess comfort level, as well as the participant's level of engagement or lack thereof. This was particularly important for my interviewees because congressional staffers are very busy and their offices are generally compensated a lot of money for in-person meetings. For instance, one interviewee told me that he works over seventy hours per week and receives over four hundred emails per day that requires a response. Hence, I was very mindful of their time and only asked more questions if the participant allowed me to. In another instance, I noticed that a person I was interviewing, for whatever reason, was uncomfortable answering the questions I posed. After noticing this, I offered to stop the interview and the person gladly accepted my offer and seemed relieved.

While there are many benefits to using a qualitative approach to explore questions on the role of race, ethnicity, and political representation, these methodological approaches are not without limitations. As Grose (2011) mentioned, compare to quantitative research, issues in qualitative research are typically more difficult to disentangle and often grapple with concerns about research design. In my case, it would have been ideal to study the effectiveness of other caucuses to see whether the hypotheses and conclusions I make are applicable to similar legislative organizations. However, given the initial difficulty I had in securing interviews with staffers in CBC and CHC offices, I decided to focus only on minority congressional caucuses.

### 3.4 Interview Methods

This section discusses the approach I took in conducting my interviews to better understand the relationship between minority caucuses and its membership. During interviews, I did not immediately bring up the CBC or CHC. Instead, I introduced myself as a graduate student at the University of Michigan working on a paper that studies the legislative priorities of Black and Latino members of Congress. I began my interviews by asking an innocuous question about the last piece of legislation that their boss sponsored.<sup>1</sup> Once they responded I then asked them, “If this legislation were to pass, who would be helped or hurt by it?” Once they discussed the intended impact of their legislation, I asked them whom their office worked with in advancing the legislation. Again, here I am allowing for the interviewee to mention whatever they think is relevant without specifically mentioning caucuses, race, or ethnicity.

Next, I inquired about the legislative priorities of member offices. In particular, I asked respondents to list the top five legislative priorities. After the interviewees list their office’s priorities, I asked them to discuss how the issues that they mentioned affect African Americans or Latinos in their district. Next, I inquired about the assistance that the caucus staff and other congressional institutions provide on their legislative priorities. Here I am interested in the types of legislation that these offices seek and expect assistance on. Do caucus members receive assistance from the caucus staff mostly on issues relating to racial and ethnic minorities? Or do they receive assistance on issues more broadly? After collecting information about the assistance that the caucus provides, I asked them for an estimate of the number of times that they interacted with the caucus staff. I was particularly interested in the duration and nature of their conversations.

From these questions, I wanted to get a sense of how the legislative priorities of

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<sup>1</sup>Before each interview, I made sure that the interviewee’s office introduced legislative that Congress. If their office did not introduce legislative, I asked them about cosponsorship and who their MC goes to for advice.

MCs compare and contrast to other members that belong in the same caucus. I was also interested in how these priorities related to racial and ethnic minorities in their district. I was mostly interested in the variance among members. Will members who have higher concentrations of racial and ethnic minorities in their district discuss race more? Will it depend on if they currently or recently serve in their caucus leadership? Does the interviewee's own race or ethnicity matter?

### 3.5 Sample Overview

The purpose of the qualitative component of my study is to understand the relationship between the staff of the CBC and CHC and their membership. To this end, I conducted twenty-seven face-to-face interviews with the staff of the CBC and CHC and legislative staffers employed by minority caucus members during January 2015 to March 2015. My initial goal was to interview a legislative staffer from each CBC and CHC office, but some offices were more cooperative than others. I received a response from thirty-one of the forty-five CBC offices, which is a sixty-nine percent response rate, but I only interviewed eighteen CBC legislative staffers and one CBC congressman because twelve offices had a policy against participating in research studies.<sup>2</sup> I received a response from seven of the twenty-two CHC offices, which is a thirty-two percent response rate, but I only interviewed four CHC legislative staffers because three offices had a policy against participating in research studies.<sup>3</sup>

There is a noticeable difference between the number of interviews I was able to secure with the CBC and CHC. I think this occurred for several reasons. First, the race of the interviewer can have an effect on the likelihood of securing an interview, responses during an interview and what is observed in the interview. I am African

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<sup>2</sup>At the time of the interviews there was actually forty-six CBC members, but I did not contact Senator Cory Booker's Office for an interview.

<sup>3</sup>At the time of the interviews there was actually twenty-three CHC members, but I did not contact Senator Robert Menendez's Office for an interview

American and I would argue that this is something that potential interviewees were made aware of before meeting me. I sent requests for interviews via e-mail and my first name is typically associated with a Black woman and my last name is not common among Latinos. Also, to confirm my identity to potential interviewees, I included a link to my profile on my department's website that details my research interests and has a recent photo of me.

Second, I interned for a CBC member in the spring of 2009 and I mentioned this after sending several emails without receiving a response. This technique helped me in securing additional interviews. Third, after interviewing a senior staffer in a senior CBC member's office, this person volunteered to contact other legislative staffers employed in CBC offices on my behalf. This made the biggest difference in me being able to secure a lot of interviews with legislative staffers in CBC offices. Several of the interviewees even mentioned that the only reason they responded was because the senior staffer contacted them personally. One staffer even mentioned that, "Ellen [name of senior staffer], is the only reason why I agreed to be apart of your study. Ellen has done way too many favors for me not to do this small favor for her. Ellen even threatened me." <sup>4</sup>

When respondents did not respond to my request after several emails, instead of dropping these cases from the analysis, which could cause selection bias, I arrived at the Washington, D.C. office anyway and simply requested an opportunity to meet with a staff member (Grose, 2011). This strategy worked in some cases I was eventually treated to an interview, but in other cases, some respondents still did not reply to my requests. Next, I started contacting another person in the same office using the same process and several offices still did not reply to my requests. In a few cases, follow-up

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<sup>4</sup>To protect participants' identities, I have altered their names and omitted any references to representatives. In addition, in some cases I have modified the respondent's position as it could possibly identify some staffers. For instance, I replace a specific title such as a "legislative director" with a more general designation like "senior staffer." Any alternations have been thoughtfully considered so not to drastically distort the characteristics of the respondent.

phone calls were also conducted to garner additional information or to verify certain data.

## **3.6 Interview Results**

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of this chapter is to provide plausibility for the hypotheses mentioned in Chapter Two, which I will subsequently test more rigorously in Chapters Four and Five. Based on the questions I asked, four topics emerged from my interview transcriptions and notes: legislative priorities for CBC and CHC members; advantages of being apart of the CBC and CHC, which primarily had to do with bloc voting via cohesiveness and psychological benefits; information about the assistance that caucus staffers provide individual CBC and CHC offices—both from the perspective of legislative staffers in CBC and CHC offices, and former employees of the caucus staff; building coalitions for legislation, where interviewees primarily discuss the value of cosponsorship and their office’s policy in obtaining cosponsors for the legislation they introduce.

### **3.6.1 Legislative Priorities**

I asked my interviewees questions about their boss’s legislative priorities to verify that the legislative issues they mentioned related to the coding schema I used to code the minority interest legislation data. I used these data in Chapter Four to test the extent to which minority caucus leaders engage in caucus influence.

After a few introductory questions, I asked my interviewees to discuss and list the top legislative priorities for their boss. Most of the respondents list these priorities in no particular order and explained at great length why these priorities are important to their boss. More than half of the respondents mentioned race or ethnicity before I explicitly asked them to explain to me how, exactly, the issues that they mention affect racial and ethnic minorities in their district. For instance, Jill, a junior staffer

in a CBC office stated that,

*I would have to say social justice issues like police brutality; criminal justice reform; education; social programs like Head Start; voting rights are top priorities for [one member]. His district was actually created... to be a majority-minority district, even though it may not be majority Black right now, our district was created for that purpose. So, for example, government studies show that minorities are more impacted by issues like healthcare, poverty, discrimination, jobs and social security, and many other issues than whites. These inequalities have been going on for years and he's just trying to shrink them. He wants to ensure that minorities get an equal footing at the table. I should note that his work helps to lift up everyone else too. For example, his legislation helps poor whites; he champions women's rights; he's working to help minority children get access to a better education, but that in turn ensures a better education for all. My boss represents some of the most vulnerable Americans in the nation. Unfortunately, a majority of these people just happen to be Black women, men, and children. So, by supporting these programs that have been proven by government studies to improve the conditions of Black Americans in need, my boss is trying to improve the conditions of everyone.*

I should note that while Jill was quick to bring up how their legislative priorities were important to African Americans in their district, she also noted that these issues affect poor Whites in their district as well. Other interviewees like Jill who had a sizable percent of Whites in their district made similar remarks whereas interviewees with a supermajority—which I characterized as over sixty percent—of African Americans or Latinos did not mention Whites in discussing their legislative priorities.

I aggregated all of the priorities and displayed the top priorities by the CBC and CHC in Figures 1 and 2, respectively. For a complete list of legislative priorities see Appendix A.

I allowed these categories to be defined by the interviewees themselves. Arguably, some of the categories in Figure 3.1 can be combined, but several of my interviewees made distinctions between seemingly similar priorities.

Among interviewees in CBC offices, education ranked as the top priority with sixty-three percent of participants listing it as a top priority for their district. Within

Figure 3.1: Legislative Priorities for CBC Offices

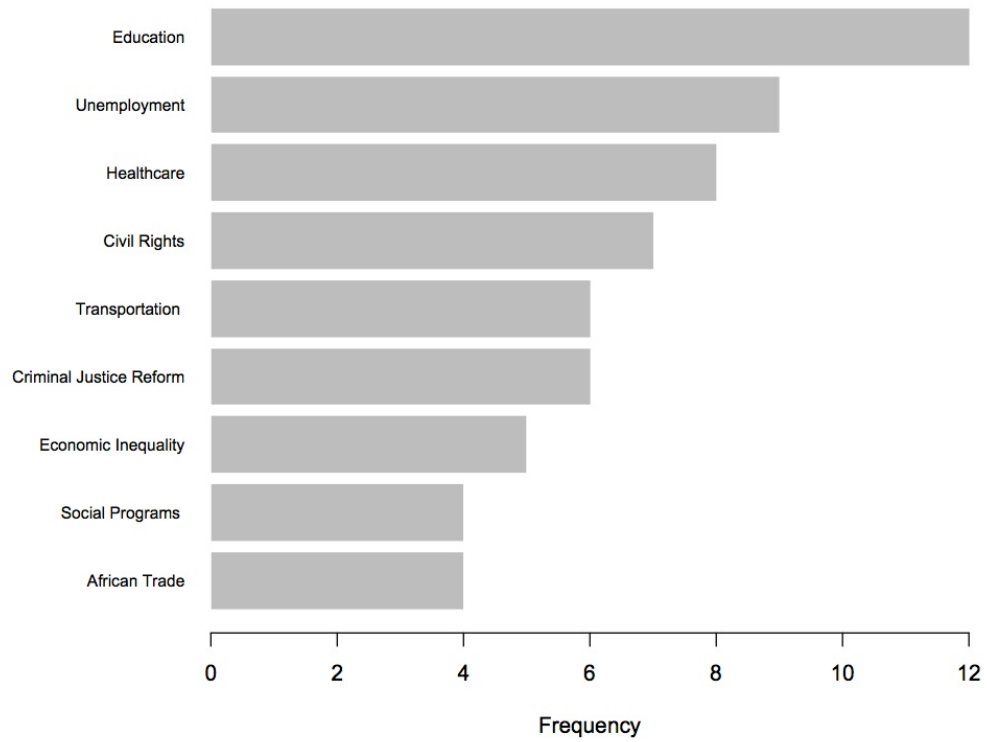
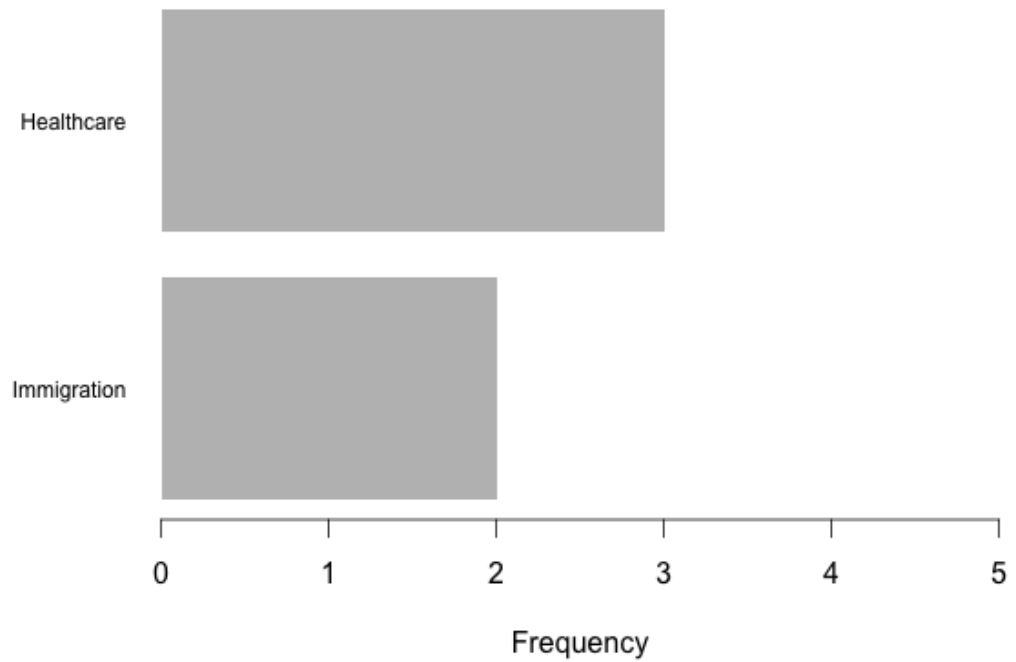


Figure 3.2: Legislative Priorities for CHC Offices



this category, interviewees were primarily concerned with improving public schools, college affordability, funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and funding for vocational training. For staffers in CHC offices, healthcare and immigration ranked as the top issues. While one of the respondents did not rank immigration as a top priority for their district—because of where their district is geographically located—he/she acknowledged that immigration is an important national issue for Latinos and an issue that the CHC has made a top priority for the past several decades.

I should also note that all of the legislative priorities mentioned in Figures 3.1 and 3.2 relate to CBC and CHC task forces, which are small groups of caucus members that work together on a particular policy area. Most of the respondents listed the name of the issue that related to their CBC and CHC task force first and were more likely to discuss caucus-coordinated activities as it relates to that issue. Interviewees from offices that served in their caucus leadership were more likely to have legislative priorities that were consistent with names of CBC and CHC task forces.

### **3.6.2 Cohesion**

As I mentioned earlier, the literature on congressional caucuses have primarily been preoccupied with adequately measuring how groups behave as a unit. Congressional scholars have developed several measures of vote cohesion, but the most famous of these indices is the “Rice Index for Vote Cohesion,” which accounts for how group members vote across different roll call votes. This measure gave rise to more detailed measures of group behavior. Clausen (1972) takes the Rice index even further by creating a measure that focuses on intergroup conflict and group cohesion. Other scholars have used a much simpler measure of group behavior by focusing solely on cohesion. Several studies have concluded that the CBC demonstrates a high level of cohesion using the Rice Index (Gile and Jones, 1995; Pinney and Serra, 1999), but



it is difficult to conclude that caucuses matter because legislators may just be voting with their own preferences and not because of their caucus membership. Also, to the author's knowledge, this is the first study to include the perspective of the CHC when studying voting cohesion within congressional caucuses.

In addition to shedding light on the aforementioned questions, this section helps to establish plausibility for my argument that minority congressional caucuses, as an institution, matters. Previous literature suggests that the CBC is extremely cohesive in their voting patterns (Bositis, 1994; Canon, 1999; Gile and Jones, 1995; Jones, 1987; Levy and Stoudinger, 1976). This conclusion implicitly claims that minority caucuses are just labels for MCs with liked preferences, which implies that caucuses, as an institution, does not matter. Some of the narratives presented in this section provide support for the conventional cohesion argument about minority congressional caucuses.

Moreover, some of the narratives presented in this section suggest that members of the CBC and CHC vote with their caucus colleagues when they have the same interest—this is mostly on issues relating to their African American and Latino constituents—but vote differently when they have different interests. This sentiment supports my argument that caucuses matter. In particular, the narratives presented in this chapter provide plausibility that minority caucus members make concerted efforts to block legislation that disadvantages racial and ethnic minorities—caucus influence. While this could occur without the establishment of minority caucuses, it would occur in a less organized fashion. Hence, caucus influence may explain why CBC and CHC members appear to be a lot more cohesive than they actually are. This is because CBC and CHC members are going to block things that they're not cohesive on (Cox and McCubbins, 2005). Hence, the bills that remain makes minority congressional caucuses appear extremely cohesive. This is why my dissertation is important. It complicates how political scientists have previously conceived cohesion

within minority congressional caucuses.

Although I did not specifically ask my interviewees any questions about the issues that they think the CHC or CBC is cohesive on, all of my interviewees discussed the extent to which their caucus is cohesive and whether or not they see that as an advantage. For instance, several participants mentioned that the CHC is generally cohesive on immigration and healthcare legislation, but do not agree on all issues. Several of my interviewees suggested that contention within the CHC usually stems from issues such as Puerto Rico statehood and lifting the embargo against Cuba. However, there are also some issues that emerge that can divide CHC members because of where their districts are geographically located. For example, Luke, a senior staffer in a CHC office mentioned that,

*On immigration the CHC really acts as one unit. They're [the caucus staff] very good about making sure we're all on the same page when it comes to immigration. They're [the caucus staff] also the same on health issues. The CHC works cohesively on health issues and so, when we are working on health issues, a lot of times we look to see what the position of the CHC is.*

*Some of these other issues CHC disagrees on. So, they're not always working together cohesively. An example of this is on water issues. I'd say that the majority of CHC members are from urban areas and so their interest in water policy are based on providing water to urban communities. However, there are quite a few CHC members that are from rural areas, so their interests in water policy are based on providing irrigation for farmers and those two can clash sometimes. So, many times the CHC does not see eye-to-eye on water issues.*

Luke's response underscores an important issue that came up in all of the interviews I had with staffers in CHC offices: CHC members do not always agree on legislative issues. After receiving this information, I interviewed a senior CHC staffer, Estefania, to see how they handled disagreements among caucus members. Estefania stated that,

***For the most part, if each individual member does not agree on something, then there's no caucus position. Each individual member votes their***

*conscience and they have healthy discussions about it. On things like Puerto Rico statehood and Cuba I think they all have accepted that they're at different places and that's where it is. And there are other issues where you could have two-thirds support on an issue, but they realize it is not worth the risk of alienating some members. So, a lot of times the chair will make an executive decision.*

***But, as the chair, you have to think to yourself that there is a litany of things we agree upon and we have to focus on that, instead of the handful of things that we don't agree on. So, my personal opinion, there are a lot of people who wonder why the Hispanic caucus doesn't engage more in Latin American policies. Well, one of the reasons why we don't engage in Latin American policies is that we don't have a unified voice on Latin American policies. So, while it is an important issue to many members' constituencies, they have to work on this issue individually because they don't agree. As opposed to the CBC, which has a pretty standard, unified response to things going on in different African nations, the CHC does not.***

This response illustrates that, from the perspective of caucus staff, CHC members respects the diversity that exists among its members and focuses on the plethora of issues they agree on rather than the issues they do not have a consensus on. This also provides plausibility that my approach is unique in that the caucus is a consequence of the preferences of the members in the caucus rather than the amalgamation of approximately fifty votes for the CBC and approximately thirty votes for the CHC that can be leverage at any given time. When a divisive issue does emerge, Estefania later mentioned that members would typically go to CHC offices individually to garner support for issues that are divisive within the caucus. I also noticed that while the caucus is democratic in its approach in deciding on what position to take, the chair has some power to act unilaterally and set the agenda on the statements that the caucus makes. Lastly, the CHC staff seems to view the CBC as being much more cohesive than the CHC.

As Estefania suggests, legislative staffers in CBC offices generally thought of their caucus as cohesive on most issues, but occasionally, they disagree on issues. Usually,

these disagreements were based on where members' district is geographically located—listing specific differences in caucus members that hail from southern districts. Some interviewees listed the percentage of non-black population in CBC districts as a point of contention; highlighting specific concerns about these populations and their capacity for donating to a member's campaign. Some of my interviewees from CBC offices in some way mentioned how beneficial it is to be in the CBC because of the approximately fifty votes they can have at any given time, which supports the conventional claims made about minority caucuses. For example, Kyle, a senior staffer states that,

*My boss always says that the strength of the wolf is in the pack and you need a pack for legislation to move forward. The CBC has a voice because they are critical in the Democratic Party and no one wants to upset them. A lot of people don't go out of their way to assist them, but no one wants to get in a fight with the CBC and that's been made clear over the last couple of years. They have a voting bloc of forty-five individuals and the top leading Democrats are members of the CBC. However, in a situation when they are in the minority it is much harder to get the Republicans to pay attention to the CBC's wants because they often don't care about the communities they serve.*

Kyle and several other interviewees outline additional benefits CBC members receive from being apart of the caucus. These claims bolster my expectation that caucuses matter as an institution. One junior staffer, Maurice, suggested that despite the seniority of many of the CBC members, they still feel ostracize. The caucus helps members grapple with these feelings of marginalization by validating their feelings and providing advice on how to deal with interpersonal issues that can surface in Congress. Kyle comments also provides plausibility that the CBC may possibly exert *caucus influence*, as non-CBC or CHC members actively try to not upset members of the CBC.

According to Maurice,

*Black members of Congress need to stand together to meet their goals as members of Congress because we've seen too often in history where just trying to be*

*a party player or trying to do things alone or just working with your state delegation, or any other group that you may be associated with, isn't good enough. Too often we're still marginalized and don't get a seat at the table, but as part of the caucus they band together to make a team of forty-three members who can speak on one accord. Often times, that demands a certain level of respect because it's a major voting bloc in Congress, especially for Democrats.*

*When the CBC stands together cohesively as members of Congress and not just as individual black members, who, if they were standing on their own could be easily ignored, toss aside, or even more marginalized, or whatever. **That's probably the thing that she finds most useful. She can go to the CBC and talk about the issues she's having with the leadership or with members of her committee or someone in her hallway or whoever, she goes to the CBC and often receives a lot of advice and counsel on how she can deal with that. They will stand up with you. They will stand up for her if what she saying is important enough to her and I think that's an invaluable resource, especially being a new member and you're still trying to find your way. CBC contains some of the most senior members of Congress who have gotten landmark legislation passed, they have made a name for themselves and they just really know their way around here. That's what the CBC is all about. They try to teach one another and help one another.***

Another interviewee provided an example of what Maurice discusses as the need for members, regardless of their seniority, to call on the CBC to prevent further marginalization. In January of 2015 there were efforts made to sidestep seniority norms and prevent a member of the CBC from becoming a ranking member of the Veteran's Affairs Committee. The person that tried to take the ranking position did not have as much seniority as the CBC member who was next in line for the position, but was the highest-ranking soldier in congressional history and was endorsed by a glut of prominent veteran groups. CBC members stood with this MC, which prevented the other MC from taking the ranking position. The respondent claim that incidents like this would happen a lot more if Black MCs did not have an institution like the CBC and their staff. According to the interviewee, the caucus staff played a major role in getting press coverage about the incident and facilitated other members' efforts

to make speeches and stances on behalf of the CBC member, which undoubtedly contributed to the CBC member becoming the ranking member of the Veteran's Affairs Committee.

Staffers in more senior CBC offices also expressed similar comments in the CBC's ability to provide members a safe place to feel protected and to discuss issues that are pertinent to African Americans. For instance, Ella, a senior staffer in a CBC office stated that

*CBC members have a lot of offline conversations. You can go to them [other CBC members] and be like, (draws closer and whispers in a low voice) "Okay, so, what's really going on?" They can take care of each other and help each other out. I think they're helpful in that sense, and they know how to navigate things.*

*Since a majority of the people in Congress are white men who get heard, we have to come together to work on these issues in order to get heard. I think they [the CBC] do have a very important role here. **If we didn't need the CBC, that would be great, but we do. We need someone to say "hey, that's not okay specifically because it hurts African Americans."** Without the CBC, that voice wouldn't get heard in the same matter. **It would be individuals making noise but there is strength in numbers and the caucus helps us to make a united voice on issues affecting African Americans and the caucus staff facilitates these efforts.***

This illustrates that CBC members regardless of their level of seniority see the caucus as a useful tool in gathering information about current issues in Congress and to discuss feelings of marginalization with their colleagues. Both Ella's and Maurice's comments provides plausibility for the conventional characterization of minority caucuses, as an institution, provides members "strength in numbers." However, both respondents complicate this characterization by enumerating additional benefits that minority caucuses uniquely provide its members. There was also narratives presented that suggests that the Hispanic caucus provides its members psychological benefits. Estefania stated that,

*It's like a family. I often tell people when they ask, "what was it like working for the caucus?" I always reply, "It was like a family." I do see them as family members and they protect each other and they make fun of each other, but when someone outside the family starts attacking them, then everyone joins forces and says, "hey, only I can insult my brother, you cannot."*

Hence, the CBC and CHC provide members a safe haven where they can share meals during meetings and protect one another when attacked by non-caucus members.

Ella's earlier comments suggest that CBC members may see themselves as surrogate representatives of African Americans (Dawson, 1994; Grose, 2011; Hall, 1996; Mansbridge, 1999; Minta, 2011; Tate, 2003). That is, Black MCs feel a responsibility to stand up for African Americans who may or may not be geographically located in their districts. After hearing Ella's comments, I asked a CBC member if he/she feels pressure to represent African Americans outside of his/her district and the CBC member stated that, "For sure. You sometimes have to resist that because in some instances you are violating legislative courtesy. Unless, they [the constituent] cannot get any representation from that person [the representative]—that's another story. That person is usually not Black." Here we observe that this CBC not only tries to represent African Americans outside of his geographic district, but he also implies that African Americans may have a difficult time being represented by a non-Black MC. The MC further explained that minority MCs are uniquely equipped to respond to the unique concerns of the African American community because of their shared fate. He also explained that part of the reason that they do this is because being a member of the CBC always reminds him/her to be concerned with how issues affect African Americans broadly. The member also mentioned that the caucus staff spends time on reminding members of this responsibility.

While all of my interviewees expressed the value in having the CBC work collectively on legislative issues, they were also quick to say that there are occasional disagreements. The topic of internal conflict within the CBC also came up during

my interview with a current CBC member. The CBC member suggested that since caucus members now hail from geographically diverse districts (compared to when the caucus was first started with thirteen members who hailed mostly from northern states), it is more difficult to build a consensus. The CBC member suggested that,

*Now, there is more diversity, which requires listening to different viewpoints and interests. Now, it is a tougher task for someone to corral and get consensus on any issue, which makes us somewhat dysfunctional. They don't handle it [internal conflict] well. **They don't handle it [internal conflict] well at all. It usually breaks down along regional lines.** For instance, there is the upcoming visit with Netanyahu, the president of Israel. Some folks in the black caucus wanted to issue a press release to take a stand against the visit and him disrespecting the first African American president by ignoring diplomatic protocol that has been in existence for hundreds of years. He should have notified the White House of his visit. They couldn't agree on issues on the stance, they were divided mostly along regional lines. Some members, mostly from the South, did not want to go on record as opposing the president of Israel because of their Jewish constituency and their donor base. That's an example of the dysfunction.*

From the CBC member's comments we observe that when conflict within the CBC arises, it usually stems from differences in where a member's districts is geographically located. The member later explained that when CBC members do disagree, they prefer to do so in private.

Next, interviewees referred to the CBC and CHC as useful networks that allow members to be more effective and organized in building support for the issues that are important to them. Also, these members see themselves as being responsible for providing caucus influence, as they see their role as speaking up for issues that are particularly harmful to racial and ethnic minorities. This gives plausibility for my theory of caucus influence that I discuss in my previous chapters. Lastly, members in the CBC may feel pressure to represent all African Americans, especially Black constituents that are not represented by a Black MC.

In general, the responses in this section complicates previous research on cohesion.



While many of my interviewees referred to the CBC's and CHC's size and their potential for bloc voting, other narratives suggest that CBC and CHC members work to protect the interest of Blacks and Latinos by speaking up issues that negatively affect them. Moreover, the above response from the CBC members and work from Barnett (1975) suggests that there is perhaps a time component to the shift in cohesion. That is, in the formative years of the CBC and CHC there was more agreement on issues, but more recently, cohesion is really about the aggregation of individual preferences because there is now more diversity in the representational styles and the districts the CBC and CHC members emerge from (Canon, 1999). Hence, there is some plausibility that minority congressional caucuses matter as an institution, rather than simply being a label for members with liked-preferences.

### **3.6.3 Caucus Staff**

An important missing variable in the study of minority congressional caucuses is their staff capacity. In previous chapters I hypothesize that caucus staff provide useful resources for its caucus members, but I did not specify what services they perform for its members. My qualitative interviews shed light on what tasks caucus staff members perform, but also reveal some vital information about the internal make-up of the CBC and CHC. In addition, I found multiple illustrations that the caucus staff provide individual CBC and CHC offices with legislative subsidies.

In previous chapters I have also hypothesized that part of the reason that minority caucuses are influential is the resources provided by the caucus staff. Moreover, the caucus staff is disproportionately accessed among caucus members. That is, caucus members in the leadership have more access to the caucus staff than non-leaders. I refer to this as the *caucus leadership advantage*. I found plausibility of the leadership advantage in several of the interviews I conducted. For instance, when I asked senior staffer, Martin, about the difference between when his boss was the CHC chair and

when they were not, he stated that,

*The obvious difference is that they're [the CHC staff] located in your office... they work for everyone [all CHC members], but when you're the chair, you're their main boss... So, the interaction goes from working with them all day, everyday to working with them only a couple times a week. To put it differently, when you're the chair, you're the main boss and in the other instance... you're just a member, so you're one of their twenty-five bosses.*

Other interviewees from CBC offices also suggested that although the caucus staff technically works for everyone that they mainly work for the caucus chair in assisting them in setting the agenda for the caucus.

All of my interviewees in CBC offices either implicitly or explicitly stated that the caucus staff reminds their office to not just be concerned about their district or the minorities in their district, but to be concerned with African Americans as a group. The vehicle that the caucus staff does this is through the various caucus-coordinated activities. For instance, one respondent stated that, "I wouldn't focus on the CBC budget if they didn't make me. We have too many other things going on." However, I noticed a difference that interviewees whose boss served on their caucus's executive committee, specifically as the chair, referred to the caucus staff as extremely helpful and provided a lot of examples to demonstrate when, exactly, the caucus staff assistance made a difference.

For interviewees whose boss did not serve in their caucus leadership, they were less likely to recall specific instances of when assistance from the caucus staff made a difference. Instead, they mentioned the weekly vote recommendations that the caucus staff helps the current CBC or CHC Whip create (see Appendix K) and the weekly lunches that the caucus staff plans. Interviewees generally consulted with the weekly voting recommendations, but stated that their member does not feel pressure to always vote with their caucus colleagues. In fact the CBC member in my study

mentioned that members are free to vote how they want because members “cannot be kicked out of the CBC.”

Interviewees that had contact with the caucus staff often referred to them as extremely helpful and discussed the caucus staff ability to be “facilitators of information.” Renee, a senior staffer in a CBC office stated that,

*The CBC staff is very helpful. They are like mini computers in that they realize what is important to our bosses; they are the eyes and ears because there are so many opportunities that are galvanized in the CBC office and they farm them out to members based on their interests. They are a great resource.*

*For example, say you're the Communication Director at the CBC, and Al Sharpton calls because he wants to talk about economic development. You, as the Communications Director would put him in touch with the CBC member working on that specific issue. Or the White House may contact the caucus staff and say that they're interested in discussing SNAP, WIC and income equality and they'll put them in contact with the CBC member working on that issue. Those are some examples of how the caucus staff connects CBC members to different opportunities.*

Hence, not only can the caucus staff connect members to outside groups who are working on similar issues, the staff acts as a liaison between caucus members and other branches of government. Kyle, who I mentioned earlier, explains what tasks the caucus staff performs for his boss in their interaction with a representative from government agencies.

*Caucus staffers do all the legwork. They organize members into different task forces depending on what congressional committees they serve on. They also assign members to task forces outside of their expertise; that way members can get different experiences and maybe later serve on a committee similar to that task force.*

*They [the caucus staff] also help facilitate meetings for outside groups that want to start working with the CBC, but everything is not just about working with the current chair and his or her staff, because they're the chair. It's more about getting that broad access to CBC members and getting them to the right person.*

*The caucus staff brief members before meetings on what needs to be done and how to do it. The caucus staffers are like law clerks working for multiple attorneys preparing all types of notes and facts so that when they get to the courtroom, the lawyer [CBC member] is ready to go. Now, I don't want to make it seem like members are not involved. They're not just figureheads. But they just don't have the time to do all of the research and find the background information necessary for these meetings.*

Here we notice that caucus staffers do a lot of the groundwork that it takes to run the CBC. The caucus staff uses the CBC task forces as a filter to connect members to different opportunities to collaborate with government agencies and interest groups. This interviewee later discussed the process that the CBC takes each year in developing an alternative budget with the help of the CBC's Budget Task Force and their network of Black organizations and interest groups outside of Congress. Through this and other mechanisms, the CBC helps its members to raise issues to the level of discussion and policy formulation. He added that in a number of instances, caucuses are the initial contact between Congress and citizens, facilitating efforts to obtain an audience within Congress for particular interests and points of view, and perhaps to place issues on the formal agenda. From Kyle's and other respondents' comments, it seems that minority congressional caucuses serve the pre-committee function in policy-making for its members, as members can develop expertise in a policy area and galvanized leadership opportunities that they might not otherwise get.

From the above narrative we also notice that not only do caucus staffers connect members to these outside groups, they also help brief members before these meetings to make sure that they are prepared. In addition to hosting briefings before meeting with outside groups, Kyle stated that caucus staffers would create fact sheets, develop talking points, and questions to ask outside speakers for caucus members. This provides plausibility that caucus staffers provide unique legislative subsidies for its membership.

The analogy that Kyle used to describe the work that caucus staffers do for CBC members as paralegal work was also present in my other interviews. For instance, Estefania, former staffer for the CHC stated that, “If the caucus has a position on something, it was my job to make sure everyone understood the position and everyone understood what their members would report if they were interviewed.” She later explained that the caucus staffers would serve as a clearinghouse for press inquiries because a lot of offices did not have their own press staff person and relied on the caucus staff to obtain airtime for them.

A staffer from a CHC office, Peter, recalls an instance where the caucus staff assisted his boss in setting up a meeting with the President. In particular he suggested that this meeting would have not taken place without the support and “brand name” of the CHC, but also because of the assistance of the caucus staff. Peter stated that,

*I recall an instance where the caucus staff and the CHC, as a group of Hispanic legislators, made a huge difference for a bill my boss wanted to pass. Before my boss’s bill became a law, there was a lot of controversy around the bill, so the President invited the CHC to come to the White House. My boss got a chance to speak and said, “Mr. president I support this bill, but the current draft is unfair to the territories.” President Obama turned to his official that works on the intergovernmental affairs at the White House and said, “[name of official] fix this.” The next day [name of official] calls our office and says, “Can we meet? We have good news.” [name of official] came to Congress with a whole bunch of White House staffers, we had a whole bunch of Healthcare staffers from all the territory offices in the CHC. She tells us that we are giving you an additional two billion dollars for that bill.*

*All of that happened because the CHC, as an entity, went to the White House. So, one great thing about the CHC is that there is strength in numbers and they [CHC members] gets invited to the White House as an entity and you can use those opportunities to make specific requests to the President, which is very rare. Otherwise you’re limited to writing a letter to the President that you know he doesn’t read. We write letters to the President all the time and he doesn’t read them. So, the CHC is good for obtaining meetings with the President. And CHC staff coordinated this whole thing.*

Here we notice that the CHC, and perhaps the CBC, can use their brand name to obtain meetings with the President and lobby him/her on issues that might not otherwise be able to get attention on by themselves. Hence, minority congressional caucuses makes individual Black and Latino MCs visible in circumstances that they are rendered invisible. The idea of minority congressional caucuses having a brand name came up in another interview, but in a different context. The comments below from Maurice reveal that some legislative organizations in Congress try to use the CBC's brand name to promote their events, especially if these events concern African Americans. Maurice stated that,

*One time the DNC [Democratic National Committee] was hosting some event geared towards African Americans. It was about some report they were releasing. I don't remember the details of it. But, I do remember having a conversation with one of the caucus staff members about it. The event wasn't working with my schedule so I considered sending someone in my place. Before doing so, I called the office to make sure that this was a CBC sponsored event. The caucus staff didn't find the event important because it was a "DNC African American event," not a CBC event.*

*The CBC staff felt taken advantaged of by the event because they felt that the outreach to CBC offices by the DNC was for a "rubberstamp" approval by the caucus rather than actually trying to engage with the CBC members. This is because the DNC didn't involve the caucus staff. So, because of the conversation I had with them about it, I didn't go.*

*In general, if the CBC staff is not involved in planning an event about black people on the Hill, we're [legislative staffers] inclined not to attend. I'm so glad we had that conversation online. Our time is very limited. But, if the CBC calls and asked my boss to do something, she would do everything to make it happen. Now, that doesn't mean that she always wants to do and it doesn't mean she always agrees with them. Now, if an organization is planning a black event on the Hill and the CBC is not involved... That's going to raise a red flag and I know my boss would not want me to attend that event.*

Maurice comments reveal that his boss is willing to go above and beyond for the CBC

even if his boss does not always want to do the task. Also, his comments suggest that members of minority caucuses are selective in the events that they associate with. While they are willing to collaborate with other organizations in Congress, they want to do so in a meaningful way.

In addition to examining the tasks that caucus staff perform for its members, I was also interested in how often and to what end do individual CBC and CHC offices consult with the caucus staff. All of my respondents mentioned that they contact or are contacted by members of their caucus staff. At the lowest level, the caucus staff contacted my interviewees twice a week—once for the weekly vote recommendations and once for a reminder about the caucus meeting, which included the agenda. However, most of my respondents admitted to having contact more than this. While the purpose of the contact varied according to the respondent, generally speaking, the communication was so that both the caucus staff and the individual office was aware of different issues that were occurring in Congress or for status updates on different projects. Maurice, a staffer in a CBC office stated that,

*The purpose of our conversations is basically to keep my finger on the pulse. So, I keep in touch daily to see if they need anything for us and so they know what we're working on so that we're not stepping on anyone's toes. I also keep in touch to ensure that there is a personal connection so that when we need them, they don't associate us as the office that only calls the CBC staff when we need them. So, we keep these important personal connections with them. That way when we need a favor they'll do it and if they need us to do something on [name of issue] or whatever the issue may be, we'll do it. Our relationship is about constant check-ins.*<sup>5</sup>

From Maurice's comments we see that his office talks to the caucus staff on a daily basis to provide one another with status updates regarding various projects that they are working on together. He also wants to keep in contact with the caucus staff because he knows that his boss will eventually need their help on something and

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<sup>5</sup>I left the name of the issue out of this quote because the office that my interviewee works for would have been too easily identifiable.

he does not want his boss to be seen as the member who only calls when they need something. Another staffer, Nicole, stated that her office keeps in contact with the caucus staff because they are a great resource for a “temperature test” to see what offices will cosponsor a bill or knowing which members her boss could count on for a supportive vote. I later asked caucus staff about Maurice’s and Nicole’s comments on contact with caucus staff and they confirmed that they were more likely to go above and beyond for members who stayed in constant contact with them. The narratives in this section provides plausibility that caucuses matter as institutions because aspects of their institutional arrangement allows for members to act differently than they might otherwise—say, if there were no minority congressional caucuses.

The interviews revealed that part of the CBC and CHC staff’s responsibility is planning the weekly lunches for their caucus members. When Congress is in session, these lunches occur once a week for approximately one and half to two hours and the CBC and CHC staffs are responsible for gathering the information for the agenda items and distributing it to all of the members before and during the meeting. They call for the meetings electronically and set them up by communicating with all of the individual offices. There is usually an outside speaker at every meeting and if necessary, the caucus staff hosts a briefing on the topic before the speaker comes. Also, after the meeting is over, the caucus staff often works late into the night following up with different offices concerning issues that came up during the meeting.

Something that was made clear from my interviews with caucus staffers who had an opportunity to attend the weekly caucus meetings was that these weekly meetings allowed members to share a personal connection that is not present in any other legislative organization in Congress. For example, Nicole, a senior staff who has worked in several CBC offices and for other government agencies, stated that,

*I think the best thing about these meetings is the collegiality between members, that personal relationship, that allows you to communicate about something that might be difficult or compromise on something that you really wouldn’t*



*have done; you've got a personal relationship with someone and so you did it, because you knew they would do it back. I think that we [Congress] lost that. So, I think the nice thing about the CBC and what the staff tries to do, and I did it too when I was there, is really allow members to talk to each other and ask questions and get information from the staff and the staff pulls information from the administration, agencies, etc. **To give it to them in a way that they also can have a private discussion with a large group of their colleagues, and go through pros and cons and say things that maybe they won't say in a greater caucus meeting because they don't know who's in there, who's listening or who's going to repeat it.***

*I think that's probably one of the best things that the luncheon brings; a chance to relax and feel comfortable in their discussion. The staff likes to keep a lot of the information during meetings confidential as much as possible. You have to keep your mouth shut when you go to the meetings.*

From Nicole's comments we learn that CBC meetings are unique in that it is perhaps one of the few places in which minority legislators feel completely comfortable in expressing their ideas because of the expectation of confidentiality. The caucus staff also fill in gaps of information about topics either by providing their own knowledge or inviting other outside groups or representatives from different branches of government in for a meeting. Below another senior staffer, LeRoy, explains how the caucus staff assists its members. He also speculates about what would happen if there were no CBC or caucus staffers.

*If the caucus staff weren't there then the work would just be done in a less organize or systematic fashion. It would just fall upon the worker bees and individual offices to get it done, which I doubt is actually possible. I think the CBC staff is helping members magnify their interest in and outside of Congress in ways that they would not be able to accomplish without their staff person or ability to organize as a group of forty something members.*

Overall, my interviewees found the caucus staff to be helpful. However, interviewees whose member served in the caucus leadership found the caucus to be extremely helpful and provided several detailed examples of how the caucus assistance made a difference for their office. The caucus meetings are also important because it allows a

chance for members to share ideas and advice on a weekly basis. For instance, Lindsey who is a staffer that's been working in the same CBC office for decades, claims that her boss never actually eats the food at the lunches, but still attends them because he wants to listen to what his colleagues are working on and to offer advice and counsel to freshman and junior CBC members.

However, I should also note that a few of my interviewees expressed a desire for the caucus staff to do more, but recognized they are limited in what they can do because they only have between three and five employees since the early 2000s. I hypothesize that part of the reason is that legislative staffers in CBC and CHC expect more from the caucus staff is because they help to pay the salaries of the caucus staff since the 2000s from their congressional budgets. In fact, the CBC member I interview stated that, "we all care about what they're doing because all of the members are helping to pay their salaries."

#### **3.6.4 Cosponsorship and Coalition Building**

Although legislative staffers in CBC and CHC offices expressed similar comments about the usefulness of the caucus staff, I noticed differences in how these offices decide to support legislation via cosponsorship. In particular, I observed that freshman or junior members, had an explicit protocol they followed in deciding whether or not to sign their boss on to a bill, but offices with senior MCs, staffers had much more leeway in their decision to sign their boss on to it a bill. One thing that remained constant across my sample is that there is a large value place on cosponsorship from the perspective of both the sponsor of the bill and the potential co-sponsor.

In discussing the process of which bills she signs her boss's name on to, Nicole explains the detailed process that she goes through every week when Congress is in session of reviewing bills for cosponsorship:

*I have about three hundred bills in my inbox right now; so I'll cut them to about sixty and I review all sixty on a Friday, and then I pick out ones that I think*

*that represents the markers that she's given me, the guidelines she has set out as her priority, and then from there I take it down to typically about twenty-five. After that, I write cover sheets on them. I tell her what I think are the pros and cons to signing on to the bill are. I tell her who's on it, if it was introduced previously; who was on it then, maybe it was a contentious issue? I try to do an impact statement. I ask myself, "what would this do for [name of the state] or the district—if I can get it down that far? Then I put that cover sheets on the bills and she looks at every single one of them, and she says yes or she says no. Because I take a long time with it before she gets it, she does not spend that much time on it. But, I don't believe in not just signing her up for stuff. She is aware of every bill that I put her name on to.*

While Nicole's boss looks at all the bills before she signs on to them, Nicole still plays a major role in not only filtering the number of bills down to a manageable number, but she also can help sway her member in one way or the other by the information she provides on the cover sheets that are attached to the bills. Many of my other interviewees from freshman or junior offices expressed a similar process to deciding whether or not their boss signs on to a bill. That is, they first examine whether the bill has to do with the legislative priorities that are most important to the member, then they think about the effect that bill could have on their state or district and lastly, they examine whether the bills has something to do with their committees or caucus memberships. For instance, Renee, a staffer in a freshman CBC office explains why their office takes the process of deciding to sign on to a bill so seriously. In particular she states that,

*Everything goes through her. We want you to look at the legislation that she introduced and cosponsored and tell what she's about. You know, there are four hundred and thirty-five members and they all have ideas and we get asked to be on bills all of the time, but my main goal, in my position, is to make sure that we can support these things with a vote down the line.*

***In terms of cosponsorship, not cosponsoring does not mean we don't support it. It is just that we really want her to be able to say that I'm not a member who is all over the place. You have to be a champion of certain things; so, we want to make sure her cosponsorship matches***

*up to her priorities.*

Again, we see that minority caucus members do not take what bills they cosponsor lightly. Both Renee and Nicole comments suggest two things. First, their bosses seem to think what they cosponsor is important; we know this just from the mere time their office invest in the process of reviewing bills for cosponsorship. Second, their bosses feel that what bills a member cosponsors reveals something about their personal legislative priorities. Perhaps cosponsorship is so important in these offices because freshman or junior MCs introduce fewer bills than their senior colleagues and in absent of their own legislation, they feel that their colleagues and constituents will form conclusions about their legislative priorities from the types of legislation that they decide to cosponsor.

Interviewees from senior offices has a lot more autonomy in reviewing and signing their boss onto legislation. Some of these interviewees suggested that their bosses rarely reviewed legislation themselves before agreeing to cosponsor it.

*With [number of years left intentional blank] years in his position I know where he is on ninety-nine percent of the issues. So it's easy for us as staff to say, "Yes, we'll cosponsor it." If we don't know what his position is then we'll do a memo and put it in front of him and let him decide. That rarely ever happens. But for a lot of stuff we know what his position is, so it's not hard for us to sign him on to things. In other offices, the staff has to go to the members themselves. They don't let anybody say "yes" for them except them and they're the hardest people to work with because of that.*

Notice that Ellen and other interviewees from more senior offices have a lot more leeway in signing their MC on to a bill. Also, senior interviewees, like Ellen, often characterize freshman or junior offices as "difficult to work with" because everything has to go through the member, which makes it difficult for these members to reply promptly to requests for cosponsorship.

Regardless of their approach to deciding to cosponsor a bill, all of my interviewees that mentioned cosponsorship viewed it as an important legislative tool for CBC and

CHC members. For example, LeRoy, a senior staffer in a CBC office explains the importance of cosponsorship below.

*Cosponsors are very important, you know, not just for the CBC members, but they're important to the legislative process of the House. Have you learned about signaling theory? Well, cosponsors are probably the best signals you could ever get. There is so much information that comes across my desk here at the Hill. There are not enough hours in the day, there are not enough days in the year to read all of the legislation that people are asking you to cosponsor and sign on to. And you have to make a decision. I could try and read a hundred-twelve page bill or I can make another kind of decision.*

*Members, over time, develop brands and give off signals just by the legislation they sponsor. And once you learn how to read the signals, you can cut through all of the white noise and the signal comes through loud and clear. So, for example, if I read the cosponsors then I can make a decision whether to cosponsor the bill or not without ever having to read the bill. I guarantee that if I ever got time to actually reading the bill, it wouldn't change the decision at all. The initial instinct would be correct because of the cosponsors. That's why you don't really make decisions based on one or two cosponsors.*

There are a few things to notice about LeRoy's comments. Being a cosponsor sends an important signal to other MCs about your position on an issue. Also, he reveals that he uses a few heuristics in making his decision to cosponsor a bill that allows him to never actually have to read most of the bills he signs his boss on to. First, the current number of cosponsors matters. Are there a few members signed on to the bill or are there a lot of members signed on? If the bill only has a few cosponsors, then he is going to hold off and do research on the bill himself. Second, the names of the current cosponsors and the congressional districts that these members hail from are important. Do they come from similar districts that have similar demographics and legislative priorities as mine? Later he discussed how most of the CBC members have similar priorities and also hail from similar districts, which makes him cosponsor most of the bills that CBC members introduce.

Previous research has examine constraints that shape cosponsorship (Krehbiel, 1995), but few studies have studied the relationship between minority congressional caucuses and bill cosponsorship. However, narratives from my qualitative interviews reveals that members use cosponsorship as a tool to signal their legislative priorities to their colleagues in the House.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I illustrate that there is plausibility to my argument that the caucus staff assist minority congressional caucuses in their legislative efforts. As I mentioned in the outset of this chapter, four themes emerged during the qualitative interviews I had with legislative staffers in CBC and CHC offices and caucus staffers. First, staffers in CBC offices revealed that the top legislative priorities for CBC members include: education, unemployment, healthcare, civil rights, transportation, criminal justice reform and economic equality, social programs, and African trade. Staffers in CHC offices rank healthcare and immigration as their top priorities. Second, incongruence with previous literature the advantages of being apart of the CBC and CHC include bloc voting via cohesiveness and psychological benefits (Singh, 1998). However, results from this chapter suggest that the CBC is mostly cohesive on issues, but disagreements can arise and they usually stem from differences in where districts are geographically located—listing specific differences in caucus members that hail from southern districts that have a sizable non-Black population. Similar results were found within the CHC, but Puerto Rico statehood and lifting the embargo in Cuba are two specific issues that divide the caucus.

Representatives from the CBC and CHC suggested that when issue arises within the caucus that divide members, the caucuses generally do not take a position on it. The results from the cohesion section illustrates that my approach is plausibility in that the caucus is a consequence of the preferences of caucus members rather than

the amalgamation of roll call votes. The illustrations is derived from the unique institutional arrangements of minority congressional caucuses that its members benefit from and their unique relationship with their caucus staff.

Third, the caucus staff of the CBC and CHC act as facilitators of information for their caucus members. In congruence with previous literature, I found instances of minority caucuses providing members with independent information outside of the information provided through traditional channels (Hammond, 1991; Richardson, 1993). However, I present specific instances where the assistance from the caucus staff made a difference in how a CBC or CHC member reacted in a situation. Lastly, an unexpected theme that emerged from these data was cosponsorship. In particular, members, regardless of their seniority, valued took cosponsorship seriously and some members even sought out the caucus staff for assistance in garnering support for their legislative pursuits. However, seniority had an affect on how member evaluated legislation for cosponsorship. That is, legislative staffers in senior offices had more leeway in signing their boss on to a bill, while freshman or junior interviewees had boss's that wanted to review all the legislation before signing on to a bill.

The chapter suggests that caucus members see their minority caucus as something that is vital to their ability in advancing legislation, but also other related legislative activities. This is not to say that previous research on CBC and CHC were wrong, but they are incomplete. While interviewees, on several occasions, expressed sentiments that are consist with previous work on minority caucuses, these data suggest that these studies only reveal part of the story. Instead, these data reveal that there is space for my argument that minority congressional caucuses, as institutions, matter. Moreover, the results from this chapter help to demonstrate the merit of the assumptions and hypotheses made in the previous chapter, and to a certain extent, demonstrate how these assumptions operate in Congress.

In the next two chapters, I move onto more systematic tests of the collective

influence of minority congressional caucuses. This chapter provides plausibility for the two subsequent quantitative chapters. In particular, I use the illustrations of caucus staff influence to construct the statistical model for Chapter Four, which studies the extent to which the CBC and CHC produce more legislation when they serve as their caucus's chair because of the legislative subsidies provided by the staff. I also observed illustrations of the CBC and CHC purposely withholding support on White member's bill during my qualitative interviews, which I call this caucus influence. I couple illustrations of caucus influence with the importance of cosponsorship to these members and construct the statistical model for Chapter Five, which studies the degree to which CBC and CHC leaders' ability to advance a White member's minority interest bill by offering support via cosponsorship.



## CHAPTER IV

# Legislative Production and Minority Congressional Caucuses

### 4.1 Introduction

As I mentioned in Chapter One, this study, as with any study on minority political representation, at some level, studies descriptive representation.<sup>1</sup> Previous studies concerning descriptive representation has focused on whether Black and, to a lesser extent, Latino legislators provide better substantive representation to racial and ethnic minorities when compared to their White counterparts (Bratton 2006; Cameron, Epstein, and O'Halloran 1996; Canon 1999; Casellas 2007; Hero and Tolbert 1995; Huerta and Santos 2006; Gamble 2007; Minta 2011; Swain, 1993; Tate 2003; Wilson, 2010). Research examining the substantive influence of congressional staff, however, is sparse. Two studies examine the relationship between Black congressional district staffers and Black constituents (Grose 2011; Grose, Mangum, and Martin 2007).<sup>2</sup> Each study imparts qualitative evidence that staffers observed stronger connections between African American district staffers and African American constituencies when

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<sup>1</sup>As I mentioned in Chapter One, representation scholars define descriptive representation as the extent to which the legislature mirrors the demographic characteristics of the population that it represents.

<sup>2</sup>To the author's knowledge, no study to date has examined the influence of Latino congressional staffers.

compared with their White colleagues. This relationship appears to be the consequence of an overlap in the social, political, and professional communities among Black staffers and constituents (Grose, Mangum, and Martin 2007, p. 457).

Previous studies on staff influence does not include the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) and Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) staffs in their examination of congressional staffers. This oversight is surprising given the qualitative evidence I present in Chapter Three that suggests that the caucus staff of the CBC and CHC act as facilitators of information for their caucus members. In congruence with previous literature, I also found evidence that minority caucuses provide members with independent information outside of the information provided through traditional channels (Hammond, 1991; Richardson, 1993). As I mentioned in Chapter Two, I posit that the reason minority caucuses are influential is, in part, because of the resources provided by the staff, which, presumably, the leadership has more access to than non-leaders—since the staff is located in the chair’s office. This phenomenon, which I refer to as caucus leadership advantage, creates necessary variation among Black and Latino MCs in the same caucus; more importantly, it allows me to examine minority caucuses’ institutional significance, whereas previous research typically uses an act committed by an individual member of the CBC or CHC to make inferences about the group. My approach, however, is different in that I incorporate institutional by-products of the CBC and CHC—their staff and caucus leadership—to examine their agenda-setting behavior.

Framing the discussion of descriptive and substantive representation of racial and ethnic minorities by emphasizing the institutional foundation of congressional caucus activity is essential in developing a more informed theoretical assessment of how, and why, race and ethnic-based interests matter in Congress. I argue that previous research has not adequately investigated the agenda-setting behavior of Black and Latino MCs because they do not consider these MCs as members of the CBC and CHC nor their

ability to exert caucus influence .

Before studying caucus leaders' ability to exert caucus influence in the next chapter, I must first establish that minority caucuses, as institutions, matter in Congress. In this chapter, I present evidence that when CBC and CHC members serve as their caucus chair, their legislative output increases. After establishing this, in the next chapter, I present evidence that the caucus leadership exerts caucus influence in the legislative process.

This chapter is organized in five sections. First, I restate the hypotheses that I will test in this chapter. Second, I discuss the data and methods of the statistical model, which measures the effect of the caucus leadership in bill sponsorship. Third, I present the statistical results and I detail the relative importance of the hypothesized factors. Fourth, I explore the implications of the results and explain how these results provide evidence of the importance of minority congressional caucuses and their inclusion in future studies of agenda-setting.

## **4.2 Hypotheses**

As discussed in Chapter Two, I expect an increase in legislative productivity when a member of the CBC or CHC serves as the chair of their caucus. This productivity is unique to the CBC and CHC chairs—and not their colleagues on the executive committee (e.g. First Vice-Chair, Whip)—because of their unique access to caucus staff, as well as their personal staff, which gives them the means to introduce more legislation. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, simply studying the number of bills introduced by Black and Latino MCs would not be sufficient since these variables are not connected to an institutional aspect of the CBC and CHC. However, the chairs of the CBC and CHC and their caucus staffers are essential institutional tools derived from minority congressional caucuses.

I test the following hypotheses concerning CBC and CHC chairs and their legisla-

tive production in this chapter:

*Hypothesis 1. CBC and CHC chairship should be positively associated with their level of general bill introduction.*

*Hypothesis 2. CBC and CHC chairship should be positively associated with their level of “substantive and significant” bill introduction.*

*Hypothesis 3. CBC and CHC chairship should be positively associated with their level of substantive bill introduction.*

*Hypothesis 4. CBC and CHC chairship should be positively associated with their level of commemorative bill introduction.*

I test my expectation of caucus influence across these four categories to see if caucus chair’s legislative output holds generally or if it depends on the type of legislation that is introduced. I will discuss the coding of the bill categories below.

### 4.3 Data and Methods

The principal purpose of this project is to assess whether the collective organization of minority congressional caucuses helps to facilitate the performance of its individual members. As I mentioned in the outset of this chapter, I want to study the caucus leadership’s agenda-setting behavior.<sup>3</sup> I posit that the leadership in minority caucuses is an appropriate proxy for examining the influence of minority congressional caucuses because becoming apart of the leadership of the CBC or CHC enhances a member’s ability to propose legislation because of their access to the caucus staff.

I amend Volden et. al (2013)’s bill sponsorship data that spans the 93<sup>rd</sup> (1973-1975) through the 112<sup>th</sup> (2011- 2013) Congresses to examine the effect of minority

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<sup>3</sup>I consider a Black or Latino MC to be a leader if they are apart of the Executive Committee, which comprises of four positions: Chairman, First Vice Chair, Second Vice Chair, Secretary, and Whip (Singh, 1998). Please note that positions within each caucus has changed slightly over time.

congressional caucus on legislative productivity. I added several covariates relevant to my study, but most importantly, I added independent variables for caucus leadership, which I collected myself (see Appendices J and K for more details). The total number of observations in this dataset is 8,522.

The dependent variable in this model is bill sponsorship, which is an overdispersed count variable. Hence, I estimate a negative binomial model of bill sponsorship. When compared to other regression models, the negative binomial is said to appropriately grapple with overdispersion in count data, which makes it ideal for this analysis (Coxe, West and Aiken, 2009). Also, since these data spans over thirty years, this study includes fixed effects using dummy variables for each Congress.

#### **4.3.1 Dependent Variables for Caucus Leadership Models**

The dependent variables for the first set of analyses are four different categories of legislation: all bills (ABills), commemorative (CBills), substantive (SBills), and substantive and significant (SSBills). The categorization of these bills was constructed by Volden and Wiseman (2010) and Volden et. al (2013). An introduced bill is deemed “commemorative” if the substance of the legislation satisfies one of several criteria deeming it as commemorative or symbolic in purpose, such as the naming or renaming of public buildings, the minting of commemorative coins and medals, and related matters. An introduced bill is denoted as “substantive and significant” if it had been the subject of an end-of-the-year report in the *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*. Finally, an introduced bill is deemed “substantive” if it is neither commemorative nor substantive and significant, according to Volden and Wiseman’s coding protocol; or, if it would have been coded as commemorative, but it was mentioned in an end-of-the-year report in the *Congressional Quarterly Almanac* that corresponds to the relevant Congress.

### 4.3.2 Independent Variables for Caucus Leadership Model

Several variables are needed to test the hypotheses specified earlier. As I mentioned earlier, I expect CBC and CHC chairship to be positively associated with several categories of bill introduction. Hence, I include dummy variables for the CBC Chair and CHC Chair. Each variable is coded “1” for each MC who served as the chair of the CBC or CHC and a “0” otherwise. However, to ensure that these results are unique to minority caucus chairs, I also include dummy variables for general membership in the CBC and CHC as well as caucus leadership variables for the other members in the executive committee.

In addition to the key independent variables I referenced above, I include several control variables that previous literature suggests significantly influence the number of bills that an MC introduces.

*Seniority.* Seniority may be a guide to legislators’ decisions. The growing experience related to seniority (i.e. learning how to establish oneself as a credible force in the chamber) is basic to establishing a legislative agenda and building a creditable reputation (Schiller, 1995). First or second term representatives may face the challenge of deciding where bill sponsorship fits into their goals. Thus, junior members are more likely to sponsor fewer bills than their more senior colleagues. Seniority is measured as the number of consecutive terms that a representative served in Congress. Since seniority contributes to a MC’s knowledge, expertise and familiarity with the legislative process, I expect senior MCs to introduce more legislation (Hibbing, 1991).

*Previous vote margin.* This variable is included as it is a relevant explanatory variable. Previous electoral margin is an interval variable that measures the percentage of the vote that the legislator obtained in the previous election. Electorally vulnerable MCs may be more or less likely to introduce legislation.

*Democratic Congress.* When compared to Republicans, Democrats have inclination for expanding government whereas Republicans’ preference for constricting

the role of government. Therefore, Democratic Congresses may permit higher levels of bill introduction when compared to Republican Congresses. Congresses with a Democratic majority is coded “1” and “0” otherwise.

*Female.* Gender and bill sponsorship has been widely discussed in the literature. Some scholars find that women are disadvantaged in introducing legislation while others find that women sponsor at least as many bills as men regardless of which party controls Congress (Rocca and Sanchez, 2007, p. 146). Also, some scholars have found evidence that, under certain conditions, female MCs may produce higher levels of bill introduction when compared to their male colleagues (e.g. Swers, 2002). To investigate how gender might impact my study, I include a gender variable where female MCs are coded “1” and male MCs are coded “0.”

*Chair and Sub-chair of Committee.* Chairs of committees may produce higher levels of bill introduction when compared to their colleagues because they introduce legislation relevant to their committee and district. MCs are coded “1” if they are a chair of a congressional committee and “0” otherwise. For similar reasons, I included a control for committee sub-chairs.

*Ideological Extremity.* Previous research purports that ideological extreme MCs sponsor more legislation than the median member of the House of Representatives on average (Rocca and Sanchez, 2009). Scholars suggest that ideologically extreme MCs engage in bill sponsorship, and other non-roll call activities, as a form of position-taking since their bills may have a lower probability of passing. Ideological extremity is measured as the absolute value of MC’s DW-Nominate score minus the House Median’s DW-Nominate score.

## 4.4 Results

Tables 4.4 through 4.8 depict the results from the negative binomial regression models I ran to examine the influence of caucus leadership in legislative production.

The first table presents the results of the general negative binomial where the dependent variable is a count variable of the total number of introduced bills (“All Bills”). First, I should note that the CBC Chair variable has an independent effect, which is significant ( $p < .05$ ) and positive, suggesting support for hypothesis one. However, this hypothesis is only partially supported because there is no such result for the CHC Chair. The beta coefficient on the CBC Chair variable is 0.233, which tells us how much a one unit increase in each bill causes the log of  $\mu$  to increase. Since beta coefficients are not the most useful or intuitive way to report my results, I exponentiate the coefficients and report the incident rate ratios (IRRs). The idea being that the coefficient tells you how changes in CBC chair (or any other independent variable) affect the rate at which bill introduction (or any other dependent variable) occurs. Hence for the CBC variable, the IRR is 1.26, which states that if a MC is the Chair of the CBC, they introduce twenty-six percent more bills than non-CBC chairs, which, according to the marginal effects chart, equates to about three and a half additional bills. This result has vital implications considering the the average number of bills introduce by a MC is only seventeen.

It is also important to point out that I observe significant and negative results for a general CBC member. That is, the CBC member beta coefficient is  $-0.391$ , which means they introduced six less bills when compared to non-CBC members; this result is statistically significant at the  $p < .001$  level. Similarly, I found negative and significant results for a general CHC member. That is, the CHC member beta coefficient is  $-0.181$ , which means they introduced approximately three less bills when compared to non-CHC members; this result is statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  level. This result is consistent with previous studies that suggests that given the lack of influence of minorities in Congress, Black and Latino MCs sponsor and cosponsor fewer bills on average than their White colleagues (Rocca and Sanchez, 2007).

After establishing that a CBC member is more productive in introducing legisla-



tion when she is the chair, it is important to see what types of bills might be driving this effect. To this end, I run similar models for commemorative, substantive, and substantive and significant bills (see above for information on coding schema). In regards to substantive bills, I find that the CBC Chair has an independent effect, which is significant ( $p < .05$ ) and positive, suggesting support for hypothesis two. However, as with hypothesis one, this hypothesis is only partially supported, as there is no such result for the CHC Chair. The coefficient on the CBC chair variable is 0.265; the IRR is 1.30, which implies that if a MC is a chair of the CBC, they introduce thirty percent more substantive bills than non-CBC chairs, which, equates to about four additional bills. This result has vital implications considering the the average number of substantive and significant bills introduce by a MC is only fifteen.

Next, I did not find support for hypothesis three—substantive and significant bills should be positively associated with CBC and CHC chairship. Instead, institutional leadership variables, such as chairship or sub-chairship of a committee in the House, was positively associated with a member’s level of substantive and significant bill introduction.

Also, I did not find support for hypothesis four—commemorative bills should be positively associated with CBC and CHC chairship. Instead, general membership in the CBC and CHC was positively associated with commemorative bill introduction and the result is statistically significant. This result is consistent with work by Tate (2003) and others who suggest that without Black MCs participating in the legislative process, the symbolic interest of Black constituents, such as the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, would not be represented in the polity.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Latino legislators have engaged in symbolic bill introduction on the behalf of Latino constituents (e.g. Wilson, 2010). As Tate (2003), Sanchez and Morin (2011), and others suggest, the absence of racial and ethnic minority legislators in Congress would further

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<sup>4</sup>Work from Brenson (2009) details the arduous process that CBC members, especially Congressman John Conyers (D-MI), took in establishing the national holiday.

marginalize the symbolic importance of African Americans and Latinos as well as their contributions to American society.

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>
Democratic Congress	0.65	0.477	0	1
Democrat	0.560	0.496	0	1
CHC Member	0.035	0.185	0	1
CHC Leader	0.007	0.082	0	1
CHC Chair	0.004	0.06	0	1
CBC Member	0.069	0.254	0	1
CBC Leader	0.011	0.104	0	1
CBC Chair	0.002	0.048	0	1
Female	0.096	0.295	0	1
Previous Vote Margin	68.258	13.815	23	100
Ideological Extremity	-0.005	0.424	-0.916	1.633
Chair [Committee]	0.05	0.218	0	1
Sub-chair [Committee]	0.246	0.431	0	1
Seniority	5.27	4.043	1	29
South	0.301	0.459	0	1
Substantive Significant Bills	0.752	1.883	0	24
Significant Bills	15.34	17.045	0	255
Commemorative Bills	0.999	2.118	0	58
All Bills	17.091	18.305	0	258

Table 4.2: Determinants of Legislative Production (93<sup>rd</sup> – 112<sup>th</sup> Congresses)

Variable	All Bills b/se
CBC Member	-0.391*** (0.072)
CBC Chair	0.233* (0.136)
CBC Leader	-0.184** (0.085)
CHC Member	-0.181* (0.095)
CHC Chair	0.047 (0.154)
CHC Leader	-0.078 (0.119)
Democratic Congress	-0.091** (0.036)
Democrat	-0.441*** (0.055)
Seniority	0.013*** (0.003)
Female	0.125** (0.051)
Chair of Committee	0.405*** (0.031)
Sub-chair of Committee	0.308*** (0.016)
Previous Vote Margin	0.004*** (0.001)
Ideological Extremity	-0.630*** (0.068)
Constant	2.527*** (0.064)
<i>N</i>	8522

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

The dependent variable is a count variable of all bills introduced.

Table 4.3: Determinants of Legislative Production [By Category] (93<sup>rd</sup> – 112<sup>th</sup> Congresses)

	SS Bills	SBills	CBills
Variable	b/se	b/se	b/se
CBC Member	-0.779*** (0.161)	-0.406*** (0.076)	0.172* (0.079)
CBC Chair	0.386 (0.530)	0.265* (0.144)	-0.217 (0.398)
CBC Leader	-0.221 (0.374)	-0.230** (0.091)	0.596** (0.206)
CHC Member	-0.222 (0.202)	-0.196* (0.101)	0.285** (0.100)
CHC Chair	0.407 (0.668)	0.063 (0.162)	-0.593 (0.378)
CHC Leader	-0.737 (0.607)	-0.071 (0.125)	0.285 (0.100)
Democratic Congress	-0.475*** (0.180)	-0.102*** (0.037)	0.327*** (0.109)
Democrat	-0.228* (0.125)	-0.458*** (0.058)	-0.330*** (0.069)
Seniority	0.085*** (0.007)	0.010*** (0.003)	0.009* (0.005)
Female	0.039 (0.114)	0.131** (0.054)	-0.026 (0.059)
Chair of Committee	1.761*** (0.070)	0.273*** (0.033)	-0.092 (0.078)
Sub-chair of Committee	1.493*** (0.046)	0.257*** (0.017)	0.128** (0.041)
Previous Vote Margin	0.005*** (0.002)	0.004*** (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)
Ideological Extremity	-0.282* (0.160)	-0.634*** (0.072)	-0.713*** (0.088)
Constant	-3.191*** (0.188)	2.510*** (0.067)	-.637*** (0.145)
<i>N</i>	8522	8522	8522

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

SS Bills = substantive and significant bills

S Bills = significant bills

C Bills = commemorative bills

As I mentioned in Chapter Two, previous research suggest that the ability for racial and ethnic minorities to introduce bills is constricted under Republican controlled Congresses (e.g. Rocca and Sanchez, 2009). To investigate how this might influence the CBC and CHC chairs' ability to introduce legislation, I conduct similar statistical models below for each category of legislation to examine how majority party status might effect different types of introduced legislation. I also included several independent variables that significantly affects a MC's ability to introduce legislation.

The first column of Table 4.4 shows that when Democrats are in control, the CBC Chair has an independent effect on the general category of bill introduction, which is significant ( $p < .05$ ) and positive, which is consistent with hypothesis one. However, this hypothesis is only partially supported because there is no such result for the CHC Chair. The beta coefficient on the CBC Chair variable is 0.323 with an IRR of 1.38, which suggests that if a MC is a chair of the CBC during Democratically controlled Congresses, they introduce thirty-eight percent more bills than non-CBC chairs, which equates to about four and a half additional bills. Also, consistent with the results in the previous table, I observe significant and negative results for a general CBC member. That is, the CBC member variable is  $-0.431$  or introduce six less bills during Democratically controlled Congresses when compared to non-CBC members; this result is statistically significant at the  $p < .001$  level. I found no significant results for the CHC variables.

Next, the second column of Table 4.4 demonstrates that when Republicans are in the majority, a CBC member variable has a beta coefficient of  $-0.229$ , which implies they introduce approximately three less bills when compared to non-CBC members; this result is statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  level. Similarly, I found negative and significant results for general CHC membership. That is, the CHC member variable has a coefficient of  $-0.263$  or introduces approximately three less bills when

compared to non-CHC members; this result is statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

In Table 4.5, which examines substantive and significant bill introduction and party control, I find no statistical significant results for the CBC and CHC chairs. Instead, I find that CBC members are less likely to introduce substantive and significant legislation regardless of which party is in control.

Next, in Table 4.6, which examines significant bill introduction and party control, I find a statistical significant and positive result for the CBC Chair when Democrats are in the majority. In particular, the CBC Chair has a beta coefficient of 0.324 with an IRR of 1.39, which suggests that CBC chairs introduces approximately five additional bills when Democrats are in the majority than non-CBC chairs. I find no statistically significant result for CHC chairship.

Lastly, in Table 4.7, which studies the interaction between commemorative bill introduction and majority party status, I find that under Republican controlled Congresses, the CBC member variable is a CBC member variable is statistically significant at the  $p < .001$  level and has a beta coefficient of 0.550, which implies they introduce ten more bills when compared to non-CBC members. I do not find a statistically significant result for CBC and CHC Chairs.

Table 4.4: Determinants of Legislative Production by Majority Party Status (93<sup>rd</sup> – 112<sup>th</sup> Congresses)

	Democratic Congresses All Bills Introduced	Republican Congresses All Bills Introduced
CBC Member	-0.431*** (0.0813)	-0.229** (0.0883)
CBC Chair	0.323 * (0.170)	0.0428 (0.227)
CBC Leader	-0.286* (0.115)	-0.0233 (0.126)
CHC	-0.154 (0.109)	-0.263* (0.116)
CHC Chair	-0.0213 (0.236)	0.210 (0.246)
CHC Leader	-0.0112 (0.214)	-0.150 (0.149)
Democrat	0.375*** (0.0609)	-0.500*** (0.109)
Seniority	0.0209*** (0.00333)	0.0158** (0.00485)
Female	0.175** (0.0594)	0.0971 (0.0644)
Chair of Committee	0.239*** (0.0429)	0.443*** (0.0584)
Sub-chair of Committee	0.263*** (0.0240)	0.213*** (0.0350)
Previous Vote Margin	0.00356*** (0.000681)	0.00179 (0.000986)
Ideological Extremity	-0.699*** (0.0789)	-0.521*** (0.116)
Constant	2.379*** (0.0722)	2.635*** (0.108)
<i>N</i>	5529	2993

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 4.5: Determinants of Legislative Production by Majority Party Status [Substantive and Significant Bills] (93<sup>rd</sup> – 112<sup>th</sup> Congresses)

	Democratic Congresses Substantive Significant Bills	Republican Congresses Substantive Significant Bills
CBC	-0.740*** (0.173)	-0.695* (0.344)
CBC Chair	0.488 (0.516)	-0.0867 (12935.2)
CBC Leader	-0.496 (0.373)	-17.06 (5964.2)
CHC	0.0305 (0.220)	-0.964 (0.534)
CHC Chair	-0.104 (0.677)	18.44 (6975.7)
CHC Leader	-0.487 (0.624)	-16.57 (6975.7)
Democrat	0.128 (0.141)	-2.049*** (0.271)
Seniority	0.120*** (0.00777)	0.115*** (0.0120)
Female	0.0354 (0.141)	0.195 (0.157)
Chair of Committee	0.963*** (0.0795)	1.550*** (0.130)
Sub-chair of Committee	0.969*** (0.0574)	0.734*** (0.0947)
Previous Vote Margin	0.00381* (0.00173)	-0.0000179 (0.00303)
Ideological Extremity	-1.313*** (0.193)	-0.230 (0.276)
Constant	-4.172*** (0.214)	-2.388*** (0.304)
<i>N</i>	5529	2993

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$



Table 4.6: Determinants of Legislative Production by Majority Party Status [Significant Bills] (93<sup>rd</sup> – 112<sup>th</sup> Congresses)

	Democratic Congresses Significant Bills	Republican Congresses Significant Bills
CBC	-0.427*** (0.0864)	-0.263** (0.0932)
CBC Chair	0.324* (0.181)	0.0774 (0.244)
CBC Leader	-0.286* (0.124)	-0.102 (0.136)
CHC	-0.173 (0.115)	-0.276* (0.122)
CHC Chair	-0.0711 (0.250)	0.278 (0.259)
CHC Leader	0.0539 (0.226)	-0.210 (0.158)
Democrat	0.395*** (0.0647)	-0.444*** (0.115)
Seniority	0.0164*** (0.00354)	0.0135** (0.00511)
Female	0.185** (0.0630)	0.105 (0.0680)
Chair of Committee	0.121** (0.0462)	0.350*** (0.0616)
Sub-chair of Committee	0.227*** (0.0257)	0.182*** (0.0368)
Previous Vote Margin	0.00401*** (0.000727)	0.00168 (0.00104)
Ideological Extremity	-0.685*** (0.0838)	-0.491*** (0.122)
Constant	2.345*** (0.0767)	2.591*** (0.114)
<i>N</i>	5529	2993

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 4.7: Determinants of Legislative Production by Majority Party Status [Commemorative Bills] (93<sup>rd</sup> – 112<sup>th</sup> Congresses)

	Democratic Congresses Commemorative Bills	Republican Congresses Commemorative Bills
CBC	-0.184 (0.145)	0.550*** (0.163)
CBC Chair	0.0925 (0.338)	-0.281 (0.490)
CBC Leader	-0.167 (0.221)	0.398 (0.244)
CHC	0.311 (0.189)	0.409 (0.220)
CHC Chair	0.397 (0.563)	-0.633 (0.693)
CHC Leader	-0.399 (0.523)	0.354 (0.338)
Democrat	0.335** (0.107)	-0.358 (0.239)
Seniority	0.0113 (0.00651)	-0.000194 (0.0112)
Female	0.0917 (0.108)	-0.0838 (0.128)
Chair of Committee	0.151 (0.0873)	-0.264 (0.204)
Sub-chair of Committee	0.0861 (0.0483)	-0.0118 (0.104)
Previous Vote Margin	0.00174 (0.00139)	-0.00228 (0.00279)
Ideological Extremity	-0.711*** (0.145)	-0.494 (0.254)
Constant	-0.905*** (0.144)	-0.912*** (0.262)
<i>N</i>	5529	2993

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

## 4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I present evidence that minority congressional caucuses play a role in the agenda-setting behavior of its leadership via their staff capacity. In particular, I present evidence that when a CBC member serves as the Chair of their caucus, she introduces more legislation—which is specifically tied to substantive legislation. This contradicts previous literature on minority caucuses, which constitutes minority congressional caucus as peripheral institutions in Congress (e.g. Singh, 1998). Also, this result contradicts literature concerning the link between descriptive and substantive representation for Black and Latino MCs and provides evidence that not only do minority caucuses matter in agenda-setting, but they matter in a substantive way, which is consistent with findings from Grose (2011) and Minta (2011).

One important caveat to the points mentioned in the above paragraph is that I did not find any statistically significant results for CHC Chairs. I will speculate about why this might be in Chapter Six.

Across all of my models, I find no statistically significant and positive results for variables relating to the general membership of the CBC and CHC except for commemorative bills. Some may interpret findings that CBC and CHC members influence symbolic legislative efforts most significantly as evidence that their effect on policy responsiveness is relatively unimportant. But previous research refutes such interpretations. For instance, Tate (2003) argues that symbolic legislation can provide political cover, initiate and augment larger legislative agendas, persuade MCs to embrace core principles on policy, and address group concerns that might otherwise be ignored. Aside from resolutions that provide political cover, Tate describes symbolic legislation as a “way to distribute nonmaterial public goods to constituents” (p. 100). A group’s pride and social inclusion associated with symbolic tributes is not unimportant from the perspective of groups whose presence and interests have been historically ignored, neglected, and excluded in policy processes. Commemo-

rative legislation sends the empowering message that Blacks and Latinos matter to the fabric of American society, and also brings broader social recognition to African American and Latino concerns, accomplishments, and goals.

While the results in this chapter demonstrate that minority congressional caucuses, as institutions matter, in the next chapter, I examine what role, if any, do minority caucuses play in agenda-setting. How might minority caucuses use its influence to affect the behavior of non-caucus members?

## CHAPTER V

# Incorporating Minority Congressional Caucuses in Studying Agenda-setting

### 5.1 Introduction

The vast majority of research on congressional institutions has focused on when, and how, political parties are influential via agenda-setting (e.g. Cox and McCubbins; Krehbiel, 1993). These studies are primarily concerned with one question: under what conditions will members of the majority party in Congress delegate authority to party leaders and exercise strong party discipline? Cox and McCubbins (2005) argue that the majority party routinely uses its near-monopoly of the formal agenda in order to keep bills off the floor that would, if passed, displease majorities of its membership. However, another study suggests that despite the preponderance of research on political parties influence over the legislative agenda, strong party effects are rarely observed (Krehbiel, 1993).

Since the literature on agenda-setting has been preoccupied with political parties, few studies examine the potential of agenda control within other congressional institutions. This dissertation seeks to fill this void by studying the agenda-setting behavior of minority congressional caucuses. The essential question of this chapter is: under what conditions will a numerical minority, such as the Congressional Black Caucus

(CBC) and Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), matter in agenda-setting? As I mentioned in Chapter Two, while my theory of minority caucuses does not contradict the previous work on the agenda-setting power of political parties, it does challenge these studies to consider how other congressional institutions, like caucuses, help to set the agenda in Congress.

Previous research has either ignored the CBC's and CHC's role in agenda-setting all together or suggested that these caucuses are ineffective because they do not pass legislation that alleviates racial and ethnic disparities (e.g. Singh, 1998). As I have argued previously, this is not the only way to measure the effectiveness of the CBC and CHC. Instead, I posit that the CBC and CHC are effective at exercising *caucus influence*. As I explained in Chapter Two, caucus influence occurs when CBC and CHC leaders support minority legislation introduced by a White member of Congress (MC) via cosponsorship, which aids in the advancing through the legislative process. Moreover, I weigh the caucus's ability to assert caucus influence against claims that the CBC is largely ineffective (Levy and Stoudinger, 1976; Singh, 1998; Smith, 1996; Swain, 1993) and conclude that minority caucuses can be effective in representing the interest of racial and ethnic minorities.

This chapter is organized in four sections. First, I restate the hypotheses that I will test in this chapter. Second, I discuss the data and methods of the statistical model, which measures the effect of the caucus leadership on caucus influence. Third, I present the statistical results and I detail the relative importance of the hypothesized factors. Fourth, I explore the implications of the results and explain how these results provide evidence of the importance of minority congressional caucuses and their inclusion in future studies of agenda-setting.

## 5.2 Hypotheses

As I mentioned in Chapter Two, caucus influence occurs when minority congressional caucuses disrupt the progress of minority interest legislation introduced by a White MC. Their ability to censor minority interest legislation could occur at any level of the legislative process. However, the further a minority interest bill introduced by a White MC that is not cosponsored by the caucus leadership gets through the legislative process, the more it would falsify my claim. I also explore the extent to which their ability to exert caucus influence is restricted depending on which party is in the majority.

In this chapter, I test the following hypotheses concerning CBC and CHC leaders and agenda-setting:

*Hypothesis 5. When a White MC introduces a minority interest bill, the greater number of CBC and CHC leader cosponsors, the more likely that bill will pass the House of Representatives.*

*Hypothesis 6. When a CBC member introduces a minority interest bill, the number of CBC and CHC leader cosponsors will have no influence over the likelihood that bill will pass the House of Representatives.*

*Hypothesis 7. When a CHC member introduces a minority interest bill, the greater number of CBC leader cosponsors, the more likely that bill will pass the House of Representatives. However, I expect for the number of CHC leader cosponsors to have no bearing over the likelihood of a CHC member's bill passing.*

I test my expectations of agenda control across several different statistical models to investigate whether caucus influence is a unique agenda-setting power that

minority congressional caucuses have over minority interest legislation.

### 5.3 Data and Methods

The principal purpose of this study is to investigate minority caucus leadership's ability to assist in advancing minority interest legislative proposals generated by their White colleagues through their cosponsorship behavior. To investigate my expectations for caucus influence and positive agenda control, I conduct an analysis that identifies the success of each member's sponsored legislation within the House of Representatives. Since these dependent variables are binary, I run a logistic regression model to study the factors that predict the success of minority interest legislation introduced by White MCs. To bolster my argument, I also run analyses that predict the success of non-minority interest legislation introduced by White MCs to demonstrate that minority caucuses' ability to exercise caucus influence is unique to minority interest legislation. I run similar analyses for Black and Latino MCs to demonstrate that minority caucuses are not able to command agenda control under these circumstances. Later, I run analyses accounting for majority party status and conduct Heckman selection regression models to demonstrate that my results are robust.

I use Scott Adler and John Wilkerson's data from the *Congressional Bills Project*, which details all bills introduced during the 106<sup>th</sup> and 112<sup>th</sup> Congresses. I amend these data by adding several covariates that may interfere with my ability to predict the introduction and passage of minority interest legislation. Most importantly, I add independent variables for the number of Black cosponsors, Latino cosponsors, Black caucus leader cosponsors and Latino caucus leader cosponsors, which I collected myself. The total number of observations in this dataset is 43,841.



### 5.3.1 Dependent Variable

The unit of analysis is bills introduced from the 106<sup>th</sup> to 112<sup>th</sup> Congresses. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, bill sponsorship and cosponsorship have been found to have significant consequences for members' legislative goals and policy interests. Previous research suggest that a bill's author, topic and language can predict the success of a bill (e.g. Anderson, Box-Steffensmeier, and Sinclair-Chapman, 2003; Franzitch, 1979; Hibbing, 1991). Others have argued that a bill's racial content also matters (Cannon, 1999).

Minority congressional caucus members and staff, I argue, have specific expertise over issues that are considered of specific importance to racial and ethnic minorities. To this end, and drawing on data from the Congressional Bills Project, my research assistants coded every bill introduced in Congress from 1999 to 2013 as dealing with minority issues or not. Consistent with previous literature, I define minority issues as those that deal explicitly with race or ethnicity as well as those policies that disproportionately impact African Americans and Latinos—access to a quality education, equal housing, crime, immigration, poverty, unemployment, and welfare to name a few (Gamble, 2011; Platt, 2014).

Upon downloading these data, I noticed that Adler and Wilkerson and Platt (2014) coded bills into nineteen categories: macroeconomics; civil rights; health; agriculture; labor, employment, and immigration; education; environment; energy; transportation; law, crime, and family; social welfare; housing/development; banking/commerce; defense; science/communication; foreign trade; international affairs; government operations; and public lands.<sup>1</sup> My research assistants examine all of the bills by category and whenever possible, coded each bill by its title as dealing with minority interest or not. However, if a bill's title was not sufficiently descriptive, either

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<sup>1</sup>More details regarding the coding of these categories can be found on the website for these data: [www.congressionalbills.org](http://www.congressionalbills.org).

the bill’s summary or the full text of the bill was consulted by my research assistants. More information about coding and examples of minority interest legislation for each category, see Appendices B and C.

While previous literature has suggested that this type of coding is problematic in that it assumes policy that addresses some subset of racial and ethnic minorities should be important for all racial and ethnic minorities (Platt, 2014). Another potential issue is that studying policies that mention having a disproportionate effect on racial and ethnic minorities is not sufficiently precise. While these points are valid, for the purposes of my study, I do not see these issues as a problem as I am studying the introduction of minority legislation from the prospective of the legislator. That is, while the introduction of a bill providing additional financial support for the study of breast cancer in Black women, for example, may or may not be relevant to African Americans with no history of breast cancer in their family, the legislator would, I argue, still consider her behavior as representing minority interests (Platt, 2014).

### **5.3.2 Independent Variables for Agenda-setting Models**

Several variables are needed to test the hypotheses specified earlier. As I indicated above, I expect that CBC and CHC leadership is positively associated with the introduction of minority legislation by White MCs, thereby exerting caucus influence. To this end, I include dummy variables for CBC leader cosponsor and CHC leader cosponsor. Each variable is coded “1” for each MC who identifies as a member of that group and a “0” otherwise. However, to ensure that these results are unique to caucus leaders, I also include independent variables for the number of CBC and CHC cosponsors. As I stated in Chapter Two, the number of CBC or CHC cosponsors, or general number of cosponsors, may matter, but what is most relevant for my study is the number of CBC and CHC leaders that cosponsor a piece of minority legislation because caucus leadership is an unique institutional aspect of minority

caucuses. Moreover, I include several control variables that previous literature suggests significantly influence the number of minority interest legislation that an MC introduces.

Many of the same control variables from the bill sponsorship analysis will also be used. I will not repeat the significance of these variables, but instead discuss control variables unique to this analysis.

*Majority Party.* The ability of minority caucuses to enhance the work of its members is dependent upon who is in the majority party. Previous literature suggests that Democrats are better representatives of the policy interests of racial and ethnic minorities than Republicans on general ideological issues as well as civil rights issues (Grose, 2011, 2005; Hutchings, 1998; Lublin, 1997). Thus, Democratic Party control of the chamber is necessary, but not sufficient to promote greater congressional attention to minority issues. Instead, “it is the collective commitment by minority legislators to represent national minority populations and to establish a diversity infrastructure to achieve those goals that makes greater attention to minority issues possible” (Minta and Sinclair- Chapman, 2013, p. 136). Also, as discussed in Chapter Two, majority party status influences a member’s ability to see their bill progress through the legislative process (Cox and McCubbins, 2005).

*South.* This variable is included because MCs often pursue bill introduction through the lens of their regional differences. Since some members hailing from southern congressional districts have historically demonstrated opposition to legislation of interest to racial and ethnic minorities, while others from the region have been supportive of said issues, regional effects were included in this model. This dummy variable is coded “1” if the sponsor hails from a southern congressional district, while other districts are coded “0”.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>I coded southern congressional districts as those districts located in any of the following eleven states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

*Percentage of Black Population; Percentage of Latino Population.* The racial and ethnic composition of a district should shape how minority interest legislation is perceived, so non-Black and non-Latino MCs will sponsor more minority interest legislation as the percentage of Black and Latino citizens in their district increases (Platt, 2014; Rocca and Sanchez, 2009). Hence, I control for the percentage of Blacks and Latinos in each congressional district.

## 5.4 Results

Tables 5.2 through 5.4 and Figure 5.1 depict the results from the logistic regression models I ran to examine the factors that determine the passage of minority interest legislation introduced by White MCs. The first table presents the results of the logistic regression model where the dependent variable is the probability of minority interest legislation introduced by White MC. Instead of reporting the beta coefficients, I reported the odds ratio for the independent variables, which represents how the odds change with an one unit increase in that variable holding all other variables constant. I find that if a CBC leader cosponsors minority interest legislation introduced by a White MC, the odds of it passing the House increases by 1.25 times or twenty-five percent and this result is statistically significant at the  $p < 0.01$  level. However, I did not find a statistically significant result for CHC chairs. Being a member of the majority party and the bill being commemorative affected the odds of a White MC's ability to pass minority interest legislation in the House.

In the second column of Table 5.2, I run a similar model for the introduction of non-minority interest legislation. The purpose of this analysis is to demonstrate that minority congressional caucuses do not have the ability to exercise caucus influence because this type of legislation is outside of the scope of their policy expertise. As expected, I find no statistical significant result for minority caucus leadership. Instead, other variables, like the number of cosponsors, being a member of the majority

party and whether the bill was commemorative or not, mattered in predicting the likelihood of non-minority legislation passing. Also, I should note that the number of Black cosponsors and women were negatively associated with the introduction of non-minority legislation introduced with White MCs.

Next, I run a logistic regression model to estimate the factors that determine the passage of minority interest legislation introduced by Black MCs. As expected, I find no statistically significant result for minority caucus leadership. Instead, other variables, like the number of cosponsors, being a member of the majority party and the bill being commemorative, mattered in predicting the likelihood of minority legislation passing when introduced by a Black MC.

Similarly, I run a statistical model to estimate the factors that determines the passage of non-minority interest legislation introduced by Black MCs. As I expected, I find no statistically significant result for minority caucus leadership. Instead, other variables, like the percent of Blacks in a district, being a member of the majority party, seniority, MCs from southern congressional districts and the bill being commemorative, mattered in predicting the likelihood of non-minority legislation passing when introduced by a Black MC. Recall that the purpose of running these analyses is to demonstrate that I do not find evidence of positive agenda control among minority caucus leaders, which supports my argument that their ability to exert agenda control is uniquely tied to White MC's sponsorship of minority interest legislation.

Lastly, I run a statistical model to estimate the factors that determine the passage of minority interest legislation proposed by a Latino MC. I find no statistical significant result for minority caucus leadership in the models for minority and non-minority legislation introduced by a White MC. Instead, other variables, like the number of cosponsors, MCs from southern congressional districts and whether the bill was commemorative or not, matter for predicting the likelihood of minority legislation passing when introduced by a Latino MC. Again, this bolsters my argument that the ability

of minority congressional caucuses to exert agenda control is uniquely tied to White MC's sponsorship of minority interest legislation.

Table 5.1: Descriptive Statistics for Agenda Control Model

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>
Percent Black	0.146	0.178	0	0.855
Percent Latino	0.144	0.166	0	0.988
Democrat	0.517	0.5	0	1
Majority Party	0.585	0.493	0	1
Female	0.174	0.379	0	1
White	0.867	0.34	0	1
CBC Member	0.095	0.293	0	1
CBC Chair	0.002	0.046	0	1
CBC Leader	0.012	0.108	0	1
CHC Member	0.038	0.192	0	1
CHC Chair	0.001	0.034	0	1
CHC Leader	0.008	0.089	0	1
Seniority	6.196	4.353	0	29
South	0.269	0.443	0	1
Cosponsor	16.655	35.957	0	432
Black Cosponsor	2.146	5.438	0	44
Latino Cosponsor	0.902	2.478	0	24
CBC Leader Cosponsor	0.28	0.832	0	21
CHC Leader Cosponsor	0.187	0.623	0	33
Commemorative Bill	0.05	0.219	0	1
Bill Passed in House	0.102	0.303	0	1
Bill Passed in Senate	0.052	0.221	0	1
Bill Became Law	0.046	0.209	0	1
Minority Interest Legislation	0.066	0.249	0	1
Ideological Extremity	0.014	0.382	-1.381	1.329

Table 5.2: Minority Interest Bill Introduction by White MCs [Logistic Results]  
(106<sup>th</sup> – 112<sup>th</sup> Congress)

<b>Passed House</b>	Minority Interest Legislation (odds ratio/se)	Non-Minority Interest Legislation (odds ratio/se)
Number of CBC Leader Cosponsors	1.25** (0.1101)	1.10 (0.5164)
Number of CHC Leader Cosponsors	1.20 (0.2741)	1.10 (0.0472)
Number of Black Cosponsors	.981 (0.0240)	.955*** (0.009)
Number of Latino Cosponsors	.882 (0.582)	1.00 * (0.183)
Number of Cosponsors	1.00 (0.0045)	1.00*** (0.0007)
Percent Black	1.32 (1.294)	.706 (0.157)
Percent Latino	.868 (0.468)	1.47** (.210)
Democrat	.694 (0.1661)	.925 (0.0418)
Majority Party	1.651*** (0.254)	2.659*** (0.1217)
Female	.9043 (0.251)	.814*** (0.0477)
Seniority	1.034 (0.0227)	1.060*** (0.0041)
South	.7401 (0.2304)	1.006 (0.0489)
Commemorative Bill	3.158*** (0.338)	9.300*** (0.5038)
Ideological Extremity	1.790* (0.4803)	1.22*** (0.0618)
Constant	-3.482*** (0.0606)	0.3072*** (0.0018)
<i>N</i>	1325	36675

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Figure 5.1: Predicted Probability for Minority Interest Bill Passage (White MC)

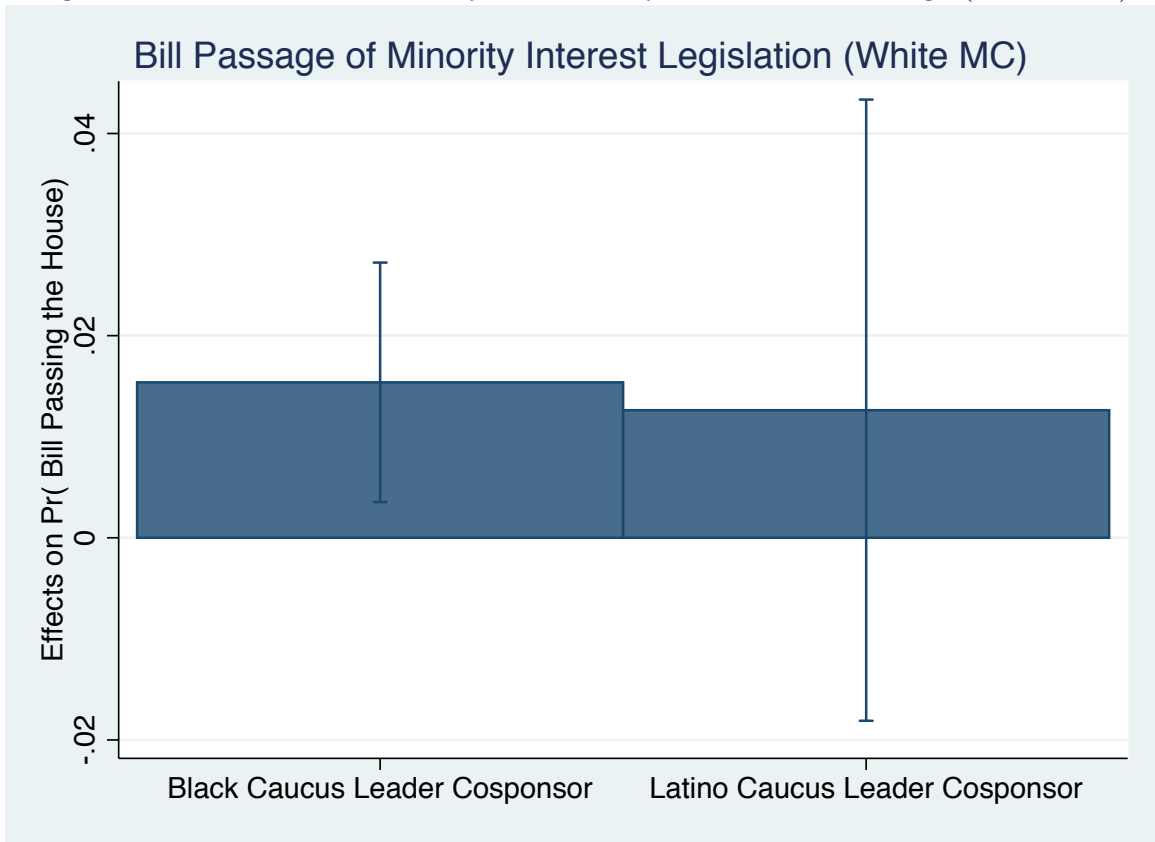




Table 5.3: Logistic Regression Results for Black MC (106<sup>th</sup> – 112<sup>th</sup> Congress)

<b>Passed House</b>	Minority Interest Legislation (odds ratio/se)	Non-Minority Interest Legislation (odds ratio/se)
Number of CBC Leader Cosponsors	.991 (0.163)	0.799 (0.129)
Number of CHC Leader Cosponsors	0.792 (0.186)	1.311 (0.279)
Number of Black Cosponsors	0.964 (0.0267)	0.972 (0.0290)
Number of Latino Cosponsors	0.792 (0.1857)	1.0575 (0.0789)
Number of Cosponsors	1.028*** (0.0068)	1.003 (0.0046)
Percent Black	1.683 (0.515)	9.76*** (6.05)
Percent Latino	0.8234 (0.613)	1.78 (0.8634)
Majority Party	3.068*** (0.721)	4.828*** (0.786)
Female	0.897 (0.242)	0.910 (0.170)
Seniority	0.951 (0.0245)	0.0443** (0.0147)
South	0.597 (0.168)	0.431*** (0.081)
Commemorative Bill	11.15*** (2.66)	15.15*** (3.56)
Ideological Extremity	1.70 (0.595)	1.00 (0.263)
Constant	0.537*** (0.030)	0.006*** (0.002)
<i>N</i>	1147	3011

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 5.4: Logistic Regression Results for Latino MC (106<sup>th</sup> – 112<sup>th</sup> Congress)

<b>Passed House</b>	Minority Interest Legislation	Non-Minority Interest Legislation
	(odds ratio/se)	(odds ratio/se)
Number of CBC Leader Cosponsors	1.506 (0.565)	1.026 (0.282)
Number of CHC Leader Cosponsors	0.854 (0.325)	0.965 (0.231)
Number of Black Cosponsors	0.842* (0.065)	0.844* (0.0616)
Number of Latino Cosponsors	0.893 (0.091)	0.915 (0.064)
Number of Cosponsors	1.050** (0.015)	1.027*** (0.008)
Percent Black	0.072 (0.131)	0.333 (0.259)
Percent Latino	1.119 (1.670)	0.734 (0.497)
Majority Party	1.760 (0.785)	2.430*** (0.530)
Female	0.788 (0.517)	1.042 (0.306)
Seniority	1.036 (0.085)	0.983 (0.412)
South	3.855* (2.640)	2.377** (0.734)
Commemorative Bill	16.509*** (8.240)	7.180*** (2.225)
Ideological Extremity	0.575 (0.580)	.335** (0.120)
Constant	0.031** (0.037)	0.084*** (0.036)
<i>N</i>	417	1189

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

#### 5.4.1 Heckman Selection Model

A critic might be skeptical of my use of logistic regression in studying caucus influence because the research question posed can be seen as a two-step selection process; where the first step estimates the probability of a White MC introducing a minority interest bill and, conditional on the first stage, the second step estimates the probability of that minority interest legislation passing in the House of Representatives. Within the second step, I am particularly interested in the extent to which minority caucus leaders exercise caucus influence over minority interest legislation introduced by a White MC.

In general, scholars typically employ sample selection models when the group that their interested in studying is able to select themselves into a particular group, which occurs because certain people may be likely to self-select into certain samples (Heckman, 1979). Hence, the sample observed is not representative of the population that I am interested in studying. As I have argued previously, and consistent with previous research, Black and Latino MCs are more apt to sponsor legislation relevant to racial and ethnic minorities. In addition, I am not observing some minority interest legislation introduced by White MCs because some of these MCs are reticent to sponsoring race-relevant bills because of fear of appearing racist or the potential reaction from minority congressional caucuses.

For the purpose of my study, I employ the Heckman Selection Model to study the ability of minority congressional caucuses to exert positive agenda control and caucus influence. I employ this model because my question grapples with two stages of the agenda-setting process and there are different factors that influence each decision, which means that I will use slightly different covariates in measuring the two stages of agenda-setting.

The Heckman model is ideal for my case because I am interested in studying the factors affecting the decision of MCs to sponsor legislation and the probability

of its success. Hence, I observe a selection decision: whether a member chooses to introduce minority interest legislation. But, if I just used a logistic regression model, I would only observe the people who introduced minority interest legislation, whereas the Heckman Selection Model only allows for a minority interest bill to be censored, if it was introduced in the first place. Simply put, the Heckman model allows for selection of introducing minority interest legislation, but the logistic regression can only study one category of a dependent variable at a time.

In addition to employing the Heckman Selection Model for studying agenda control among minority caucuses, I explore to the extent to which majority party status might affect their ability to exercised agenda control; these results are reported in Tables 5.5 through 5.10. I should note that I am primarily interested in the top half of these tables, which report the second stage of the analyses—the probability of a MC’s minority interest bill passing, conditional on them introducing at least one minority interest legislation. However, I am interested in the first stage—which measures the probability that a MC introduces a minority interest bill—insofar as the relevant variables as significant because this will have implications on the results of the second stage.

Now, in Table 5.5, I observe that being Black caucus leader, members of the majority party, and introducing a commemorative bill are all still positively associated with predicting the passage of minority interest legislation introduced by a White MC. After running a similar analysis accounting for majority party status, I find that when Democrats are in the majority, I still find positive and statistically significant result for minority caucus leadership and commemorative bills.

Next, in Table 5.7, I observe that being in the majority party, number of cosponsors, and introducing a commemorative bill are all still positively associated with predicting the passage of minority interest legislation introduced by a Black MC. After running a similar analysis accounting for majority party status, I find that when

Democrats are in the majority, I still find positive and statistically significant result for the number of cosponsors. Again, as expected, I find no statistically significant result for minority caucus leadership.

Finally, in Table 5.9, I observe that being a MC from a southern congressional district, number of cosponsors, introducing a commemorative bill, and support for the Black caucus leadership are all still positively associated with predicting the passage of minority interest legislation introduced by a Latino MC. After running a similar analysis accounting for majority party status, I find that when Democrats are in the majority, I still find positive and statistically significant result for the number of cosponsors and introducing a commemorative bill. However, after accounting for Democratic controlled Congresses, I do not find a statistically significant result for Black caucus leader cosponsor.

Table 5.5: Minority Interest Bill Introduction by White MCs (106<sup>th</sup> – 112<sup>th</sup> Congress)

	Pass House
Democrat	-0.0211 (0.0227)
Female	-0.0113 (0.0211)
Seniority	0.00291 (0.00192)
South	-0.0125 (0.0210)
Majority	0.122*** (0.0176)
Number of Cosponsors	-0.000195 (0.000732)
Number of Black Cosponsors	0.00117 (0.00379)
Number of Latino Cosponsors	-0.00847 (0.00620)
Number of Black Leader Cosponsors	0.0214* (0.00976)
Number of Latino Leader Cosponsors	0.00804 (0.0175)
Commemorative Bill	0.484*** (0.0386)
<hr/>	
Minority Legislation Introduction	
Percent Black	0.549*** (0.130)
Percent Latino	0.809*** (0.0839)
Democrat	0.179*** (0.0315)
Female	0.00000872 (0.0350)
Majority	-0.00749 (0.0282)
Seniority	0.00515 (0.00301)
South	-0.103** (0.0372)
Number of cosponsors	-0.0119*** (0.000866)
Number of Black Cosponsors	0.0677*** (0.00534)
Number of Latino Cosponsors	0.0791*** (0.0110)
Number of Black Leader Cosponsors	0.0413 (0.0240)
Number of Latino Leader Cosponsor	-0.0774* (0.0334)
Commemorative Bill	0.000328 (0.0618)
<i>N</i>	38000

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 5.6: Minority Interest Bill Introduction by White MCs [Partisanship](106<sup>th</sup> – 112<sup>th</sup> Congress)

	Democratically Controlled Congresses Pass House	Republican Controlled Congresses Pass House
<b>Heckman Selection Model</b>		
Democrat	0.0825 (0.0468)	-0.127*** (0.0251)
Female	-0.0171 (0.0397)	-0.00239 (0.0248)
Seniority	0.00590 (0.00369)	0.00193 (0.00222)
South	-0.0557 (0.0416)	0.00820 (0.0241)
Cosponsors	0.00125 (0.00147)	-0.000802 (0.000842)
Black Cosponsor	-0.00656 (0.00655)	0.00553 (0.00464)
Latino Cosponsor	-0.0231 (0.0124)	0.000237 (0.00749)
CBC Leader Cosponsor	0.0597** (0.0253)	0.00995 (0.0253)
CHC Leader Cosponsor	0.0541 (0.0361)	0.0541 (0.0361)
Commemorative Bill	0.580*** (0.0844)	0.580*** (0.0102)
<b>Count</b>		
Percent Black	0.719*** (0.217)	0.483** (0.164)
Percent Latino	0.858*** (0.138)	0.800*** (0.106)
Democrat	0.223*** (0.0575)	0.172*** (0.0358)
Female	-0.0231 (0.0586)	0.0125 (0.0439)
Seniority	-0.00259 (0.00523)	0.00916* (0.00370)
South	-0.146* (0.0690)	-0.0846 (0.0443)
Cosponsors	-0.0117*** (0.00158)	-0.0120*** (0.00105)
Black Cosponsor	0.0579*** (0.00989)	0.0719*** (0.00643)
Latino Cosponsor	0.0610** (0.0201)	0.0931*** (0.0134)
CBC Leader Cosponsor	0.0810 (0.0481)	0.0233 (0.0277)
CHC Leader Cosponsor	-0.0218 (0.0623)	-0.123** (0.0408)
Commemorative Bill	-0.141 (0.119)	0.0560 (0.0729)
<i>N</i>	11617	26383

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 5.7: Minority Interest Bill Introduction by Black MCs (106<sup>th</sup> – 112<sup>th</sup> Congress)

	Pass House
Democrat	-0.0940 (0.102)
Female	-0.0266 (0.0204)
Seniority	-0.00647** (0.00215)
South	-0.00810 (0.0199)
Majority	0.0887*** (0.0186)
Number of Cosponsors	0.00404*** (0.000889)
Number of Black Cosponsors	-0.0104* (0.00430)
Number of Latino Cosponsors	-0.0144* (0.00663)
Number of Black Leader Cosponsors	-0.00337 (0.0121)
Number of Latino Leader Cosponsors	-0.0272 (0.0172)
Commemorative Bill	0.232*** (0.0564)
<hr/>	
Minority Legislation Introduction	
Percent Black	0.325 (0.173)
Percent Latino	0.615*** (0.148)
Democrat	-0.118 (0.214)
Female	0.0301 (0.0546)
Majority	-0.0602 (0.0470)
Seniority	0.0132** (0.00476)
South	-0.129* (0.0499)
Number of Cosponsors	-0.0136*** (0.00160)
Number of Black Cosponsors	0.0734*** (0.00657)
Number of Latino Cosponsors	0.0555** (0.0199)
Number of Black Leader Cosponsors	0.0177 (0.0372)
Number of Latino Leader Cosponsors	-0.0131 (0.0581)
Commemorative Bill	0.862*** (0.0833)
<hr/>	
<i>N</i>	4158

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$



Table 5.8: Minority Interest Bill Introduction by Black MCs [Partisanship](106<sup>th</sup> – 112<sup>th</sup> Congress)

	Democratic Congresses Pass House	Republican Congresses Pass House
<b>Heckman Selection Model</b>		
Female	-0.0734 (0.0501)	-0.00782 (0.0199)
Seniority	-0.00573 (0.00441)	-0.00586** (0.00223)
South	-0.0192 (0.0436)	-0.00327 (0.0200)
Number of Cosponsors	0.00527* (0.00214)	0.00295*** (0.000822)
Number of Black Cosponsors	-0.0193 (0.0109)	-0.00421 (0.00387)
Number of Latino Cosponsors	-0.00859 (0.0145)	-0.0124 (0.00657)
Number of CBC Leader Cosponsors	0.0325 (0.0283)	-0.0101 (0.0118)
Number of CHC Leader Cosponsors	-0.0585 (0.0403)	-0.0162 (0.0168)
Commemorative Bill	0.0881 (0.129)	0.342*** (0.0543)
Constant	0.629 (0.332)	0.0756 (0.135)
<b>Count</b>		
Percent Black	0.202 (0.290)	0.384 (0.197)
Percent Latino	0.555* (0.256)	0.650*** (0.183)
Female	0.110 (0.0891)	-0.00897 (0.0694)
Seniority	0.0105 (0.00774)	0.0155* (0.00616)
South	-0.127 (0.0842)	-0.116 (0.0609)
Number of Cosponsors	-0.0151*** (0.00252)	-0.0124*** (0.00213)
Number of Black Cosponsors	0.0811*** (0.0110)	0.0693*** (0.00827)
Number of Latino Cosponsors	0.0434 (0.0317)	0.0568* (0.0261)
Number of CBC Leader Cosponsors	0.0121 (0.0628)	0.0220 (0.0463)
Number of CHC Leader Cosponsors	0.00569 (0.0989)	-0.0261 (0.0726)
Commemorative Bill	0.846*** (0.144)	0.868*** (0.103)
Constant	-1.255*** (0.162)	-1.310*** (0.130)
<i>N</i>	1587	2571

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 5.9: Minority Interest Bill Introduction by Latino MCs (106<sup>th</sup> – 112<sup>th</sup> Congress)

	Pass House
Democrat	0.145* (0.0729)
Female	0.0157 (0.0283)
Seniority	0.00102 (0.00505)
South	0.0916** (0.0307)
Majority	0.0194 (0.0250)
Number of Cosponsors	0.00390** (0.00147)
Number of Black Cosponsors	-0.0177** (0.00537)
Number of Latino Cosponsors	-0.00618 (0.00658)
Number of CBC Leader Cosponsors	0.0544** (0.0184)
Number of CHC Leader Cosponsors	-0.00295 (0.0187)
Commemorative Bill	0.385*** (0.0483)
<hr/>	
Minority Legislation Introduction	
Percent Black	0.424* (0.207)
Percent Latino	0.949*** (0.215)
Democrat	0.0709 (0.198)
Female	0.0942 (0.0871)
Majority	-0.0462 (0.0726)
Seniority	0.0354* (0.0143)
South	-0.0228 (0.0975)
Number of Cosponsors	-0.0177*** (0.00296)
Number of Black Cosponsors	0.0614*** (0.0149)
Number of Latino Cosponsors	0.0623*** (0.0179)
Number of CBC Leader Cosponsors	0.0751 (0.0635)
Number of CHC Leader Cosponsors	0.0724 (0.0641)
Commemorative Bill	0.436** (0.138)
<hr/>	
<i>N</i>	1679

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 5.10: Minority Interest Bill Introduction by Latino MCs [Partisanship](106<sup>th</sup> – 112<sup>th</sup> Congress)

	Democratic Congresses Pass House	Republican Congresses Pass House
<b>Heckman Selection Model</b>		
Female	0.00391 (0.0480)	0.0245 (0.0350)
Seniority	-0.00176 (0.00780)	0.00104 (0.00654)
South	0.0157 (0.0647)	0.111** (0.0353)
Number of Cosponsors	0.00467* (0.00234)	0.00344* (0.00175)
Number of Black Cosponsors	-0.0131 (0.00924)	-0.0199** (0.00641)
Number of Latino Cosponsors	-0.00170 (0.0108)	-0.0132 (0.00806)
Number of CBC Leader Cosponsors	0.0606 (0.0408)	0.0466* (0.0193)
Number of CHC Leader Cosponsors	-0.00244 (0.0378)	0.0132 (0.0208)
Commemorative Bill	0.380*** (0.0939)	0.411*** (0.0536)
Constant	-0.134 (0.215)	0.0547 (0.179)
<b>Count</b>		
Percent Black	0.692 (0.353)	0.280 (0.258)
Percent Latino	1.357*** (0.405)	0.878*** (0.257)
Female	0.142 (0.138)	0.0307 (0.114)
Seniority	0.00697 (0.0228)	0.0514** (0.0192)
South	-0.271 (0.166)	0.0884 (0.121)
Number of Cosponsors	-0.0221*** (0.00497)	-0.0159*** (0.00386)
Number of Black Cosponsors	0.0824** (0.0265)	0.0550** (0.0185)
Number of Latino Cosponsors	0.0442 (0.0304)	0.0668** (0.0230)
Number of CBC Leader Cosponsors	0.181 (0.117)	0.0250 (0.0771)
Number of CHC Leader Cosponsors	0.0395 (0.114)	0.0930 (0.0806)
Commemorative Bill	0.473* (0.235)	0.422* (0.171)
Constant	-1.850*** (0.253)	-1.728*** (0.201)
<i>N</i>	706	973

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

## 5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I present evidence that minority congressional caucuses exert caucus influence over White MCs' sponsorship of minority interest legislation. In particular, I present evidence that when a CBC member serves on the executive committee of their caucus, she is able to block minority interest legislation introduced by a White MC. As in the statistical results from Chapter Four, I did not find any statistically significant results for the CHC executive committee. I will speculate about why this might be in Chapter Six.

The results of this chapter provide evidence for the need of expanding what and how the literature measures and considers as legislative effectiveness. Previous research has tried to apply this "one size fits all" model in measuring legislative effectiveness. This study provides evidence that minority congressional caucuses can be relevant in the agenda-setting stage, particularly as it relates to minority interest legislation. This finding contradicts previous literature on minority caucuses, which constitutes minority congressional caucus as peripheral institutions in Congress. Also, this result contradicts literature concerning the link between descriptive and substantive representation for Black and Latino MCs and provides evidence that not only do minority caucuses matter in agenda-setting, but they matter in a substantive way, which is consistent with findings from Grose (2011) and Minta (2011).

## CHAPTER VI

### Conclusion

As mentioned in the outset of this dissertation, substantial research has examined the relationship between the descriptive representation of African Americans and Latinos and the substantive representation of minority interests in Congress (e.g. Canon, 1999; Grose, 2011; Minta, 2011; Swain, 1993; Tate, 2003). Early studies explore this connection via roll call voting and come to different conclusions. On the one hand, these studies provide evidence that minority legislators do a better job of representing the interest of racial and ethnic minorities when compared to their White colleagues (e.g. Canon, 1999); on the other, race or ethnicity makes no difference in the substantive representation of African Americans and Latinos (e.g. Hero and Tolbert, 1995; Swain, 1993).

While these studies provide insight on how race and ethnicity affects members' voting behavior, they only make use of one form of legislative behavior: roll call voting. Moreover, several studies have argued against the use of roll call data, as it is far from an exhaustive indicator of representation and can, on occasion, represent a distorted one (Achen, 1982; Hall, 1996). Studies that rely solely on voting behavior boil sets of complex decisions down to a handful of oversimplified dichotomous choices. Moreover, a single roll call vote provides no information on the intensity of a member's preference, or the significance of her vote to the final outcome (Hall, 1996). The

selection inherent in roll call analyses skews the conclusions about race's impact on representation by systematically excluding the proposals that might polarized the preferences of minority and White MCs (the so-called "censored sample problem") (Hall, 1996, p.192).<sup>1</sup>

While examining voting behavior does help scholars place Black and Latino legislators relative to other House members, this is only relevant for bills that come to the House floor. Additionally, how a legislator votes only tells us a part of how well they represent their constituents; it does not tell us what the legislator is doing proactively for their constituents (Grose, 2011; Hall, 1996). More recent research has studied the effect of race and ethnicity "beyond the vote." This research has shown that both African American and Latino legislators are more likely to sponsor legislation that disproportionately affects members of their respective groups (Rocca and Sanchez, 2008, Sinclair-Chapman, 2003; Tate, 2003; Wilson, 2010). In addition, there are noticeable differences in minority MCs' legislative styles (Canon, 1999; Tate, 2003), constituency service (Grose, 2011), and interventions in oversight hearings (Minta, 2011).

While these recent studies are an improvement on studies that exclusively focus on roll call data, these studies overlook a vital component of any effective mode of representation: organizations. Initial studies of minority congressional caucuses focused on its formation and symbolic significance (Barnett, 1982; Levy and Stoudinger, 1976). These studies claimed that minority caucuses acted as a social organization for its members and rarely engaged in substantive representation. The second stream of research focused on voting cohesion among minority congressional caucus (e.g. Giles and Jones, 1995). For the most part, these studies claim that the CBC was cohesive with few exceptions. A few studies have conducted similar analyses of the CHC and concluded that its membership is cohesive on some issues, but display greater

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<sup>1</sup>Also, by design, roll call voting presents MCs with a single choice, typically structured by party leaders to attract a majority of votes (Hall, 1996; Cox and McCubbins, 1993).

diversity in roll call votes relative to the CBC. This dissertation offers an assessment of the CBC and CHC from the perspective of institutions that affect the legislative agenda. This approach represents a departure from previous assessments that detail the origins, evolution, operations, and organizational structure of the CBC and CHC (Barnett 1975, 1982; Champagne and Rieselbach, 1995; Clay, 1993; Singh, 1998).

In this chapter, I review my main findings, discuss the limitations and implications of my results, and conclude with a brief note on directions for future research.

## **6.1 Overview of Findings**

In Chapter Two, I compare and contrast my theory of minority caucuses with the work of Cox and McCubbins (2005) and their theory of negative agenda control. In addition, I discuss two theories I later test in Chapters Four and Five. One concerns the behavior of the caucus chairs in promoting their own, or the caucus's, priorities by virtue of their staff capacity. The other is about the caucus's ability to block legislative proposals generated by MCs outside of the CBC and CHC—which I refer to as caucus influence.

Next, I will summarize Chapter Three's findings from my qualitative interviews, which provide important insights for the aforementioned theories. There were noticeable differences in the number of interviews I obtained with the CBC versus the CHC staff. That is, CBC staffers were more cooperative than CHC staffers, which is primarily due to the assistance I received from a senior CBC staffer. While I would have preferred a more representative sample of CHC staffers, I do not see this as a problem, as I was not trying to generalize about the behavior of CBC and CHC personal and caucus staff. Instead, I was trying to understand the relationship between caucus staff and individual member offices. Nevertheless, four topics emerged from my qualitative interviews: legislative priorities, vote cohesion, caucus staff and cosponsorship.

In regards to legislative priorities, I found that the CBC is primarily interested in education, unemployment, healthcare, civil rights, transportation, criminal justice reform, economic inequality, social programs and African trade; while the CHC was interested in healthcare and immigration. These caucuses have more issues in common than what is displayed here,<sup>2</sup> but since I only interviewed a few CHC staffers, healthcare is the only top legislative issue these caucuses had in common in my sample.<sup>3</sup>

Second, while I did find evidence that staffers viewed vote cohesion in the traditional manner, which focuses on the collection of votes within the CBC and CHC, I also found qualitative evidence that CBC and CHC members view vote cohesion in a strategic manner. In other words, members vote with their caucus when their preferences are similar, but vote differently when they have preferences that differ from their colleagues in the CBC or CHC; this sentiment bolsters my claim that caucuses matter as legislative institutions. My interviewees also discussed how their bosses make concerted efforts to block legislation that disadvantages racial and ethnic minorities. This is perhaps why minority caucuses, especially the CBC, appears to be so cohesive: the literature primarily focuses on the extent to which these members vote alike (e.g. Giles and Jones, 1995), but ignore the circumstances that they make concerted efforts to block legislation.

Next, interviewees revealed vital details about caucus staff and their relationships with individual member offices. For instance, my theory of caucus leadership advantage (based on evidence from interviews) posits that caucus leaders will be more productive because the caucus staff is physically located in their office. In addition, my

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on the legislative priorities of the CHC and CBC, visit the following websites: <http://congressionalhispaniccaucus-sanchez.house.gov/> and <https://cbc-butterfield.house.gov/>.

<sup>3</sup> To clarify, I am only mentioning legislative issues in which a substantial amount of caucus members mentioned. CHC members mentioned other issues like social justice or crime, but these issues were not mentioned by the majority of members in my sample. For a full list of legislative issues mentioned, please see Appendix A.



interviewees stated the caucus staff is uniquely helpful in building their relationships with institutions within and outside of Congress and other branches of government, especially the executive branch. These and other claims suggest the importance of a previously ignored aspect of minority congressional caucuses: the caucus staff. The general sentiment was that caucus staffers help its members magnify their influence in ways that would be hard, but not impossible, to do without them.

Finally, in their discussion of cosponsorship, interviewees reveal the diverse approaches their bosses take in signing onto bills. I use this finding later in Chapter Five in constructing my statistical model concerning caucus influence. In general, the qualitative evidence presented in this chapter provides affirmation that minority MCs view their caucus membership as important because of the assistance they receive from the caucus staff.

In Chapters Four and Five, I move onto statistical tests of the hypotheses enumerated in Chapter Two. In Chapter Four, I present the statistical results of the caucus leadership advantage models. By leveraging an unique institutional by-product of the CBC and CHC—caucus staff—I demonstrate that when caucus members serve as leaders, they introduce more substantive bills. These results are robust when considering other statistical models and majority party status, among several other institutional and district covariates. Hence, contrary to the previous research on minority congressional caucuses (e.g. Singh, 1998), the CBC and CHC are not peripheral institutions. Instead, this dissertation provides evidence that the CBC and CHC are ancillary institutions that warrant inclusion in studies of minority agenda-setting. I argue that this approach to studying minority agenda-setting behavior should be employed in future studies, as it is a realistic approach to the political reality of minority legislators in Congress; minority legislators are often working as a group via caucus membership to improve the conditions of racial and ethnic minorities.

In Chapter Five, I present the statistical results of the caucus influence models. I

found that the support of minority caucus leaders via cosponsorship helps to predict the success of minority interest legislation by a White MC. Additional analyses suggest that their ability to wield caucus influence is confined to issues relating to racial and ethnic minorities.

An important caveat to mention regarding the statistical results presented in Chapters Four and Five is that I did not find any statistically significant results for the CHC. In regards to Chapter Four, I suspect that I found no statistically significant results for the CHC because they have less staff capacity than the CBC. This might explain why, in some analyses, I found results for the CHC that was close to being statistically significant, but not quite. Regarding the lack of significant results in Chapter 5, non-CBC and CHC members may view CBC cosponsorship differently than the CHC cosponsorship. That is, legislators may see the CBC leader cosponsorship as representative of all African American MCs, but since the CHC is seen as more diverse in their approach to politics, MCs may not view cosponsorship from the CHC as being representative of all Latinos in Congress. Instead, members may try to gain support for the CHC by approaching individual members instead of approaching the CHC as a group. Hence, part of the reason these the CBC is effective at exerting caucus influence is largely due to how other MCs view them as an organization. Future studies should explore how other members outside of minority congressional caucuses view them and how their vantage point shapes how and why that interact with the CBC and CHC.

Overall, this dissertation argues that the presence of minority congressional caucuses matters in agenda-setting. The results of this dissertation support results from Gross (2005) and Minta (2011) find statistical and qualitative support of the substantive influence of minority legislators outside of roll call voting. As mentioned in Chapter One, minority congressional caucuses are akin to internal lobbyists (Miler, 2011). While caucuses are voluntary organizations with no formal agenda-setting

powers, they provide members opportunities to symbolically and substantively represent the interests of their constituents in unique ways.

## 6.2 Limitations of Dissertation and Future Research

In this section, I will discuss ways this vein of research could be improved. First, in Chapter Five, an index variable or legislative effectiveness score that measures legislative success in predicting the probability of a White MC's minority interest legislation passing is probably preferable to my use of a dichotomous variable measuring bill passage; since there is substantial differences in the number of bills that are introduced and the number of bills that advance to further stages, my current dependent variable gives too much weight to members who are more successful in later stages of the legislative process (e.g., having a bill pass the House) than earlier stages of the process (e.g. bill introduction or action in committee). Moreover, if I created a legislative effectiveness score similar to Volden et. al (2009), I would be able to observe if minority legislators are introducing more bills than their White colleagues but are less successful at getting their bills passed into law. Also, an index variable is important for this study because minority legislators are less likely to see the bills that they introduce translate into law (McCormick and Mitchell, 2007). Hence, future studies should employ an index variable or legislative effectiveness score, as it would depict a more realistic account of the legislative process. If an index variable was employed, I expect that minority caucuses would have more apt to exert caucus influence at the committee level, as these members hold several ranking positions on congressional committees.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Since CBC members emerge from uniformly Democratic districts, they often have weak challengers. This lends itself to outsized seniority within the chamber, meaning a larger share of the CBC members have the benefits of seniority than could be randomly expected (Gerber, 1996). Future studies should examine the consequences of this undue influence. Smith (1996) asserts, "as blacks rise in the institutional power structure, they may be required to put interests of the committee, the party or the House before the interests of their constituents" (p.110). This is also similar to the arguments that Tate (2014) puts forth in her recent book. In particular, she provides evidence

Next, by studying the progression of bills through Congress, I am studying specific forms of agenda-setting behavior and effectiveness of MCs. In addition to advancing their own interests and those of their constituents through their sponsorship and cosponsorship behavior, minority MCs engage in bringing “pork” projects to their districts (Grose, 2011, 2005), constituency service (Grose, 2011), speaking up in oversight hearings (Minta, 2011), and much more. While studying such activities is outside the scope of this project, understanding how minority caucuses facilitate the effectiveness of minority MCs across a range of activities also merits study.

Another limitation of this study is that I provide no systematic empirical evidence that staffers shape policy-making in Congress. That is, I assume that the reason that caucus chairs are productive when they are in the leadership because of the additional staff capacity they have from the caucus staff. While I provide substantial qualitative evidence that this occurs, I do not provide any empirical evidence that this is definitively why caucus chairs are more productive. Future studies should quantitatively test whether the composition of legislative staffs is associated with the content and volume of legislative agendas of their bosses. I suspect that congressional and caucus staffers influence the legislative agendas of their bosses.

Future research should also study the extent to which the racial or ethnic composition of staff affect the policies that their bosses pursue. It is possible that representation of groups like African Americans and Latinos on legislative staffs brings diverse perspectives to Congress that the institution continues to lack when it comes to elected officials, as previous work suggests (e.g. Canon, 1999; Grose, 2011). This is not to say that staffers can replace the well-established influence of either descriptive representatives or like-minded White Democrats on policy responsiveness to

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of “concordance,” which she refers to as the process by which “Black lawmakers at the national level are more likely to vote with the Democratic majority than they ever have in the past” (p. 1). According to Tate, this is a result of the political incorporation of Blacks (especially into party leadership roles), which causes them to become more moderate and simultaneously, the Democratic Party is becoming more liberal on racial issues.

racial and ethnic minorities. However, minority congressional staffers may broaden the scope of policy initiative and responsiveness by increasing the presence of Latino and African Americans interests on policy agendas. This is important for minority MCs and non-minority MCs alike, as not all Black and Latino constituents are represented descriptively. In other words, African Americans and Latino staffers may help shape responsiveness to marginalize populations in desirable ways. This or other research that uncovers ways that we might be able to increase the representation of Blacks and Latinos are vital, as there is a finite number of majority-minority congressional districts that state legislatures can draw.

### **6.3 Implications**

The relationships observed here between agenda-setting and minority congressional caucuses have interesting implications for literatures on race, ethnicity and representation, congressional caucuses, and minority organizations. In regards to minority representation, this dissertation illustrates the need of research to go beyond the dyadic study of minority representation, and instead look at the CBC and CHC and their influence on agenda-setting. Studying the influence of these caucuses in agenda-setting is vital for several reasons. First, Black and Latino MCs spend a significant amount of their finite time in caucus meeting and on other caucus-related activities every week. As I mentioned in Chapter One, and consistent with previous literature, MCs are misers of time; if they are spending a lot of time doing a legislative activity, it is important to examine the purpose that activity and how it serves a member's legislative goals.

Second, as mentioned earlier, a plethora of research suggests that the bulk of legislative work is done by staffers. According to Rundquist, Schneider, and Pauls (1992), "virtually nothing is done in Congress so exclusively by Members of Congress themselves that staff have no impact on the outcome. Supporters of staff influence

claim that staff result in innovation and a broader range of informed perspectives being brought to bear upon the policy decisions of Congress” (p. 93). Hence, if congressional staffers are able to wield influence over the legislative agenda, then one can expect the same for the CBC’s and CHC’s caucus staffers. In fact, when questioned about the role of the caucus staffers in Congress, one of my interviewees stated that, “[The caucus staff] do all the legwork... caucus staffers are like law clerks working for multiple attorneys preparing all types of notes and facts so that when they get to the courtroom, the lawyer [CBC or CHC member] is ready to go. Now, I don’t want to make it seem like members are not involved. They’re not just figureheads. But they just don’t have the time to do all of the research and find the background information necessary for these meetings.” This and several other statements by interviewees provide evidence that the caucus staff warrants examination in future studies of legislative staff and minority agenda-setting.

The dissertation also underscores the need and importance of political organizations for Blacks and Latinos. At the mass level, there has been substantial research on linked fate—the idea that your fate is tied to other in-group members—amongst Blacks and Latinos. According to Dawson (1994), the political importance of group interests is a result of at least two historical aspects of American racism: “First, until at least the late 1960s, individual African Americans’ life chances were determined by the ascriptive feature of race... [And] as long as African Americans continue to believe that their lives are to a large degree determined by what happens to the group as a whole... African Americans’ perceptions of racial group interests [will] be an important component of the way individual Blacks go about evaluating policies, parties, and candidates” (p. 57). This linked fate construct grew increasingly important when used to explore the group behavior of other racial and ethnic (or pan-ethnic) collectivities representing Latinos (Sanchez and Masuoka, 2008; Sanchez 2008; Nicholson, Pantoja and Segura, 2005) and Black Caribbeans (Watt, 2009), and

was found to be significant. And given that minority MCs are forced to deal with institutional dynamics and interpersonal relations that constitute them as subordinate (Hawkesworth, 2003), CBC and CHC are vital institutions for Black and Latino MCs. Hence, just as we study how linked fate affects racial and ethnic minorities at the mass level, a simultaneous process is occurring at the elite level, as these legislators try to represent the interest of racial and ethnic minorities while also being Black or Latino themselves.

Lastly, this dissertation provides substantial evidence for the inclusion of congressional caucuses, in general, in future studies of legislative agenda-setting. Congressional caucuses formed as an effort to influence the legislative process beyond what regular participation in Congress offers (Hammond 1998; Miler 2011). In this way, caucuses serve as a tool for the professional development of its members. In addition, caucuses serve the need of policy coordination of a cause or legislative issue. For these and other reasons, caucuses warrant study in legislative agenda-setting.

### **6.3.1 Normative Implications for Congressional and Caucus Staff Influence**

The results of this dissertation has interesting normative implications for questions about responsiveness and accountability. Some may argue that the influence of non-elected officials on legislative agendas in Congress raise considerable issues for congressional accountability. After all, caucus and congressional staffers have no direct mandate to act on behalf of the public. If staffers influence legislative agendas, what mechanisms exist to ensure that legislation reflects the public will? Scenarios in which staffers influence the substance of legislation to serve special interests rather than the public interest are easy to imagine, and tempting to entertain. There are reasons, however, to believe that representation by caucus and congressional staffers has more potential to improve congressional responsiveness to the public interest than

to pervert it. Surely, anecdotal examples of powerful staffers influencing substantive bills exist, but there is no systematic evidence that caucus and congressional staffers significantly affect members' policy agendas.



## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### Legislative Priorities for CBC and CHC

Table A.1: Legislative Priorities for CBC and CHC Offices

<b>Legislative Priority</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Affordable Housing	2
African Trade	4
Agriculture	1
<b>Civil Rights</b>	<b>7</b>
College Affordability	2
Combat drug trafficking	1
Copyright Protection	1
<b>Criminal Justice System Reform</b>	<b>5</b>
Debt Reduction	1
Disengagement from Foreign Wars	2
Economic Inequality	3
<b>Education</b>	<b>8</b>
Federal programs should apply to territories	1
Foster Care	1
Funding for STEM Programs	1
HBCUs	1
<b>Healthcare</b>	<b>11</b>
Homeland Security	1
Immigration	3
Increase Use of Generic Drugs	1
Increasing Trauma Centers	1
International Affairs	1
Juvenile Justice	1
Minority Businesses	1
Poverty	2
Public Safety	1
Reducing the Size of Federal Government	1
Retirement Security	1
Second Amendment Rights	1
Sex Trafficking	1
Social Programs	4
Statehood for this U.S. Territory	1
Taxes	3
Teen Pregnancy	1
Trade of Firearms	1
<b>Transportation and Infrastructure</b>	<b>7</b>
Underage Drinking	1
<b>Unemployment</b>	<b>10</b>
Veterans	4
Water	2
Women's Interests	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>

## APPENDIX B

### Details on Coding Examples for Bill Sponsorship Data

Table B.1: Example of Minority Interest Legislation by Topic

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Example</b>
Macroeconomics	incentives in high unemployment areas
Civil Rights	extension of the Commission of Civil Rights
Health	issues relating to disparities in health
Agriculture	domestic food programs for the needy
Labor/Employment/Immigration	earned income tax credit
Education	expand programs under Higher Education Act
Environment	demographic data for waste treatment sites
Energy	low-income home energy assistance
Transportation	public works employment for unemployed
Law/Crime/Family	racially discriminatory use of the death penalty
Social Welfare	establish national minimum for AFDC benefits
Community Development/Housing	revitalization and construction of public housing
Banking/Finance/Commerce	non-discrimination in insurance
Defense	pensions for minority soldiers
Space/Science/Communication	diverse ownership of local broadcasting
Foreign Trade	none
International Affairs	sanctions against apartheid
Government Operations	King holiday and its commission
Public Lands	national Latino American history museum

## APPENDIX C

### Details on Coding by Category (Sources: Brenson 2009; Platt, 2014)

1. Macroeconomics bills are predominantly about unemployment and what the government can do to provide more jobs for the poor and racial and ethnic minorities. This includes legislation concerning full employment, jobs credits for the poor, and incentives to develop economically distressed areas.
2. Civil rights bills grapple with instances of discrimination in a variety of areas; voting rights issues that impact Blacks or Latinos in particular; administering existing civil rights provisions; and remedial actions such as reparations for slavery.
3. Racial and ethnic minority health legislation deals with expanding health care to the poor, caring for pregnant women, and funding for sickle cell, diabetes, and vitiligo research, which are conditions that disproportionately effect minorities .
4. An example of minority interest agriculture legislation may use surplus products to provide food assistance to the needy and school children.

5. The labor and employment category may include legislation relating, but not limited to job training programs targeted towards the poor or Blacks or Latinos.
6. Education legislation is coded as a Black or Latino issue if it provides targeted benefits to disadvantaged students, reduces funding disparities, further Head Start programs, and funding earmarked for historically black colleges or minority serving institutions.
7. Environmental legislation with the location of waste sites in minority communities.
8. Minority interest energy legislation may provide home energy assistance to the poor and compensate those who lost jobs as a result of the oil crisis.
9. Minority interest in transportation issues may include extended public works projects intended to alleviate unemployment, representation of minorities and the poor on local transit boards, and amendments to the Urban Mass Transportation act that pertains to the poor.
10. Law, Crime, and Family issues are coded as Black or Latino when they address disparities in sentencing, prohibitions of police brutality, hate crimes, and programs to help children or poor mothers.
11. Social welfare bills include guaranteed income, appropriations for the Office of Economic Opportunity, and expansions of the food stamp program. Mostly this topic is composed of changes to Aid to Families with Dependent Children(AFDC) that increase benefits, federalize administration, avoid work requirements, and repeal punitive measures for program participants.
12. Community development and Housing legislation is coded as minority interest legislation when it expands or improves low-income housing, especially public

housing. The category also includes issues of fair housing, community development block grants, enterprise zones, and economic development of depressed areas are also included under this heading.

13. Legislation in the Banking, Finance, and Commerce category was coded as minority interest when it referred to discrimination in the ability of minorities to get reasonable credit and insurance rates. Also, targeted tax relief for low-income people and inducements to invest in minority business are also included.
14. Defense bills offer remedies to Black or Latino soldiers for past racial injustices and create special offices for equal opportunity or minority affairs were coded as minority interest legislation.
15. Space, Science, Technology, and Communications contains issues about the diversity of broadcasting ownership, media portrayal of racial/ethnic groups, and public works employment to build communication infrastructure that were coded as minority interest legislation.
16. Foreign trade bills include some affirmative action measures and job retraining for those displaced by foreign trade were coded as minority interest legislation.
17. International Affairs does not include many minority interest bills, given the emphasis on domestic policies. The exception is funding for domestic micro-loan programs.
18. Government operations relate to minority interests when they commemorate achievements made by Black and Latino leaders, preferences for contracts in high unemployment areas, and applying civil rights laws to government offices such as Congress and the Supreme Court.
19. Public lands and water management is devoted entirely to monuments and landmarks that recognize important aspects of Black or Latino history.

## APPENDIX D

### Interview Instrument Legislative Staffers in CBC and CHC Offices

I am a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Political Science at the University of Michigan. I am currently in the process of conducting dissertation research on the legislative priorities of Black and Latino members of Congress. I would like to ask you a few questions about the legislative priorities of your boss. I am mainly interested in issues that affect minority and low-income constituents.

Do you have any questions for me before we begin the interview?

#### Questions

1. Can you tell me about the last piece of legislation that your boss sponsored?
  - (a) If this legislation were to pass, who would be helped or hurt by it?
  - (b) Who did you work with on Capital Hill in advancing this legislation?
2. What role did you play in sponsoring and developing this legislation?
  - (a) In developing this legislation, whom did you work with? (e.g. other legislative staffers)



- (b) Did you work with anyone from a caucus? If so, who?
- 3. Can you tell me the top five legislative priorities for your boss?
  - (a) How do the issues that you just mentioned affect African Americans or Latinos in your district?
- 4. On any of the issues you mentioned, do you seek assistance from the Congressional Black Caucus staff?
  - (a) If yes–In what matter did you seek assistance from the CBC?
  - (b) If no–Do you seek assistance from other caucuses?
- 5. On average, how many interactions do you have with caucus staff per week?
  - (a) Generally speaking, how long are these interactions?
  - (b) Can you walk me through a typical conversation with caucus staff?
- 6. Can you talk more specifically about an instance where you worked with caucus staff? What kinds of things did you discuss?
  - (a) What kind of information did they provide? Did they provide any policy reports or policy analyses? Did they communicate with other members on your behalf? Did they communicate with interest groups on your behalf?
- 7. Do you have questions for me?

## APPENDIX E

### Interview Instrument for CBC and CHC Staff

I am a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Political Science at the University of Michigan. I am currently in the process of conducting dissertation research on the relationship between congressional caucuses and minority members of Congress.

#### Questions

1. What do you see as the role of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) (or Congressional Black Caucus (CBC)) in working on policy issues relevant to Latinos?
2. Do you work with individual member's offices on legislation that they care about? If so, what kind of assistance do you provide?
3. On average, how many interactions do you have with caucus members per week on average?
4. Can you walk me through a typical conversation with caucus members?
  - (a) Which members do you talk with the most?
  - (b) What kind of assistance do members look to CHC (or CBC) for?

5. Here are five headlines of press releases made by the caucus (show five press releases for CHC chosen at random).
  - (a) Did the caucus staff work on these issues? What assistance did you provide and to whom?
6. Which members were active on this issue (depends on the response to question 5)?
  - (a) Were there any members who had less significant roles?
7. Can you talk more about one of these issues where you worked with a caucus member? What sort of information did you get? What kinds of things did you discuss?
  - (a) Did your office provide any policy reports or policy analyses? Did your office communicate with other members on your behalf? Did your office communicate with interest groups on your behalf?
8. Do you have question for me?

## APPENDIX F

### Interview Instrument for Members of Congress

I am a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Political Science at the University of Michigan. I am currently in the process of conducting dissertation research on the Congressional Black Caucus. Do you have any questions for me before we begin the interview?

#### Questions

1. What do you see as the role of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) in working on policy issues relevant to African Americans?
2. In recent years, the number of black members representing majority white districts has increased. There is even members hailing from Republican districts. Has CBC evolved because of this?
3. How does the CBC handle internal conflict?
4. What factors influence the caucus agenda setting?
5. Do you feel a responsibility to representative blacks outside your personal district?

6. How does the CBC measure success when polarization in Congress hinders the passage of legislation?
7. What is it like being a member of Congress with a black president?
8. What happens when black members vote against CBC interests?
9. What are the weekly CBC meetings like?
10. Do you think It is important for the CBC remains all black?
11. Do you have questions for me?

## APPENDIX G

### Subject Recruitment–Email Script

Dear X:

I am a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Political Science at the University of Michigan. I am currently in the process of conducting dissertation research on the legislative priorities of Black and Latino members of Congress. I would like to ask you a few questions about the legislative priorities of your boss. I am mainly interested in issues that affect minority and low-income constituents.

I have learned what I can from looking at your boss's website and his legislative activity, but there is information that I cannot get from those resources. Hence, I would like to conduct a short in-person interview with you. My questions will take no longer than twenty minutes. This interview will be off the record. I will not mention you or your boss's name in any of my future written work.

Please contact me if you would be willing to participate or have any questions. I can be reached via email at [lbrenson@umich.edu](mailto:lbrenson@umich.edu) or by phone (555) 555 5555.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Thank you for considering my request.

Best,

LaShonda

LaShonda Brenson

Ph.D. Candidate

University of Michigan

Department of Political Science

lbrenson@umich.edu

(555) 555 5555

## APPENDIX H

### Consent Letter

**Project Title:** Where's the Caucus? A Study of Minority Agenda- Setting Behavior

**Investigator:** LaShonda Brenson, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Michigan

**Internal Review Board (IRB) Registration Number:** 00000246

Before agreeing to participate in this study, it is vital that you review this consent form. This letter contains pertinent information regarding the benefits, purpose, and procedures associated with this study. Most importantly, it contains information about your confidentiality and your right to withdraw from the study at any time.

#### **Procedures**

You are being asked to participate in a research project that examines the role of race and ethnicity in the legislative process. Specifically, I am interested in finding out what role, if any, does race and ethnicity in caucus participation. I anticipate that an interview will take no longer than thirty minutes of your time and can be conducted at your legislative office. I plan to conduct one face-to-face interview, but I may need to contact you for clarification purposes.



## **Benefits**

I understand that your time is valuable and that you are extremely busy, particularly during the legislative session. There is no direct benefit or compensation to you for participating in this study. However, the research is expected to yield fascinating results about the role of race and ethnicity in caucus participation.

## **Confidentiality**

This is a non-partisan academic project funded by the Rackham Graduate School at the University of Michigan. Most questions are very general in nature, and are not intended to elicit sensitive or confidential information. Nonetheless, please know that the information you provide will be kept in strict confidence. Neither your name nor your congressional district will be associated with the responses you give. Only myself and authorized personnel (e.g. my faculty advisors, research assistants and the Internal Review Board (IRB) at the University of Michigan) will have access to my research materials.

## **Withdrawal from Study**

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and refusal to participate at any time will involve no penalty of any kind.

## **Contact Information**

If you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can be reached by telephone (555-555-5555) or by email (lbrenson@umich.edu). Further, this study complies with strict guidelines regarding the conduct and use of interviews for academic purposes. If you have any questions concerning the procedures used in conducting this study, you may also contact the Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences

Institutional Review Board (IRB-HSBS) at (734) 936 0933 or irbhsbs@umich.edu

### **Agreement**

Your signature below indicates that you agree to the terms above and to participate in this study. In addition, your signature below indicates that you received a copy of the letter for your records.

Signature of Subject

Date

Subject Name (print please)

Signature of Researcher

## APPENDIX I

### Example of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Whip's Weekly Email

Figure I.1: Example of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Whip's Weekly Email [page 1 of 4]

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**From:**  
**Sent:** Friday, February 20, 2015 4:10 PM  
**To:**  
**Subject:** FW: CBC Whip Line - Week of Jan 13

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**From:** Whip, CBC  
**Sent:** Monday, January 13, 2014 3:12 PM  
**To:**  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** CBC Whip Line - Week of Jan 13



***THE WEEKLY CBC WHIP LINE  
FROM WHIP KAREN BASS***

**WEEK OF JANUARY 13**

**First Vote of the Week: Mon, Jan. 13: 6:30 PM | Last Vote Predicted: Thurs, Jan. 16: 3:00 PM**

**MONDAY, JANUARY 13, 2014**

The House will meet at 12:00 p.m. for Morning Hour debate and 2:00 p.m. for legislative business. With votes postponed until 6:30 PM

**3 Suspension Bills**

**1. H.R. 1513 - Revise Boundaries of Gettysburg National Military Park – Rep. Scott Perry (R-PA)**

CHAIRWOMAN VOTING RECOMMENDATION: VOTE YES

**SUMMARY:** This bill expands the boundary of Gettysburg National Military Park in Pennsylvania to include the train station at which President Abraham Lincoln arrived to deliver the Gettysburg Address. That land could be transferred to the department by donation only.

**BACKGROUND:** The Gettysburg National Military Park was established in 1895 when the property was transferred to the federal government. In 1933, administration of the site was transferred to the Interior Department and the National Park Service. The Natural Resources Committee reported the bill by unanimous consent

**RANKING MEMBER DEFAZIO INPUT: SUPPORTS**

**2. S. 230 - Authorize Peace Corps Commemorative Work – Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH)**

CHAIRWOMAN VOTING RECOMMENDATION: VOTE YES

**SUMMARY:** This bill authorizes the Peace Corps Commemorative Foundation to establish a commemorative work on federal lands in the District of Columbia to honor the formation of the Peace Corps and its mission and ideals. Under the measure, no federal funds could be used to pay any expense of the project.

Figure I.2: Example of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Whip's Weekly Email [page 2 of 4]

**BACKGROUND:** The Senate passed the bill by unanimous consent on June 19, 2013. The House Natural Resources Committee in December reported the bill by unanimous consent. House passage would clear it for the President.

**RANKING MEMBER DEFAZIO INPUT:** SUPPORTS

**3. H.R. 841 - Grand Ronde Reservation Expansion – Rep. Kurt Schrader (D-OR)**

**CHAIRWOMAN VOTING RECOMMENDATION:** VOTE YES

**SUMMARY:** This bill modifies the process by which the Grand Ronde Indian Community may apply for trust land within the original boundaries of its former 1857 reservation in order to expedite the addition of such land. Specifically, it allows the Interior department to accept land to be placed into trust by the tribe if that land was located within the boundaries of the original 1857 reservation. That land would be treated as an on-reservation trust acquisition. The measure prohibits gaming on these lands, except for lands within two miles of the tribe's current casino.

**BACKGROUND:** The Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon were among several tribes in Western Oregon that entered into treaties with the United States in the 1850s. In 1983, Congress enacted the Grand Ronde Restoration Act to extend recognition to the Grand Ronde Indians and establish a process for the tribal government to organize itself. The Natural Resources Committee reported the bill by unanimous consent.

**RANKING MEMBER DEFAZIO INPUT:** SUPPORTS

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2014**

The House will meet at 10:00 a.m. for Morning Hour debate and 12:00 p.m. for legislative business. With votes postponed until 6:30 PM

**5 Suspension Bills**

**1. H.R. 801 - Holding Company Registration Threshold Equalization Act – Rep. Steve Womack (R-AR)**

**CHAIRWOMAN VOTING RECOMMENDATION:** VOTE YES

**SUMMARY:** This bill increases the thresholds at which a savings and loan company must register with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) or may deregister with the SEC, equalizing them to the thresholds set by the JOBS Act for banks and bank holding companies. Specifically, it increases from 500 to 2,000 shareholders the threshold at which a savings and loan company must register with the SEC, and it allows savings and loans to deregister if their shareholder base falls below 1,200 (versus 300 in current law).

**BACKGROUND:** In 2012, Congress enacted the Jumpstart Our Business Startups Act (JOBS Act). Among other things, the bill raised the threshold at which banks and bank holding companies must register with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) from 500 to 2,000 shareholders, while increasing from 300 to 1,200 the threshold at which financial institutions could deregister with the SEC (i.e., allowing them to deregister if their shareholder base contracted to fewer than 1,200). The JOBS Act, however, did not change registration/deregistration requirements for savings and loan companies. The Financial Services Committee reported the bill by voice vote.

**RANKING MEMBER WATERS INPUT:** SUPPORTS

**2. H.R. 2274 - Small-Business Mergers, Acquisitions, Sales and Brokerage Simplification Act – Rep. Bill Huizenga (R-MI)**

**CHAIRWOMAN VOTING RECOMMENDATION:** VOTE YES

**SUMMARY:** This bill exempts mergers and acquisitions (M&A) brokers that assist in the transfer of ownership of small, privately owned businesses from Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) registration. In order to be eligible for exemption from SEC registration, the company being sold must not have any class of securities required to be registered with the SEC and in the previous fiscal year must meet at least one of the following limitations: pre-tax earnings of less than \$25 million and gross revenues of less than \$250 million. Those thresholds would be adjusted for inflation every five years.

**BACKGROUND:** Under current law, firms that broker mergers and acquisitions (M&A) must register with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). In 1985, the Supreme Court decided that transactions involving the sale of an entire business constituted the sale of stock or securities, and therefore the brokers of such sales must register with the SEC. M&A firms since then have sought to establish criteria regarding what level of such

Figure I.3: Example of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Whip's Weekly Email [page 3 of 4]

activity would trigger broker-dealer registration requirements. The Financial Services Committee reported the bill by a 57-0 vote

**RANKING MEMBER WATERS INPUT: SUPPORTS**

**3. HJ Res ##### - Short-Term Continuing Appropriations for FY 2014 – Rep. Harold Rogers (R-KY)**

CHAIRWOMAN VOTING RECOMMENDATION: VOTE YES

**SUMMARY:** This resolution provides funding for the government for an additional three days — through Jan. 18, 2014 — at the sequester-reduced levels in effect at the end of FY 2013. It also extends all authorities included in the previous continuing appropriations law enacted in October for the same time period.

**BACKGROUND:** Negotiators in December announced that they had reached agreement to raise discretionary budget caps for FY 2014 and 2015 and partially roll back a portion of the sequester each of those years (with the spending cuts replaced by other savings); Congress subsequently enacted that agreement as the Bipartisan Budget Act. Given that bipartisan agreement on discretionary caps for FY 2014, House and Senate appropriators began efforts to assemble an omnibus appropriations measure that includes all 12 spending bills to fund the government for the remainder of FY 2014. While negotiators are close to an agreement, they have called for a short extension of the current CR so the government remains funded after Jan. 15 while Congress works to enact the omnibus. The Appropriations Committee has not acted on the resolution, which was introduced Friday, Jan. 10, by Appropriations Chairman Harold Rogers, R-Ky.

**RANKING MEMBER LOWEY INPUT: SUPPORTS**

**4. H.R. 2860 - OPM IG Act – Rep. Blake Farenthold (R-TX)**

CHAIRWOMAN VOTING RECOMMENDATION: VOTE YES

**SUMMARY:** This bill allows the Inspector General of the Office of Personnel Management to receive revolving fund monies to pay for IG audit and investigative work associated with the fund. The bill limits the amount available to the IG to 0.33% of the revolving fund's budgetary authority. The IG must submit an annual budget request and report detailing its planned revolving fund work.

**BACKGROUND:** The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) currently conducts certain personnel management services for other federal agencies, which are financed through a revolving fund created in 1952. The two largest activities financed by the revolving fund are those conducted by OPM's Federal Investigative Services (FIS) and Human Resources Systems (HRS). The Oversight and Government Reform Committee reported the bill by voice vote.

**RANKING MEMBER CUMMINGS INPUT: SUPPORTS**

**5. H.R. 1233 - Presidential & Federal Records Act Amendments – Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-MD)**

CHAIRWOMAN VOTING RECOMMENDATION: VOTE YES

**SUMMARY:** This bill allows former presidents to request the non-disclosure of certain records related to their presidencies. It also requires federal employees who conduct any official business with their personal email account to forward such information to agency accounts, and it updates a number of National Archives procedures related to record keeping to reflect an emphasis on electronic records.

**BACKGROUND:** Current law does not provide a procedure that allows former presidents to request continued restricted access to presidential records created during their administrations. Several presidents have issued executive orders to formalize a request procedure and define the limits of such requests, but this process has not yet been codified into law. In addition, existing federal record-keeping laws have not adjusted to the massive transition toward electronic communication and record keeping. National Archives-related crime laws, and laws covering the communications of federal employees, are among the areas that have not fully evolved to the new electronic age. The Oversight and Government Reform Committee approved the bill by voice vote.

**RANKING MEMBER CUMMINGS INPUT: SUPPORTS**

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 9, 2014 AND THE BALANCE OF THE WEEK**

On Wednesday, the House will meet at 10:00 a.m. for Morning Hour debate and 12:00 p.m. for legislative business. On Thursday, the House will meet at 9:00 a.m. for legislative business, with last votes expected no later than 3:00 p.m. On Friday, no votes are expected in the House.

Considered under a Structured Rule:

Figure I.4: Example of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Whip's Weekly Email  
[page 4 of 4]

**Legislation Related to Funding Government Operations for the Remainder of Fiscal Year 2014**  
Vote recommendation will be issued shortly after appropriations bill becomes available

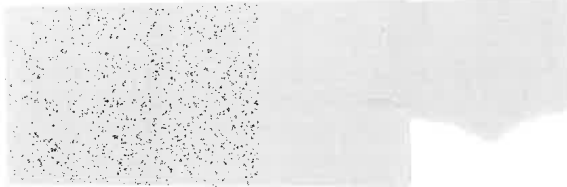
1. **H.R. 3362 – Exchange Information Disclosure Act** – Rep. Lee Terry (R-NE)

CHAIRWOMAN VOTING RECOMMENDATION: VOTE NO

**SUMMARY:** This bill requires the Department of Health and Human Services to issue detailed weekly reports on the functioning of the health benefit exchanges created under the Affordable Care Act. The reports would contain data on topics including the number of website visits, chat logins, account creations, any problems identified with the website or call centers, as well as actions to resolve those problems. The reports would also include more detailed information such as the number, zip code, and level of coverage of every enrollee in a Qualified Health Plan through a Health Benefit Exchange. Additionally, H.R. 3362 requires HHS to issue weekly updates on a public listing of navigators and certified agents and brokers.

**BACKGROUND:** According to Energy and Commerce Democrats, the legislation would impose unnecessary and duplicative administrative burdens on the Department of Health and Human Services. HHS is already releasing detailed enrollment figures every month and conducting daily briefings on efforts to improve the functioning of healthcare.gov. Finally, a regularly updated, public listing of navigators, agents, and brokers is currently available. The weekly production of these duplicative listings further enhances repetitive measures for HHS as prescribed by H.R. 3362. *Leadership is also recommending a no vote.*

**RANKING MEMBER WAXMAN INPUT: OPPOSES**



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## APPENDIX J

### Leadership in the Congressional Black Caucus

(CBC) [92<sup>nd</sup>-112<sup>th</sup> Congresses]



Table J.1: Leadership in the Congressional Black Caucus [92<sup>nd</sup>-112<sup>th</sup> Congresses]

Congress	Years	Chair	First and Second Vice Chairs	Secretary	Treasurer
92	1971-1972	Charles Diggs, Jr.	Augustus Hawkins	Charles Rangel	-
92	1972-1973	Louis Stokes	Augustus Hawkins	Charles Rangel	William Lacy Clay
93	1973-1974	Louis Stokes	Parren Mitchell	Charles Rangel	William Lacy Clay
93	1974-1975	Charles Rangel	Yvonne Burke	-	Andrew Young
94	1975-1976	Charles Rangel	Yvonne Burke	-	Andrew Young
94	1976-1977	Yvonne Burke	Walter Fauntroy	Cardiss Collins	Andrew Young
95	1977-1979	Parren Mitchell	Shirley Chisholm	Ronald Dellums	Cardiss Collins
96	1979-1981	Cardiss Collins	Ronald Dellums	William Gray, III	Julian Dixon
97	1981-1983	Walter Fauntroy	William Gray, III	Harold Washington	Julia Dixon
98	1983-1985	Julian Dixon	William Gray, III / Mickey Leland	Edolphus Towns	Harold Washington
99	1985-1987	Mickey Leland	Edolphus Towns	Alan Wheat	Cardiss Collins
100	1987-1989	Mervyn Dymally	Alan Wheat	Cardiss Collins	Kweisi Mfume
101	1989-1991	Ronald Dellums	Alan Wheat / Kweisi Mfume	Cardiss Collins	Charles Hayes
102	1991-1993	Edolphus Towns	Cardiss Collins / Kweisi Mfume	William Jefferson	Charles Hayes
103	1993-1995	Kweisi Mfume	Cardiss Collins / Alcee Hastings	William Jefferson	Barbara-Rose Collins
104	1995-1997	Donald Payne	Barbara-Rose Collins / Earl Hilliard	Eddie Bernice Johnson	William Jefferson
105	1997-1999	Maxine Waters	Earl Hilliard / Eddie Bernice Johnson	Corrine Brown	-
106	1999-2001	James Clyburn	Eddie Bernice Johnson / Corrine Brown	Elijah Cummings	-
107	2001- 2003	Eddie Bernice Johnson	Elijah Cummings / Shelia Jackson Lee	Bobby Rush	-
108	2003-2005	Elijah Cummings	Shelia Jackson Lee / Corrine Brown	Danny Davis	-
109	2005-2007	Melvin Watt	Corrine Brown / Carolyn Kilpatrick	Danny Davis	-
110	2007-2009	Carolyn Kilpatrick	Barbara Lee / Emanuel Cleaver II	Danny Davis	-
111	2009-2011	Barbara Lee	Emanuel Cleaver II / Donna Christensen	GK Butterfield, Jr.	-
112	2011- 2013	Emanuel Cleaver II	Donna Christensen / GK Butterfield, Jr.	Yvette Clarke	-

## APPENDIX K

### Leadership in the Congressional Hispanic Caucus

(CHC) [92<sup>nd</sup>-112<sup>th</sup> Congresses]

Table K.1: Leadership in the Congressional Hispanic Caucus [94<sup>th</sup>-112<sup>th</sup> Congresses]

Congress	Years	Chair	First and Second Vice Chairs	Secretary
94	1976-1977	Edward R. Roybal	-	-
95	1977-1979	Edward R. Roybal	-	-
96	1979-1981	Edward R. Roybal	-	-
97	1981-1983	Edward R. Roybal	Baltasar Corrada / Robert Garcia	Edward R. Roybal
98	1983-1985	Robert Garcia/ Bill Richardson	Baltasar Corrada	Edward R. Roybal
99	1985-1987	Bill Richardson/ Matthew Maertinez / Esteban E. Torres	Matthew Martinez	Esteban E. Torres
100	1987-1989	Esteban E. Torres/ Albert G. Bustamante/ Jaime B. Fuster	-	-
101	1989-1991	Jaime B. Fuster / Eligio (Kika) de la Garza II / Solomon P. Ortiz	-	Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
102	1991-1993	Solomon P. Ortiz	-	Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
103	1993-1995	Jose E. Serrano	Lucille Roybal- Allard	Ed Pastor
104	1995-1997	Ed Pastor	Carlos Romero Barcelo	-
105	1997-1999	Xavier Becerra	Nydia M. Velazquez / Loretta Sanchez	-
106	1999-2001	Lucille Roybal- Allard	Silvestre Reyes / Ciro Rodriguez	-
107	2001-2003	Silvestre Reyes	Ciro Rodriguez/ Grace Napolitano	-
108	2003-2005	Ciro D. Rodriguez	Grace Napolitano / Joe Baca	-
109	2005-2007	Grace Napolitano	Joe Baca /Raul Grijalva	-
110	2007-2009	Joe Baca	Raul M. Grijalva / Charles A. Gonzalez	-
111	2009-2011	Nydia M. Velazquez	Charles Gonzalez / Ruben Hinojosa	-
112	2011-2013	Charles A. Gonzalez	Ruben Hinojosa / Ben Ray Lujan	-

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