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John R. Petrocik; Scott W. Desposato

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ARTICLES

The Partisan Consequences of Majority-Minority Redistricting in the South, 1992 and 1994

John R. Petrocik

Scott W. Desposato

University of California at Los Angeles

This paper demonstrates that the creation of majority-minority districts was no more than an indirect cause of Democratic losses in 1992 and 1994, and the second-order effect of losing familiar voters was more important than the first-order effect of a reduced black constituency. Further, it demonstrates that a pro-GOP surge, independent of redistricting, was the critical factor without which neither new voters nor the reduced black population would have defeated many incumbent Democrats. These results integrate existing theory about voter behavior, the influence of short-term forces, incumbency dynamics, and structural adjustments such as redistricting to formulate a fuller account of the losses.

The anti-Democratic tide of 1994 was a national force that defeated Democrats throughout the country and at every level of government. But national political forces do not offer a complete account of the outcome. The country was at peace, the economy was growing apace, and common measures of general dissatisfaction (distrust and a sense that the country was on the "wrong track") were not at unprecedented levels (Steeper and Blunt 1995). The very fact that regional political loyalties and established incumbents were unable to resist the Republican tide seemed to require the addition of local factors to any account of the outcome (see, e.g., Campbell 1996; Jacobson 1996). One local factor, the extensive majority-minority redistricting that occurred during 1991 and 1992 in the South, is the focus of this paper. The analysis integrates existing theory about voter behavior, the influence of short-term forces, incumbency dynamics, and structural adjustments such as redistricting to formulate a fuller account of the losses.

This paper was originally presented at the 1995 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, in Chicago. We want to thank the various people who have made helpful comments, particularly Morgan Kousser and John Jackson, discussants at the APSA panel; the American Politics Reading Group at UCLA; and Mark Rush. Two people deserve a special note. Franklin Gilliam, with whom this subject was often discussed, and Elizabeth Stephenson, Director of the Data Archive of the Institute for Social Science Research at UCLA, who helped us access the Census files we needed to calculate essential variables. The data used for this analysis were provided through the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research. The authors alone are responsible for the analysis and conclusions in this paper.

The Majority-Minority Packing Thesis

The standard partisan prediction of the electoral effect of majority-minority redistricting is that white Democrats are weakened as a direct result of the loss of their African-American constituents. Majority-minority redistricting reduces the most reliably Democratic portion of the electorate while simultaneously increasing the proportion of whites, who are more Republican and more likely to defect to Republicans even when they are Democrats (this proposition has a long history; see, e.g., Brace, Grofman, and Handley 1987).¹ By this account, many of the southern white Democrats who were defeated in 1994 could trace their fate to the creation of majority-minority districts after the 1990 census (see Banducci and Karp 1994; Hill 1995; Lublin 1995a, 1995b; NAACP 1994).

The electoral arithmetic for this thesis is illustrated in Figure 1, which models the fraction of the white vote a southern Democrat must win as a function of the percentage of the African-American contribution to the total turnout. Since virtually every black voter is expected to support the Democrat, a Democratic candidate can construct a winning coalition in this model without a majority of the white voters, depending upon the size of the black vote in the constituency. For any given black share of the electorate, a Democrat's election strategy needs to focus on four numbers: African-American share of turnout, the party balance among whites, the defection rate of white Democrats, and the defection rate of Republicans. The median southern white Democrat has a constituency that is about 20% black. In the average constituency (represented by the "X"), the Democrat can construct a winning majority with 38–39% of the white vote. A white Democrat can eke out a win with as little as 33% of the white vote if the electorate is 30% black. If blacks are as little as 15% of the electorate, 41% of the white vote would be needed.

The figure graphs the average effect.² A specific election strategy would require adjustments for different roll-off and turnout rates. However, that refine-

¹ Throughout the 1950s, southern whites averaged about 70% Democratic and approximately 20% Republican. The Democratic majority declined fairly consistently thereafter. By 1984, southern whites were as Republican as they were Democratic, with about 10% claiming to be independent—although short-term perturbations occasionally increased the Democratic lead in surveys. If recent data are correct, Republicans in the South have enjoyed a 5% to 10% lead in party identification since about 1992.

² The vote-support targets represented by the trade-offs in Figure 1 illustrate what is commonly known, among political operatives who work on southern elections, as the "35% rule." Proceeding from the assumption that blacks constitute about 20% of the eligible electorate, the "35% rule" asserts that a Democrat can eke out a victory with as little as 35% of the white vote. As crude as the "rule" might seem, it comes close to accurately expressing the coalition strategy that both Democratic and Republican candidates pursue in district and statewide elections. The white vote a white Democrat would need with a 20% black electorate is closer to 38% or 39% (as the text indicates). However, lower turnout and higher roll-off among blacks probably results in the "35% rule" coming closer to the needed percentage than the 38–39% obtained from the figure. The typical situation probably produces a curve that is slightly less steep than the curve in the figure. When black turnout is higher, and it occasionally has been higher, the curve would be steeper.

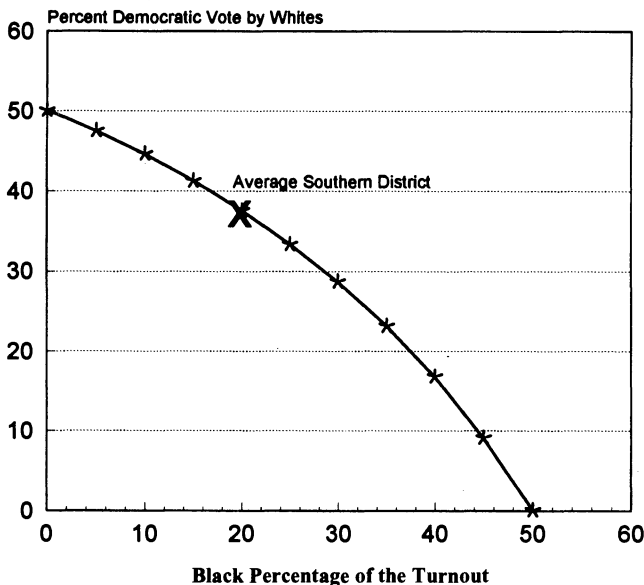
ment would not alter the basic relationship, which explains Democratic anxiety toward, and GOP support for, majority-minority redistricting. In any given state (North Carolina, for example), racial packing that reduces the African-American percentage in the districts of four or five white Democratic incumbents could defeat two or three (or more) of them for every black Democrat who is elected. A preredistricting balance of eight Democrats and four Republicans could easily become an eight to four Republican balance if packing African-Americans into three districts strips the remaining five white Democrats of a critical part of their core vote.

A Reformulated Majority-Minority Thesis

The proposition underlying this analysis of the 1994 congressional elections in the South is that this standard explanation of the impact of majority-minority districts on Democratic fortunes is essentially correct, *but too simple*. The creation of majority-minority districts did marginalize some white Democratic incumbents and played a role in their defeat in 1992 and 1994. In that specific sense, majority-minority redistricting was a necessary ingredient for the defeats,

FIGURE 1

White Vote Needed to Win for Any Given Black Percentage of a District



Note: The calculations assume similar turnout and roll-off rates for blacks and whites.

but it was insufficient by itself, and that “insufficiency factor” deserves more attention than it has received from analysts. The critical ingredient in these Democratic defeats was the *coincidence* of large numbers of new constituents (defined as individuals who were in a different incumbent’s district prior to the redistricting) in the redrawn districts (a shuffling of individuals made necessary by racial packing) and a pro-GOP political tide.

The key factor was the second-order effect of losing familiar voters. This loss of familiar constituents was more important than the first-order effect of a reduced black constituency. The data show that the pro-GOP surge in 1992 and 1994, independent of racial districting, was *the* critical factor in the losses under either a first- or a second-order effect. Racial packing trimmed the probable plurality of some Democratic incumbents, *but the redrawn districts were not so marginal that defeat was likely, ceteris paribus*. But because everything was not equal in 1992, much less in 1994, the majority-minority districts were consequential. Clinton’s weak win in 1992 (his vote was equal to or less than the percentage of losing Democrats from 1980 through 1988) provided no boost for Democrats. Further, a sour national mood during 1994 gave Republican candidates a boost before the Democrats who survived 1992 had time to ingratiate themselves with their new constituents and develop the organizational and financial advantages that produce the 6 to 8 points that represent the sophomore surge and a foundation for the incumbency advantage. Undoubtedly, GOP candidate recruitment and financing, stimulated by these conditions (see the conclusion for more on this), also shaped the outcome. But the direct influence of majority-minority redistricting is the focus of this paper—and its effect was limited.

Short-Term Political Tides and Incumbent Immunity

The importance of the political tide is illustrated in Table 1, which combines the underlying redistricting effect modeled in Figure 1 with the effect of short-term, election-specific partisan tides. The table presents outcomes for four possible elections. The top half of the table represents two elections *prior* to a majority-minority redistricting. The bottom half of the table reports on two elections *after* majority-minority redistricting. The left-right halves of the table distinguish elections in which short-term forces favor the Democratic candidate (left side) from an election where the short-term forces favor the GOP (right side).

The figures in the table reflect observed parameters. Before redistricting, 44% of the districts of white Democrats were at least 20% black; only 25% had so many black constituents after redistricting (see Figure 2). The “size of group” numbers and percentage voting Democratic are representative of the partisanship and voting behavior of southerners as they appear in recent National Election Study surveys. The “pro-Democratic” environment calculates the Democratic

vote of whites (by party identification) from the 1990 election (a winning year for the Democrats). The 1990 voting patterns of white Southerners were similar to their voting in 1986 and 1988, except that white Independents voted much more Democratic in those years. The small number of Independents has a trivial effect on the totals. The "pro-Republican" environment uses the vote of white Democratic identifiers, white Independents, and Republicans in 1994—a GOP year.

Racial Redistricting in a Steady Political Environment

Consider first the potential danger to Democrats of a redistricting that reduces the black share of the constituency (compare the upper left and lower left quadrants).³ In the preredistricting environment (upper left), the Democratic

TABLE 1
The Effect of Population Composition and Short-Term Forces on
Elections: An Illustration

Before Redistricting					
Short-Term Election Forces are:		<i>Pro-Democratic</i>		<i>Pro-Republican</i>	
	Size of Group	Democratic		Democratic	
		Vote	Share	Vote	Share
African-Americans	20%	95%	19.0%	95%	19.0%
White Democrats	36	80	28.8	71	25.6
White Independents	8	46	3.7	43	3.4
White Republicans	36	35	12.6	12	4.3
Total	100%		64.1%		52.7%
After Redistricting					
Short-Term Election Forces are:		<i>Pro-Democratic</i>		<i>Pro-Republican</i>	
	Size of Group	Democratic		Democratic	
		Vote	Share	Vote	Share
African-Americans	14%	95%	13.3%	95%	13.3%
White Democrats	39	80	31.2	71	27.7
White Independents	8	46	3.7	43	3.4
White Republicans	39	35	13.7	12	4.7
Total	100%		61.9%		49.1%

Note: The voting choices of each group are obtained from the 1990 and 1994 National Election Study surveys. The 1990 data are used to represent an election with pro-Democratic forces; the 1994 data are used to illustrate an election with pro-Republican forces.

³ The survey data cited in the paper are drawn from the 1990 and 1994 National Election Study surveys. Estimates of party identification by race, voting behavior, and group sizes are drawn from these datasets.

incumbent faces a constituency that is 56% Democrat, 36% Republican, and 20% African-American. Blacks are overwhelmingly Democrats; whites are split. In a "good" election environment a white Democratic incumbent gets 80% of the votes of white Democrat identifiers, about 46% of the white Independent vote, and a bit over a third of GOP identifiers (to repeat, these behavior estimates come from the NES survey of 1990)—which, when added to a constant 95% from African-Americans, produces a win of about 64%. After redistricting (lower left) reduces the black proportion of the Democratic incumbent's constituency from 20% to 14% (the average reduction experienced by white Democrats in the 1991/1992 redistricting), the unchanged vote choices of blacks, white Democrats, Independents, and Republicans have *almost no effect* on the total Democratic vote, which declines only 2 percentage points—to just under 62%. Simple racial shifting has a trivial influence on the vote. Given these vote choices, the Democrat would be defeated only if the black proportion of the district had been reduced to less than 3%.

Racial Redistricting and a Shifting Political Environment

A shift in the political environment, however, has a *large* impact on the vote share. Consider, first, the upper right quadrant of Table 1 (and its difference from the data in the upper left side). When a Democratic incumbent faces the electorate in a "bad" year (1994), white Democratic identifiers are more inclined to vote for the Republican candidate. Almost 30% of the Democrats defect, Independents split slightly Republican, and only 12% of Republicans vote for the Democrat (per the 1994 NES survey). The Democrat still wins, though with a small majority of about 53%.

When a "bad" year follows a redistricting that significantly reduced the black share of the district, the changed behavior of the white voters defeats the Democrat. Compare the upper left and lower right quadrants of the table. The 9-point increase in Democratic defection and the 23-point increase in Republican loyalty (changes that actually occurred between 1990 and 1994) push the Democrat's vote down more than 14 percentage points, to about 49%. The drop in the Democrat's vote from 64% in the preredistricting, pro-Democratic election (in the upper left) to the postredistricting, pro-GOP election (in the lower right) is overwhelmingly contributed by a change in the behavior of white voters. The changed racial composition of the district contributed just over 2 points of the 14-point difference.

The Importance of New Constituents

White voters can be so responsive to a tide because the "incumbent" in a much-reformulated district enjoys that status in name only for many constituents. Consider what majority-minority redistricting might do to an incumbent's district. Gathering neighborhoods with a large black population into a new

majority-minority district produces ripples of compensating adjustments throughout a state. White voters get transferred as the line-drawers attempt to equalize population and find the optimal balance of prospective Democratic and Republican voters. As a practical matter, the amount of shuffling of white constituents will be related to the number of black voters that are concentrated in creating majority-minority districts. It is easy to imagine a situation where many or even all of the incumbents in a state could face a large number of new constituents as a result of majority-minority redistricting.

Every redistricting creates this vulnerability because the inertia of familiarity and habit that shape voter support for an incumbent doesn't exist among new voters. The loss of previous constituents and the arrival of unfamiliar voters erodes an incumbent's vote some 6–8 percentage points (Alford and Brady 1989) because the new voters are less familiar with the incumbent (or may not have even heard of him or her), usually never voted for him or her, and never received the largesse and "friendship" that helps incumbents on election day (a further analysis of this shuffling effect can be found in Mark Rush's 1993 book on redistricting in New England). Whether such a change will deny reelection to an incumbent will depend upon the incumbent's support among traditional constituents, the proportion of new voters in the district, and the environment of the election that follows redistricting. A 10% "new voter" share is less menacing than a 50% new population. But a vastly reshaped district may be secure if the national mood is hostile to the challenger's party, while even a 10% new constituency can be threatening if the political environment strongly favors the challenger's party.

New Constituents in 1992 and 1994

The coincidence of new voters and pro-Republican short-term forces was a critical feature of Democratic losses in 1992 and 1994. Short-term forces that favor the GOP do not necessarily produce a high defection rate among Democrats or a high level of party loyalty from Republican identifiers with a Democratic member of Congress. Pro-GOP national tides in 1984 and 1988 had only a small impact on the southern congressional vote: Democrats voted 80% Democratic for Congress; Independents voted over 60% for Democrats; Republicans had defection rates in excess of 30%. *The key difference between those years and 1992 and 1994 is that the pro-GOP tides of the nineties followed a redistricting that left many Democratic incumbents with districts in which 40% or more of the constituents were new to the incumbent and "unimmunized" by incumbency.* An appropriate metaphor for the structural dynamics that helped the GOP in both years, but especially in 1994, is to consider the similarity of these elections to the all-too-common holiday boating accident: an *overloaded* boat is swamped by a *sudden storm*, and lives are *lost*. The overloaded boat was necessary for the tragedy, but nothing eventful would have happened without the storm. The

increasing stature of black political leaders within the Democratic Party and the standard interpretation of the applicable voting rights laws made black majority districts politically and legally unavoidable in the 1990 reapportionment.⁴ The GOP "storm" was not anticipated. Democratic losses resulted from the worst combination of events: many white Democratic incumbents were campaigning among a substantially new group of voters, in an unsupportive (1992) and then hostile (1994) political environment, and in a region that has been turning against their party.

The First-Order Effect of Majority-Minority Redistricting

Majority-minority redistricting was designed to have a limited effect on the Democrats.⁵ *Prima facie* evidence of this is that Republicans were much more likely than Democrats to lose black constituents from redistricting. The average white Democratic incumbent had a district that was just under 21% black before redistricting and, despite the creation of majority districts, just under 20% black after the redistricting (revisit Table 1 for a sense of how little such a change would have affected the average Democrat). A substantial minority (29) of white Democratic incumbents received new districts with more rather than fewer black constituents (36 lost black constituents). Republican incumbents, by contrast, lost an average of over 40% of their black constituents: the proportion of blacks in districts with Republican incumbents fell to about 9.3% from 15.7%. Figure 2 provides a more detailed breakdown of the racial shifting that occurred in Democratic- and Republican-controlled districts in 1991 and 1992.⁶

This is not the kind of racial shifting that would axiomatically generate a full-throated chorus of complaints from incumbents in either party. On average,

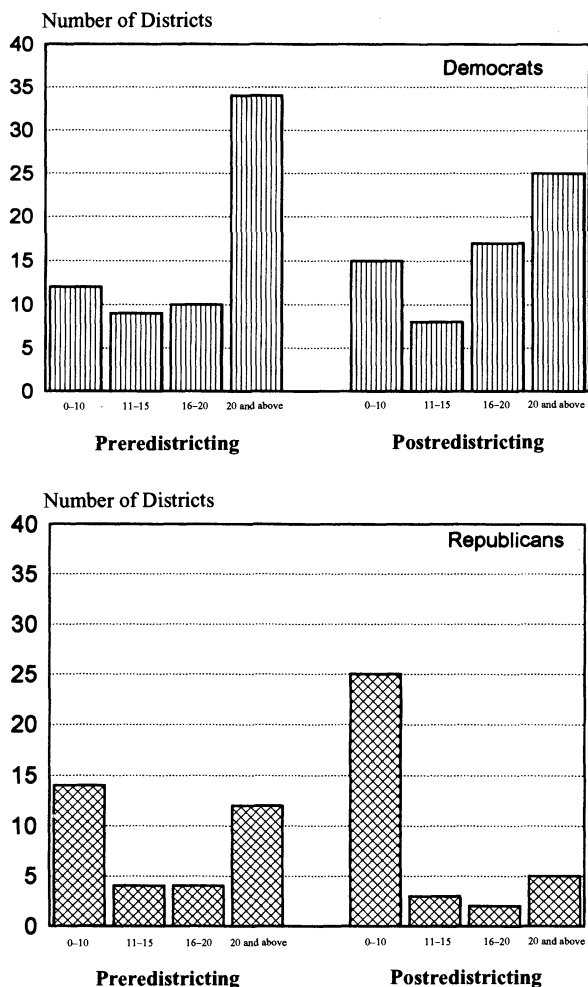
⁴This fact was well appreciated within the Democratic Party, which was advised by a lawyer's committee that existing law and court decisions practically required support for as many majority-minority districts as could be created following the 1990 census (private communication from Daniel Lowenstein of the UCLA Law School, who participated in some meetings of this committee at about this time).

⁵The risk to the Democrats was limited because the political maturity of the state legislatures and courts who oversaw the redistricting understood the importance of incumbent protection and the role of black voters for Democratic candidates. To be sure, this assertion is unexceptional when state legislatures dominate the process and more subject to challenge when courts are involved as they were to some degree in almost all of these plans. However, there is every reason to believe that the judges and court-appointed masters and "experts" who were involved in these plans were fairly sensitive to the racial differences in party support and to incumbency. On its face, the racial differences indicate as much. For an appreciation of this sophistication in general, see Cain 1984, 1985; and Butler and Cain 1992.

⁶A district is designated as "Democratic incumbent" if the district was held by a Democrat at the time of the election in question. "Republican incumbent" districts are similarly defined. In Figures 3 and 5, the analysis focuses only on the districts held by Democrats in 1990, and held also through the 1992 election. A district lost by a Democrat in the 1992 election is not a part of the case base for the analysis since their inclusion would confound the analysis of how the Democratic incumbent was affected by the tides.

FIGURE 2

Black Percentage in Democratic and Republican Districts



racial redistricting made Republicans more secure. It was a boon for Republicans because 29 of the 35 GOP incumbents lost more than half of their black constituents (the black share dropped from over 17% to less than 10%, thereby shedding the most implacably Democratic segment of their constituents). Only six Republicans gained blacks (the average gain was .5%, to 7.2% black), and a couple were put in difficult situations when their districts were spread around or collapsed.

The racial outcome of redistricting was more mixed for Democratic incumbents. Twenty-nine white Democrats maintained or gained African-American constituents; and those who gained saw the black population in their district increase by more than 5 percentage points. The 36 who lost blacks constituents did not lose many: the average drop was just under 3 points. Seven white Democratic incumbents saw their black constituency decline by more than 10%. However, this did not presage their defeat, as Table 2 indicates. Only the 15 Democrats with districts that were less than 10% black were near the precipice—they needed about 47% of the white vote to win. But, considering that incumbent Democratic congressional candidates carried the white southern vote by 61% in 1988 and 77% in 1990, that would not have seemed like an impossible hurdle to any savvy line-drawer. Any Democrat whose district was more than 15% black was well insulated, as Table 2 demonstrates.

Figure 3 shows what could have been expected with this history of white southern support for congressional Democrats. The figure graphs the relationship between the vote and the change in the black population in the district for 1990, 1992, and 1994. The figure reports the pattern only for white Democratic incumbents who ran in all three years, thereby controlling party and incumbency effects (Appendix A reports the regression equations on which the data in Figures 3 and 5 are based). The figure has several notable features.

First, the relationship between the 1990 vote and whether the black percentage a Democrat's constituency was changed indicates some sensitivity to incumbent-protection among the court masters and legislators who drew the lines: Democratic incumbents lost black voters in inverse proportion to their margin in 1990. White Democratic incumbents who gained black voters in the redistricting

TABLE 2
Proportion of the White Vote Needed by Democratic Candidates
to Win after Redistricting

	Average Black Percentage	White Vote Needed to Win		Number of Districts
		Minimum*	Mean	
Blacks are:				
10% or less of the district population	5.6%	50.1%	47.0%	15
Between 10% and 15% of the district population	12.4	44.4	43.6	8
Between 15% and 20% of the district population	17.8	41.2	39.2	17
More than 20% of the district population	32.1	37.5	26.4	25

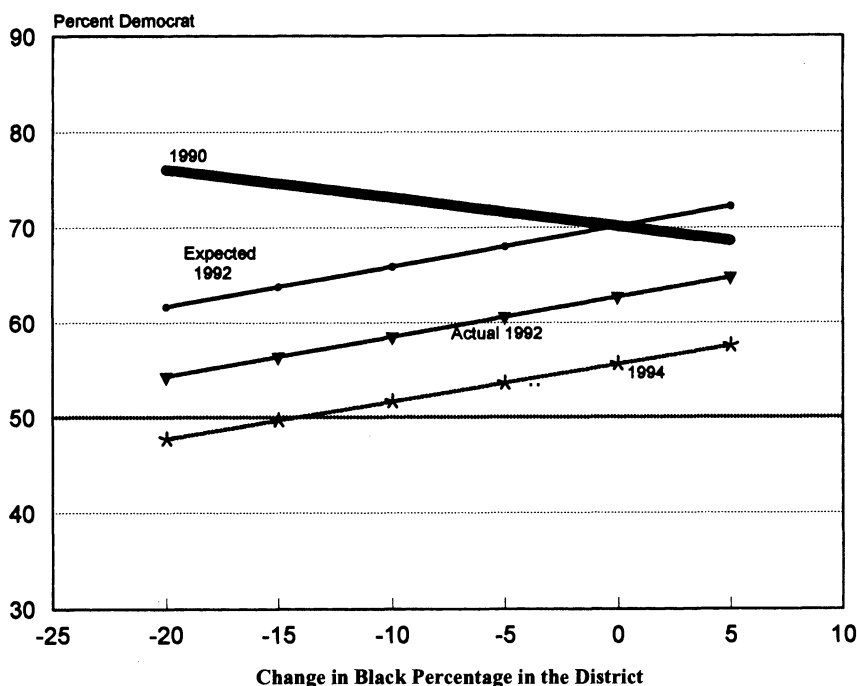
*This minimum applied only when the percentage of African-Americans equals the lower limit of the category. For the "50.1%" this is meant to stipulate a condition where there are no blacks in the district.

won with an average of about 66.5% of the two-party vote in the preceding 1990 election, while those who lost black voters had won with about 74% of the vote in 1990. The line labeled "1990" shows this relationship. The 1990 line, because it provides a benchmark for evaluating the electoral impact of reducing the share of black constituents in these districts, establishes the second significant feature of Figure 3: the more black voters these Democratic incumbents lost, the less well they did in 1992 compared to 1990. The line labeled "Actual 1992" shows this drop.

However, the third feature of Figure 3 is evidence that redistricting alone didn't presage defeat. A relationship between the Democratic vote in 1992 and the change in the black share of the constituency as a result of redistricting indicates that the Democratic vote declined about 4 percentage points for every 10-point decline in the black population. That relationship is represented in the "Actual 1992" line. However, the vote of Democrats didn't just decline as a result of a change in the racial composition of the district. If the vote of white

FIGURE 3

Changing Racial Composition of the Constituency and the Vote



Democratic incumbents in 1992 responded only to the change in the black share of the district, a Democrat whose district was racially identical after reapportionment would have expected *no* change in the vote. In fact, the margin of such Democrats was, on average, more than seven points less in 1992 (the distance between the lines when the change in the black percentage was zero). That difference, when calculated into the actual slope, produces the "Expected 1992" vote, and the third feature of Figure 3: had it not been for the anti-Democratic surge in 1992, the loss of black constituents alone would not have imperiled many white Democratic incumbents since even Democratic incumbents who lost the most black constituents—about 20 points—would still have expected almost 62% of the vote.⁷ The difference between the observed point estimates in "Actual 1992" and the point estimates in "Expected 1992" were created by the unanticipated GOP tide.

The heavy political weather of 1992 turned worse for Democrats in 1994, defeating some who survived the 1992 tide. Again, however, the change in the proportion of black constituents was a secondary contributor to the losses in 1994, and insufficient by itself. The relationship between the vote and the change in the size of the black constituency was stable (see the regressions in Appendix A), but the overall Democratic vote declined. It dropped for *all* Democrats in 1994, actually declining the most among those who *gained* black voters (this is not well represented in Figure 3, but see the nonlinear version of this graph in Appendix B). These losses, although across the spectrum of changes in the racial composition of the districts, were more consequential for Democratic incumbents who lost the most black constituents since they had a smaller cushion against the GOP tide. The strong GOP tide in 1994 produced greater defection rates among white Democrats and greater loyalty among Republicans, and many of the incumbents who survived the 1992 tide were defeated in 1994.⁸

⁷ The expected 1992 line is calculated as the effect of the change in the black population on the vote in 1992, with no change in the intercept of the regression from its value in 1990. The difference between the expected and the actual vote reflects the Republican surge and the changed defection rates of partisans and the choices of Independents. Consider the following example to illustrate how the effects add up: A 40% black district is reduced to 20% in redistricting. Prior to redistricting, this 40% black district would produce a 70% Democratic vote because all blacks vote Democratic and about 60% of the white electorate voted for the Democrat (60% was the white vote for Democrats for Congress in 1990). The 60% white vote for the Democrat reflects the power of incumbency, which causes high loyalty rates among Democratic identifiers; a Democratic vote among Independents; and high defection rates (on the order of 35% to 40%) among Republicans. After redistricting reduces the black population to 20%, a 60% white vote for the Democrat would produce a total vote for the Democrat of about 66%. However, redistricting eliminates the incumbent bonus by reducing the defection rate of Republicans and the loyalty of Democrats. This change along with the lower Democratic vote of Independents yields a Democratic vote by whites of about 46% or 47% (the observed proportion in 1992). The sum of the product of these proportions yields a total Democratic vote of about 54% or 55%.

⁸ This 6-percentage-point shift in the intercept reflects the strong Bush/GOP sentiment throughout the South in that year. In 1990, the average white southerner rated the Democratic Party 4 degrees

New Constituents: The Second-Order Effect of Majority-Minority Redistricting

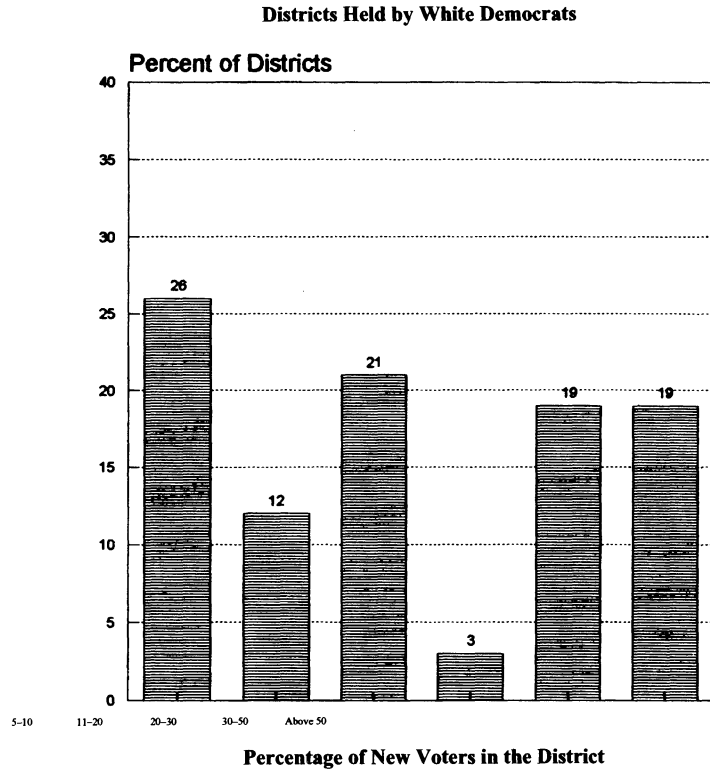
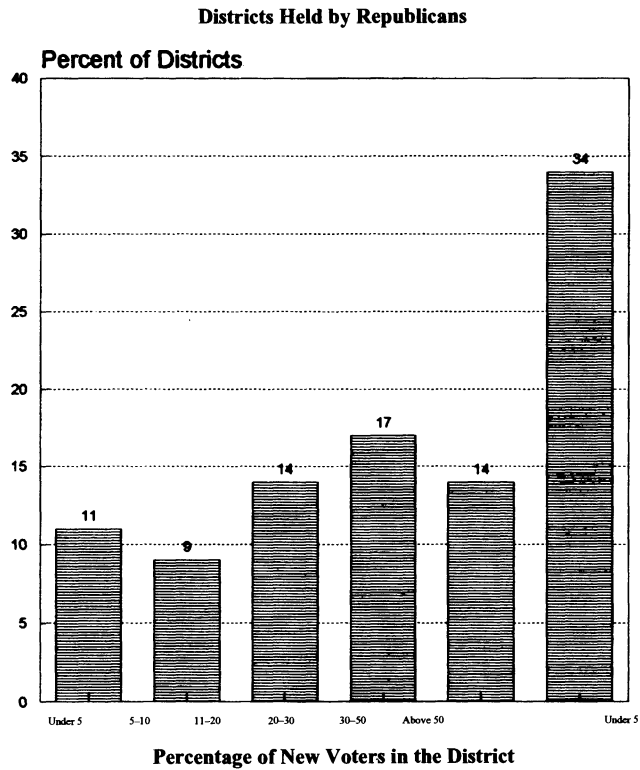
Heading into the 1992 elections, new constituents were potentially more bothersome for the Republicans who were made less secure by the disproportionate number of new constituents in their redrawn districts. On average, white Democratic incumbents acquired a district in which about 21% of their constituents had been shifted from other districts, while the average Republican incumbent had a constituency that was 37% new.⁹ These averages do not capture the party disparity (Figure 4). Almost 40% of Democratic incumbents had districts with less than 10% new constituents. Of that fraction, 70% (28% of the total) had fewer than 5% new voters. By contrast, almost half (48%) of the Republicans received districts in which 30% or more of their constituents were new; most of that group (34% of the total) were given districts in which *more than half* of their constituents were new to them.

The relatively larger number of new voters handed to GOP incumbents was threatening if the reelection environment was balanced or pro-Democratic, but in this event, 1992 and 1994 developed as Republican years. There was no surge to help down-ticket Democrats in Clinton's weak 35% vote among southern whites in 1992, and 1994 was a positive boon to Republicans. Democratic identifiers and Independents who were new to the incumbent were, at the margin, pushed toward a Republican vote by the short-term tide of the election. Republican identifiers reacted at least as strongly. The traditionally high (over 35%) defection rates of southern Republican identifiers in congressional elections were suppressed by the pro-Republican tide that occurred, as many found themselves

above the Republicans. In 1992, while the nation was voting for Clinton, southern whites rated the Republican Party 2 degrees above the Democrats, voted 17 points more heavily for Bush than did the nation as a whole, and gave him a thermometer rating that was almost 10 degrees above his mean in the rest of the country. Southern whites gave the GOP an 11-point advantage on the thermometer in 1994.

⁹ The variable measures the proportion of voters who were added to the district (defined by the previous incumbent) by the redistricting that established the district for the 103rd Congress. A district that is 65% new is one in which 35% of the residents were in that same district and 65% were in different districts before redistricting. The values are calculated using data from Summary Tape File 1b, which includes block-level demographics, and the 1992 TIGER/line mapping files. Both series are produced by the Census. The error rate of this calculation should be extremely close to zero, since no census block crosses any congressional district line (essential since the extreme requirements for equal population leave no room for a margin of error). Calculating difficulties with the Arkansas data make it the one state where some error is possible (in the neighborhood of 2.6%). This wouldn't affect our results. Finally, note that the only significant changes in 1994 were to Cleo Fields's district in Louisiana. This could have produced some calculating errors for Louisiana. The corrected TIGER files were not available to us. Substantive conclusions shouldn't be affected by this data problem.

FIGURE 4
New Voters after Redistricting



in districts in which the incumbent Democrat was not the Democrat they had supported in the past. The weakened incumbent link, coupled with the tide, reduced Republican defection to 12% in 1994.

The Second-Order Effect in 1992

Figure 5 indicates what this coincidence meant for southern white Democrats. The key variable in the graph is the proportion of new voters facing the incumbent subsequent to the redistricting. Incumbency doesn't confound the pattern since the trend line represents only districts held by a white Democrat seeking reelection in 1992. Consider Figure 5A. These white Democrats were reelected with just under 71% of the vote in 1990. The proportion of their district that would be new voters after the redistricting was unrelated to the vote in 1990, ergo the flat line labeled "Vote in 1990." This is not an interpretable relationship. It does, however, serve as the baseline for determining what happened in 1992 as a function of the proportion of new constituents in the district (estimated via OLS; see Appendix A). The difference between the 1990 baseline and the line representing the relationship between the proportion of new constituents and the 1992 vote captures the effect of redistricting upon Democratic incumbents.

The incumbent's vote declined as the new proportion of the constituency increased, but as was the case with the black share of each district, new constituents were a threat sufficient to defeat them only when the incumbent faced an almost completely new constituency. Few Democratic incumbents experienced such a dire circumstance. Most suffered less than a 50% turnover in their constituency; only two incumbents found themselves in districts with constituencies that were more than 80% new. As Figure 5A indicates, a 50% turnover still produced a 60% Democratic vote in the 1992 election (see the "1992 Actual" line).

Here again, the anti-Democratic mood of the election is apparent in the difference between the "1992 Actual" line and the line representing the vote in the absence of short-term forces (the "No STFs" line) in Figure 5A. The line representing no short-term forces in Figure 5A is the relationship between the percent of new constituents and the Democratic vote in 1992, after eliminating the swing between elections—with the swing defined as the difference between the 1990 and 1992 vote of a Democratic candidate whose new district did not include any new constituents (formally, the intercept of the regression). A comparison of the "Vote in 1990" line with this relationship indicates how the redistricting *might* have affected the 1992 vote had there not been an anti-Democratic swing that depressed the overall Democratic vote by more than 7 percentage points. On the far left side of the graph, the "No STFs" line meets the mean vote in 1990 reflecting the probability that an incumbent with an unchanged electorate should do equally well in two elections occurring in similar political environments. As one

FIGURE 5
New Constituents and the Vote for White Democratic Incumbents

Figure 5A:1992

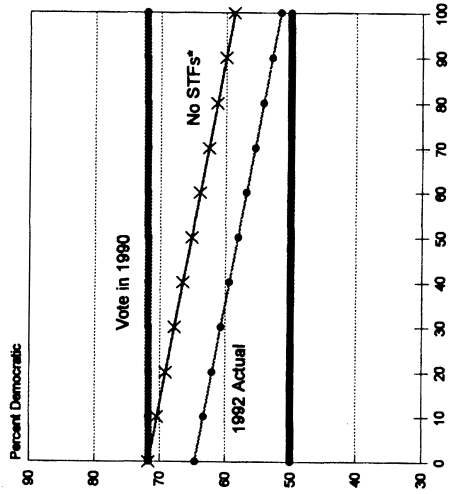
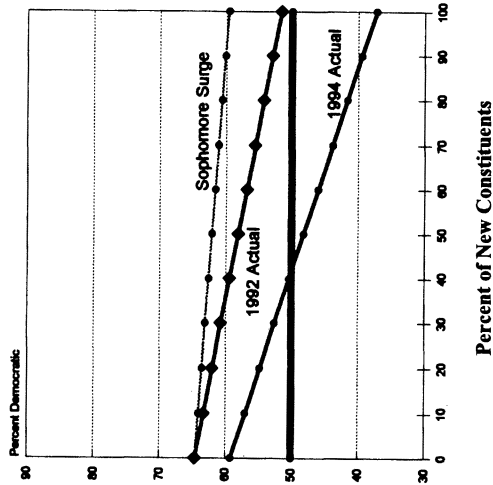


Figure 5B: 1994



Percent of New Constituents

Percent of New Constituents

*Note: "STFs" is an abbreviation for "short-term forces."

moves across the graph to the right, the “no short-term forces” scenario indicates that a Democratic incumbent seeking reelection should expect a decline in his or her margin in proportion to the number of new constituents in the reformed district (see the regression estimate in Appendix A).

If the estimation in Figure 5A is even approximately correct, Democratic incumbents with almost completely new constituencies should have been reelected with margins of about 60% in 1992. However, there were strong short-term forces in 1992, and they combined an anti-Democratic tide with these changed constituencies. For 13 Democrats whose districts were composed of 50% or more new voters (and had fewer blacks), the 8% swing brought them closer to a loss, and these 13 contributed the bulk of the 9 incumbent seats lost by the Democrats in 1992.

The Second-Order Effect in 1994

The more anti-Democratic mood of the 1994 electorate was a Republican high tide that defeated some of the 1992 survivors. Figure 5B replicates the analysis of Figure 5A, using the 1992 vote of these incumbents as the benchmark. The typical 8-point sophomore surge (see Alford and Brady 1989; Erikson 1990; Lockerbie 1994) would have pushed these incumbents up (the “Sophomore Surge” line), producing a more shallow relationship between the proportion of new voters in the constituency and the Democratic vote in their sophomore election. Over time, the vote share would be expected to flatten as new voters are cultivated by the incumbent and strong challengers are dissuaded, eventually assuming a flat relationship (per the “Vote in 1990” line in Figure 5A). The observed relationship between the vote and the proportion of new voters from the redistricting (“1994 Actual”) was just the reverse of this expectation. Democratic incumbents lost proportionally more votes as a function of new constituents in 1994 than they did in 1992 (the loss rate doubled; see the regressions in Appendix A), and the overall Democratic vote declined another 5.5 percentage points (the difference in the regression intercept in 1994 compared to 1992). Coupled with the increased sensitivity of these not-yet-immunized voters (1994 was the sophomore election, postredistricting), any Democrat with a constituency that was more than 40% new had a predicted vote of approximately 50%. About 20 Democratic incumbents found themselves in this vulnerable position in 1994, and about half of them were defeated. The incumbency advantage that had developed over the preceding two years was insufficient to resist the GOP tide in 1994.

Conclusion

The short-term tide that coincided with the redistricting was not completely beyond influence. Republicans who wanted to move up the political ladder,

ambitious candidate recruitment by the National Republican Congressional Committee, and generous financing of these Republicans helped create the tide in both years. Bush's (ill-fated) reelection bid looked more promising in 1991 when Republicans were deciding to challenge Democratic candidates. Also, many politicians probably saw the large numbers of new constituents in the redrawn districts as an opportunity. Both considerations surely brought a better-than-average crop of Republican challengers into the 1992 election. Controversial and failed policy initiatives, and Clinton's low approval ratings also produced a strong crop of well-financed GOP candidates in 1994 (Jacobson 1996). Any complete accounting of the results of the congressional elections of 1992 and 1994 would find a two-stage process in the aggregate outcome: some fraction of the losses resulted from sharp-eyed Republican challengers correctly perceiving that an opportunity had presented itself.

But it seems unlikely that strategic politicians are more than *a* factor in the Democratic losses. Very few Democrats had lost so many African-American constituents that their base vote had been obviously (or at all) imperiled (see Figure 2); and Republican incumbents were more threatened than Democrats by new constituents (Figure 4). Overall, the risk factors probably balanced out, and it seems unlikely that either change would have produced a rush of strong challengers in either party. No Republican hopeful would have looked at data of the sort in the top half of Figure 2 and seen the perfect opportunity to move to Congress. There is no evidence that the "quality" of the Republican challengers was so much better in either year that challenger-quality can explain the magnitude of the shifts. Also, the interelection shifts in the vote are not concentrated only among "promising districts" where the largest number of black voters were shifted out, and the best challengers would have turned up (see Appendix B for a particularly clear illustration of this). The losses are fairly uniform—a pattern consistent with a tide that was not just a marker for strong challengers.

The tide was *the* necessary ingredient in the Democratic losses. If the projections in Figures 3 and 5 suggest anything, it is that the redistricting crafted districts designed to reelect the Democratic incumbents—albeit with lesser margins in the near term. Had the political environment of 1992 and 1994 been better for the Democrats, a sophomore surge would have put the Democrats on the path to electoral security for the rest of the decade. However, an impossible-to-anticipate, large, anti-Democratic tide undermined a "friendly" redistricting that had every prospect of leaving the Democrats in charge.

Appendix A

The following regressions are the basis of the estimates used in calculating the lines and point estimates in Figures 3 and 4.

	1992	1994
Change in black percent in the district		
b	.421	.395
se	.196	.523
p	.02	.23
intercept	62.7	55.6
Percent new in district		
b	-.128	-.205
se	.062	.093
p	.02	.02
intercept	64.6	59.2

The following multiple regressions were not used in the calculation of any of the line or point estimates. However, they are useful for comparing the relative importance for the Democratic vote of the change in the black population compared to the effect of new populations. The reader will notice that both variables had an effect on district differences in the vote in 1992. In 1994, however, only the new population played a role.

Note that these regressions are only useful for cross-sectional comparisons, and for getting a sense for the independence of the effects. The diachronic analysis that is the heart of the design can only be done with the line and point estimations that are presented graphically.

	1992	1994
Change in black percent in the district		
b	.202	-.036
se	.104	.547
p	.06	.99
Percent new in district		
b	-.094	-.208
se	.065	.103
p	.07	.02
intercept	64.5	59.2

Legend:

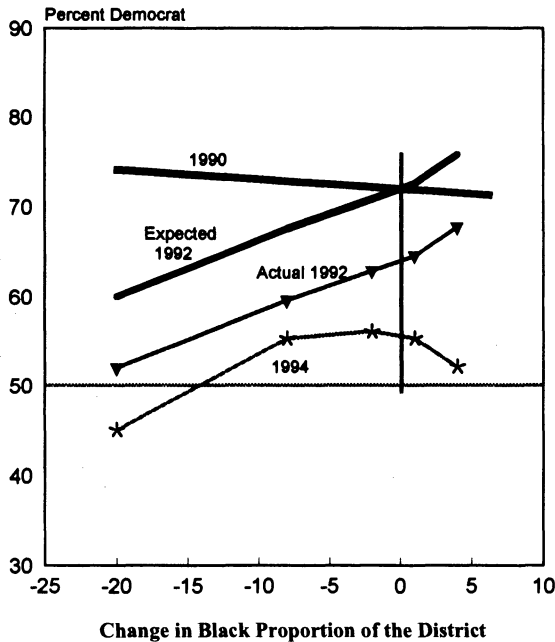
b: regression coefficient

se: standard error

p: the probability level of the estimated coefficient, one-tailed test

Appendix B

This figure is substantively identical to Figure 3. However, the linear estimate used to portray the relationship between the vote and the change in the black population of the incumbent's district is not completely faithful to the relationship in 1994. The following graph captures the pattern more accurately. The substantive interpretation is unchanged.



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John R. Petrocik is professor of political science, University of California at Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1472.

Scott W. Desposato is Ph.D candidate in political science, University of California at Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1472.

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