

Race, Redistricting and Representation: The Unintended Consequences of Black Majority Districts.
By David T. Canon. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999. 324p. \$50.00 cloth, \$18.00 paper.

Micah Altman, *Harvard University*

It is sometimes striking what small use the current Supreme Court has for that which we, as political scientists, regard as empirical evidence. Justice O'Connor, speaking for the Court, showed no inclination to seek out or examine such evidence when, in *Shaw v. Reno* (1993), it remarked that racially-conscious redistricting lines "bear[s] an uncomfortable resemblance to political apartheid," and asserted that officials elected from such majority-minority districts are more likely to represent exclusively members of that minority group. Canon's carefully researched and thoughtfully argued book provides a refreshingly empirical response to the Court's simple assertion.

In essence, Canon argues that blacks members of congress can represent white constituents, well. The electoral dynamics of majority-black congressional districts often, in fact, causes black representatives to adopt the "politics of commonality" and to draw on a biracial voter base. (243) This most often occurs when several strong black candidates run against each other in the Democratic primary, splitting the black vote, and then must make successful appeals to the interests of white voters in order to win the nomination.

Canon begins his argument with an inquiry into the differences between the policy preferences of blacks and that of whites. Relying primarily on a comparison of data from the 1992 and 1994 *National Election Survey*, he finds that blacks "have the same issue preferences as whites on nonracial issue." (p. 30) This finding implies that previous studies that use standard voting scores to gauge the responsiveness of representatives to minority constituents need to be reexamined (e.g., David Lublin, *The Paradox of Representation*, 1997; and Charles Cameron, David Epstein, and Sharyon O'Halloran, "Do majority-minority districts maximize substantive black representation in Congress?" *APSR* 90: 794-812).

Canon's analysis is suggestive, but it leaves the reader uncertain of the importance of the problem. Can the same pattern be confirmed in other surveys and for other times? How big is the difference between, and confidence intervals for, the corrected and uncorrected scores?

Canon continues by examining (with Mathew M. Schousen and Patrick J. Sellers) the "process of candidate emergence" (p. 93) in black districts. He starts with a detailed study of the redistricting process in North Carolina, which he uses to develop their "supply-side" hypothesis. He uses this data to successfully postdict most of the contests in seventeen majority-black districts in 1992. Their main finding is that the characteristics of each district determine the racial makeup of the candidate pool in the Democratic primary, which, in turn, determines the coalition of voters a candidate must attract in order to win. In particular, the presence of large black majorities increase the likelihood that several ambitious black candidates compete. As long as no white candidate enters the race, the resulting split amongst black voters creates the opportunity for a "new style" of black candidate. This new-style candidate practices a "politics of commonality" and attracts the additional white vote necessary to the defeat the "traditional" black candidates, who practice the "politics of difference."

Canon relies on unique data, comprising the political bases of support for and the policy positions of candidates running in majority-minority districts. It is puzzling that Canon is not clearer about how it was collected and coded: He states only that he "examined" the policy positions and racial coalitions of these candidates, using data came from interviews, newspapers and public records (p. 137-8,265). Much of this data and the data used later in the book is collected from interviews, personal meetings, and constituency mailings, and is irreproducible. Canon has opened up new lines of inquiry, but he misses an opportunity to have his research more directly extended by failing to provide replication data. (See Gary King, "Replication, Replication," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 28: 443-499, for a description of the replication standard) One hopes that the author will soon place this data in a public archive.

Furthermore, 1992 was not a typical year for majority-minority districts (see David Lublin, "Racial redistricting and African-American Representation," *APSR* 93: 183-6), and one wonders whether the dynamics that Canon observes apply to other years. Moreover, Canon's supply-side explanation of

representational style leaves vital questions unanswered. Is the "politics of commonality" durable -- did the new-style candidates remain successful in future elections, and did they continue to be maintain their biracial political style and base? Why did so few white candidates compete? Are white Democrats less likely to run in these districts if other white Democratic districts exist? If so, what are the *extended* supply-side repercussions of making other Democratic seats less safe to create majority-black districts?

After testing the supply side theory, Canon draws upon a variety of sources, including roll call votes, an extensive collection and content analysis of Congressional newsletter, flyers, and press releases and an analysis of news coverage, to show that "commonality" representatives are more moderate on racial issues than "difference" representatives. This is, arguably, the book's most significant contribution to the discipline. Canon's analysis of the behaviors of "difference" and "commonality" representatives is, however, mildly marred by a lack of clarity in testing his hypothesis.

The most rigorous of these tests comprise six regressions (Tables 4.9, 4.10, 4.14, 4.17, 4.18, 5.8), in which the independent variable is (typically) a measure of moderateness (e.g. an LCCR score) and the representational styles of a member are represented by dummy variables. Canon discusses whether the individual coefficients were significant, and whether members practicing the commonality style appear to be more moderate than those practicing the difference style. Canon does not, however, test explicitly the inference that these representatives behave differently. (He might have, for example, computed the confidence interval for the difference between the coefficients for the two styles. Canon does refer, in text, to "significant" differences on pages 190, 196 and 236. But it is not clear to which differences he refers, how they are computed, and what is the associate confidence level.) Without his data, one can only compute bounds on the possible confidence intervals: These bounds confirm that explicit tests are indeed necessary to determine whether the differences in behaviors were significant. In at least one test (Table 4.9) that would otherwise appear to support Canon's hypothesis, the difference was clearly *not* significant. (Canon does not note this.) Despite the need for clearer tests, however, the weight of the evidence does seem to support Canon's theory.

In conclusion, Canon's findings in *Race, Representation and Redistricting* are of immediate and lasting importance. The variety of data sources and research methods marshaled in support of these findings is impressive, as is the effort that the author invests in data collection and coding. *Race, Redistricting and Representation* should be required reading for anyone with an interest in the linkage between representatives and their constituencies