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WHO IS RUNNING AGAINST ME?: THE INFLUENCE OF DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHICS
ON PRIMARY COMPETITION AGAINST BLACK HOUSE INCUMBENTS

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Mississippi

Stacy D. Carter

August 2021

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ABSTRACT

I seek to answer is there a variation between the number of challengers who emerge against black incumbents in majority-minority and minority-influence congressional districts? This study will examine how demographic composition affects candidate emergence in congressional districts and other factors that might have an influence on candidate emergence such as margin of victory, incumbent's ethnicity, political party identification, incumbent's decision to seek reelection and length of time in office by using existing primary and secondary data to address these questions. At the conclusion of this study, one will have a clear understanding of the impact of district demographic composition on candidate emergence. The expectation is that when a congressional district has a high ethnic population and a non-white congressman, then candidates are less likely to challenge the incumbent in the upcoming election.

I personally collected and stored data on Congressional primary election candidates and results from 2006, 2008, and 2010 in both majority-minority and minority-influence districts. This study will also use The Candidate Emergence Study (CES) database to get an empirical understanding on candidate emergence. CES data draws on extensive surveys of potential candidates, district informants and voters in US House elections from 1998, 2002, and 2006. I will also employ case studies of historical candidate emergence patterns in majority-minority and minority influence districts.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mother, Ruth Odell Carter, my wife, Lakreash Dixon- Carter, and my son, Caleb Stacy Carter.

.ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to thank Dr. Winburn for his assistance, guidance, and expertise in helping me complete this dissertation. He encouraged me to make it across the finish-line even when I wanted to give-up. It is because of Dr. Winburn I have a renewed mind and willing spirit to continue my research in the field of Political Science.

PREFACE

This dissertation is an original, unpublished, independent work by the author Stacy D. Carter.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In 2016, when the North Carolina legislature admitted it focused on race while redrawing the congressional lines for North Carolina's 1st and 12th districts, the US Supreme Court in *Cooper V. Harris* (2017) found that North Carolina relied too heavily on race in their creation of these districts. The Senior Editor of the *Random Lengths News* wrote "Supreme Court strikes a crucial blow against racial gerrymandering — but bigger battles lie ahead" and he went on to say, "This is a big deal because the law around racial gerrymandering is relatively well developed, but partisan gerrymandering has long been treated as beyond the reach of the law." *Cooper v. Harris* (2017) will change electoral and partisan politics and the configurations of congressional districts for years to come.

Race and politics have been intertwined since the ending of the American Civil War. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 had a profound impact on the African American voting population by making many of the historic disenfranchisement measures illegal. The byproduct of these statutes allowed African Americans long denied access to voter registration and to the voting booth, which gave them the capability to elect candidates who were ethnically similar and would represent their own interests. These black representatives provide representation that makes laws and represents the African American community. Yet, many state legislatures, mainly in southern states, diluted and dissipated the black vote and ethnic representation. It took judicial intervention to protect enfranchisement and political representation for minorities in America.

When electing multiple representatives from single-member legislative districts became the weapon of black suppression, the US Supreme Court case, *Thornburg v. Gingles* (1986), made it illegal for state legislatures to create multi member legislative districts arguing that these multimember districts “impair the ability of ... cohesive groups of black voters to participate equally in the political process.” The effects of this judicial decision increased state black elected representatives, especially in states with sizable African American populations. Unfortunately, state legislators continued to strongly use race in redistricting by packing as many black voters in congressional districts as possible in hopes of crippling the chances of black voters electing candidates of their choice. It took over a decade for the United States Supreme Court to address racial redistricting. Finally, by way of *Shaw v. Reno* (1993), the Court mandated that when states redraw congressional lines, race must be held to a “standard of strict scrutiny” under the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment, and the Court made it illegal to pack “all black voters” in a state in one congressional district.

Politically, *Shaw v. Reno* (1993) gave an edge to the Democratic Party whereby state legislators, mostly Democrats in Southern states, unpacked black voters in heavily populated black congressional districts to create other black majority districts and districts with high percentages of ethnic voters, which increased Democratic candidates’ chances of winning. Conversely, Republicans believed that this violated Section 5 under the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which the Court disagreed with in *Georgia v. Ashcroft* (2003). Because of *Georgia v. Ashcroft* (2003), *Thornbug v. Gingles* (1986) and other Supreme Court cases, such as *Miller v. Johnson* (1995) and *Bush v. Vera* (1996), state legislators were able to create majority-minority districts (MMDs) and minority influence districts (MIDs) and use racial gerrymandering as a proxy for partisan gerrymandering.

The political ramifications of the judicial decisions since the 1965 Voting Rights Act led to the creation of 122 majority-minority congressional districts that stretch across twenty-six states, which make-up 28% of the 435 congressional districts in the United States House of Representatives. Among these congressional districts there are 23 districts that have an African American population over 50%, 30 districts with a Hispanic population over 50% and a hundred or so districts with a sizable minority population.¹

The early scholarship on majority minority districts and minority influence districts focuses on the delivery of congressional political representation and partisan influences and is well-established. For example, Cameron et al. (1996) seeks to understand if majority-minority districts maximize substantive black representation in Congress addressing the question of: Do majority-minority districts maximize substantive black representation in Congress. They found that when minority voters are scattered across congressional districts, it maximizes substantive representation. Likewise, the scholarship is deep rooted on candidate quality and candidate emergence, on the other hand, the literature has been somewhat silent on those who challenge the incumbent in MMDs and MIDs, specifically for black incumbents, and how district demographics influence the emergence of those challengers. Moreover, the literature does not give adequate attention to political behavior to those who desire to represent the people in these congressional districts. Some lingering theoretical questions remain, such as: What do we know about these challengers who run in Majority-Minority districts and in Minority-influence districts? Who runs in these majority-minority/influence districts? What are some factors that influence the emergence of challengers in MMDs and MIDs?

¹2010 United States Census Bureau Data

“Making The Case”

Just two weeks before the March 1, 2018, qualifying deadline, Rep. Bennie Thompson, incumbent for Mississippi 2nd Congressional District, which is the “blackest” congressional district in the country, did not have any challengers running for his congressional seat, even Thompson had yet to qualify. Mississippi’s 2nd Congressional District was not the only MMD experiencing no challengers as both Tennessee’s 9th and Alabama’s 7th had no one running against the incumbents. Indiana’s 7th and New York’s 13th Congressional Districts, which are not MMDs but MIDs, had collectively over 10 candidates running. The occupations of these challengers ranged from a Flexographic worker to a catering manager. Why did incumbents in MMDs districts in Mississippi, Tennessee, and Alabama not face the same number of challenges like the incumbents in Indiana and New York? Is there a correlation between district typology and challenger emergence? What factors contribute to the emergence of challengers in MIDs compared to MMDs?

Theoretically, I seek to answer if there is a relationship between demographics in Majority Minority and Minority Influence congressional districts and the number of challengers who emerge against black incumbents in those congressional districts. Moreover, are challengers who run against these incumbents’ quality challengers? I also investigate the influence of the political party that is controlling the state in which the congressional district is in and how the length of service of the incumbent contributes to the emergence of candidates.

The Supreme Court’s opinion in *Cooper v. Harris* (2017) will change electoral and partisan politics for years to come. It is incumbent on scholars to provide an academic explanation for the political ramifications of *Cooper v. Harris* (2017). Thus far, the conclusions of several studies suggest that candidates are strategic in their decisions when deciding to run for

office or not. This dissertation will be one of the first dissertations since *Cooper v. Harris* (2007) that will address the impact of race and district demographics in congressional elections among black incumbents in MMDs and MIDs. At the conclusion of this study, one will have a clear understanding of the impact of district demographic composition on candidate emergence, and an awareness of the influence of the “incumbent advantage” among black incumbents in MMDs and MIDs.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding candidate emergence has a long history in studies of American politics. Studies on candidate emergence have developed beyond just studying candidate behavior. They also address areas in political rationality, campaign politics, and the policy-making process, among other topics. The main goal of this literature review is to trace the origin/development of candidate emergence by exploring seminal and contemporary “debate(s)” among scholars and highlighting understudied theoretical questions of candidate emergence, specifically the potential link between incumbent race, district demographics, and the emergence and quality of candidates in congressional elections.

It is important to trace how the literature developed to understand the future of candidate emergence studies. Candidate emergence emerged as a widely studied area in political science in the 1980s and 1990s. When looking at early studies, much of the arguments are rooted in the early literature on political representation. The prevailing conventional wisdom is that potential challengers, especially quality challengers, are less likely to run against incumbents seeking reelection.

Early authors devote a large amount of their scholarship to incumbents and the advantages the incumbents have over their challengers. In the American electorate, there is a perception that incumbents are better qualified and more experienced than their opponents, which is an advantage to incumbents. According to a Washington Post article entitled, “People

Hate Congress. But most incumbents get reelected. What gives?" 90 percent of House members and 91 percent of senators who sought re-election won their seats back. Since the 1960s, American politics has witnessed over 98% of incumbents achieving re-election in Congressional elections. Campbell (1983) reinforces this and maintains that voters perceive their incumbents to be more experienced and more able to carry out the responsibilities of the job, thus evolving a theory of "incumbency advantage." Many scholars embraced the theory of "incumbent advantage" to explain why there is a lack of challengers running against incumbents. However, the "incumbent advantage" failed to address some basic reasons why challengers seek public office. Thomas Kazee (1983) explains the presence of an incumbent seemed to discourage those who could make the strongest challenge.

For the most part, the bar was set low for those who were labeled as an "quality candidate." Many believed that being elected to public office before is a good indicator for determining if a person is qualified or not, which is called the office-holding measurement. Moving more towards an advanced theory for candidate quality, Squire (1992) used the NES 1988's Senate Elections data to show that those Senate challengers who held higher profile offices and those who are good campaigners are better known and better liked by voters, thus are more likely to gather more votes. Squire (1992) acknowledges that the mere fact one has once held political office, does not automatically classify them as a qualified candidate; rather it depends on the highest political office level achieved. Squire (1992) revamps the traditional office-holding measurement by incorporating campaign performance of the challengers and incumbents and argues that those who can campaign hard by making their name and platform known to voters should be given credit for their efforts, which gives some credibility to their campaign abilities and qualifications.

However, there is a shortcoming of Squire's (1992) "campaign theory." Other than focusing on a candidate's campaign behavior or a person's access to resources, there are other external factors that could possibly influence candidate emergence/quality, like influence of political parties or the previous name recognition of a candidate. Moreover, that was bluntly omitted from the early office holding measurement and Squire's measurement omits personal attributes of the candidates. Stone et al. (2005) answers this need to incorporate individuals' attributes in the office holding measurement. The authors imbue the idea of candidates possessing strategic personal qualities in the discussion on the office holding measurement. Strategic quality, Stone et al. (2005) advanced, is a quality that is composed of the skills and resources necessary to wage an effective campaign. Simply put, those who have the money and other resources to run an election will do better than those who do not. Personal quality, Stone et al. (2005) suggests, is composed of characteristics most ordinary citizens value in their leaders and representatives, such as personal integrity and his/her dedication to public service. Some voters believe that these personal qualities are essential to the job duties of the office that the candidates are seeking. Now, the major question is after the introduction of Stone et al.'s (2005) advanced measurement on office holding; would it be accepted, rejected or advanced by scholars in the field? Goodliffe (2016) believes that those like Stone et al. (2005) and Squire (1992) provided a good measurement of candidate emergence/quality. The authors' findings suggest that money is still a major factor in politics and is a good indication on how many challengers an incumbent will have to ward off. Goodliffe (2016) believes the more money an incumbent has in his/her war chest the less likely he/she would have to fight off opponents.

Jacobson and Kernell (1983) and Jacobson (1989) rely on other reasons to explain candidate emergence and quality. The authors make the claim that the incumbent's previous vote

margin and the political preferences of the district play a strong role in a challenger's decision to run for office. For example, if the incumbent won by 60% in the last election, a possible challenger might see this as an indicator of the incumbent margin of victory for the next election. Other authors who advanced this argument were those like Green (1988); Krasno (1994); Krasno and Green (1988).

The 1980s also provided a theoretical explanation on how strategic candidates are in their decisions whether to seek public office or not. Gary Jacobson (2002) presents his strategic politician theory where he provides insight on candidate rationality. In short, the strategic politician theory is when experienced politicians make strategic/rational decisions about when or whether to run for higher office, considering many different determining factors. Some scholars like to classify the strategic politician theory as part of the literature on rationality. Jacobson, with Samuel Kernell, declares that when incumbents are strong, high-quality candidates do not run and it is difficult for challengers to raise money. This assertion by Jacobson and Kernell (1983) provides correlation with the earlier theory on incumbent advantage. When the incumbents have the advantage in the election, then it will be difficult for challengers to raise money thus they will be rational/strategic and not run against the incumbents. Jacobson also accounted for those who are not being rational or strategic when deciding to run or not. He believes they are naïve and are overestimating their chances of winning.

Maisel and Stone (1997) give validity to Kernell and Jacobson's theory of candidate ambitions. In their analysis, they were able to reveal that candidates who emerge have common traits. They had many of the attributes one would expect of strong House challengers, there was variance in what they stated was the likelihood of their running for the House in 1994, and they

were most strongly influenced by what they perceived to be their chances of winning their party's nomination in their district. Hinckley (1980) believes there is a difference in the type of candidates that will emerge for those who run in US congressional districts then those who ran for a Senate seat. Hinckley believes that House candidates stand apart from all other candidates due to their visibility and contact with voters. The argument of proximity is one that shows how district type can play a major role in candidate emergence. Cook and Ragsdale (1987) contend that these resources are major factors why candidates make the choice to run for office. These authors find that incumbents and challengers act in ways relatively independent of one another, basing their current actions on previous efforts in office and prior electoral outcomes, rather than the activities of their opponent. The scholarship on candidate emergence and quality examines more of the same factors such as money and resources as being major factors in candidate emergence. So, there appears to be a correlation between being a strategic candidate and a high-quality candidate.

If being rational/strategic is part of the DNA of a “qualified candidate,” those who are naive and do not assess their chances of winning are irrational/nonstrategic and are not considered to be qualified candidates. Perhaps so! Ban et al. (2016) believe that those like Jacobson and Kernell (1983) and Jacobson (1989) fall short of addressing the office-holding measurement. The authors’ findings suggest that previous estimates in the literature are significantly biased due to strategic challenger entry, because previous studies failed to incorporate the strategic and personal qualities of these challengers.

Jamie L. Carson (2005) took a more strategic approach to candidate entry. He argues that experienced challengers strategically emerge in situations other than when legislators exhibit signs of vulnerability or decide to opt for a tough election campaign (Carson 2005). He assumes

that candidates are strategic when they decide to run for public office. This is a good assessment because for the most part most challengers have some type of plan when they enter an election. Jacobson (1989) examines how strategic challengers stick with their affiliation of their political party. He claims that more high-quality candidates run when prospects appear to favor their party (Jacobson 1989). Having a political party to back a challenger is very important because it could provide those essential components that are necessary to run in an election such as money and manpower to get the candidate's message out to the citizens. Bianco (1984) will agree with Jacobson's claim that money plays a vital role in determining if a person decides to run for a congressional seat or not, but the money Bianco is referring to is the economy. He argues that candidacy of experienced challengers in incumbent elections appears to be influenced by changes in economic conditions (Bianco 1984). However, Bianco did find that this has the greatest impact in an open seat when the incumbent is not running compared to when the incumbent is running for reelection.

The 1980s and the 1990s literature on candidate emergence and quality provides factors on why candidates decide to seek public office. However, the authors of the eighties and the nineties provide overarching theories and theoretical arguments that address candidate emergence and quality. What many of these earlier authors fail to incorporate are some of the external factors that impact candidate emergence and quality, such as the impact of political parties, the creation of the changing demographics of the country, precedent of Supreme Court cases. A majority of the 1980s and 1990s articles analyzed congressional districts to understand the dynamics of candidate emergence and quality, while little attention was given to candidate emergence and quality on local levels. Also, scholars paid more attention to candidates' behavior in these districts, rather than focusing on the uniqueness of the districts. Much of the

seminal work speaks directly to understanding the office-holding measurement, strategic politician, strategy and personal qualities of candidates. Nevertheless, much of the incorporation of these “external factors” came in the late 1990s and 2000s studies of candidate emergence.

Recent Scholarship

The literature has been developing over the years on candidate entry and quality. Most research emphasis on different factors that influence candidate emergence/quality rather than on the theoretical perspectives and arguments of candidate emergence and quality. Much of the scholarship uses congressional elections, candidates and districts as data points to understand candidate emergence and entry. One speculation why congressional elections, districts, candidates and challengers are widely used is because of the availability of data points and the ability to evaluate candidate emergence and quality on the aggregate level. Overwhelmingly, the concentration has been on the impact of money, political parties and incumbency as influences that contributed to the quality of candidates and why candidates would enter elections (Goodliffe, 2001).

Bovitz and Carson (2000) believe that congressional roll call records are major factors in determining whether challengers will choose to enter elections. The credence of the author's argument is that if the incumbent's voting record is one that goes contrary to the people, he/she serves, then this could encourage people to run against the incumbent and decrease the “incumbency advantage.” Conversely, Goodliffe (2001) believes that it is all about the money. He claims that money which he called a candidate's “war chest” could potentially deter potential challengers from entering an election. Potential serious challengers may see the amount of money raised by an incumbent as a deterrent, arguing that they are unable to raise enough money to compete in that election. Other reasons why some challengers may enter an election may be

because they feel that the incumbent has just been in office for too long or the incumbent's name has been tainted with scandalous or illegal behavior, or simply because those people just want to run for public office.

Many of the contemporary scholars saw a weakening in the incumbent advantage theory. Largely, this is since campaign behaviors of candidates have changed, and incumbents now have to work harder and harder to achieve reelection. The impact of money plays a more integral role in elections. Peter Zemsky (1999) suggests that there is a relationship between the emergence of candidates and fundraising. Those incumbents who can raise tremendous amounts of money are able to deter individuals from challenging them in the next election. However, this assertion just speaks to the "financial" threat incumbents posed to possible challengers but not about those who are able to finance their own campaign or effectively run a grassroots campaign. Ragsdale and Cook (1987) contend that incumbents and challengers act in ways relatively independent of one another basing their current action on previous efforts in office and prior electoral outcomes, rather than the activities of their opponent. This contradicts many of the earlier scholars and those who argue that candidates are not independent in their decision making, which in truth many factors need to be considered when making a decision to run for public office or not.

Van Dunk (1997) gives some hope to challengers in legislative races. Her examination of state legislatures across 10 states from 1988-1992 revealed that when quality challengers run, they are more likely to be successful (Van Dunk, 1997). Like the length of service, an incumbent's margin of victory may influence the number of challenges she/he will receive in future elections. Jewell and Breaux (1988) examine the impact of margin of victory on incumbency success in single member districts. They found a significant increase in the margin of victory that incumbents received in previous elections was linked to the level of electoral

success enjoyed (Jewell and Breaux 1988). However, this increase was largely confined to uncontested elections throughout state legislatures. Regardless of the limitations it is important to note that the article adds to our knowledge on how an increased margin of victory might scare off challengers. Garand (2000) collected data in 16 states from 1968 to 1986 that showed there is a change in the meaning of marginality in the U.S. state legislative elections. The effect of incumbency actually increased the probability of incumbent defeat. One of the reasons for this occurrence was possibly due to the volatility of increasing vote swings from 1970 to 1986.

Generally, incumbents tend to be reelected when they run for political office. Their electoral success can be attributed to a variety of factors including but not limited to voters' familiarity with the candidate, their ability to show they can be trusted by voting along with public opinion on controversial issues, financial support from interest groups, and overall know-how and experience with the election process. Pritchard (1992) noted the importance of these and other factors in his empirical analysis of the Florida House of Representatives between 1972 and 1980. Pritchard (1992) also pointed out that incumbents who appear to be vulnerable are more likely to be challenged in the general election. This vulnerability clearly influenced decisions to challenge incumbents. Though these findings are pertinent to understanding electoral success, they do not provide information on incumbency in majority-minority and minority-influenced districts, the districts of interest in this research. By examining the incumbency factor in these environments, I can add to the existing literature.

Several scholars have noted the relationship between length of service and the impact it has on an incumbent's electoral success. Carey et al. (2000) conducted a study that incorporated data from chambers across 49 states to examine the incumbency effect on the probability of reelection success. They found that a strong correlation existed between the length of term in office and

incumbent safety (Carey et al., 2000). Though the finding aligns with conventional wisdom, the authors did note that in some elections longer lengths of terms reduced the probability of an incumbent winning an election (Carey et al, 2000).

The Gap: Theoretical Argument

There are other factors that possibly can have an influence on candidate emergence and quality, such as geography, district type or the current political climate, especially after landmark Supreme Court cases like *Shaw v. Reno* (1993), *Miller v. Johnson* (1995), and *Bush v. Vera* (1996) and the increasing population of nonwhite Americans leading to different outlooks on candidate emergence and quality. The political climate in the late 1990s and 2000s for the creation of majority-minority and minority-influence congressional districts may have led to more candidates making the decision on whether to run for political office or not.

Demographics have also been intertwined in American politics. It impacts who gets elected, policy decisions, and voter turnout. V. O. Key puts it best in his book *State and Nation* when he notes, “South revolves around the position of the Negro.” Although Key was referring to the high African American population impact on policies and policy-making decisions in the American South, this also could be said with other areas of the country that have a high concentration of other racial and ethnic minority groups.

Race can play a major role in candidate success particularly when the candidate’s race is the race of many of the voters in the congressional district. Several studies add to this notion by pointing out the significance of race in electoral and political success, especially as it relates to largely African American districts or voting populations. Gay (2002) claims that the race of political candidates and officials can influence how citizens perceive and support them. This coincides with Gilliam (1996) and Bobo and Gilliam (1990) in their finding that African

American voters tend to be more supportive of candidates and elected officials of their same race or ethnicity.

Branton (2009) adds to the discussion of race and primary elections. She finds that if a challenger who is African American or of some other minority ethnicity announces a candidacy for office, other challengers will enter the competition. Janai S. Nelson explores the role of minority communities in ensuring that majority-minority districts elect their candidates of choice, even when there are outside challengers (Nelson, 2007). Many times, the candidate of choice is reflective of the race of many voters in the district. Through various case studies, Nelson (2007) finds racial minorities in majority-minority districts are left with the dilemma of forcibly uniting behind a single candidate to demonstrate political cohesion and avoid fragmentation of their vote or voting their consciences and, thereby risking absolute defeat in the collective. This phenomenon might deter some candidates from running against black incumbents in majority minority districts because some challengers might believe that the incumbent has an advantage since, he or she has name recognition or has already won the support of the black community, which largely makes up the electorate.

Majority-Minority Congressional Districts

Majority-minority districts are mostly composed of Democratic Party identifiers. Conventional wisdom argues that the composition of these districts can increase the level of difficulty political hopefuls will encounter when seeking to run against a Democratic incumbent. However, some legislative and political scholars refute this notion. Hogan's (2003) examination of 25 congressional races throughout the United States during the 1994 and 1996 elections cycles revealed that the strength of support for a political party in each district is expected to influence

interparty competition; the district's dominant political party tends to be well supported by party identifiers, which in turn leads to more competitive races during primary season.

When states transition from single-member districts to multi-member districts and state legislators aggressively use gerrymandering for political gain, it gives rise to more and more individuals running for public offices. Consequently, scholars sought to understand the possible implications it could have on why candidate emergence and the quality of candidates who are emerging. Ostdiek (1995) finds, and Carson et al. (2006) affirms, candidate entry and electoral outcomes are affected by redistricting, and that partisan gerrymandering tends to electorally weaken the safe districts of a state's majority and minority party, which will lead to a rise in challengers challenging incumbents.

Redistricting can also have an impact on candidate entry. Petrocik and Desposato (1998) present the notion that redistricting has a strong impact on the lack of candidate entry in majority-minority and minority-influence districts. In many respects, redistricting can cause candidates in the majority-minority districts to have a strong Democratic base, whereas in influence districts the Democratic Party can lose a notable portion of its Democratic base due to white citizens becoming more Republican (Petrocik and Deposato, 1998). The old adage of "I'm not leaving the party, the party left me" might also help to add understanding to the defections of white Democrats. Regardless of the reasoning, the exit of white Democrats can change the political landscape of both majority-minority and minority-influence districts thereby altering the number of candidates willing to enter into political races. Support for Petrocik and Deposato's (1998) findings can also be found in Kevin Hill's work. Hill (1995) utilizes 1990 and 1992 electoral and district level census data in eight southern states to assess what impact redistricting

has on candidate electoral success. He found that nine seats were taken by the Republicans in the 1992 election, and four were due to the creation of majority black districts (Hill, 1995).

Squire (2000) conducted a comparative analysis that examined how uncontested seats are far more common in state legislative elections than in U.S. House elections. Through his examination of legislative elections data from 1992 to 1996 (Squire, 2000) he found that there are more uncontested seats in the South because of majority-minority districts, which tend to lean heavily for one political party over another.

We know a lot about the incumbency advantage and strategic challenger entry, but we do not know very much about the influence of district demographics and minority incumbent status on candidate entry. This dissertation adds to this literature by focusing on race, both in terms of incumbency and districts composition, as it relates to challenger emergence in congressional elections.

CHAPTER THREE

DATA, METHODS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter provides empirical insight on the number of challengers incumbents face based on their district composition. Specifically, I answer the theoretical question of: What is the relationship between candidate emergence and district type by analyzing United States congressional districts that have black incumbents. This chapter provides a statistical overview of the relationship between primary candidate emergence and district demographics. The next chapter gives a more in-depth narrative explanation through case study analyses of specific incumbents found in the empirical data in this chapter.

What We Know

For the most part, as discussed in the previous chapter, studies of candidate emergence arose out of the literature of the electoral advantage of incumbency in American politics. Anthony Downs (1957), David Mayhew (1974) Morris Fiorina (1977), Richard Fenno (1978) established early theories on the incumbency advantage. What was striking to many early scholars is that the majority of members of Congress who sought reelection did not have any real formative challengers. Largely because, as Campbell (1983) argues, voters perceived their incumbents to be more experienced and more able to carry out the responsibilities of the job, thus evolving a theory of “incumbency advantage.” The mere presence of an incumbent seeking

reelection seemed to discourage individuals from challenging an incumbent. Due to the increasingly changing political landscape, such as increasing ethnic diversity in the United States, continual realignment of congressional districts, and the increasing number of scandals and retirements by members of Congress, the theory of “incumbency advantage” and how candidates emerge has evolved. More contemporary authors have studied other aspects that contribute to the emergence of challengers and the incumbency advantage. For example, Silva and Skulley’s (2018) examine candidate emergence for women of color over time. They find many of the conditions thought necessary for women’s emergence as candidates are contextual and temporally specific. Maisel and Stone (2014) believes that candidate entry and incumbency advantage is driven by political parties. They contend that the political party that is not in control of Congress will have a difficult time finding potential challengers.

What is missing from both seminal and more contemporary scholarship is the linkage between the demographics in congressional districts across the country and candidate emergence in congressional districts, specifically majority-minority congressional districts.

Hypotheses

This chapter examines four hypotheses related to the research question. This section walks through the expectations.

Hypothesis 1: Black incumbents will have fewer challengers than white incumbents.

It is my argument that black incumbents have more of a reliable and cohesive voting bloc than white incumbents. Many of their voters trust the judgement of their congressman. For example, Bennie Thompson in Mississippi’s 2nd congressional district faces very few challengers when he seeks reelection (discussed more in Chapter 4). Some of this is rooted in the

substantive vs descriptive representation argument. The scholarship shows that African Americans connect with their elected leaders in a more “descriptive” than substantive way. White constituents expect their incumbents to provide more of a substantive view when it comes to policymaking on their behalf.

Hypothesis 2: Black incumbents will have fewer quality challengers than white incumbents.

Hypothesis 1 builds into Hypothesis 2, meaning that black incumbents have fewer quality challengers than white incumbents. African American candidates should have fewer quality challengers due their strong “incumbent advantage.” Quality challengers are more rational, which means they should take into account whether they have the resources and name recognition to defeat the incumbent. If not, they make a rational decision not to challenge the incumbent. Since, black incumbents have a more of a cohesive voting bloc, and once it is secured it becomes an electoral advantage to black incumbents, thus helping to fend-off quality challengers.

Hypothesis 3: Black incumbents in majority-minority districts will have fewer challengers than black incumbents in influence districts.

Black incumbents in majority-minority districts have a more reliable and cohesive voting bloc than black incumbents in influence districts. My argument is that incumbents in majority minority districts only must appease one voting bloc, African Americans, to secure reelection. Whereas in influence districts, black incumbents must influence and support policies of various voting blocs to get reelected.

When challengers see that black incumbents have a stronghold on the black voting bloc in majority-minority districts, many of these challengers make a rational decision not to run

against the incumbent. However, the challengers in influence districts may feel that he or she is able to put together a coalition that will defeat the incumbent.

Hypothesis 4: White incumbents in influence districts will have fewer challengers than black incumbents influence districts.

I base this hypothesis in theories of racial bias in which African American incumbents will have more challengers than white incumbents because potential challengers see black incumbents as less formidable than white incumbents. Also, voters will perceive African American incumbents as more beholden to the policy preferences of African American voters than voters who are not African Americans. Conversely, other ethnic groups may feel that a member of their own group will better represent their interests than someone else outside their ethnic group. On the flip side, white incumbents are seen as individuals who do not belong to any one ethnic group and are able to address policy issues across groups.

Data and Methods

It is vital that there is an accurate empirical measurement of any research question. Therefore, this chapter attempts to show empirically whether there is a relationship between the number of challengers and the composition of United States congressional districts and race of the incumbent. This section discusses the data collection and identifies the appropriate methods for assessing the hypothesis of this dissertation.

Data

To conduct the analysis, I need data on the racial demographics of congressional districts, the race of congressional incumbents, and the number of candidates that ran in congressional primaries. The analysis examines U.S. House races from 2006-2018. The United States Census Bureau was used to collect the demographic data of congressional districts after the 2000 and

2010 Censuses. I collected the race of the incumbent from the U.S. House of Representatives website for all incumbents from 2002-2018. For the number of primary candidates, I rely on two data sources that include candidate data for all House races from 1956-2018.² I merge these data sources together for the data set used in this analysis.

Measurement of Variables

I focus on two explanatory variables: district type and race of the incumbent. I code districts into three categories based on the percentage of the districts that is African American. I code districts as majority-minority, influence, and majority white. Majority-Minority congressional districts are any congressional districts that have a racial minority group or groups comprising most of the district's total population, such as if a district's residents are majority African American or Hispanic. According to the 2020 United States census, there are 122 majority-minority congressional districts in the United States, which account for 28% of all congressional districts. Minority influence congressional districts are any congressional districts in which at least 25% of the population of a congressional district is a member of a racial minority group in the United States. For the race of the incumbent, I code African American incumbents as 1 and white incumbents as 0. Hispanic and Asian incumbents are excluded from the analysis.

²Pettigrew, Stephen; Owen, Karen; Wanless, Emily, 2014, "U.S. House Primary Election Results (1956-2010)", <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/26448>, Harvard Dataverse. Miller, Michael G., and Camberg, Nikki, 2020, "U.S. House Primary Election Results (2012-2018)", <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/CXVMSY>, Harvard Dataverse.

The dependent variables come from the House primary data sets and focus on three variables. The first is if the incumbent ran unopposed in their party's primary in a given year. This is coded as 1 if they run unopposed and 0 if the incumbent faced challengers. The second is the number of challengers an incumbent raced in their party's primary in a given election year as well as the number of candidates running in the other party's primary. I then total the number of challengers and candidates across the two party's primaries. The third dependent variable is the number of quality challengers running in the primary against an incumbent and the number of quality challengers running in the other party's primary. I also include the total number of quality challengers across both parties. The House primary data set provides candidate quality based on if a candidate had held previous elected office.

Methods

Any statistical test should permit sampling to reflect the sample group's population. Therefore, a t-test will be used for assessment of the hypotheses. A t-test analysis is a type of inferential statistic used to determine if there is a significant difference between the means of two groups. This method accounts for the correlation between the groups and the testing of the means within groups. For the purposes of this assessment, a t-test analysis provides the frequencies of the emergence of challengers running in any given party primary. This variation of occurrence is imperative in understanding means within these two groups and will provide a test of significance for the hypotheses being tested.

Descriptive Statistics

Independent Variables

Table 1.1: Race of Incumbent by Party

	Democrats	Republicans	All
Black	20.42% (291)	0.32% (5)	9.86% (296)
White	79.58% (1,134)	99.68% (1,573)	90.14% (2,707)

Table one assesses the race of incumbents by his/her political party. The sample size includes a total of 3,003 incumbents who ran in the congressional elections of 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2018. Within that sample, there were 2,707 white incumbents, which accounted for 90.14% of the sample, and 296 out of 3,003 incumbents were African Americans that accounted for 9.86% of the sample population. Looking at the race of incumbents by party, Table one reveals that Republicans are predominately white as less than 1% of the Republican incumbents in the data are black while just over 20% of Democratic incumbents are black.

Table 1.2: District Type by Incumbent Type

	Black Democrats	White Democrats	Republicans	All Districts
Majority White	7.56%	89.33%	94.67%	84.39%
Influence	36.08%	8.73%	5.27%	9.58%
Majority Black	56.36%	1.94%	0.06%	6.03%

Table two examines the relationship between the typology of United States congressional districts and incumbency. The findings reveal approximately that 7.56% of black Democratic incumbents represent majority white congressional districts and 36.08% of black Democratic incumbents represent congressional districts that are minority-influence congressional districts with 56.36% of the Black Democratic incumbents representing majority-minority districts. Among white Democratic incumbents, 89.33% represent majority white congressional districts. Only 8.73% of white Democratic incumbents represents minority influence congressional

districts, and only 1.94% of white Democratic incumbents represent majority black congressional districts.

According to Table Two, 99.94% of Republican Incumbents are white and 95% of the districts represented by Republicans are majority white. Therefore, the analysis will focus on Democratically held districts only. However, the analysis does examine the number of Republicans running in the primaries in these Democratic districts. Although they are running against other Republicans within their primary, they still have hopes of defeating the Democratic incumbents. Overall, this analysis shows that 84.39% of the congressional districts in the sample are majority-white, 9.58% are minority influence congressional districts, and 6.03% are majority black congressional districts.

Dependent Variables

Table 1.3: Democratic Incumbents Running Unopposed in the Primary

	%	n
Unopposed	70.03	1,054
Dem. Challengers	29.97	451

Table Three shows those congressional races in which incumbents were unopposed. According to the table, 70.03% of incumbents in the sample were unopposed, which accounted for 1,054 incumbents. These incumbents did not have any challengers in the Democratic primary. Only 29.97% of Democratic incumbents were challenged in their primaries. In these districts at least one challenger opposes the incumbents. This accounts for 451 of the 1,154 districts in the sample.

Table 1.4: Average Number of Challengers in Democratic Districts

	Democratic Candidates	Republican Candidates	All Candidates
All Challengers	1.51 (0.96)	1.82 (1.58)	3.33 (1.92)
Quality Challengers	0.18 (0.49)	0.14 (0.40)	0.32 (0.70)

Table Four assesses the number of challengers who ran as a Democratic or Republican during the presidential and midterm elections from 2006 to 2018. According to Table Four, Democratic incumbents had an average of 1.51 challengers and 0.18 quality challengers in their elections and Republican incumbents had slightly more challengers at 1.82, but less quality challengers at 0.14. Overall, on average, there are 3.33 challengers and 0.32 quality challengers per race. This is meaningful because of the assumption that challengers are rational when deciding to run against incumbents is not always true.

Findings

To determine if there is a correlation between congressional district type and candidate entry, testing of several hypotheses is warranted. This empirical analysis tests if race of incumbents and type of districts influences the likelihood a Democratic incumbent runs unopposed or faces challengers, both quality and “non quality.” Each hypothesis will have its respective table.

Hypothesis One: Black incumbents will have fewer challengers than white incumbents.

Table 1.5 Percentage of Incumbents Running Unopposed

Race of Incumbent	Mean Unopposed	n
White	73.55	1,134
Black	54.30	291
Difference	19.25***	1,425

Notes: Difference of Means (t-test)

*p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Table Five tells if black incumbents have fewer challengers than white incumbents. The findings show that African American incumbents in congressional races do in fact not have fewer challengers than their white counterparts. 73.55% of the White incumbents were unopposed in their congressional election while fewer African American incumbents were unopposed when they sought reelection (54.30%). This is a statistically significant difference. The comparison

reveals there are some other underlying issues that are having an impact on why black incumbents are facing more challengers than their white counterparts. This lingering issue will be debated in the next chapter.

The finding counters the hypothesis that black incumbents will have fewer challengers than white incumbents. The results might be attributed to the fact that some challengers believe that African American incumbents have higher expectations politically from their voters, and when they do not deliver on those expectations, they must pay a higher political cost. Also, white incumbents could have a more cohesive voting block and once that voting block is secured by those incumbents many potential challengers make a rational decision not to challenge the incumbent.

Table 1.6: Average Number of Challengers/Candidates

Race of Incumbent	Democratic Challengers	Republican Candidates	Total Challengers	n
White	1.42	1.98	3.40	300
Black	1.73	1.51	3.24	133
Difference	-.312**	.47*	.16	433

Notes: Difference of Means (t-test)

Only Districts where the incumbent did not run unopposed.

*p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

The assessment of do black incumbents have fewer challengers than white incumbents continue in Table Six. It shows that white incumbents have on average 1.42 Democratic challengers and 1.98 Republican challengers. Overall, white incumbents see an average of 3.40 challengers when they are seeking reelection and are not unopposed. Black incumbents see on average 1.73 Democratic challengers and 1.51 challengers in the Republican primaries for an average of 3.24 challengers for both Democratic and Republicans challengers.

Moreover, white incumbents see slightly more Republican challengers than Democratic challengers. Black incumbents see slightly more Democratic challengers than Republican

challengers. This is because there are more whites in Congress who are Republican, and the majority of African Americans are Democratic. Often, challengers believe that there is no need to run against the incumbents of the opposite party because they feel he/she is unbeatable.

Hypothesis Two: Black incumbents will have fewer quality challengers than white incumbents.

Table 1.7: Average Number of Quality Challengers/Candidates

Race of Incumbent	Dem. Quality Challengers	Rep. Quality Candidates	Total Quality Challengers	N
White	.15	.19	.34	300
Black	.24	.05	.29	133
Difference	-.09	.14**	.05	433

Notes: Difference of Means (t-test)

Only Districts where the incumbent did not run unopposed.

*p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Table Seven examines the relationship between incumbents and quality challengers, both Democratic and Republican challengers. The evidence of Table Seven reveals that white incumbents have slightly more Republican quality challengers than Democratic quality challengers. Black incumbents have slightly fewer quality Republican challengers than Democratic quality challengers. The results show a significant difference for Republican quality challengers and support hypothesis two. Overall, there is mixed support for hypothesis two. There is no statistical difference between white and black incumbents in the number of quality Democratic challengers, but districts with black incumbents do, on average, have fewer quality candidates running in the Republican primary.

Hypothesis Three: Black incumbents in majority-minority districts will have fewer challengers than black incumbents in influence districts.

Table 1.8: Running Unopposed, Black Incumbents Only

District Type	Mean Unopposed	n
Influence	51.43	105
Majority Black	53.05	164
Difference	-1.62	269

Notes: Difference of Means (t-test)

*p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Table Eight gives insight on how many incumbents ran unopposed. It allows for the comparison of black incumbents running in majority minority congressional districts to those who are running in minority influence congressional districts. According to the table, 51.43% of incumbents in influence districts run unopposed while 53.05% of black incumbents in majority-minority districts run unopposed when they sought reelection. There were more incumbents running unopposed in majority minority congressional districts than in influence districts, although this is not a statistically significant difference. However, the direction of the relationship supports hypothesis three. Voters in majority-minority congressional districts are more unified in voting as a bloc, and once that voting block has been “politically secured” by the incumbent, many challengers make a rational decision not to challenge the incumbent because he/she believes they are unable to be defeated.

Table 1.9: Average Number of Challengers/Candidates (Black Incumbents Only)

District Type	Democratic Challengers	Republican Challengers	Total Challengers	N
Influence	1.80	1.75	3.55	51
Majority Black	1.73	1.38	3.10	77
Difference	.08	.39	.45	128

Notes: Difference of Means (t-test)

Only Districts where the incumbent did not run unopposed.

*p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Like Table Eight, Table Nine examines the relationship black incumbents in majority minority congressional districts and black incumbents in minority influence districts. The results reveal that black incumbents in majority-minority districts see on average 1.73 Democratic challengers compared to 1.38 challengers in the Republican primary. Whereas, in minority influence congressional districts, black incumbents have roughly the same number of challengers both in the Democratic and Republican primaries. Overall, there is no difference in the number of challengers who emerge against black incumbents in majority minority congressional districts compared to those who are running in minority influence districts. The finding does offer weak support for this hypothesis as the direction matches the hypothesis, but the results are not statistically significant.

Table 1.10: Average Number of Quality Challengers/Candidates (Black Incumbents Only)

District Type	Dem. Quality Challengers	Rep. Quality Candidates	Total Quality Challengers	n
Influence	.14	.04	.18	51
Majority Black	.32	.06	.39	77
Difference	-.19 [^]	-.03	-.21 [^]	128

Notes: Difference of Means (t-test)

Only Districts where the incumbent did not run unopposed.

[^] p < .10, *p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Table Ten incorporates the emergence of quality challengers who ran in both influence and majority-minority districts. It indicates that quality challengers were slightly more likely to run against a black incumbent in a majority minority congressional district than in a minority influence congressional district. The difference in means at -.19 demonstrates a marginally statistically significant relationship. One the other hand, the table reflects that there is not much variation in the increased number of challengers in majority-minority congressional districts than in influence in congressional districts. There is not strong support for this part of the hypothesis.

Hypothesis Four: White incumbents in influence districts will have fewer challengers than black incumbents in influence districts.

Table 1.11: Incumbents Running Unopposed, (Influence Districts Only)

Race of Incumbent	Mean Unopposed	N
White	66.67	99
Black	51.43	105
Difference	15.24*	204

Notes: Difference of Means (t-test)

*p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Table Eleven shows the percentage of incumbents who run unopposed in minority influence congressional districts, 2006-2018. There were more white incumbents who ran unopposed in influence congressional districts than black incumbents in influence districts. Black incumbents ran unopposed about 51.43% of the time. This is a statistically significant difference showing that Republican were less likely to face a challenger, at least in terms of being unopposed, and offers support for hypothesis four.

Table 1.12: Average Number of Challengers/Candidates (Influence Districts Only)

Race of Incumbent	Democratic Challengers	Republican Challengers	Total Challengers	n
White	1.52	2.00	3.52	33
Black	1.80	1.75	3.55	51
Difference	-.29	.25	-.03	84

Notes: Difference of Means (t-test)

Only Districts where the incumbent did not run unopposed.

*p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Table Twelve assesses the relationship between the number of challengers who run in influence districts to the race of the incumbents. In this sample, there were on average 1.52 Democratic challengers who ran against the incumbent when the incumbent was white. For Republican challengers, it was an average of 2 challengers who ran against the white

incumbents. So, there was a slight increase of Republican competition for white incumbents who sought reelection.

Nevertheless, on average, white incumbents saw an average of 3.52 competitors as they sought reelection. Conversely, Black incumbents face on average 1.80 Democratic challengers and 1.75 Republican challengers when they face reelection. Black incumbents had about the same number of challengers overall compared to their white counterparts.

Table 1.13: Average Number of Quality Challengers/Candidates (Influence Districts Only)

Race of Incumbent	Dem. Quality Challengers	Rep. Quality Candidates	Total Quality Challengers	n
White	.18	.30	.48	33
Black	.14	.04	.18	51
Difference	.04	.26**	.30^	84

Notes: Difference of Means (t-test)

Only Districts where the incumbent did not run unopposed.

^ p < .10, *p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Table Thirteen also tests hypothesis four by evaluating the average number of quality challengers in influence districts. The quality challengers are challengers who are individuals who held public office before and are seeking to defeat the incumbent. White incumbents in influence districts have on average .18 Democratic quality challengers and .30 Republican quality challengers on average. When black incumbents run there is little variation in the number of challengers that run against them, the table reveals that these incumbents see on average .14 Democratic challengers and .04 Republican challengers. The total number of quality challengers is only .18. Overall, white incumbents in influence districts are significantly more likely to face quality Republican candidates than black incumbents in influence districts. This runs counter to the expectations of hypothesis four. Although white incumbents were more likely to run unopposed, if they faced primary challengers, quality Republican candidates were more likely to emerge.

Conclusion

A statistical analysis is good for answering multiple theoretical questions. It determines if there is a relationship between congressional district demographics and the number of challenges an incumbent will face, specifically black incumbents. In recapping the findings, Hypothesis One reveals that black incumbents in congressional races do in fact not have fewer challengers than their white counterparts. Hypothesis Two shows that white incumbents have slightly more Republican quality challengers than Democratic challengers. Black incumbents have slightly fewer quality Republican challengers than Democratic quality challengers. Hypothesis Three shows that there is not a lot of variation on the number of challengers who emerged against black incumbents in majority-minority congressional versus incumbents in minority-influence congressional districts. Lastly, Hypothesis Four shows that there were more white incumbents who ran unopposed in influence congressional districts than black incumbents in influence districts.

In context, these hypotheses give credence to the overarching research question on the relationship between district type and candidate emergence, specifically Hypotheses Three and Four. If the answer to the research question solely relies on the findings of these two hypotheses, it will show that congressional district composition and the race of the incumbent are relevant. White incumbents in more diverse congressional districts tend to have slightly fewer challengers than black incumbents in minority influence congressional districts, and incumbents in majority-minority congressional districts.

The rationale for this could be that white incumbents in minority-influence districts have built a coalition between white voters and ethnic groups in these congressional districts. By doing so, challengers see that the resources and the path to defeating the incumbent is unlikely.

In comparison, challengers in majority minority congressional districts believe that they could win over the majority of voters in the congressional districts, especially if the challenger is an African American. Black incumbents in minority influence congressional districts may have a harder time holding that coalition together compared to their white counterparts. Challengers may believe that they are able to build a coalition and provide better representation for all the groups in the congressional district. Perhaps, knowing not only the race of the incumbent but also the race of the challengers will help to better understand this phenomenon. The following chapter will provide a more narrative analysis of the relationship between district type and the emergence of challengers.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CASE STUDY

During a conversation on an upcoming Mississippi judicial election with a close political ally, who is a lawyer and former judge, the question on who will be running against her came up. Both of us had no idea who would challenge her in the upcoming judicial election. At that point, my mind began to wonder, what if there was a methodical way for incumbents and political scientists to determine the number of opponents an incumbent will face when he/she runs for reelection. In the end, the judge faced two challengers and was defeated.

This chapter conducts a qualitative analysis that examines the number of challengers who emerge against black incumbents in majority-minority and minority-influence United States congressional districts. It examines four black incumbents and their congressional districts. The analysis focuses on district demographics from the 2010 United States Census Bureau, incumbents' seniority, and the realignment of a state's party identification to see if there was an increase or decrease of the number of challengers in those congressional districts from 1994 to 2018. In all the cases, I examine the following question: Is there a connection between candidate emergence and district type among black incumbents in Majority-Minority and Minority-Influence congressional districts? The analysis also includes an incumbent from a majority white district to see if the same trends hold for white incumbents in majority white districts.

I examine the following districts in this chapter:

District Type: **Majority Minority (Black Incumbents)**

- Bennie Thompson, 2nd Congressional Districts, Mississippi (1993-to present)
- John Lewis 5th Congressional Districts, Georgia (1987 to 2020)

District Type: **Influence (Black Incumbents)**

- Mel Watts, 12th Congressional Districts, North Carolina (1993-2014)
- Eddie Bernice Johnson, 30th Congressional Districts, Texas (1993-Present)

District Type: **Majority White (White Incumbents)**

- Robert Aderholt, 4th Congressional Districts, Alabama (1997-Present)

Case Selection Criteria

In selecting the above incumbents for examination, I focused on several case selection criteria. To make the comparisons in the analysis below useful, the cases needed to have some similarities to highlight the variations of interest: district demographics. The two primary criteria I selected on was the length of service in the House and representing southern states. To accurately determine if district demographics had any influence on candidate emergence, I wanted to examine incumbents that had all been elected at similar points and served similarly long terms in the House. This allows for better tracking of challenger emergence over multiple elections and holds constant the similar political dynamics that may have been influence American politics at the time. As such, each of the incumbents examined were elected within a ten-year period from 1987-1997 and until at least 2014. Three of the cases were all elected in the same year of 1992 and three of the members are still serving in the House.

I also focused on representatives from southern states to allow for comparisons of incumbents that represent states with similar political cultures and political histories. As such, each of the incumbents chosen for examination represent all states that were covered under the Voting Rights Act (VRA) provisions. All of Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi were included in the original 1965 Voting Rights Act as were many counties in North Carolina. Texas was included in the preclearance provision in the 1975 VRA revision. This provides a similar political history to make conclusions related to district demographics comparable across the district types. Finally, I include one majority-white district (with a white incumbent) as a type of

comparison to examine if challenger emergence in southern states appears markedly different among all districts and not just those represented by African Americans.

“Deep Roots and Long Reign: The Influence of Seniority on Candidate Emergence”

Bennie Thompson

Adam Ganucheau, a columnist with *Mississippi Today*, noted that, “There is an unwritten rule in Mississippi politics: If you’re a Democratic candidate and you want to win your election, you need the blessings of Congressman Thompson.”³ Bennie Thompson was elected in April of 1993 from the 2nd Congressional District in Mississippi, after winning the seat formerly held by Mike Espy, who became US Secretary of Agriculture. The Mississippi 2nd has the highest concentration of African Americans residents of any other congressional district in the United States The “Kingmaker” of Mississippi 2nd has been in office for 27 years, and relatively had to fend off a few challengers. Largely, because of his popularity and commitment to the people of the Mississippi Delta.

He truly developed a relationship with the people of the 2nd congressional district. Every time he runs for reelection he wins by large majorities, and for the most part, has not encountered any major threat to his reelection campaigns. This could be because over the years he has developed close ties with the people of the Mississippi Delta by doing what Richard Fenno called “Home Style” politics, which are ways members of Congress connect with their voters back in their districts. Personally, I can recall many times Congressman Thompson attended funerals of leaders in the community and campaigned for local mayors, supervisors and so forth.

³Adam Ganucheau, *Mississippi Today* article “Rep. Bennie Thompson, Democratic king-maker, throws full support behind Mike Espy in Senate Race” October 22, 2020

Conventional wisdom suggests, the longer one is in office the less likely that person would face challengers. This notion does not hold true for Congressman Thompson, however. Those who frequently challenged Thompson were Republicans. According to Table One, Thompson has faced more Republican challengers than Democratic challengers since 1994. Thompson has faced several quality Republican challengers during this time. Clinton B. LeSueur, who is an African American male Republican and former college administrator, ran against Thompson in 2002 and 2004. LeSueur came within 8% of defeating Thompson in 2002, and 10% in 2004. In 2006, Republicans supported an African American woman who was Mayor of Tchula, Mississippi She only garnered 35% of the vote. Overall, this table shows the “incumbent’s advantage” has not aided in Thompson having fewer challengers challenging his reelection bid. On the other political side, Thomson’s Democratic challengers were qualified challengers who were a black high-ranking military officer, mayor of the 2nd largest city, insert city name, in the 2nd congressional districts and a well-known state lawmaker This could be because Thompson is the only Democratic Congressman in a heavily Republican state.

Table 1.14: Number of Challengers for Bennie Thomson, 1994-2018 (2nd Congressional Districts, Mississippi)

Election Years	Democratic Challengers	Republican Challengers	Independents	Other Political Parties	Total Number of Challengers
1994	0	1	0	0	1
1996	0	3	0	0	3
1998	0	0	0	0	0
2000	0	0	0	0	0
2002	1	2	0	0	3
2004	0	3	0	0	3
2006	1	2	0	0	3

2008	0	0	0	0	0	
2010	0	1	0	0	1	
2012	1	1	1	0	3	
2014	0	0	0	0	0	
2016	0	1	0	0	1	
2018	0	2	0	0	2	
Total Number of Challenger by Party	3	16	1	0	Total Number of Challengers from 1993 to 2018	20

Mel Watts

Like Thompson, Mel Watts has developed strong ties with the people in the North Carolina 12th. His congressional district became an “influence district” after the Supreme Court case *Shaw v. Reno (1993)*, in which the Court ruled that when states redistricting congressional districts, those districts must be held to a standard of strict scrutiny under the equal protection clause. The 12th congressional district in North Carolina was a congressional district that had to be reconfigured following *Shaw v. Reno (1993)*. It is a congressional district that has around 47% African American population.

Mel Watts was elected to the 12th district. He served the people of North Carolina since he was nominated by President Obama in 2013 to be Director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency. Like other African American incumbents, Watts was able to provide a type of representation that many people in the African American community can identify with. Similar to Bennie Thompson, Watts was able to connect with the people, thus securing a large voting bloc in his district.

Table 1.15: Number of Challengers for Mel Watts, 1994-2012 (12th Congressional District, North Carolina)

Election Years	Democratic Challengers	Republican Challengers	Independents	Other Political Parties	Total Number of Challengers	
1994	0	1	0	0	1	
1996	0	1	0	0	1	
1998	1	5	0	0	6	
2000	0	3	0	0	3	
2002	0	1	0	0	1	
2004	0	1	0	0	1	
2006	0	1	0	0	1	
2008	0	1	0	0	1	
2010	0	1	0	1	2	
2012	0	1	0	0	1	
Total Number of Challenger by Party	1	16	0	1	Total Number of Challengers from 1993 to 2012	18

Table Two shows the number of challengers Watts faced through the years. He had only one formidable challenger since he was elected in 1993. However, he consistently faced Republican challengers in every election. This analysis does reveal the longer Watts remained in office fewer Democrats had a desire to challenge him, along with very few Republicans. Surprisingly, Watts, who represented an influence congressional district, faced fewer Democratic challengers than Thompson, who represented a majority-minority district.

So, did seniority work better for Thompson than Watts, or is seniority more effective in an influence district than in a majority-minority district? I think the answer is that Mel Watts is

viewed in higher regards than Congressman Thompson. Meaning, before Congress, Thompson was a mayor of a small town in the Mississippi delta and had little name recognition across his congressional district. Watts had better name recognition in his district, and was a lawyer, businessman and member of his state legislature prior to being elected to Congress. The combination of his stellar background and incumbency helped Watts build a bond with the African American community in this district and secured the black vote in his district. Also, in keeping with the idea that many of the challengers are rational actors, some challengers see that running in an influence district is more cumbersome than running in a majority-minority congressional district. Running in an influence congressional district means a candidate must build coalitions with various ethnic groups in the district. Some challengers do not have the means or are unable to build coalitions with the groups needed to secure victory thus making it harder to campaign in an influence district than in a majority district.

Robert Aderholt

It is important to see the influence of an incumbent seniority on different types of congressional districts and incumbents. Robert Aderholt is a white incumbent who represents a district that is predominantly white compared to Thompson and Watts. Aderholt is the longest serving member of Alabama's congressional delegation. He has been serving the people of 4th congressional district since 1997. He was one of the first Republicans elected to Congress when the state of Alabama, like many other southern states during that time, was becoming more Republican. Aderholt's district is over 80% white and mostly Republican.

Table 16.16: Number of Challengers for Robert Aderholt, 1997-2012 (12th Congressional District, North Carolina)

Election Years	Democratic Challengers	Republican Challengers	Independents	Other Political Parties	Total Number of Challengers	
1998	2	0	0	0	2	
2000	1	0	0	0	1	
2002	0	0	0	0	0	
2004	1	0	0	0	1	
2006	0	0	0	0	0	
2008	2	0	0	0	2	
2010	0	0	0	0	0	
2012	1	0	0	0	1	
2014	0	1	0	0	1	
2016	0	1	0	0	1	
2018	2	2	0	0	4	
Total Number of Challenger by Party	9	4	0	0	Total Number of Challengers from 1997 to 2018	13

According to Table Three, Aderholt faced fewer Republican challengers than Democratic challengers since becoming an incumbent in 2000. It was not until 2014 that he had his first Republican challenger. The rise of Republican challengers running against Aderholt could be the direct result of external factors, such as the 2018 midterm elections where there was an increase in challengers across the country due the unpopularity of President Donald Trump, and soft “Republicans” begin defeated by those who were considered die-hard Trump supporters.

In comparison to Watts and Thompson, Adherhold had about the same or fewer challengers within the party. Thompson and Watts faced more challengers from the opposite party compared to Aderholt. However, the frequency of challengers is very close between Thompson and Aderholt, whereas there is a slightly higher frequency of challengers when Mel Watts was the incumbent. One potential reason is that Mel Watts' district is more diverse than Thompson and Aderholt's districts and potential challengers who feel that they can represent the interest of their ethnic group better than Watts.

Moreover, seniority has an effect but not a major effect on the number of challengers incumbents face. There is little evidence in this analysis that suggests that an incumbent's seniority alone is a driving factor on why challengers try to unseat an incumbent. However, there is a slight difference in the number of challengers incumbents face in majority white and black congressional districts compared to incumbents in influence congressional districts. It appears that as a district becomes more diverse and whiter the fewer challengers an incumbent will face, so diversity in congressional districts play a larger role than an incumbent's seniority.

“The Changing of the Guards: The Influence of State Politics on Candidate Emergence”

One day when I was working on the George Irvin for Congress campaign back in 2002, I overheard the candidate mention to one of the senior campaign staffers that, “I hope they do not think I am going to change parties when I win.” A few weeks later I noticed a tall white man with a deep southern voice visit campaign headquarters. I later found out that the man was former chairman of the RNC and Governor of Mississippi Haley Barbour's brother, Jeppi Barbour, who was one of the architects of his brother's bid for governor. It was apparent that he thought that having George Irvin instead of Bennie Thompson as a congressman would help to advance the Republican agenda in the state.

State politics have always played a role in congressional elections. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, southern states began to rapidly transition from Democratic to Republican control in which many of the old Democrats who represented those states and congressional districts within those states retired or lost their bids for reelection. Many white southerner voters left the Democratic party and fled to the Republican party because of ideological differences. However, most of the minority-majority congressional districts and black incumbents who represented those districts remained in office, yet the scholarship is scarce on the effect of statewide political transitioning and its impact on majority-minority congressional districts and black incumbents.

Therefore, this section will analyze three congressional districts, which are represented by three black incumbents. These congressional districts are Bennie Thompson, Mississippi 2nd congressional district; John Lewis, Georgia's 5th congressional district; and Eddie Bernice Johnson, Texas 30th congressional district. This analysis is used when governors of states and states' legislatures change from one party to another as a method of identifying a change in a state's political structure. By the end of this section, one will have a better understanding on the impact state politics has on the number of challengers who emerged against black incumbents.

Mississippi 2ND Congressional District

Mississippi Democrats, who are socially conservatives, have ruled the state since Reconstruction. Not only did Democrats occupy the state's highest offices, but also lower-level offices like constable, mayors, county supervisor and so forth. Also, Mississippi voters sent Democrats to the halls of the United States capital to represent their interests, those like John C. Stennis, Jamie Whitten and Sonny Montgomery. All these individuals had a tremendous impact in Mississippi and the country. For the most part, Mississippi's state government began to turn

Red to Blue with the defeat of Democratic governor Ronnie Musgrove in 2003. Table Four describes the years Democrats and Republicans were in control of the state government.

As previously mentioned, Bennie Thompson has been in office since 1994. At that time Democrats had solid control over politics in Mississippi. Although Mississippi had a Republican governor, Kirk Fordice, the Democrats in the state legislature had enough to override any veto by the governor. It was not until 2006 that Republicans gained control of the governorship and the state senate. Two years prior Thompson faced his highest number of Republican challengers. Table Four details the congressional election years in which Bennie Thompson was the incumbent, and which political party controlled the governorship, senate and house in the state of Mississippi.

Table 1.17: Party Control in Mississippi and the Number of Challengers Emerged in 2nd Congressional Districts, 1994-2018

Congressional Election Years	Governorship	State Senate	State House	Number of Challengers
1994	Republican	Democrat	Democrat	1 (Republican)
1996	Republican	Democrat	Democrat	3 (Republican)
1998	Republican	Democrat	Democrat	0
2000	Democrat	Democrat	Democrat	0
2002	Democrat	Democrat	Democrat	3 (1 D 2 R)
2004	Democrat	Democrat	Democrat	3 (Republican)
2006	Republican	Republican	Democrat	3 (1 D 2 R)
2008	Republican	Republican	Democrat	0
2010	Republican	Republican	Democrat	1 (Republican)
2012	Republican	Republican	Republican	3 (1 D 1 R 1 I)
2014	Republican	Republican	Republican	0
2016	Republican	Republican	Republican	1 (Republican)

2018	Republican	Republican	Republican	2 (Republican)
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According to the table, when Democrats controlled the governorship and the state house and senate in Mississippi, Thompson faced no challengers. Though, when the Republicans were in control Thompson faced on average 1.5 challengers. Congressmen Thompson faced an average of 1 challenger when Republican controlled at least two out of the three: governorship, state house or the state senate. The same holds true when Democrats controlled at least two out of three, Thompson on average faced 1 challenger. However, Thompson faced more Republican challengers during the transition period in Mississippi, 2004-2008 in which Republicans were able to challenge Thompson with quality challengers who were able to raise a large amount of money. Mississippi Republicans' desire to remove Bennie Thompson has been consistent ever since he was elected.

Georgia 5th Congressional District

If Congressman Thompson is Mississippi's 2nd “Kingmaker,” then John Lewis was the “Peacemaker” of Georgia’s 5th Congressional District. John Lewis was a decorated veteran of the American civil rights movement; and he was elected to Congress in 1989. He was considered the underdog in his election with another civil right icon Julian Bond. Not only was Congressman Lewis beloved by the people of his Congressional District, but he was loved by Americans across the country. In an editorial he wrote in the *New York Times* shortly before his death, which was intended to be published after his death, John Lewis wrote, “Ordinary people with extraordinary vision can redeem the soul of America...” Congressman Lewis certainly was a man of and from his people who had a vision that was fulfilled for his people, including Republicans.

The takeover of Georgia’s state government by Republicans was slower than the one in Mississippi. In comparison, the Georgia 5th congressional district is more urban than the Mississippi 2nd congressional district. It is more ideologically liberal than that of Bennie Thompson’s district. Table Five details the congressional election years in which John Lewis was the incumbent, and which political party controlled the governorship, senate and house in the state of Georgia, and the number of challengers Lewis faced since he ran for reelection in 1992.

Table 1.18: Party Control in Georgia and the Number of Challengers who Emerged in 5th Congressional Districts, 1992-2018

Congressional Election Years	Governorship	State Senate	State House	Number of Challengers
1990	Democrat	Democrat	Democrat	1 (Republican)
1992	Democrat	Democrat	Democrat	4 (1 D and 3 R)
1994	Democrat	Democrat	Democrat	1 (Republican)
1996	Democrat	Democrat	Democrat	0
1998	Democrat	Democrat	Democrat	1 (Republican)
2000	Democrat	Democrat	Democrat	1 (Republican)
2002	Democrat	Republican	Democrat	0
2004	Republican	Republican	Republican	0
2006	Republican	Republican	Republican	0
2008	Republican	Republican	Republican	2 (Democrat)
2010	Republican	Republican	Republican	2 (Republican)
2012	Republican	Republican	Republican	2 (1 D 1 R)
2014	Republican	Republican	Republican	0
2016	Republican	Republican	Republican	1 (Republican)
2018	Republican	Republican	Republican	0

Unlike Mississippi, it was very clear when Republicans took control of the state government in Georgia. In 2000, the Democrats had control over the governorship, state senate and the state house and by 2004 they took control over the state government. Surprisingly, Congressman Lewis faced no challengers during this period. It was in 2010 that he faced his first round of challengers since the Republican takeover. On average Congressman Lewis had 1 challenger when Democrats were in control of Georgia's state government, whereas he experienced .8 challengers when Republicans were in control. Between 1990 to 2000, there was only one Democrat who ran against Lewis and 6 Republicans. Compared to between 2004 to 2018 when three Democrats and 4 Republicans ran against the Congressman. Lewis had the same number of challengers when Democrats controlled the Georgia state government and when Republicans controlled the government.

In midterm elections, there were no Democrats and three Republicans challenged Lewis when Democrats were in control, and when the Republicans were in control and only 2 Republicans and no Democrats challenged the congressman. One reason for this could be that Republicans have no need to challenge the longstanding Congressman, and instead put money and effort into helping Republicans stay in office in Georgia. Another reason could be the fact that Lewis had more name notoriety in Georgia than Bennie Thompson had in Mississippi, and because Lewis was a Civil Rights icon who risked his life for the political rights and freedoms for all citizens. Nevertheless, the Mississippi 2nd congressional district and Georgia 5th congressional districts clearly had an influx of candidate emergence when there was a change in the party controlling the state governments.

Texas 30th Congressional District

The 30th Congressional Districts in Texas is one of the most diverse congressional districts in the state of Texas. According to the 2010 United States Census Bureau data, the racial make-up of the district is 44.6% black; 41.0% white; 35.7% Hispanic and 1.9% Asian. This congressional district is reflective of the increasing growing population in the state of Texas. Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson has been serving the people of the 30th District since 1993. Prior to being elected to Congress, Johnson was a member of the Texas State House and Senate. Nevertheless, like other southern states Texas experienced Republicans taking over control of its state government. Table Six shows candidate entry in the 30th Congressional District by partisan control of government.

Table 1.19: Party Control in Texas and the Number of Challengers who Emerged in 30th Congressional Districts, 1992-2018

Congressional Election Years	Governorship	State Senate	State House	Number of Challengers
1992	Democrat	Democrat	Democrat	2 (1D and 1R)
1994	Democrat	Democrat	Democrat	1 (Republican)
1996	Republican	Democrat	Democrat	4 (1D, 2R and 1I)
1998	Republican	Republican	Democrat	1 (Republican)
2000	Republican	Republican	Democrat	0
2002	Republican	Republican	Republican	1 (Republican)
2004	Republican	Republican	Republican	0
2006	Republican	Republican	Republican	3 (1D and 2R)
2008	Republican	Republican	Republican	0

2010	Republican	Republican	Republican	2 (Republican)
2012	Republican	Republican	Republican	3 (2 D 1R)
2014	Republican	Republican	Republican	2 (2 Democrat)
2016	Republican	Republican	Republican	1 (1 D and 1I)
2018	Republican	Republican	Republican	1 (Democrat)

It is apparent that Texas turned red quicker than Mississippi and Gregoria. With the election of then Governor George W. Bush in 1996, and thereafter with a total takeover in 2002. Surprisingly, Congresswoman Johnson faced more challengers when Democrats were in control of Texas state government compared to when Republicans were in control. From 1992 to 1994, Congresswoman Johnson had 1 Democratic challenger and two Republican challengers; yet in the first two years when Republicans were in control Johnson faced only one Republican challenger in her bid for reelection. One explanation for this is that since she was elected in 1993, those first three elections after she was in office were the most “politically vulnerable” elections cycles, and challengers believed it was the best time to try and defeat her. If so, this notion supports the idea that seniority helps to “fend-off” political challengers.

After the 2002 Midterm Election, Congresswoman Johnson consistently faced challengers under Republican control in which she was challenged in every election since 2010. This does not hold true for other incumbents, particularly for those black incumbents in majority minority congressional districts. Lewis and Thompson in the last three elections combined only had four challengers, and in 2014 and 2018 they did not face any challengers.

“The Winds of Change: The influence income, gender and education have on Candidate Emergence.”

Social scientists have always used demographics, such as individuals’ race, income, gender, education and so forth to better understand the behavior of human beings. It is no different when it comes to political scientists. This section is designed to examine the impact of demographics on the emergence of challengers in the Mississippi 2nd, Georgia 5th, Texas 30th and North Carolina 12th congressional districts. Table Seven describes how the variation of income and education of the people of these congressional districts may or may not influence the rise of challengers against the incumbents in these congressional districts.

In theory, there should be a positive relationship between candidate emergence and income because voters who have a higher income tend to vote for Republican candidates, thus potential Republican challengers are more likely to run against Democratic incumbents in congressional districts where the incumbent is a Democrat and the median educational and the income levels are higher than the national average. Congressman Watts, North Carolina 12th Congressional District, had the highest income and education among his constituents than the other black incumbents in this study. Moreover, he faced 16 Republican challengers and two Democratic challengers during this period. This is not many more or fewer than incumbents in the Mississippi 2nd, Georgia 5th and Texas 30th congressional districts. Conversely, Bennie Thompson’s constituents in the Mississippi 2nd congressional district had the lowest income with a median income of \$31,084 and 77.6% of his constituents having a high school diploma or better. He had a total of 20 challengers (16 Republican challengers and 4 Democratic challengers) from 1994 to 2018. Congressman John Lewis had the fewest number of challengers (14 challengers) with a constituent median income at \$40,708 and a high school graduation rate

at 77.6%. There is no real meaningful variation between income and education among congressional districts.

Analyzing both quantitative and qualitative results of this study, it shows that the composition of a congressional district does not have any effect on the type of candidates who emerge in those congressional districts. I believe that income and education of constituents in congressional demographics is more reflective of the incumbent than the number of challengers who ran against the incumbent. Meaning, voters with higher income and educational level will elect individuals with a higher educational level and income. For example, the Texas 30th Congressional District, which have 75% of its voters with a high school diploma or better elected Eddie Bernice Johnson, who has a BS and MPA respectfully compared to Mel Watts in North Carolina where his district had the highest number of voters who have a high school diploma of better have a law degree from Yale University. The idea of demographics impacting the type of candidate voters elect does call for more investigation.

Table 20.20: Education and Income Levels and Candidate Emergence

Congressional Districts	<i>Mississippi 2nd Congressional Districts</i>	<i>Georgia 5th Congressional Districts</i>	<i>Texas 30th Congressional District</i>	<i>12th Congressional District, North Carolina</i>
Income	\$31,084	\$40,708	\$40,107	\$57,605
High School Graduation Rate	77.6%	85.7%	75.0%	88.6%
Total Number of Challengers, 1994 to 2018	20	14	19	18
Election Year				
1994	1	4	1	1
1996	3	1	4	1

1998	0	0	1	6
2000	0	1	0	3
2002	3	1	1	1
2004	3	0	0	1
2006	3	0	3	1
2008	0	0	0	1
2010	1	2	2	2
2012	3	2	3	1
2014	0	2	2	
2016	1	0	1	
2018	2	1	1	

Conclusion

Just like I had more questions than answers after the conversation with the judge, the same holds true with this chapter. Without a doubt, it provided an insight on how state politics, district demographics, and incumbent seniority influence the number of challengers who run against black incumbents. In summation, an incumbent's seniority does have an impact on the number of challengers who emerged while state politics and district demographics have little to no influence on those who emerged.

These congressional districts are homogeneous congressional districts meaning the voters in these congressional districts have a commonality, and they elect House members who resemble their characteristics; thus, making it difficult for those incumbents to be defeated. The reason why is because of incumbent advantage, and a sense of "leader compliance" among voters of black incumbents. The question is now: Do black incumbents have a higher incumbent advantage than their white counterparts? If so, why are there some reasons for the variation? I

think that variables like incumbent seniority, district demographics and the influence of state politics have more of an effect on the incumbent, then on the number of challengers who emerge thus having an impact on the number of potential challengers against an incumbent.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In the words of that old southern preacher, “I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I want to be, but thank God, I am not what I used to be.” Certainly, Black representation has increased since the days before the modern Civil Rights movement. Many contemporary scholars believe the current representation for African American is not a “fair” representation of the number of minority citizens living in the United States, and the United States government still has a long way to go in achieving this fairness. They realized that Black representatives are important to the constituencies in a sense that it provides representation that not only embodies public policies but is a type of representation that is reflected culturally and ideologically. This dissertation was designed to show some of the challenges that black incumbents encounter during their primaries and general elections, between 2006-2018 through analyzing the number of challengers who opposed them. By doing so, I analyzed some of the factors that influence the frequency of challengers who ran against these black incumbents. This dissertation shows that, empirically and qualitatively, there is no sole one factor that is the driving force on why challengers challenge black incumbents in primaries.

The crux of this dissertation rests on Hypothesis One; black incumbents will have fewer challengers than white incumbents. The findings reveal that black incumbents do not have fewer challengers than their white counterparts. Merely, fewer black incumbents ran unopposed than white incumbents. So, why was this the case? Hypothesis Three and Four addressed the questions to see if there is any variation in the number of challengers who emerged by the type of congressional districts, specially analyzing influence and minority-majority districts. It was my

theory that the configuration of congressional districts is driving the number of challengers who challenge the incumbent.

Hypothesis Three argues that black incumbents in majority-minority congressional districts will have fewer challengers than black incumbents in influence congressional districts. Forthrightly, the argument here is that as a congressional district increases in minority voters the fewer individuals want to challenge the incumbent. It is when congressional districts are homogenous and “unified” incumbents can fend-off potential challengers. The empirics support this premise.

Hypothesis Four suggests that race of the incumbent is a factor, contending that white incumbents in influence congressional districts will have fewer challengers than black incumbents in influence districts. This hypothesis shows that there is a correlation between an incumbent’s race and congressional districts. The finding does not reveal what is driving the ability of white incumbents to influence congressional districts to enjoy an easier path to reelection than their black counterparts.

Chapter Four of this dissertation addressed some of those determinants that explain why black incumbents in majority-minority congressional districts have fewer challengers than black incumbents in influence congressional districts, and why white incumbents have fewer challengers than black incumbents in influence districts. The chapter investigates three potential factors, the influence of state politics, the 2010 United States Census demographics data, and the incumbent’s seniority, as a basis for understanding these two phenomena. The case study chapter reveals that an incumbent’s seniority influences the number of challengers who emerge against the incumbent. State politics and district demographics had little to no impact on the number of challengers who emerged.

Surprisingly, I assumed that demographics of congressional districts would have a bearing on the number of challengers who emerged due to the fact Hypothesis Four showed that when there was a transition in the type of congressional district, there was a variation in the number of candidates who emerged. Perhaps, understanding candidate emergence against black candidates' does not rest exclusively on candidate emergence but a combination of several different factors.

“Looking Forward.”

District composition based on these results does not appear to be a force in political behavior of the challengers. This study provides insight on the number of challengers who run against black incumbents in congressional districts. Conversely, like the current literature, it does fall short of providing insight on specific reasons why challengers seek to defeat the incumbent, and if these individuals are rational in their decisions to seek the office or not. There are very few if any scholars who are addressing this question.

While doing research for this study, I found no reputable datasets that collected this information, thus one must be created to empirically investigate challengers' reasons for running. The task of answering these questions must start with the data collection. It is imperative that there is a close look into those who challenge incumbents not just for congressional districts, but also in other political races as well. I think the theoretical argument could be made that the political behavior of challengers' influence incumbents' behavior. I look forward to expanding this study and contributing to the literature.

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VITA

Stacy D. Carter

EDUCATION:

University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS. **Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science**, August 2021
Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS. **Master of Public Policy and Administration**,
May 2008 Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS. **Bachelor of Arts in History**, August
2005

TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCES:

Assistant Professor of History/Coordinator of History Program

Oakwood University, Huntsville, AL

August 2016-May 2020

Taught Political Science and History courses in the Department of History and Political Science
and History, advised students on courses and majors, served on university committees, reviewed
and

adopted course curriculums and assisted in assessing and building new and existing courses.

Academic Advisor

Jefferson State Community College, Birmingham, AL

June 2015-May 2016

Advised students on course selections and majors, reviewed and proposed changes to policies
and

procedures relating students' code of conduct, Title IX, ADA and other Civil Rights
discrimination,

served as a liaison between students and the college, served on college committees, worked with
students who are appealing their Financial Aid, and evaluated students' progress who are on
academic suspension.

Adjunct Professor of Political Science and History

Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University, Huntsville, AL

August 2014-May 2015

Taught students Political Science and History courses, provided adults access to educational
opportunities, enhanced students' professional development and helped students to promote
leadership and service to the community, researched and gave public lectures on issues
ranging

from slavery to civil rights.

Instructor of Political Science and History/Coordinator of Political Science Program

Northeast Mississippi Community College, Booneville, MS

August 2010 –August 2014

Taught Political Science and History courses in the Division of Humanities and Social Behavioral

Sciences, advised students on courses and majors, served on the Academic Honesty and Student Discipline committees, reviewed and adopted course curriculums, assisted in assessing

and building new and existing courses, helped to develop articulation agreements with four-year institutions and served as a liaison between the faculty and administration.

Advisor/Coordinator of Student Support Services for Students Who Were Affected by Hurricane Katrina

Student Support Services, Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS.

November 2005-July 2007

Recruited prospective Trio students, coordinated events for Student Support Services, advised students on academic issues relating to the university, represented Student Support Services at college events served as a liaison between the students and university officials.

PUBLICATIONS

Book Reviews

Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom, *Journal of Mississippi History* (Summer 2006).

Civil Rights Memorials and the Geography of Memory, *The GRIOT: The Journal of African American Studies*- In Progress

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, CONFERENCES and BOARDS

Mississippi Political Science Association

Southern Political Science Association

Alabama Political Science Association

Association for the Study of African American Life and History

Southern Conference of Afro-American Studies, Inc.

America Reads- Mississippi Advisory Board (2008-2013)

Vice-President and President, Northeast Mississippi Community College Faculty Association (2013-2014)

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Carter, Stacy, “The Impact of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in North Mississippi” Paper Presented at the meeting of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Cincinnati, Ohio, September 2009.

Carter, Stacy, “The Dixiecrats: The Father of the Modern-Day Republican Party” Paper Presented at the meeting of the Mississippi Political Science Association, Jackson, Mississippi, November 2009.

Carter, Stacy, “The Importance of Civic Education” Lecture Presented at the meeting of America Reads, Starkville, Mississippi, May 2010.