

A complex network diagram with various sized nodes (black, blue, and grey) connected by thin grey lines. Some nodes are highlighted with larger circles. The background is white with faint grey circular patterns.

Mathematics and Redistricting

Trinity College, Fall 2019 (Kyle Evans)

Voting Rights Act of 1965

- 15th Amendment (1870) – Black males cannot be denied right to vote
- Jim Crow era – literacy tests, poll taxes, state constitution tests, etc.
- VRA: State and local governments cannot pass voting laws that discriminate against racial or language minorities
- Vote denial – minorities denied opportunity to vote
- Vote dilution – laws dilute strength of minority votes
 - “diminish ability to elect their candidate(s) of choice”

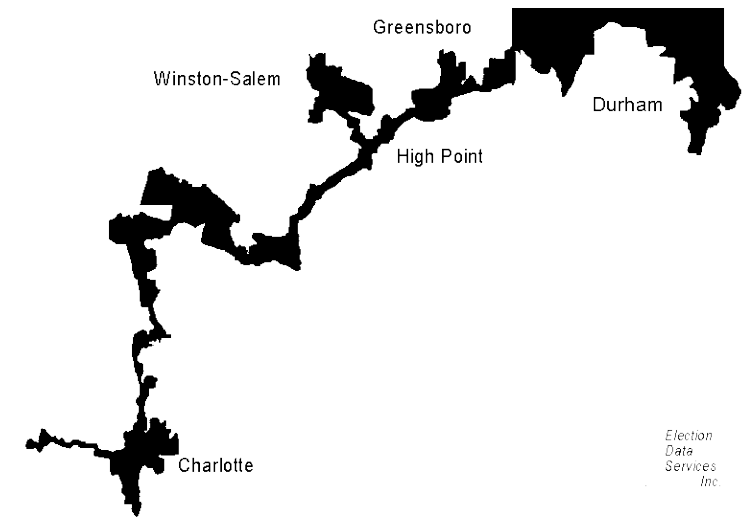
Majority-minority districts

When are districts required to be drawn with a majority of a minority population within the district?

Thornburg v. Gingles (1986)

- Numerical majority of voting-age population in a compact area
- Minority group is “politically cohesive” – vote similarly
- Majority group votes similarly to defeat minority’s preferred candidate

Racial Gerrymandering Cases



Shaw v. Reno (1993)

- North Carolina had 1 majority-minority district following 1991 redistricting
- DOJ asked for 2 such districts to improve black voter representation
- Adding a second would've required a shape “so bizarre that it is unexplainable on grounds other than race”
- Result: cannot draw a district strictly for racial reasons (but also need to comply with Voting Rights Act)
- Ruling upheld in *Miller v. Johnson* (1995) involving the creation of a second majority-minority district in Georgia

Racial Gerrymandering Cases

Bush v. Vera (1996)

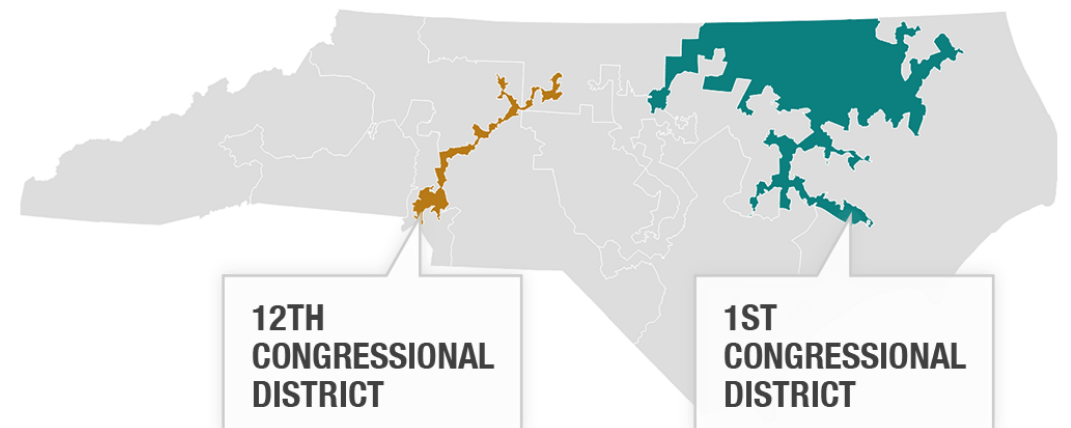
- Texas used new computer technology to draw 2 new Hispanic-majority districts and 1 new Black-majority district
- State argued goal was to unite communities of interest and to protect incumbents
- Court ruled districts be redrawn: “race for its own sake, and not other districting principles, was the legislature's dominant and controlling rationale in drawing its district lines”



Racial Gerrymandering Cases

Cooper v. Harris (2017)

- North Carolina had 2 districts move from under 50% to having over 50% Black Voting-Age Population in 2011 redistricting
- One argument: this is required by VRA
- Opposing argument: Black candidate of choice already winning elections, additional packing diminishes Black voting power
- Result: maps redrawn, even if primary intent is partisan advantage, racial effects still constitute racial gerrymandering



Main Question

How do we balance the competing goals of minority representation within a district vs. minority representation across all districts of a state?

How can we measure racial gerrymandering, especially among other redistricting criteria such as communities of interest?

Case Study Assignment

Racial Gerrymandering

- *Alabama v. Alabama Legislative Black Caucus* (2015)
- *Thomas v. Bryant* (2019 – Mississippi)
- *Abbott v. Perez* (2018 – Texas)
- *Bethune-Hill v. Virginia Board of Elections* (2019)

Partisan Gerrymandering

- *League of Women Voters of Michigan v. Benson* (2019)
- *Ohio A. Philip Randolph Inst. v. Householder* (2019)

Sign up for groups/cases at bit.ly/StateRedistricting

New political maps pass NC legislature, will be reviewed by judges who ordered redraw

The News&Observer September 17, 2019

North Carolina's new political maps gained final approval from both the N.C. House and Senate on Tuesday. Nearly all Republicans supported them, and Democrats were split.

The maps can't be vetoed by Gov. Roy Cooper — the state constitution specifically forbids it — but they aren't necessarily the final word. A panel of judges still gets to weigh in on the maps, which will happen over the coming days, and could potentially order them redrawn yet again.

“These are the fairest maps, and this was the fairest process, in North Carolina in my lifetime,” Charlotte Democratic Sen. Jeff Jackson said of the Senate maps.

Jackson, however, still voted against the maps. He said he opposes any political maps drawn by politicians, and “independent redistricting would look just like the process we just went through, except it wouldn't be politicians doing it.”

[New State House map](#)

[New State Senate map](#)

New maps would still give GOP disproportionate power in NC legislature

The News&Observer September 18, 2019

The new political maps approved by the North Carolina General Assembly this week would likely still favor Republicans in the 2020 elections, numerous experts say.

Wang's analysis specifically found that a 50-50 vote split in 2020 could lead to a 27-23 Republican majority in the Senate and a 68-52 Republican majority in the House.

Local experts also predict similar trends.

Currently, Republicans hold a 29-21 majority in the Senate and a 65-55 majority in the House.

However, that doesn't necessarily mean the new maps — which still have to be approved by the judges who threw out the old maps — are also partisan gerrymanders.

Complicating matters is geography. North Carolina law says that counties, whenever possible, can't be split up into multiple districts. That tends to help Republicans since many Republican voters are spread out in rural areas while many Democratic voters live in just a handful of the largest counties.

The Insider's analysis of the House maps similarly found that Republicans are likely to keep their majority in 2020 under the new maps. However, there are numerous districts that could be considered tossups under the new maps.

That would be a change from the current system, where many seats are relatively safe for one party or the other. Most of those newly competitive districts are currently held by Democrats, The Insider reported, but a few are held by Republicans.