SYSTEMATIC STAGES OF GROUP REALIGNMENT

CASE STUDY: BLACK GROUP REALIGNMENT 1912-1964

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Introduction

V.O. Key’s seminal work on party realignment spawned an entire field of research. During the 1950s, Key wrote three noted pieces on realignment. First, he introduced the term “party realignment” and its conditions. Second, he defined “secular realignment,” a “secular shift in party attachment” (Key 1959). Third, he established a new theory of “critical realignment,” specifically, those elections that reveal a “sharp alteration of the pre-existing cleavage within the electorate” (Key 1955).

The concept of realignment itself has undergone several definitions. Some scholars describe it as a durable change in the issues that politically divide the nation (Sundquist 1983), while others focus on group and regional attachments to parties (Petrocik 1981). As a result, realignment theory has developed a reputation as ill-defined, and a few scholars think it ought to be scrapped altogether (Mayhew 2002, Carmines and Stimson 1989).

For years, detractors of critical realignment theory seemed to have become the resounding voice within the disciple.¹ Nevertheless, a new generation of scholars has emerged in an effort to revitalize the genre (Nardulli 1995, Nichols 2009). They acknowledge its empirical (and predictive) shortcomings and thus attempt to “restate” and “reimagine” the concept. It is from their spirit of renewal that I endeavor this research.

Key’s theory on critical elections existed without the benefit of hindsight. Two major shifts occurred after his publications. First, black voters became even more integrated within the Democratic Party, overshadowing their peripheral role in the New Deal coalition to metaphorically become the party. Second, white Southerners, who showed movement as early as the sixties, didn’t become a permanent fixture in the Republican Party until the 1990s. These oversights, neither of which was “predicted” by Keys or other early scholars, became fodder for critics of critical realignment theory.

Carmines and Stimson (1989) classify the inherent flaw of critical realignment theory as “prescientific,” too abstract and resilient to have any social scientific value. Empirical inconsistencies, they argue, undermine the theory’s ability to predict seismic shifts in the electorate. Scholars have instead used empirics to merely refine the concept, distorting its utility, and forming a literature that is a “long string of amendments by typology.” Mayhew (2004) agrees, arguing that the theory is nothing more than historical narrative. The literature on realignment, he claims, was “once a vibrant source of ideas” that is now an “impediment to understanding.”

Peter Nardulli (1995) does not generally disagree with Carmines and Stimson, but he is not prepared to drop the concept altogether. He argues that despite its scientific deficiencies, realignment research may yet still have theoretical value, and that fault lies with scholars who were too busy rushing to construct a broad theory that they neglected to scrutinize it properly. He finds that if appropriately defined “the concept of critical realignment is a powerful tool in the study of electoral behavior.”

Burnham (1970) developed a model of critical realignment that principally echoes that of punctuated equilibrium theory. That is, party realignments are broad and systemic, and are the result of “tension management.” He found that throughout American history there had been five party “systems”: Federalists v. Democratic-Republicans, 1794-1824, National Republicans/Whigs v. Democrats, 1828-1856, the Civil War System, 1860-1892, the System of ’96, 1896-1928, and the New Deal System, 1932-1964. Since, Sundquist (1983) has added a sixth (1968 dealignment of the South). Essentially, party systems are disrupted by single rapid-change events that alter the status quo. These changes, however, are made possible when mounting tensions force them to occur.

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5 Ibid.
Curt Nichols’s (2009) “reimagining” of realignment also uses punctuated equilibrium, claiming that realignment happens in three stages: Rising Entropy, the Realigning Tipping Point, and Reordering Politics. First, Nichols writes that accumulated entropy “causes the governing majority’s institutional regime to be seen as an impediment to both progress and necessary change.” When this happens, “past arrangements lose their relevance and politics have reached a realigning tipping point.”6 Second, the tipping point is the critical moment in which “structural constraints posed by the old order diminish,” allowing “partisan leaders to effectively repudiate the enervated status quo.” As a result, this “moves the pressure on the status quo to a much higher level and creates conditions of political crisis.”7 Next comes the “reordering opportunity,” in which a “casually tight chain of events that is nearly uninterruptible can be made to form a new governing majority by first shifting the main axis of partisan conflict and then outflanking political opponents to assemble a new majority coalition.”8 Last, if party leaders are successful, “systemic entropy should drop dramatically, and a new status quo will be established.”9

Nichols, similar to many scholars, approaches realignment from the macro level.10 The literature focuses on ‘party systems,’ which are the “system of interactions resulting from inter-party competition.”11 Their real interest lies in a broad predictive model, one that explains both past and future changes in party competition. Consequently, the groups within the parties are only acknowledged passively, as a means to justify conclusions. Very often scholars operating at a macro level get the general story correct, but the individual group stories wrong, relying on broad and biased interpretations of history and neglecting the nuances. For example, Hanes Walton, Jr. (1985) criticizes the “serious” and “methodological” problems in the literature on black voting

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6 Nichols (2009): 3
7 Ibid. 51
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid. 52
10 It should be noted that other political science scholars have investigated group dynamics as related to party realignment. In his book *Party Coalitions* (1981), Petrocik finds that party coalitions that emerged from the New Deal realignment were constructed by race, class, region, nationality, and ethnicity. Later, Petrocik (1988) finds that “religious impulse” was also a feature of party coalitions. In the future, I intend to do more extensive research on those few scholars who did focus on groups rather than systems, particularly as I broaden the scope of my case studies and update my model.
behavior, which ignored, among other things, the data on black political independence and third-party voting. Historians, such as Henry Blumenthal, Richard B. Sherman, and Christopher Waldrep, among others, have done a fine job of accurately telling stories on the black political experience, but their focus is sometimes too circumscribed, and their primary aim is not to necessarily add to political science realignment literature. I endeavor to focus on groups within party systems to focus on and enhance the concept of realignment. I fuse Burnham’s model of punctuated equilibrium with Nichols’s “reimagining” principles of realignment to create a four-stage model of systematic causes of group realignment. This model includes two phases and two critical elections. In this thesis, I apply this four-stage model to a case study of black group realignment (1912-1964).

Figure 1

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Realignment

I. Priming Phase
II. Turning Point
III. Settling Phase
IV. Sealed Realignment

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Four Stage Model

Priming Phase

Communications and media scholars have done extensive research on the subjects of framing, agenda setting, and priming. These models have been used to “tell theorists and researchers about the effects of mass media.” While framing and agenda setting may play a role in group realignment, in this paper, I focus on the prominence of priming, which Iyengar and Kinder (1987) describe as “changes in the standards that people use to make political evaluations.” Domke, Dhavan, and Wackman (1998) call it “the process by which activated mental constructs can influence how individuals evaluate other concepts and ideas.” The first period of my four-stage model is the priming phase.

The priming phase is the period in which the group softens its perceptions of, conceptions of, and loyalties to, their aligned party. It is a synergistic phase. Thus, it features a combination of moving parts that all conspire to stimulate political change, and typically lasts fifteen-to-twenty years. Paul Beck (1974) writes that “manifestations of a decline in parties are apparent prior to each of the realignments in the past,” noting that an electorate is “ripe for realignment” as a result of “traumatic events.”

While borrowing some important definitional elements of the concept as it relates to group realignment, I argue that the media does not solely drive priming. Instead, the priming phase features five characteristics: Party Contrast, New Cohort Shift, Activist Shift, Media Shift, and Cross-Cutting Issue.

Party Contrast

- In order for priming to occur, the group must experience being governed by both major parties. This becomes fundamental because it allows the group to compare and contrast. Were they better off with the party of their allegiance

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in power? Did they notice a difference between the parties? Priming only works if the group begins to lament the fact that there is no real difference between its “friend” and “foe.” Indeed, in some circumstances, the group may realize that its loyalty is not well spent, as the comparison may produce an even more unfavorable view of their aligned party than the opposition.

New Cohort Shift

- Priming also requires a new cohort to emerge and introduce fresh ideas and perspectives to their group. This new cohort is made up of younger voters who are coming of age in an environment rife with short-term forces that influence their political identities. It may also include formerly disenfranchised voters who migrate to a freer environment and adopt a new pattern of political behavior. This cohort will be far more willing to embrace political independence and reject old loyalties. They will also adopt a new “stream of consciousness” that will update and heighten group-awareness. A result of this is renewed group militancy, including lists of demands designed to disrupt the current order, as well as win political, social, and economic benefits for the group. It should be noted that this cohort is not always striving for a progressive agenda. Their “current order” may include revolutionary movement away from their desired establishment. Thus, fresh ideas could sometimes be interpreted as reactionary, and new perspectives may be construed as static or conservative in comparison to the broader, moving political environment. Inexperienced voters (whether young or formerly disenfranchised) are also subject to political manipulation. This may be in the form of short-term influences and/or charismatic leaders.

Activist Shift

- A shift in allegiance among group activists is also a primary feature of the priming phase. Nardulli (1995) argues that a “comprehensive theory of political change would have to incorporate a variety of catalytic agents.” These “agents of change” include government elites, social and economic leaders, party activists, and organized special interest groups. It is important to understand that during the priming phase, each of these agents act at varying degrees. They will not all, for example, shift en masse at the exact same time. After all, they do not all “respond similarly to the same stimuli.”

  Government elites and party activists, who have a vested interest in the party of allegiance, will move slower, as they are “less likely to act on issues that would divide their core constituency.” Social and economic leaders, as well as special interest groups, however, are driven by results (be they symbolic or substantive). A mark of the priming phase is the very public divergence of these groups with their aligned party. They may begin to embrace “third-way” options, which include the creation (or support) of third parties and independent organizations. Not unlike the new cohort, these groups may also begin to flirt with other dominant ideologies and reject the dichotomy of Democrat vs. Republican. Elite activists initiate the group shift because they are apt to articulate existing problems. They are the most extreme, invested,

16 Ibid.
and knowledgeable contingent on issues important to their group. They are also the likely body to hold political leaders accountable for inaction and broken promises. When problems persist, they speak out. Aldrich (1995) argues “the political role [of party activists] is to attempt to constrain the actual leaders of the party, its ambitious office seekers, as they try to become the party-in-government by appealing to the electorate.”

Media Shift

- Another important characteristic of the priming phase is the influence of mass media on group perception and behavior. In keeping with the traditional view of priming, we must also include media shift. Viswanath and Arora (2000) argue that the media “reflect, refract, and amplify the concerns of power groupings in the social system,” continuing, “their primary function is social control, in the interest of system maintenance, which they perform by drawing attention to what is acceptable and not acceptable within the dominant norms and values of the community” (p. 41). Additionally, communications scholars claim that media “bias” is similarly reflected in how one constructs one’s beliefs about the world (Hawkins and Pingree 1981). Features of media shift may include: increased editorial scrutiny from group newspapers (or more generally, news outlets) of the aligned party, positive mentions and added credit given to the opposition party, open hostility toward aligned party leadership, and calls for political independence.

Crosscutting Issue

- A crosscutting issue must exist during the priming phase. Specific issues can be used as benchmarks for “evaluating the performance of leaders and governments.” Again, the aligned party has to be seen as disinterested in fulfilling its promises to the group, and a crosscutting issue may encourage “flanking”. Miller and Schofield (2003) describe “flanking” as a motivation of candidates who want to win elections, enlisting “coalitions of disaffected voters, at the risk of alienating some of their traditional activist supporters.” As this dynamic plays out, the group begins to question its loyalty to their aligned party, recognizing that its leaders are attempting to play both sides of the fence, with little concern for (or power to) satisfy its political promises. In other words, the romance is over. The group realizes its beau’s propensity to wander and loses trust. It may not leave immediately, because another suitor is not readily available, but when given the opportunity, it will.

Turning Point

A turning point is the electoral consequence of a primed group. It is the first indication of a massive shift in voting behavior as a result of priming and short-term forces.

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The *turning point* indicates a group’s shift in voting behavior during a critical election. It does not solely accept the traditional view of critical realignment as an “aggregate level concept that refers to an abrupt, large, and enduring form of change in prevailing electoral patterns, one that is initiated by a critical election and results in a significantly different partisan balance in the electorate.”18 Instead, as Peter Nardulli (1995) finds, critical realignments are “geographically concentrated phenomena that represent marked and enduring breaks in regional electoral patterns.” In other words, they are not always national movements. This is an important distinction because focusing solely on group support for national party figures may miss the more compelling tale. If as Speaker Tip O’Neil once wrote, “all politics is local,”19 then it might prove useful to focus on those regional electoral patterns too. In the case of black Americans, whereas aggregated data shows that 1936 was a pivotal turning point in presidential politics, scholars should not ignore the local reality of black politics in the mid-30s. In Chicago, for example, black support for local Democrats consistently underperformed their backing of national Democratic aspirants until the early 1950s. Additionally, significant proportions of blacks were still voting (and calling themselves) Republican during and after 1936. These facts separate characteristics of the *turning point* and *sealed realignment* stages. Cowden and McDermott (2000), Howell (1981), and Boyd (1972), among others, have all found that short-term forces can have an effect on voting behavior. The *turning point* stage presupposes that this feature exists among a primed group.

**Settling Phase**

The *settling phase* has two major characteristics: Solidifying Pull Factors and a sizable, but dwindling Old Loyalty Base

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19 This statement is derived from the title of his 1994 book with Gary Hymel, “All Politics is Local: And Other Rules of the Game.”
Solidifying Pull Factors

- These factors may include the developing relationship between the group and dominant local political machine, emergence of political incorporation and self-representation within the newly aligned party structure, machine reinforcement of group enfranchisement and efficacy, and growth in material gains for the group as a result of their new allegiance.

Old Loyalty Base

- Old loyalists exist as representatives of the old coalition, continuing in their efforts to turn the group around. Their significance is not only in their numbers, but their status, and political voice. Some old loyalists are respected within the group community. They may own newspapers or hold political office and high status. They’re represented in the 20-30+ percent of the group who still consistently vote in favor of the old party. They also help to signify the shift in group allegiance from settling to sealed realignment.

Sealed Realignment

*Sealed Realignment* is the last stage of group realignment. It is triggered by a second critical election and its short-term forces: galvanizing the young cohort, permanently cementing the political class into the new party, and shaking the older cohort and loyalists away from the old regime. Where the *settling* phase shows incremental group immersion into a new coalition, a *sealed realignment* is characterized by its bluntness. That is, the trend lines authenticate this election as a group’s point of no return.

**Case Study: Black Group Realignment 1912-1964**

**Priming Phase**

**Party Contrast**

In 1912, Woodrow Wilson became the first Democrat elected to the presidency since 1893. The Wilson Administration was no “friend of the Negro.” By many measures, namely the number of black lynchings, dwindling black federal political appointments, the “resegregation” of Washington D.C., and treatment of black leaders, Wilson and his administration lived up to the
reputation. As shown in Figure 2, on average, there were about 56 black lynchings per year during the Wilson Administration.

Kathleen L. Wolgemuth (1959) finds that segregation in Washington D.C. had a “special significance,” as it was the “center of Negro society,” where blacks enjoyed a social status unparalleled with the rest of the nation. By 1914, for the first time since the mid-nineteenth century, segregation had been realized in several important federal governmental departments. In the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, the Post Office, and the Office of the Auditor for the Post Office, blacks and whites were “separated or screened-off” in working positions, lavatories, and lunchrooms. This development was a “conspicuous reversal of a fifty year tradition of integrated civil service.”

By 1915, as a result of firing and a refusal to hire, significant federal offices held by blacks were

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Figure 2

Black Lynchings By Year 1913-1921


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reduced from twenty-four posts to seven. In lieu of appointments to significant posts, steps were being taken to “appoint Negroes only to menial posts or to restrict them from obtaining civil service jobs.” Hiring officers would require applicants to provide photographs (in the guise of “preventing impersonation”) in order to weed out blacks. Additionally, hiring officers also used the long-standing practice of choosing their staff replacements from a pool of three names to exclude blacks. None of these policies were articulated as blatant discrimination. On the contrary, they were said to be in the interest of avoiding friction in federal services. Nevertheless, this was not persuasive for many black leaders.

While Wilson campaigned on giving a “fair dealing” to black Americans, it was not difficult to question the sincerity of his claim. In 1916, for example, after being reelected, Wilson told the New York Times, “If the colored people made a mistake in voting for me, they ought to correct it.” Booker T. Washington lamented, “I have recently spent several days in Washington and have never seen the colored people so discouraged and so bitter as they are at the present time.” A White House private screening of the controversial D.W. Griffith film The Birth of a Nation elicited outrage and protest and Wilson’s own defense of segregation as “humanitarian” also troubled black leaders and media. Blumenthal (1963) argues that Wilson’s primary agitation with the “race question” was related to politics. His party was still very much led by Southern white forces who were “Negrophobe” and forcing the social evolution of blacks at a “greater speed than Wilson thought the Negro masses were either educationally or vocationally prepared to maintain” irritated the Democrat. Nonetheless, even after accomplishing his favored reforms, Wilson’s “continued reluctance to take an active interest in the Negroes’ fight for civil rights and 

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22 Ibid.  
24 Ibid.  
26 Weiss (1969): 64.  
27 The Birth of a Nation, based on a popular 1905 book called The Clansman (a sentimental novel on the “plight” of whites during Reconstruction), was celebrated by Southerners because it depicted the antebellum South as a “golden age” in which “feudal agrarianism provided the good life for wealthy, leisured, kindly, aristocratic owners and loyal, happy, obedient slaves” (Everett Carter 1960) (350). Furthermore, Nation portrayed black and “mulatto” men as “bestial” and “unrestrained,” cosigning popular myths they are sexual deviants and a danger to white women (353).
liberties left little doubt that more than political pressures kept him from seeking social justice for the colored people.”

Even as some were mildly encouraged as Wilson campaigned for the presidency, blacks were not entirely surprised by their treatment at the hands of the Wilson Administration. After all, given the general tenor of the Democratic Party, expectations were tempered. The party, led by Southern whites, had no room in its agenda for black civil rights measures. It had, since Reconstruction, evolved instead into a quasi-confederate force. The real shock rested in the incremental evolution of the “party of Lincoln” on racial issues. Republican “progressivism,” as administered by the Roosevelt and Taft presidencies, nurtured black discontent with the party. By the 1920s, during the height of Republican control of government, this dissatisfaction only grew, as the party began looking and sounding more racially conservative.

In the 1920s Republican Party, the position of the mainstream party and its vote-maximizers was not aligned with black voters. On policy issues ranging from black appointments to leadership positions, to black self-representation, to anti-lynching legislation, the GOP brass were unwilling to budge. In three Republican administrations, blacks were dissatisfied with the party’s blasé treatment of black issues.

As early as 1922, in a speech given in Birmingham, Alabama, President Warren G. Harding declared, “Social equality between whites and Negroes there cannot be.” The Chicago Defender, a Chicago-based black newspaper with national prominence, called him the “saddest figure in all the annals of government,” accusing him of turning his back on every black, driving him out of the party, turning him out of the government, and stripping him of “every vestige of dignity as a citizen.” In other words, Harding was not much of a marked improvement from the Wilson years, except of course, he and the Republicans were supposed to be a “friend.”

28 Blumenthal (1963): 20-21
29 The Chicago Defender (National edition) (1921-1967); Apr 3, 1926; ProQuest Historical Newspapers (1910-1975): A8
30 The Chicago Defender (National edition) (1921-1967); May 30, 1931; ProQuest Historical Newspapers (1910-1975): 14
One measure of improvement is evident. During the Republican administrations, black lynchings did decrease.\textsuperscript{31} Below, Figure 1 shows that from 1922-1933, there were about 19 (on average) black lynchings per year. That is a reduction of about 36 lynchings per year from the Wilson era.

\textbf{Figure 3}

\begin{center}
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\textbf{Figure 3}

\begin{center}
Black Lynchings By Year 1922-1933
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Nevertheless, times were different, and expectations shifted: Republican Congressman Leonidas Dyer introduced a federal anti-lynching bill in Congress. Blacks (and some liberal whites) expected passage, but many Republicans dragged their feet, and the party suffered further damage to its reputation.

As a candidate for president, Herbert Hoover advocated a “Southern Strategy.” At the 1928 Republican National Convention, his aids openly supported the promotion of white Southerners to important committees. In turn, black politicians consistently found themselves at a

\textsuperscript{31} A more detailed account of black lynchings will be discussed in the section on Cross-Cutting Issues.
disadvantage. The GOP platform in 1928 paid little mention to black concerns, merely devoting a single line to federal anti-lynching legislation.\textsuperscript{32} Hoover’s generic rhetoric on the subject of race also made it difficult for blacks to vigorously support him, as it played too neatly into perceptions that he was truly only interested in placating white Southerners in an effort to win the South. Furthermore, in 1928, when Hoover interjected himself into a local political scandal in Mississippi, his allegiances with white Southerners seemed all the more evident. When black national committeeeman Perry Howard was prosecuted for the sale of federal offices (not an unprecedented practice for the times), his was a political indictment to be used by national Republicans to curry favor with Southern white voters. In essence, Howard was Hoover’s “Sista Souljah” moment,\textsuperscript{33} as he openly chastised Southern blacks for “blackmailing” Republican officials in the South for patronage jobs.\textsuperscript{34} In 1931, the \textit{New York Times} reported on Hoover’s call for reform of Republican organizations in Mississippi, South Carolina, and Georgia. He declared that they must “clean house” or get no offices.\textsuperscript{35} The \textit{Chicago Defender} interpreted “clean house” to mean the cleaning out of black chairman, secretaries, committeemen, etc. from the Republican organization. “The trouble in Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina is not in the leadership of the Republican Party,” its editors wrote, but “wholly traceable to the cowardly desertion by the Republican Party of the colored people.”\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{33} On May 13, 1992, Sista Souljah, a young black female rapper, made controversial remarks to a \textit{Washington Post} journalist regarding the Los Angeles riots. She remarked, “I mean, if black people kill black people every day, why not have a week and kill white people? You understand what I’m saying? In other words, white people, this government and that mayor were well aware of the fact that black people were dying every day in Los Angeles under gang violence. So if you’re a gang member and you would normally be killing somebody, why not kill a white person? Do you think that somebody thinks that white people are better, or above dying when they would kill their own kind” (B1)? When then-candidate for president, Bill Clinton, responded with, “If you took the words, ‘white’ and ‘black’ and you reversed them, you might think David Duke was giving that speech,” the “Sista Souljah” moment was created. Essentially, this “moment” is a “calculated denunciation of an extremist position or special interest group” by a candidate for office (\textit{Boston Globe}, September 16, 2007). It is used to convince voters that the candidate is centrist and attract support from across the political spectrum.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid. 231
\textsuperscript{35} The \textit{Chicago Defender} (National edition) (1921-1967); May 30, 1931; ProQuest Historical Newspapers (1910-1975): 14
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
When in 1929 the Florida Republican Party passed a resolution barring all but white voters from voting in its primary, it was yet another indicator that the Republicans were “on a plane with the Democratic [party] as far as dark voters are concerned.” Once Hoover was elected president, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) had further complaints about Hoover’s lack of appointing blacks to positions of power. In fact, like Harding and Coolidge, Hoover failed to restore blacks to the “number of positions in the Executive Departments that they had held before Wilson’s presidency.” NAACP official Walter White charged that Hoover could only be addressed as “The Man in the Lily White House”. Hoover’s “flanking” was seen as egregious, but ultimately it was indicative of a larger movement among Republicans to rid itself of the coalitional albatross that hindered its ability to play in the South.

Locally, the divergence of blacks and Republicans was also taking shape. For example, black women (particularly activists found in women’s organizations) played a role in widening this cleavage. Coleman (1997) writes that early twentieth-century black women “began to articulate an aspect of black self-determination that had been all but ignored.” Hendricks (1998) notes the impact black female political activists had in not only shifting party loyalty rhetoric, but also in emboldening black politicians to run for offices outside of the Republican Party. She writes, “The promotion of black female political activism in Chicago” had “immediate effects.” First, these activists were non-partisan and adamant about supporting black candidates for office. Second, “black male politicians who had long been disgruntled about their lack of power within the white-dominated Republican Party viewed the female vote as an opportunity to shed their

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37 The Chicago Defender (National edition) (1921-1967); Oct 19, 1929; ProQuest Historical Newspapers (1910-1975): 14
39 Ibid. 235.
confinement by both the party line and the party’s patronizing posture.” Similarly, the erosion of the relationship between blacks and the GOP was furthered by white women’s organizations. Higginbotham (1997) cites these 1920s white women’s Republican groups for “black women’s discontent” with the Republican Party, and credits them with hastening blacks to form “new leaders, alliances, and strategies” in the 1930s.

By 1928, black discontent with local Republicans in Cincinnati began to rear its head. Long a force in machine politics, Republicans, led by Boss George B. Cox, dominated the city since the late nineteenth century. In 1924, however, reform-minded Republicans, Democrats, and Independents attempted to stifle the power of the machine by forming the Chamber City Committee. Its goal was to establish a city manager system of government and create a city council to be elected by proportional representation (PR). Despite machine opposition, a charter was passed, and immediately gave black voters a chance to elect members of their own race. Before the PR system, there had already been a growing rift between black wards and the Republican machine, as blacks saw themselves shut out from leadership positions. When the local GOP nominated candidates for office, it refused to select black candidates for black wards, causing both activist and media elites to begin speaking out. The Cincinnati Journal, a local influential black newspaper, editorialized that blacks were but “tools” for the local Republican machine, nothing more than a few thousand loyal votes that did not need to be persuaded. Because Republicans also failed to dole out a fair share of high-paying city government and patronage jobs to black citizens, the paper further argued that the “greatest zenith [of a black man] is to get protection at the courts and run immoral dens’ to debase our race.” As a result, the paper openly questioned black loyalty to Republicans and urged “intelligent” blacks to support the “good government” Chamber City Committee in 1924.

Ibid.
Ibid.
Some black male activists were also troubled by Republican treatment of blacks and no less willing to publicly question political loyalty to the party. William Ware, chairman of the Universal Negro Political Union, echoed calls from “radical” black activists in cities across the country tired of being represented by white men in government. He argued that “20th Century Negroes” could not be represented by white men, and openly acknowledged a changing tide within black communities across the country when he said, “You are dealing with a different type of Negro than in the past. We’re no longer willing to vote any way that the Ward Healers would tell them to vote in order that they might get a minor job, or a few dollars and a box of cigars.”

He lamented white Republicans too, accusing them of never failing to mention black voters of their indebtedness to Abraham Lincoln, while knowing little about him. His representation prediction became even more evident by 1929, when black candidate for city council Frank A. B. Hall, a retired police officer, ran as an independent (the Republicans refused to endorse him) and siphoned away a substantial amount of black votes from the GOP ticket. Burnham (1997) claims, “his candidacy represented a kind of protest against the relationship that had developed between the Republican organization and the black community.” In 1931, recognizing the political error of their ways, the Republicans endorsed Hall, but it proved too late. In Cincinnati, as it began showing nationally, local Republicans were out of touch with their black constituents, and while the Democrats were at present nonexistent (or still openly hostile), black elites began to develop openness for political independence, perfectly illustrating characteristics of the priming phase.

For black activists, the subject of black self-representation was a problem the Republican Party showed no interest in solving. Like in Cincinnati, local Republican organizations had long-held expectations that black ward voters would support the “Party of Lincoln” no matter who they nominated to represent them. Because of this, white Republican bosses were apt to promote white politicians to represent black wards. In Pittsburgh, for example, local Republicans awarded blacks

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46 Ibid.
with only the least desirable patronage jobs, and white chainmen controlled all four black wards. In the early part of the century, this was a tenable system. In most cities, blacks were not a large enough population to cause much trouble for white machine bosses. Black wards were to be ignored. Nonetheless, when women gained the vote, suddenly they “seized the moment to center themselves in the political discourse and demonstrated their ability to reshape, redirect, and strengthen their community’s political influence.” In Chicago, organized black women (or club women) not only added to the black bloc, but they “awakened the black community to its ability to determine how best to advance the race,” symbolizing “the black community’s political liberation from white ward bosses.” For example, in a 1915 race for Chicago alderman, women cast more than one-third of the votes of eventual winner, Oscar DePriest. Aware of their contribution to his victory, DePriest publicly asserted that he was in favor of extending the right of suffrage to women because they “cast as intelligent a vote as the men.”

By 1928, many black elites echoed the sentiments of W.E.B. Du Bois when speaking on the presidential contest between Herbert Hoover and Al Smith. He said, “In my humble opinion, it does not matter a tinker’s damn which of these gentlemen succeed. With minor exceptions, they stand for exactly the same thing: oligarchy in the South, color caste in national office holding, and recognition of the rule of organized wealth.”

Indeed, by the late 1920s, many blacks began coming to expect exactly what DuBois articulated. “Year after year,” wrote the Defender, “we have gone to polls and have marked our cross in the column headed Republican, while that party has moved farther and farther away from the principles which promoted its being. Year after year we have added our weight to the

47 Such as garbage collector, janitor, and elevator operator.
50 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
numbers necessary to man the White House and the halls of Congress, and our own efforts have been used to heap greater indignities upon our heads.”54

Given the opportunity to compare and contrast between the previous Democratic administration and the “GOP Three,” the Defender was not seeing a difference as far as realizing the interests of the group:

Today, with segregation, disenfranchisement, lynchings, peonage, bastardsly and all other forms of humiliation facing us, the Republicans are in control of government. With segregated beaches in Washington, with the government flaunting segregation signs in our faces under the dome of the nation’s capitol, the Republicans are in control. With a Republican majority in the United States Congress, as it has been almost uninterruptedly for a quarter of a century, anti-lynching bills are scoffed at and laughed out of both houses. With the Ku Klux Klan parading up and down the public highways of Washington, the Republicans are in control.55

By 1932, the Defender was declaring that “no longer” could blacks look to Republicans to embody the “high principles of manhood rights.”56 Herbert Hoover had “furnished the first real opportunity for the black man to escape the clutches of Republican treachery.”57 Republicans had failed to pass major civil rights legislation, failed on reversing Wilson’s precedent of appointing few blacks to significant federal posts, failed at galvanizing dispirited blacks at the local machine level, and failed to convince blacks that their loyalty would be duly compensated. The 1920s demonstrated “Republican treachery,” offering blacks an opportunity to compare and contrast a decade of GOP control with the Wilson era and find little to praise. Party contrast did the Republicans no favors.58

54 The Chicago Defender (National edition) (1921-1967); Oct 30, 1926; ProQuest Historical Newspapers (1910-1975): A2
55 The Chicago Defender (National edition) (1921-1967); Oct 20, 1928; ProQuest Historical Newspapers (1910-1975): A2
56 The Chicago Defender (National edition) (1921-1967); Jun 4, 1932; ProQuest Historical Newspapers (1910-1975): A2
57 Ibid.
58 It should be noted that the Chicago Defender was not the definitive voice of black Americans in its day. However, due to its popularity, its editorials may be seen as reflective of a large contingent.
New Cohort Shift

Contemporary scholars have split on the sources of partisan realignment. Among them, two major hypotheses (mobilization and conversion) developed in their attempt to explain how realignments occur and who in the electorate realigned (Campbell 1985).

The mobilization hypothesis argues that party strength shifts is the result of new voters entering the electorate. New voters (those who may have been previously too young to vote, ineligible, or immigrants) are mobilized to participate and form a new majority party coalition. Petrocik and Brown (1999) note the “large impact of electoral mobilization” in party systems, concluding that the “historical record clearly demonstrates” a “characteristic bias which, in virtually every case, resulted in one or a few of the parties benefiting disproportionately.”

Salisbury and MacKuen (1981) agree, stating “the process of mobilization and demobilization whereby party organizations, candidate appeals and issue salience pull people over the threshold of indifference to become voters, or alternatively, let them slide back, have important effects on electoral outcomes.” And Northup (1987) finds that young cohorts (and independents) were mobilized to form the new Republican coalition of the 1980s.

Campbell (1985) writes, “the conversion hypothesis claims that realignments result largely from established voters switching their partisan allegiances to the new majority party. Established voters by virtue of their size and increased loyalty to the new majority party contribute more to the party’s gain than do new voters who enter the process.” In looking at the period of 1928-1936, Erikson and Tedin (1981) posit that the “Democratic vote surge of the New Deal era resulted from the vote switching of established voters.” Indeed, on the subject of black

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group realignment, Grimshaw (1992) states that blacks “forged a Democratic majority mainly through conversion – the transformation of Republican into Democrats.” He cites Kristi Anderson’s (1979) Chicago study that found that while other city groups – Poles, Italians, Jews, Swedes, Germans, and Czechs - switched at the onset of the 1930s, “blacks shifted in a distinctive way.”

Although scholars split on these hypotheses, I reject the dichotomy. The story of black group realignment cannot be explained without elements of each. Weiss (1983) writes that “the experience of blacks fits both of the models which political scientists use to explain the New Deal realignment: the conversion of previously Republican voters to Democrats, and the mobilization of previously apolitical citizens who simultaneously entered the political arena and acquired a party identification.” New Cohort Shift, for example, borrows from the mobilization hypothesis. Later, data describing the turning point and sealed realignment will provide evidence for conversion. Indeed, a dichotomy cannot exist as a part of this four-stage model. The priming phase is but one stage. It does not explain mass voter behavior as attempted by the conversion hypothesis. Instead, it explains a shift in voter perceptions. It precedes actual realignment.

A new cohort, as a part of this story, plays a more fundamental role during this phase. In the 1920s, the new black cohort produced emerging leaders that introduced radical ideas of political independence that had an immediate effect on the initial black group realignment. The advent of black labor organizations, communist groups, socialist thinkers, and race leaders brought about a fresh “stream of consciousness” that advocated an updated sense of “blackness.” It was this militant group of thinkers

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64 Ibid. 106
and activists who articulated priming phase frustrations with Republicans, Democrats, and the reigning political, economic, and social order of the era. These “New Negroes”, who emerged between 1915 and 1925, transcended “the older ideological disputes” and developed “a more pragmatic approach to the problems that the black community faced.” By the 1920s, old guard black leadership in the vein of Booker T. Washington, began speaking to (and for) a “dwindling and rather self-conscious minority.”

Second within this cohort were “previously apolitical citizens.” As a result of the Great Migration, many southern black transplants began crowding northern cities, experiencing for the first time the allure of black-consciousness rhetoric, having lived under (or witnessed their parents endure) oppressive conditions in the South. The collapse of cotton had depressed employment opportunities for black farmers, and northern industry created a “pull factor” that

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67 Ibid.
precipitated this move. Between 1910 and 1930, nearly a million and a half black migrants traveled north to New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio.\textsuperscript{68} For many, the North represented a “promised land.”\textsuperscript{69} Once north, however, the honeymoon didn’t last long. Faced with competing for jobs with other ethnic minorities and racist elements within the labor industry, as well as poor education, limited skills, lack of financial resources, and the “psychological burden of color,” blacks were only met with a new set of problems.\textsuperscript{70} Hanes Walton (1972) writes that the “urbanization of blacks” created a “quest for community,” “new social values,” and a “concern for the security, safety, and the opinions of other.”\textsuperscript{71}

**Activist Shift**

As blacks adjusted to urban life, and crises mounted regarding poor conditions for black workers, housing, and political viability, the “New Negroes” emerged as a voice for a rising tenor of social militancy, impatience, and political action. These new voices, such as A. Philip Randolph, Cyril Briggs, Marcus Garvey, Angelo Herndon, and W.E.B. Du Bois, among others, did not, however, speak in unison. While some advocated for existing third parties like the Communists and Progressives, others called for a creation of black and tan parties, protest, and still others promoted black ticket splitting between the two major parties. Nevertheless, they all called for (and contributed to) a growth in black consciousness during the priming phase, providing an outlet for the disaffected, and, like in the case of the early-labor voices, paving the way for black inclusion into labor politics and the New Deal coalition.

One such prominent voice of that era was A. Phillip Randolph, a pioneering black labor activist and editor of *The Messenger* magazine who used his pulpit for a number of causes: to denounce the “inherent” racism of the capitalist system, win equal conditions for black labor

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid. 210
workers, castigate the leading political parties, and promote black consciousness. In a written critique on the “cause of lynching,” Randolph credited capitalism as the root cause. He wrote, “Both black and white farmers are fleeced by this financial system [in the South]. But white and black farmers won’t combine against a common foe on account of race prejudice. Race antagonism, then, is profitable to those who own the farms, the mills, the railroads and the banks.”72 He charged that because prejudice is the chief weapon in the South, capitalists take heed in exploiting both races. Socialism, he argued, would end capitalist profiteering because it eliminates the incentive of pandering to and promotion of race prejudice and antagonism. He concluded, “Workingmen and women of my race don’t allow Republican and Democratic leaders to deceive you. They [Republican and Democratic leadership] are paid by Rockefeller, Morgan, Armour, Carnegie, owners of Southern railroads, coal mines, lumber mills, turpentine stills, cotton-plantations, etc., who make millions out of your labor.”73 Even if an anti-lynching bill becomes law, he claims, it cannot be trusted because “it will never be enforced” by “Republican and Democratic representatives, who profit from lynching; who want lynching to continue. Lynching will not stop until Socialism comes.”74

Socialism never came, even after the Socialist Party in the 1920s changed its adverse position toward blacks. The party called upon white workers to “treat Negroes as equals, to encourage Negro unionism, and to help break down anti-Negro prejudice.”75 Its influence ultimately failed, however, because it offered nothing special to blacks, instead assuming that the “uplift of the white worker would automatically emancipate the black worker.”76 Nonetheless, Randolph’s influence was not compromised. Even while he continued to stump for the socialists, he won victories for black labor in the ‘30s and ‘40s by mobilizing large protests of workers and

73 Ibid. 90-91
74 Ibid. 91
76 Ibid.
pressuring political authority. “The time has come,” Randolph said to a gathering of black laborers, “when the Negro has to decide between organized labor and organized capital.”

Black communists, similar to their socialist counterparts, also played a small but significant role in fanning the flames of black discontent in the 1920s. Cyril Briggs, editor of popular Crusader magazine, merged “Black Nationalism with revolutionary socialism and introduced the twentieth-century global revolutionary tide to black America.” Briggs’s magazine was dedicated to a “renaissance of Negro power and culture throughout the world.”

Angelo Herndon, a famous political prisoner in the early-1930s, who was sentenced to 18 to 20 years on the chain gang on charges of inciting insurrection, wrote a public letter in honor of the Communist party. Until the Supreme Court freed Herndon, his case attracted support from diverse quarters, and his writing “reveals more vividly” the “Communist appeal for those working class blacks who did join its ranks.”

Herndon wrote, “My parents and grand-parents were hard-boiled Republicans, and told me very often that Lincoln had freed the slaves, and that we’d have to look to the Republican Party for everything good. I began to wonder about that. Here I was, being Jim-crowed and cheated. Every couple of weeks I read about lynching somewhere in the South. Yet there sat a Republican government up in Washington, and they weren’t doing a thing about it.” Instead, despite scare tactics from Birmingham foremen, “big-shot Negroes,” and Yankees, talked about how “reds” believed in killing people, and would get him into a lot of trouble. Herndon “got a few ideas clear about the Reds.” They “believed in organizing and sticking together. They believed that we didn’t have to have bosses on our backs. They believed that Negroes ought to have equal rights with whites.” Walton (1969) cautions that the Communist Party ultimately had little impact on the black community electorally, but it did offer

79 Ibid. 6
80 Ibid. 132-133
81 Ibid. 137
82 Ibid. 138
blacks “an opportunity, when other doors were closed, to deplore the racist factor in American politics.” Its focus on the “race question” and position as an uncompromising defender of black rights (after all, in 1932, it nominated a black man as its presidential candidate) encouraged black involvement in the form of protest, not on the principles of the party.84

Marcus Garvey and his popular Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) was another indicator of an emerging leadership. The UNIA had mass appeal. Its “heady talk of race pride provided a much needed balm to those souls who had suffered for so long at the hands of arrogant, racist whites.” In 1922, Garvey went to Detroit, attracting thousands of blacks to watch his parade and hear him speak, and alarmed the local establishment. The Garvey-led UNIA, a back-to-Africa, Black Nationalist organization, was short-lived (effectively ending in 1927, after Garvey’s deportation to Jamaica), but it “left its mark on the self-consciousness” of blacks in Detroit, and around the country.86

Physical protest also became a part of black long-term strategies against poor treatment by local, state, and federal government official practices, as well as the two major parties. In his book *Life for Us Is What We Make It*, Richard W. Thomas cites 1915 through 1945 in Detroit, when “black protest took as many forms as there were incidents of racial discrimination.”87 Members of this generation, many whom were recent migrants, refused to allow racial barriers to go unchallenged. Influenced by W.E.B. DuBois, the NAACP, publications like the Chicago Defender and Detroit Tribune, as well as the aforementioned Garvey and Randolph, this generation embraced a more hard-edged, radical view of politics and protest, disorienting the old unyielding loyalty to the “Party of Lincoln.”

DuBois, a chief black intellectual and editor of Crisis magazine, was an outspoken critic of, among other things, racism in labor and politics. He was also a leader in establishing black

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83 Hanes (1969): 73
84 Ibid.
85 Thomas (1992): 194
86 Ibid. 199
87 Ibid. 229
consciousness. In 1924, his magazine encouraged black readers to “knife them at the polls,” by defeating Republican enemies and electing Democratic friends. He asked them to “play the political game with knowledge and brains.”

In 1936, echoing sentiment among socialists, he argued that black workers could only find the “surest way to economic security” by teaming with white workers to bargain for security for everyone.

DuBois also took a leading role in the “Negro Sanhedrin” in the early 1920s, a national conference of black civic organizations, leaders, and groups “aimed at developing greater cooperation among them on political matters.” Here, leaders strongly emphasized black pride, black consciousness, and the need for black unity. Kelly Miller, Dean at a historically black university, Howard University, called the conference because the “Negro question is a problem of psychology.”

Unity, he argued, would compel race consciousness to “necessarily arise under compulsion of external circumstances.” Kelly, forecasting the brewing angst of his people, predicted that “within the next half generation,” there would be a “tremendous change.” Indeed, the purpose of his “Sanhedrin” was to bring to bear “purposive intelligence” to give this growing movement of “New Negroes” “orderliness and direction.”

Many blacks sought to order that movement, not in labor unions, protests, or intellectual conferences, but in the formation of black and tan parties. Indeed, while black and tan candidates had existed long before this era, data show a spike in them, starting in 1920. That year especially, the Texas black and tan candidate for governor received nearly 30,000 votes. In his book *Invisible Politics*, Hanes Walton, Jr. writes, “with the rise of new black politics, the

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88 *Crisis*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (July, 1924): 104
90 Ibid. 71
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid. 75
93 Ibid. 71
94 Black and Tan Parties were official black protest organizations challenging the practices of lily-white Republican purges in the South.
95 Walton (1972): 127
increasing number of black candidates has intensified black participation in campaigning." He shows eleven of nineteen black and tan Republican candidates running before blacks shifted to the New Deal, and claims that “black political mavericks” spearhead political movements, paving the way for “black political independents.” Other black independent parties of the era, the National Labor Congress (1924), and National Negro Congress (1936) also lasted a short while, but nonetheless played a role in organized black protest activity against lily-white Republicans and the current party system.

Media Shift

Communications scholars have oft-cited theories on “social reality” (a person’s interpretation of the world around them) and tied them to the role of the media. Additionally, they claim that media “bias” is similarly reflected in how a person constructs their beliefs about the world. Since the establishment of the first black newspaper in 1827, the black press had successfully framed intra-group mores, politics, and allegiances with powerful words of persuasion. It is thus important to note the role it played during the priming phase.

To famed nineteenth-century black journalists John B. Russwurm and Samuel Cornish, the black press was to be a “defender of the race,” ready to counter attacks on blacks from the white press, and to make the case for black equality. With this mission, black media, particularly the militant wing, often found itself the victim of white mob attacks and public castigation from white politicians. In that, black editors knew that their content had far-reaching

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96 Walton (1985): 155
97 Ibid. 122
influence (with readership from both races) and could “define the terms of debate as they wished.”

Black newspapers, including the *Chicago Defender, Cleveland Gazette, New York Age, Richmond Planet, Detroit Tribune, Savannah Tribune, Boston Guardian, California Eagle, Chicago Board Ax, Indianapolis Freeman, Washington Bee,* and *Crisis* all represented a cross-section of black media in the early-twentieth century. These papers served as organs for black activist opinion, and particularly in the 1920s, they articulated “New Negroism,” black consciousness, and black self-help to a new generation of black citizens. *Crisis,* for example, was known as a monthly organ of the NAACP. In Detroit, the black newspaper was an institution with immense influence. They represented the “only means of communication beyond the information-gathering social centers such as barbershops, poolrooms, and churches.”

Swedish social scientist Gunnar Myrdal (1944) claimed that the major function of the black newspaper was to be an “organ of protest,” and that by fulfilling its “propaganda function,” it helped create and maintain “group solidarity.”

This parallel “radicalism” of “New Negroes” and black media cannot be ignored. While independent political organizations were being formed in the 1910s and activist opinion began to shift, the black press was also beginning to cleavage on the issue of party loyalty. Many papers, who William G. Jordan (2001) coins “Agitators,” advocated “political activism and independence.” Calvin Chase, editor of the *Washington Bee,* echoed sentiments made by the Negro Independent Political League, calling for blacks to play off each party and split their votes. Editors for the *Chicago Ax* openly denounced Booker T. Washington for his famed accommodationist philosophy toward whites and unyielding loyalty to the GOP. Publisher of the *Cleveland Gazette,* Harry C. Smith, provides further insight into how black media “worked to

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101 Ibid. 4  
102 Thomas (1992): 187  
shape” black public opinion. Smith’s disenchantment with the Republican Party was robust, and he used his platform to openly advocate for black political independence in his paper. Kenneth L. Kusmer (1976) credits Smith with “helping to lay the groundwork” for black rebellion against the GOP. In 1912, William Monroe Trotter’s *Boston Guardian* openly campaigned for Woodrow Wilson, a move that would eventually backfire. Trotter and the *Guardian* were embarrassed, and by the 1920s, when black migration to Washington D.C., Harlem, and Chicago materialized, he and his paper lost most of its influence. Nonetheless, by 1928, several influential black newspapers abandoned the Republican standard-bearer and endorsed Al Smith for president. Among them: the Baltimore *Afro-American*, the Norfolk *Journal and Guide*, the *Guardian*, and the Chicago *Defender*. In 1930, the *Philadelphia Tribune* and *Defender* accused the Republican federal government of “fostering, condoning, and supporting discrimination.” *Defender* editors wrote, “The great wave of intolerance that is sweeping the country has its source in the White House, presided over by Herbert Clark Hoover, Republican.”

During the 1920s and early 30s, the *Defender* had an immense readership. With a circulation well above 100,000, its open and often castigation of Republicans (and particularly their lily-white policies) was a notable sign of the deepening dissatisfaction between black media, black voters, and the GOP. In a 1924 editorial titled “Nearing the End”, the paper chastised President Coolidge for allowing himself to fall “under the magic spell of that little band of Democratic office-seekers called lily-white Republicans.” It declared “political independence” at the polls that year, making a credible case that the real fault line of racial inequality was actually regional. That is, northern Democrats like Robert Wagner (candidate for governor) were

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105 Ibid. 53
107 Sherman (1973): 254
108 Ibid. 247
110 *The Chicago Defender (National edition)* (1921-1967); Jan 20, 1923; ProQuest Historical Newspapers (1910-1975): 12
worthy of black support, but Idaho Republican William Borah and his ilk were not. In 1931, the Defender claimed Hoover was a “very sad disappointment to Colored Republicans,” and he could “afford to be ashamed of what he has been influenced to do by the Klan and the Lilies.”111 In addition to protest, and in concert with the growing militancy, the Defender devised a list of demands for both parties: one-eighth of all emoluments should be given to the race, voting franchise be given to the millions of black people in the South, induce private industry to hire blacks “in proportion to the population,” pass legislation requiring labor unions to include blacks, put a stop to lynching, and “develop a true regard for the needs of the black race and take steps to advance those needs.”112

In 1932, while most small black newspapers remained loyal to the president, the largest and most influential either openly endorsed Roosevelt (and attacked Hoover) or refused to endorse a candidate.113 Still, despite calls from the press, black voters remained skeptical of the Democratic Party and continued to support Hoover.114 Their concern was realized due to Franklin D. Roosevelt’s own deficiencies as a candidate on issues related to race, as well as the Democratic Party’s own reputational problems. Nevertheless, by 1934, papers like the Defender began giving Democrats credit where it was due. In an editorial titled “Lincoln is Finally Dead”, the paper noted that Democrats in the North, East, and West had put into practice a “real genuine definition and interpretation of democracy” by slating black candidates on various tickets across the country. In addition to former Republican papers shifting allegiance, a rash of unapologetic Democratic publications began developing large followings. Established in 1936, the Michigan Chronicle, a radical and pro-labor publication, developed for itself a “new” constituency. The paper consciously took an ideological leap away from the “old, tried and tested political orthodoxy, with its heavy dependency upon the Republican Party, the industrial elites, and black

111 The Chicago Defender (National edition) (1921-1967); Dec 19, 1931; ProQuest Historical Newspapers (1910-1975); 14
113 Richard B. Sherman (1973) cites a report prepared by John R. Hawkins, the head of the Colored Voters Division during the 1928 campaign, as well as Crisis, 39 (Nov. 1932), Kifer (1961), and Everett S. Sanders (1932).
114 Sherman (1974): 255
capitalism” to the Democrats and unionism, and quickly emerged as the single-handedly most influential black publication in Detroit.\(^{115}\) The Philadelphia Independent became a leading voice of blacks in the 1930s. By 1935, it boasted a circulation of upward the black masses who, bent low under the Depression, sought some ray of hope.”\(^{116}\)

Not all papers shifted, however, and no small argument can be made regarding media compromise. That is, while the largest papers sometimes displayed an independent streak, others still were reliant on Republican Party patronage to remain afloat. Booker T. Washington, for example, often paid newspaper editors to release favorable coverage of himself and the GOP.\(^{117}\) Jordan (2001) argues that while Washington did not exert “complete control over the black press,” he used his clout to influence coverage.\(^{118}\) As a result, Jordan writes, “the balance between protest and accommodation was decidedly tipped toward the latter, in part because of coercion from outside.”\(^{119}\)

In addition to articulating “New Negro” sentiments to a new generation of black urbanites, black media also played a role in exposing the Republican Party’s lack of action on lynching in the South, specifically, even as it held the reins of power in Washington, its failure to pass federal anti-lynching legislation. This became a galvanizing issue for northern black urbanites, who abhorred this treatment of their southern brethren, and southern migrants, who knew all too well the horrors of white mob violence. Northern white politicians (in both parties) were persistent in passing legislation, but the alliance of lily-white Republicans and Southern Democrats made it impossible. That this was based on bipartisan obstructionism only further undermined the black relationship with Republicans, and created a crosscutting issue that no doubt played a role during the priming phase.

\(^{115}\) Thomas (1992): 192  
\(^{116}\) Ibid.  
\(^{118}\) Ibid.  
\(^{119}\) Ibid.
Crosscutting Issue

The menace of lynch mobs loomed large over the early-twentieth century America. Thousands of black citizens found themselves at the mercy of mob-justice, which provided no due process, flimsy reasoning, and a brutal end. For years in the South, the specter took on the image of the three wise monkeys: speak no, see no, and hear no evil. Southern politicians, local law enforcement, intellectuals, and common folk would deny their occurrence, act as if they had never witnessed them, and play as if they’d never heard of these incidents. When the number of victims increased, and became too big a problem to ignore, justifications for mob-violence relied on black “criminality.” In the North, as reports became prevalent, federal politicians began pushing for a national law that would compel criminal prosecution against the perpetrators of mob lynching.

Congressman Leonidas Dyer of Missouri introduced his federal anti-lynching bill in 1918. This bill (1) defined a “mob” (2) held state and governmental subdivisions criminally responsible for failing to protect the victims of mob violence (3) held perpetrators of mob violence federally responsible (4) forced the county in which the victim was lynched to monetarily compensate the victim’s family and (5) established the treaty rights of aliens.120

The Dyer bill, however, was fashioned from a previous anti-lynching bill championed by Senator George Hoar. In 1901, Hoar introduced a bill that would “protect citizens of the United States against lynching in default of protection by the States” and held “murderous” lynch mobs liable by trial by any “circuit court of the United States having jurisdiction in the place where such putting to death occurs.”121 The bill was provocative and immediately ignited states’ rights debates. Furthermore, its “death penalty for lynchers” clause elicited its fair amount of attention from the press. It was also met with objections on the grounds of efficacy. Many were simply

unconvinced that this unconventional solution would provide the results needed to justify a transformation of the constitutional relationship between the federal government and the states. It ultimately failed, and while it provided a template for future legislation, it also primed opponents with a set of talking points and constitutional arguments that were continually successful. Numerically, there were enough Southern Democrats and skittish Republicans to stifle its passage. This was a precursor to similar coalitions that defeated these anti-lynching measures.

In 1922, Congressman Ira G. Hersey refused to be “blackmailed” into supporting the Dyer bill. As a staunch Maine Republican, conventional wisdom would lead one to assume that Hersey would be a guaranteed vote in the affirmative. This was not so. And his sentiments on the entire matter, even as most Northern Republicans voted for the Dyer measure, were prescient. Hersey once exclaimed, “We as a party owe the colored people nothing, and I for one refuse to be politically blackmailed.”

On the floor of the House, Hersey made constitutional arguments against the Dyer bill, echoing Southern Democrats, and annoying his colleagues. In a floor speech, he cited the Volstead prohibition measure as a prime example of the Dyer bill’s ineptness and unconstitutionality. He stated, “The Supreme Court said in substance the states have a right to enact their own criminal laws. They have the police power, and it is not only their duty but it is their exclusive duty to enforce the police powers under the Constitution.”

As a result, he said, Congress went about passage of a constitutional amendment to make the manufacture and sell of liquor a federal offense. It was passed. Thus a federal enforcement code was created. The Dyer bill was different. It was “not a resolution of Congress submitting the twentieth amendment to the people of the Nation, making lynching a Federal offense in every state in the Union, and authorizing Congress to enact a federal code for the enforcement of the amendment.” Instead, the Dyer bill was attempting to possess the same power of the Eighteenth Amendment, without the passage of a new amendment. Until a Twentieth Amendment is passed, said Hersey, Congress

124 Ibid.
“has no power whatever” to enact the Dyer bill. He cited *Unites States v. Harris* (1883), where the Court ruled that Congress could not make individual acts a federal offense without a constitutional amendment, as a guarantee against the “exertion of arbitrary and tyrannical power on the part of the government and legislature of the state.” He also claimed that if “there are more Negroes lynched than whites, it is because of certain monstrous crimes committed by the Negro that arouse the blood of the white race.” Indeed, a statement one might justifiably confuse with that of a Southern Democrat. Hersey may have been one of just a few Republicans to vote against the Dyer bill in the House that year, but his vote, arguments, and general sentiments toward blacks was a harbinger of the Hoover Administration and increased Republican racial conservatism.

The *Negro Almanac*, using data collected by the Tuskegee Institute, shows that between 1882 and 1962, nearly 3500 blacks were lynched. It also shows a significant drop-off in lynching post-1920, just as federal anti-lynching legislation had been proposed. Was this a coincidence or the result of a real decrease in mob violence? A rift among black elites on the definition of ‘lynching’ may also explain why the purported drop in mob violence during the 1920s was not universally accepted (and why Republicans were not off the hook).

The importance of defining ‘lynching’ had implications beyond the quarrelling among reformers. As long as advocates for anti-lynching measures were on separate wavelengths, southern apologists could rely on promoting their own explanation for lynching, and it seldom had much to do with the crimes of the mob. Instead, southern politicians and newspaper editors focused on black criminality. As a tactic, this was used to convince “white reformers sensitive to the plight of southern blacks” of “the truth of black villainy.” Black crimes, among them rape

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125 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
and theft, they reasoned, were an assault on entire communities. Thus, the community justified extralegal measures, as they felt threatened.

Walter White, a prominent figure of the NAACP, promoted a broad definition of lynching. As he saw it, conditions in the South and the southern psyche prevented any limiting explanation. He reasoned by observing the various tactics of the white mob in persecuting southern blacks. If not hanged, the accused could be killed by other measures, and then their remains would be mutilated. These were certainly ‘lynch’-like activities, he charged. In other cases where a black is tried legally, but unfairly, his execution should effectively count as a lynching. The ultimate expectation was that one could only estimate the number of unjust murders of blacks, thus a count of all these occurrences, regardless of their characteristics, was justified.\textsuperscript{129}

It goes without saying that many disagreed with his assessment. First, if this consideration was to be pursued, was not the value of lynching statistics grossly inflated? In other words, if most considered ‘lynching’ to be the rare incident of a white mob hanging an accused black, then the inclusion of all “unjust” murders would simply inflate the real number of lynchings. Advocates couldn’t use these “catch-all” statistics, opponents argued, to justify anti-lynching legislation. It would be tantamount to fraud.

The Tuskegee Institute, a prominent black organization founded by Booker T. Washington, also disagreed with White and the NAACP. It preferred to define lynching as “an activity in which persons not officers of the law, in open defiance of the law, administer punishment by death to an individual for an alleged offense or to an individual with whom some offense has been associated.”\textsuperscript{130} The exclusion of officers of the law and other murders was a major point of contention between the two heavyweight organizations, and that would have a dramatic effect on how lynchings were being counted.

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid. 85
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid. 97
It is doubtless that a limited definition of lynching becoming the universally recognized function of newspaper editors and southern apologists had a great effect. After all, if lynchings were becoming rarer, what was the need for a federal law? This may explain why the NAACP was so tenacious in its effort to broaden the definition. If achieved, this “catch-all” might reveal the real picture: that mob violence wasn’t decreasing, just becoming more sophisticated. Additionally, the forms of killing were diversifying, so much so that a limited explanation of lynching would not count these incidents. The dueling between Tuskegee and the NAACP only served to elongate the dilemma, allowing southerners to exploit a conservative count of lynching, and provide a decent rationale for why reformers were exaggerating the problem. Nonetheless, no matter who counted what, black elites were convinced that federal anti-lynching legislation was a necessity, and increasingly it looked as if Republicans were dragging their feet.

The Dyer bill would eventually pass the House, 230-119. Its path toward becoming law stalled in the Senate, due in no small order to the Republican chairman of the Judiciary Committee, William E. Borah. The Idaho Republican opposed the legislation on constitutional grounds, and was the single most influential vote on the measure. Additionally, the other Republicans who sat on the committee all hailed from states (CT, RI, ID, IO, SD, NE) with small black constituencies, and therefore were under little pressure to vote in the affirmative. As a result, the Dyer bill was shuffled from the docket, delayed until after the election of 1922, and effectively stifled. Moorfield Storey, leader of the NAACP, expressed disappointment at the lack of veracity coming from Republican senators. In Crisis magazine, the NAACP publicly listed every Republican who did not respond to quorum on the measure and warned Republican senators that if the bill was not passed in the post-election session, they would consider it as a broken promise to blacks. After the election, where the GOP lost eight seats in the Senate,

133 Ibid. 65
things only got worse. When the Dyer bill was reintroduced, Southern Democrats threatened to filibuster if Republicans tried to pass it during the lame-duck session. Ultimately, the caucus relented and abandoned the bill. The subsequent outcry was immense. Ernest Harvier of the *New York Times* described the black response in an “open letter” to the Senate:

> The action of the Republicans in passing the bill was regarded by their negro followers as belated and the delay over its adoption as an evidence of bad faith. Hence their defection last year from the Republicans in New York City and in many other cities throughout the country and this year in Chicago, Kansas City and Philadelphia.  

The bipartisan nature of this failed effort was not lost on black media either. In an editorial titled “More Sectional Than Partisan”, the *Defender* noted the regional effect at play in votes against the Dyer bill. In reality, they wrote, the picture was more nuanced than Republicans ‘yea’ and Democrats ‘nay’. They found that in all but two cases, affirmative votes for the bill in the House, regardless of party, were to be found in the North. Below the Mason-Dixon Line, the opposite was true, again, irrespective of party. This trend was seen as an encouragement. “That the new Northern Democrats in Congress could not be whipped into line by the representatives of the Southern oligarchy,” they wrote, “is a favorable sign and hopeful indication.”

Jenkins, Peck, and Weaver (2009) argue that this ordeal “marked the beginning of black disaffection with the GOP and foreshadowed their outright revolt in the 1930s.” Furthermore, “perhaps the Dyer bill’s greatest legacy was in helping to reduce blacks’ allegiance to the Republican Party.” In their conclusion on the subject, they write:

> By the end of the 1920s, blacks had no alliance and were not “captured” (in Paul Frymer’s language). As Congressional Democrats reemerged in the North in 1930s, thanks to FDR’s coattails, they would be poised to be the “friendly party” to blacks, a title they could not compete for given their small numbers in the 1920s. Related to shifting black party alliances, the party line votes in the Dyer years would become more bipartisan, with more and more Democratic sponsors

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135 *The Chicago Defender (National edition)* (1921-1967); Mar 18, 1922; ProQuest Historical Newspapers (1910-1975): 12
and supporters of anti-lynching legislation, much to the chagrin of the Southern wing of the party.\textsuperscript{137}

The cleavage issue of anti-lynching legislation had an immeasurable effect on black perception of the Republican Party. This is a key characteristic of the \textit{priming phase}: a salient wedge that contributes to shifting allegiances within both parties. Indeed, it became an issue that helped push blacks away from an indifferent GOP and within the grasps of an emerging Democratic presence in the North. The only natural progression was for a cataclysmic short term force to break blacks free. This \textit{turning point} came in the form of Franklin Roosevelt and his New Deal coalition, an acceptable (and popular) alternative for black political allegiance.

\textbf{Turning Point}

\textbf{Short Term Forces: New Deal}

The presidential election of 1936 marked a great shift among blacks and their party allegiance. While the unpopular Herbert Hoover was still able to rely on black loyalty in 1932, due in no small order to skepticism toward the New York Brahmin Democrat Franklin Roosevelt, the relatively beneficial implantation of New Deal policies had an effect on the vote four years later. Alf Landon, a listless Kansas Republican governor, inspired few, particularly on-the-fence blacks. Rhetorically, Landon generically espoused a belief in equality and condemned lynching, but his words rang hollow for many in light of the \textit{tangible} gains they had received as a result of Roosevelt’s policies.\textsuperscript{138}

Emmett J. Scott, secretary of Howard University in 1936, penned an editorial in \textit{Opportunity} magazine on these gains. He wrote, “the largest number of colored men holding worthwhile political positions is now assembled in Washington, and representative Negroes are holding important positions also throughout the country…these positions are mainly of an

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\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid. 67  \\
\textsuperscript{138} Weiss (1983):195
\end{flushleft}
entirely different kind from those usually provided by the Republican Party,” continuing, “contrasting these appointments with the Republican policy of appointing three or four colored men at salaries averaging about $4,500 is altogether to the credit of the Democratic administration.”

In a nationwide address entitled “Roosevelt Replaces Hovel With Homes,” prominent Black Cabinet member Mary McLeod Bethune credited the Democratic administration with pouring millions of federal funds into “the construction and repair of school buildings for Negro youth; [and] other millions went to keep open schools that had been forced to close through loss of local support.” Furthermore, Roosevelt created the Division of Negro Affairs, which provided large sums of assistance for black students, and according to Bethune, would benefit fifty thousand young blacks.

Robert Weaver, another member of the Black Cabinet, gave a speech to the NAACP touting the accomplishments of the administration. He claimed that 390,000 blacks were employed on Works Progress Administration (WPA) projects, 10,000 black children were cared for through the WPA nursery schools, 5,000 black teachers were on the federal payroll, and a third of federally-funded housing units were earmarked for black residents.

Nancy Weiss in *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln* (1983) makes an important distinction regarding black perceptions and the New Deal. The initiative was not without its flaws and many of the programs had unintended consequences. For example, the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) authorized the president to issue executive orders establishing some 7000 industrial cartels, which restricted output and forced wages and prices above market levels. The minimum wage regulations made it illegal for employers to hire people who were not worth the minimum because they lacked skills. As a result, thousands of blacks, particularly in the South, were

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141 Ibid.
142 Weiss (1983): 236
estimated to have lost their jobs.\textsuperscript{143} Furthermore, Roosevelt still refused to publicly enforce federal anti-lynching legislation. His trepidation on the matter was probably only neutralized because Landon displayed a similar sentiment. In any event, while blacks knew they weren’t receiving the best deal, they were appreciative to simply receive a deal. The point wasn’t that they were being subjected to discrimination in New Deal programs. Instead, it was that they were receiving something, which ultimately kept their families from starving.\textsuperscript{144} Richard W. Thomas (1992) implicitly echoes this assertion when assessing the declining performance of Republicans among blacks. The party “lacked a political and economic program containing a live issue attractive to hard-pressed urban blacks.”\textsuperscript{145} Conversely, Roosevelt and his New Deal had this allure in spades.

Landon would go on to receive the lowest support among blacks in Republican Party history. His 28 percent support was a drubbing, and unfortunately for Republicans, a trendsetting episode.\textsuperscript{146} Roosevelt, on the other hand, saw drastic increases in his support within black wards across the nation. Table 1 shows his black ward percentage increases, 1932 to 1936, in eight major cities:

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|}
\hline
City & Percent Increase from 1932 to 1936 \\
\hline
Cleveland & +250 \\
Philadelphia & +157 \\
Cincinnati & +126 \\
Detroit & +114 \\
Chicago & +132 \\
Harlem (NYC) & +60 \\
Pittsburgh & +81 \\
Knoxville & +89 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Percent Increase from 1932 to 1936}
\end{table}


\textsuperscript{144} Weiss (1983): 211
\textsuperscript{145} Thomas (1992): 263
\textsuperscript{146} Fauntroy, Michael K. \textit{Republicans and the Black Vote}. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007: 56.
These percentages would increase again in 1940.\textsuperscript{147} Nationally, 1936 was a banner year for black political shift. It did not, however, reflect the depth of black allegiance to Democrats. While blacks turned the corner in favor of the New Deal, they did not uniformly support Democrats to the same extent at local and statewide levels.

Grimshaw (1992) finds that the black electorate in Chicago “was the only group that did not shift its allegiance, in either local or national elections.”\textsuperscript{148} He writes, “black voters sought representation and empowerment as well as favors from the Democratic Party,” and while the New Deal tried to address black socioeconomic concerns, it “failed to address their [black] marginal social status.”\textsuperscript{149} The following chart shows the gap in the level of support for Democratic candidates at the mayoral and presidential levels in Chicago black wards:

**Figure 5**

\begin{center}
\textbf{Black Support for Chicago Mayoral Candidate}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chart.png}
\end{center}

Sources: John Allswang, Bosses, Machines, and Urban Voters (1977); William Grimshaw, Bitter Fruit (1992)

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{147} Weiss (1983): 206.
\textsuperscript{148} Grimshaw (1995): 47.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid. 48
\end{flushright}
During the 1930s, black support for mayoral and presidential elections was indistinguishable. However, when FDR committed the national Democratic Party to the promise of racial equality, and local machines neglected to make a similar pledge, different levels of support became apparent.\textsuperscript{150} Black voters distinguished the local Democratic machine’s “raw deal” from the national New Deal. Grimshaw credits the “politically active middle-class” of blacks in the “black belt” in Chicago for being able to make this distinction (and form the electoral “contradiction” of voting Democratic nationally and less predictably locally). He coins this pattern as “divergence”.\textsuperscript{151} He argues that because this contradiction existed, Chicago blacks were not fully realigned, because the local Democratic political system did not create the proper conditions to take advantage of blacks’ then-loose (and dying) association with Republicans nationally.

Banner-Haley (1998) also found a class-based division in 1930s and 40s Philadelphia. For many black Philadelphians, being a part of the Republican Party was more than just the membership, it was a status symbol.\textsuperscript{152} Upper-and-middle class black professionals, lawyers and businessmen, were less drawn to the lure of New Deal economic policies, and the Democratic Party had yet to successfully make its case otherwise. Similarly, well-off blacks on the west side of Detroit continued to vote Republican both nationally and locally until the late 1940s. Class division, while not clear-cut, did “exert some influence on black voting patterns.”\textsuperscript{153}

This “divergence” and class-division phenomenon illustrates why the story of group realignment does not begin and end with the \textit{turning point}. Borrowing from Key (1959), the “slowness” with which groups reach political homogeneity may be in part explained by the “management of political leadership.” In 1936, lower-class blacks had already become susceptible to this management, in the form of New Deal programs. Those who were not swayed

\textsuperscript{150} Ibid. 49
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid. 50
\textsuperscript{153} Thomas (1992): 264.
by job opportunities and housing may have come around once Democrats began speaking more liberally on race issues. Nevertheless, in order to insure the permanent defection of poor blacks, as well as win over the skeptical upper-and-middle classes, prospects had to also come in different forms. Particularly, the chance at elective office and leadership posts within the party structure. Black self-representation and political incorporation are just two features that explain how turning point black Republican defection became permanent Democratic coalition votes across class, locally, statewide, and nationally. These factors are a part of the settling phase.

**Settling Phase**

**Solidifying Pull Factors: Local Machines**

The specific role of the New Deal record in the conversion of blacks to the Democratic Party is not agreed upon universally. Harvard Sitkoff (1978) argues that the positive racial record of the first FDR administration did cause change.¹⁵⁴ Weiss (1983) claims that support for Roosevelt happened in spite of the hostility of New Deal programs toward blacks. Both scholars make compelling cases, but these features do not have to be mutually exclusive. Additionally, neither emphasizes the dramatic role the local political machine played in keeping blacks converted.

Local political machines (and party systems) must be included when describing the settling phase. Merton (1968) observes that the key structural function of a machine is to “organize, centralize and maintain in good working condition the scattered fragments of power which are present dispersed through our political organization.”¹⁵⁵ He writes:

The machine welds its link with ordinary men and women by elaborate networks of personal relations. Politics is transformed into personal ties. The precinct captain “must be a friend to every man, assuming if he does not feel sympathy with the unfortunate, and utilizing in his good works the resources which the boss puts at his disposal.” The precinct captain is forever a friend in need. In our prevailingly impersonal society, the machine, through its local agents, fulfills the

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important social function of humanizing and personalizing all manner of assistance to those in need.\textsuperscript{156}

For marginalized groups, such as the newly immigrated Irish, Italians, Polish, Catholics, as well as blacks, the machine served as the party system in cities across the country. In the early twentieth century, “bossism” was an inescapable reality. Boston, Chicago, New York, Lexington, Cincinnati, Jersey City, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Memphis, Kansas City, New Orleans, and Albany all sustained a political machine. In most of these cities, black citizens had several disadvantages. First, they were too small a population (particularly in Northern cities) for the machine to take much notice of their concerns. In Albany, for example, the political rulers paid “minimal attention to the black community” as Catholics were the dominant constituency.\textsuperscript{157} In his book \textit{You’re The Boss} (1947), Bronx boss Ed Flynn never even mentions his black constituents when explaining the process of forming a “well-rounded ticket” for an election. This was clear because the Jewish, Italian, and Irish Catholic groups were the largest portions of the county. In Boston, “treatment of African-Americans merited little attention from either politicians or the press”.\textsuperscript{158} Blacks were just too small a population to matter. Second, they often resided in Democratically controlled (read: hostile) cities, which meant that the machines were even less inclined to serve them. In Lexington, Boss Whallen made no attempts to court black voters (even as they were a sizable group in the electorate), instead using intimidation tactics to question and challenge their right to register at election time.\textsuperscript{159} Reynolds (1936) notes the use of the police in New Orleans to enforce “minute regulations concerning assistance to illiterate voters.”\textsuperscript{160} Needless to say, the Machine used this tactic to disenfranchise those black voters who were brave enough to even attempt to vote. As a result, blacks found themselves shut out of the political sphere and the patronage system.

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid. 128
\textsuperscript{158} Schneider (1997)
When blacks began to migrate to northern cities, conflict developed between them and the poor Irish, who were also cast as societal lowlives. Nevertheless, during the 20s and 30s, black voter presence in many cities began to take shape. Political dissent among black elites and media, however, found itself stunted on two fronts. First, in cities dominated by Republicans, popular resentment toward the GOP could have been tempered (particularly if the local party would have none of it). In 1920s Chicago, even while activist women’s groups, male elites, and the local press were challenging the Republican Party, black voters still overwhelmingly supported the GOP ticket. After all, Republican Big Bill Thompson was “perhaps the first urban politician to have seen the potential strength of the black vote and openly courted it.” For example, in 1919, his “alliance with blacks proved central.” Additionally, Thompson’s political power, it could be argued, was in part based on support from Chicago’s Black Belt. Second, in cities where hostile Democrats ruled, mustering popular approval for national allegiance with Democrats (or simply breaking from Republicans), may have proven an arduous task. Because of this, black voters could only realign when local Democrats took their “window of opportunity” in Republican-dominated cities; and formerly antagonistic Democratic machines were either replaced or evolved on issues related to race.

Some machines proved the exception to the rule. In fact, in Memphis and Kansas City, black voters became an active class in the machine, a shocking development, particularly in southern city Memphis. Tucker (1980) cites the unique situation in Ed Crump’s Memphis during the early twentieth century. Crump’s machine “provided security for blacks and also delivered a better share of city services and less brutal police treatment than did white rule in those Southern cities where blacks did not vote. So blacks followed the machine loyally and voted as they were instructed.” As a result, “few pockets of resistance emerged.” Tom Pendergast in Kansas

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162 Ibid. 99
163 Ibid.
City followed the same tradition, expanding his machine with “handouts of food, fuel, and clothing, as well as aid in finding employment and help when in trouble with the law” to blacks in the West Bottoms. In these peculiar instances, machine replacement or evolution would not be needed. Black voter efficacy seemed to have at least marginally existed, and because blacks had already become accustomed to voting Democratic, activist and media persuasion was less a necessity. In Boston, however, realignment conditions required the advent of bosses like Michael Curley, who unlike previous Democratic Boston mayors “encouraged black voter participation.”

Conditions changed for blacks in major city machines during the New Deal. Beginning as early as 1932 (and in earnest in the late 30s), local Democratic machines began incorporating blacks into their newly formed coalition. In Philadelphia and Detroit, blacks were increasingly able to obtain political jobs through the local Democratic party which the Republicans had denied them. Democratic slating of black candidates in black wards also served to engender black political efficacy, fostering group pride, and again, contrasting favorably against the old lily-white Republican regimes.

In *Black Politics*, Hanes Walton, Jr. maintains that 1930s black professionals (many of whom were still Republican-in-name) were “eager for new prestige.” This ambition precipitated the relationship between these (mostly) men and white political bosses. They “acquired the trappings of Anglo-Saxon political behavior” to achieve status, corral votes, and distribute tangible rewards given by the machine. In turn, the Democratic political machine “filled part of the demand for black participation.” This quid pro quo system not only served to convert middle-and-upper-class blacks, but also settle them into the dominant party. After all,

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165 Ibid. 21
169 Walton (1972): 58
170 Ibid.
blacks and their leaders needed the Democratic organization as much as the organization needed them.\textsuperscript{171}

In Chicago, from 1932 on, many (if not most) black politicians “jumped upon the Democratic bandwagon.”\textsuperscript{172} This was a telling development, as once the local Democratic Party became dominant; many calculated that the only way to play the game would be to be a Democrat. Machine Democrats began appointing former-Republican blacks like Michael Sneed, as Democrats, to committee seats. In 1934, black Democrat Arthur Mitchell ran against (and unseated) loyal black Republican stalwart Oscar De Priest in a race for Congress. Soon after, William Dawson, another black Republican, switched allegiances and was appointed Democratic committeeman from the Second Ward.\textsuperscript{173} The trend became clear (particularly with the Mitchell victory), black politicians were now embracing the “other” party, becoming a part of national Democratic politics for the first time, signaling a real shift in group political alignment. RW Gordon (1969) writes:

\begin{quote}
Mitchell's nomination heralded the beginning of Negro participation in national Democratic Party politics. Before Mitchell, no Negro Democrat had won a nomination for Congress... Although a majority [of blacks] voted for De Priest in the congressional elections of 1934 and 1936, many of Chicago's Negroes demonstrated a shift toward the Democrats in the aldermanic and county elections.
\end{quote}

While Chicago blacks did not overwhelmingly support the candidacy of Mitchell, and their realignment was slower to develop than the national black trend would indicate, the fact that black politicians began to both see opportunity in the Democratic Party and to actually be elected is significant.

The election of Charles C. Diggs, the first black Democrat to be voted to the Michigan Senate, opened a “new era in northern urban politics.”\textsuperscript{174} Thomas (1992) writes:

\begin{flushright}
Allswang (1977): 135. \
\textsuperscript{172} Gordon, Rita Werner. "The change in the political alignment of Chicago's Negroes during the New Deal." \textit{The Journal of American History} 56.3 (1969): 584-603. \
\textsuperscript{174} Walton (1972): 266.
\end{flushright}
Based upon the emergence of a new political coalition made up of labor, white ethnics, liberal Democrats, and blacks...Diggs became a model of progressive black political leadership unprecedented in Detroit’s black political history.\(^{175}\)

Diggs would oversee a sea change in black Detroit political behavior in the 1940s, forming the Michigan Federation of Democratic Clubs (MFDC), and helping to elect black Democrats to the state house and Detroit Common Council.\(^{176}\)

Black city politicians in the 1930s and 40s began abandoning the Republican label. As the machines began to evolve (or be replaced), Democratic bosses began making an effort to court black voters. They did so strategically. First, they more openly welcomed blacks in the patronage system. More importantly, they placated activist elites, media elites, and popular will by appointing blacks to represent black wards. When the Chicago Democratic machine finally deigned to court black politicians, and these men accepted their overtures, settling was in motion. By the 1950s, Chicago boss Richard J. Daley and his Democratic organization made it a priority to be “a good deal more responsive to blacks...giving them an increasing share of nominations and appointments.”\(^{177}\)

Machines helped to accelerate the “registration and voting of blacks” and facilitated “black accommodation to the promised land [cities].”\(^{178}\) Nonetheless, Walton (1972) questions the value of black political rewards. He finds that about 85% of these tangible benefits were marginal and non-significant.\(^{179}\) Blacks received only “bare necessities” like low-paying jobs, poor food, and poor housing.\(^{180}\) They were still, however, increasingly voting Democratic. Illustrated below in Table 2, black voters in Philadelphia showed increasing allegiance through three consecutive election years on three separate levels: nationally, statewide, and locally.

\(^{175}\) Thomas (1992): 261.
\(^{176}\) Ibid. 267
\(^{177}\) Allswang (1977): 135.
\(^{179}\) Ibid. 211
\(^{180}\) Ibid.
Kenneth Kusmer (1976) provides insight into black urban psychology that in some ways mirrors Weiss’s view on the success of the New Deal. He claims that while blacks sought better opportunities, they did not necessarily define opportunity solely on economic terms. He writes, “The desire for better schools, recreational facilities, and the need to escape the hard, humdrum conditions and poor accommodations on plantation and farm,” also played a role in assessing progress. On this front, even going back to the days of Boss Crump, machines were fairly effective.

**Old Loyalty Base**

Old loyalists were still a force in the 40s and 50s. While their numbers were dwindling, they still embodied a last gasp of hope for Republican leaders desperate to get back in the good graces of black voters. Unfortunately, these loyalists were a dying generation; victims of old age, diminishing clout, and outright conversion. Weiss (1983), measuring party affiliation by age among black leaders, uncovers a stark (albeit unsurprising) result: About 60% of black leaders born in the 1890s were Republican in 1942. That number drops to 57% if born in the 1900s.

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Finally, it falls more dramatically to 29% if born in the 1910s. By the 40s and 50s, these loyalists (born between 1890 and 1910) were largely middle-age voters, and as the children and grandchildren of slaves, it just proved more difficult for them to support the Democratic Party.

At the aggregate, black support for the Republican Party ranged between 20 and 40 percent from 1936 to 1960.

**Figure 6**

![Black Support for Republican Presidential Candidate](source.png)


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183 Ibid. 229
Data collected from cities with large black concentrations also show Republican support ranging between 20 and 40 percent.

These numbers would show a remarkable drop in 1964 (triggering a *sealed realignment*), which will be discussed later.

If Detroiter Charles Diggs was the voice of the emerging black Democrat, Sara Pelham Speaks articulated the sheer desperation of loyalists. Ms. Speaks, member of a prominent black family in Detroit, refused to believe that blacks were lost to Republicans forever. The task, instead, was for the Party to demonstrate a more emphatic understanding of the needs of Depression-ravaged blacks.\(^{184}\) While addressing a group of black Republicans in Chicago, she introduced a doctrine of sorts. A set of principles that the Republican Party needed to adopt in order to regain black loyalty:

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\(^{184}\) Thomas (1992): 261.
They must protect the lives of blacks from mob rule; business leaders should hire blacks in areas in which they have been barred; child labor should be abolished; realize that the sentimental appeal to Reconstruction is passé in light of the current social and economic struggles of blacks.\textsuperscript{185}

She also criticized Roosevelt for his lack of support for anti-lynching legislation and the New Deal’s perpetuation of an “inferior status in American life.”\textsuperscript{186} Her words did not resound. Republican leaders had no intention of “radicalizing” their agenda, and blacks still preferred Roosevelt. Even Joe Louis, famed heavyweight boxing champion, who campaigned on behalf of Republicans in the 30s and 40s, could not resonate.

Nonetheless, loyalists are important to note for a few reasons. First, they represent (in numbers and votes) that an observable percentage of the group are still wedded to the old regime. From 1936 to 1960, about 20 to 40 percent of the national black vote was still going to Republicans. Locally, that range looked similar (see again the previous figure) Second, they in many ways articulate the shortcomings of the new regime in an attempt to court their brethren. Black Republicans spent an inordinate amount of time spelling out the flaws of the New Deal, Roosevelt, the racist Democrats, and prejudicial unionists. Their mistake was in assuming that these costs outweighed the perceived gains. Additionally, they underestimated the influence of local machines and group dependency on the benefits these organizations afforded. Third, when their numbers noticeably convert at the polls, it is one of the more significant developments of a sealed realignment. High (and consistent) defection rates among the old guard, particularly after an election with powerful short-term forces, are no accident of nature. They help to signify an essential (and final) stage in group realignment.

\textsuperscript{185} Ibid. 262
\textsuperscript{186} Ibid.
Sealed Realignment

Critical Election - 1964

By 1964, among most blacks, the Republican Party had completely switched places with Democrats. The Grand Old Party had conspicuously moved rightward, socially, politically, and rhetorically. The presidential primary between Nelson Rockefeller and Barry Goldwater proved a power struggle between two competing factions within the party. Rockefeller represented old guard Eastern establishment Republicans: ideologically liberal, politically ambidextrous, and elitist. It was a dominant wing that had nominated every Republican presidential candidate since Wendell Willkie in 1940. Goldwater led a movement of young firebrand and housewife conservatives. They were tired of “Me Too” Republicanism and distrusted the establishment. On a platform of liberty, state’s rights, and constitutionalism, the Goldwater movement would mobilize a wave of young conservatives, libertarians, and Southerners into Republican politics. He eventually won the 1964 GOP nomination and led his spirited new cohort into the fall campaign.

Alas, Goldwater did not endear himself to black voters. His vote against the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was something of an unfortunate political Rorschach. Differing parties interpreted this vote based on their own inclinations. Goldwater saw it as a vote against an unconstitutional overreach on the part of the federal government. Specifically, he disagreed with Titles II (which banned private businesses from discriminating on the basis of race) and VII (which banned private employers from discriminating on the basis of race). Eastern liberal Republicans saw it as yet another indicator of his rigid extremism. Southern whites viewed it as an invitation to his movement. After all, his avowals to state’s rights were music to the ears of Southern voters fed up with federal intrusion. Democrats like Lyndon Johnson exploited it as a means of defining him.

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187 “Me Too” Republicans was a phrase coined by conservative activist Phyllis Schlafly in her campaign book “A Choice Not an Echo” (1964).

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For blacks, it was the final slap in the face from the party they once fully embraced. With his vote, Goldwater invited the ire of black leaders, liberal Republicans, Democrats, and moderate voters. Even Dr. Martin Luther King deemed it necessary to publicly denounce the Republican nominee. He told the *New York Times* that if Goldwater was elected, the nation would erupt into “violence and riots, the like of which we have never seen before.”

President Lyndon Johnson, on the other hand, made great strides in sealing the relationship between black voters and the Democratic Party. Johnson had spearheaded the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (a bill that was once dead-in-the-water), courted black civil rights leaders, and promised further action on racial inequality. He was an unelected Texan with a scattershot civil rights record as a legislator, but compared to perceptions of Barry Goldwater, he was a warrior for equality. In 1965, he would send federal troops into Alabama, oversee the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and give a stirring speech before Congress, uttering “We Shall Overcome” (a key mantra of the Civil Rights movement) to a room full of Southern legislators.

The short and long-term effects of the Goldwater/Johnson race are evident by a few measures. Beginning in 1964, Figure 7 illustrates a sharp (and sustained) drop in black Republican identification. During the 1950s, black Republican identifiers were close to 20% of black voters. By 1976, they were about 6%.

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**Figure 8**

Percentage of Black Republican Party Identifiers (South and Non-South) 1956-1976

Source: Data from 1948–2004 ANES Cumulative Data File [ICPSR Study #8475] and organized into a crosstab by John R. Petrocik

Figure 8 shows black support for Republican presidential candidates taking a nosedive in 1964

**Figure 9**

Black Support for Republican Presidential Candidate

Source: Michael Fiumehey, Republicans and the Black Vote (2007), Gallup
and remaining in the low-double digits.

In the nine major cities measured in Figure 6, black support for the presidential candidate averaged above 20% (1948-56). Here, in Figure 9, the post-1964 average is 7%.

Percentage of Black Voters Who Voted For The Presidential Candidate of the Republican Party

Weiss’s research on the middle-aged black cohort in 1942 found that about 60% of those born in the 1890s were still Republican. Those born in the 1900s were about 57%.\textsuperscript{190} These voters were the bedrock of the old loyalist base. Things changed post-1964. According the 1968 American National Elections Study, this cohort (those born 1888-1910) were now 75% Democratic identifiers.

**Figure 10**

### Partisan Identification of Black Voters Born Between 1888-1910 (1952-1968)

![Graph showing partisan identification of black voters](image)


In 1968, the party identification of blacks in cities of 50,000 and more was 86.6 percent Democratic.\textsuperscript{191}

At the congressional level, black city wards continuously elected Democrats to represent them. The passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 assured, among other things, the elimination of vote delusion in minority communities. Election officials were no longer permitted to “crack”

\textsuperscript{190} Weiss (1983): 231.
minority communities into smaller, insignificant voting blocs or “submerge” them into broader, multiethnic districts. As a result of the law, majority-minority congressional districts began sending black (and later Latino) representatives to Congress. These new members were not only attaining election, but because their districts were drawn in such a way, their odds of reelection to the House were great. In fact, since World War II, black members of Congress have had greater longevity than the general membership. The Voting Rights Act not only provided safer districts for black representatives, but also created a boon in black membership in the House. Fully 71 percent of all black members serving came after 1970, nearly all of them Democrats. Only about ten percent of the nation’s record 200 black office seekers ran as Republicans in 1964.

194 Cofield, Ernestine. The Chicago Defender (National edition) (1921-1967); Nov 7, 1964; ProQuest Historical Newspapers (1910-1975) pg. 1
Even elite party politics took a major turn toward the Democratic Party in 1964. Black delegate seating at national conventions had always been something of an issue within both parties during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In fact, until 1936, no black delegate had ever been seated to the Democratic National Convention (DNC). However, starting in 1964, an observable spike in black delegates to the DNC and subsequent increases once again illustrates a trend.

DR Matthews and JW Prothro (1966) arrived at the conclusion that black Democratic bias was so overwhelming that “few of them are likely to shift permanently to the Republican camp in the foreseeable future.” Adding, “Their images of the parties are extraordinarily favorable to the Democrats and hostile to the GOP.” Undeniably, their prediction came true. Since 1964, Black Democratic party identification has not dropped below 75%, Republicans have yet to win more than 15% of the black vote, and black politicians have become an integral part of the party leadership. Today, a fifth of Democratic House members are black, two (of three) black senators are Democrat, and of course, the leader of the party became the first black President of the United States. Furthermore, eight in ten black local and statewide elected officials are Democrats. The data show that these numbers are a result of the sealed realignment election of 1964.

196 Matthews, Donald, and James Prothro. "Negroes and the new southern politics." (1966): 391
Conclusion

Group allegiance to a party system is durable. Thus, the process of group realignment is both delicate and incremental. Still, shifts have (and do) occur. When a group is primed to think differently (and negatively) about their aligned party, opportunities exist for the opposition party to take advantage of short-term forces and absorb the group’s support. This immersion transpires as a result of a turning point election. Once the group has realigned, the new regime settles its coalition with tangible and symbolic dividends, assuring group demands are met. Finally, after another critical election, the last vestiges of the old regime all but vanish from the group and seal group realignment.

The necessity of predictive power for the concept of critical realignment may be overrated. Most objective observers would acknowledge the empirical limitations of the theory and thus question its utility on that front. Moreover, making it work isn’t the same as showing it works. Attempting to prove the predictive power of critical realignment with elaborate (but hollow) empirics will not save the theory from its constraints. In the end, this may only expose it for what it is not, rather than concentrating on what it can be.

The theoretical power of critical realignment has legs, particularly when applied to groups. While solely focusing on macro-level shifts in the party system may stump a researcher, group movements, especially when placed in a generalizable model, provide a bounty of content. For example, in 2014, discussions on broader party system realignment might prove premature. For the most part, at the aggregate, the parties are intact. Groups, however, are stirring with what Nichols would call “entropy”. The Tea Party faction has played an antagonist within the Republican Party for years, threatening to rock the party establishment, not unlike the old Goldwaterites of the 60s. Latinos, the most sought after group in the party system, have been taking slow but steady steps toward the Democratic Party for decades. White men are seemingly growing more conservative, single women more liberal, and Jews slightly more Republican.
Some of these groups more than others may be vulnerable to a critical election. Are Latinos *priming*? Have white evangelicals *sealed* with Republicans? Thinking of groups in terms of where they are in this process of realignment could prove helpful for scholars, grassroots activists, and party leaders, even if eventual outcomes are not being predicted.
Works Cited


