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SOURCES OF THE NEW DEAL REALIGNMENT:
THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF CONVERSION
AND MOBILIZATION TO PARTISAN CHANGE

JAMES E. CAMPBELL

University of Georgia

THE SOURCES of partisan realignments have been the subject of considerable research. How do realignments occur? More specifically, who in the electorate is realigned? Two competing hypotheses have been offered in answer to this question — the mobilization hypothesis and the conversion hypothesis.

The mobilization hypothesis claims that the shift in the relative strengths of the parties is a result of new voters entering the electorate. People are mobilized to participate who had been too young to vote, were ineligible to vote (e.g., women prior to the Nineteenth Amendment, immigrants prior to gaining their citizenship), or were convinced that previous electoral choices were irrelevant. These new voters, the mobilization hypothesis contends, contribute more to the electoral gains of the new majority party than do the established, pre-realignment cohort of voters. Evidence supporting the mobilization hypothesis in the New Deal realignment has been found by Key (1955), Campbell et al. (1960), Sellers (1965), Converse (1976), Petrocik (1981), and Wanat (1979).

The most thorough and extensive work in support of the mobilization hypothesis has been conducted by Andersen (1979a and 1979b). Although Andersen's analysis drew upon a variety of data, the core of her analysis rested on SRC party identification recall data collected from 1952 to 1972. These data were used to demonstrate that voters entering the electorate in the realignment era were overwhelmingly Democratic.

Erikson and Tedin (1981) dispute Andersen's findings. They note that the partisanship recall question used by Andersen has proven to be highly unreliable (Niemi, Katz, and Newman 1980; and Reiter 1980). This problem is apparent in the distribution and trends of party identification constructed from the recall measure. According to these data, the Democrats had a plurality of the electorate as early as 1920; they gained just 3 percent of the electorate from 1924 to 1930 (Andersen 1979a: 61); and they held nearly a two-to-one advantage over the Republicans among young voters in 1924 prior to the realignment. Such counterintuitive findings raise serious doubts about the reconstructed partisanship variable. Moreover, despite her earlier arguments asserting the validity of the measure, Andersen seems to acknowledge a problem when she admits that many young Democrats of the 1920s, identified as such by the recall measure, would have identified themselves at the time as independents or without a party (Andersen 1979: 67).[1] Erikson and Tedin (1981: 952) also argue that

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[1] Andersen attempts to minimize the importance of the differences between actual and reconstructed partisanship. She asserts that reconstructed "Democrats" may have been actually independents but were never Republicans. Several figures in her analysis (particularly Figure 10 and 11) are quite misleading because of the likely differences between actual and reconstructed partisanship.

Andersen's analysis did not seriously entertain the possibility of conversion, that her aggregate data could be reasonably interpreted to support either the conversion or mobilization hypotheses. Indeed, as Wettergreen points out (1977), Andersen only briefly alludes to a test of the mobilization versus conversion hypothesis indicating that "over 60 percent" of the partisan change can be traced to mobilization (Andersen 1979a: 65).

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. Sundquist (1973: 200) and, to a lesser extent, Burnham (1970) have lent support to this thesis. Examining Gallup survey data, Ladd and Hadley (1978: 75-87) also found evidence of conversion. "Conversions indeed occurred during the 1930s," Ladd and Hadley (1978: 82) concluded. "But there is little indication of any generational conversion, of any bulge in Democratic support among new members of the electorate."

Erikson and Tedin (1981) present the most developed case for the conversion hypothesis. Their analysis of *Literary Digest* and *Gallup* data collected during the realignment indicates that individual conversions from the Republican to the Democratic party account for the bulk of the realignment shift. They found little evidence that the Democratic party was propelled to majority status by the mobilization of new voters sympathetic to that party.

Erikson and Tedin's conclusions rest on two findings. First, on the basis of their analysis, new voters were no more loyal to the Democratic party than established voters. Only in the 1928 election were new voters more Democratic than established voters, a 15 percent difference. However, in 1932 new voters were just 3 percent more Democratic and in 1936 they were actually 1 percent less Democratic than the established voters. Second, new voters contributed little to the total partisan shift between 1924 and 1936. Using the difference between new and established voter loyalty to the Democrats and estimates of the proportion of the electorate composed of new voters, Erikson and Tedin calculated the Democratic gain that could be attributed to new voters. By their calculations mobilization accounted for a mere 4.9 percent of the 27.7 percent increase in Democratic support from 1924 to 1936. In effect, only 18 percent of the realignment was a consequence of mobilization and, by implication, 82 percent was a consequence of conversion.

There are two problems with Erikson and Tedin's analysis, First, they incorrectly categorized mobilized and converted voters. Second, they chose an inappropriate baseline from which to calculate mobilization's effects. Both of these problems caused significant underestimation of mobilization's contribution to partisan change.

The manner in which Erikson and Tedin categorize new and established voters does not permit a direct comparison of voters present in the electorate before the realignment and voters entering during the realignment. In their analysis new voters are those voting for the first time in a

particular election and established voters are those who had voted in at least one prior election. The difficulty this poses for an assessment of the mobilization and conversion hypotheses is demonstrated in Figure 1. Here the Erikson and Tedin categorization of voters is compared to a categorization that strictly separates those voters entering the electorate during the realignment period from those who were part of the electorate prior to the realignment. This comparison indicates that, except for the 1928 election, Erikson and Tedin included in the established voter category many who had entered the electorate *after* the realignment began and included in the new voter category only some who had entered during the realignment period. This explains why Erikson and Tedin observed a major partisan difference between established and new voters in 1928 but not in 1932 or 1936. If the new voters of 1928, 1932, and 1936 were politically distinct from earlier cohorts, as the mobilization thesis predicts, differences between established and new voters should be depressed significantly as blocs of post-1924 voters are packaged with the pre-realignment voters. Compared to the established voters of 1932 and 1936, the established voter of 1928 was free of the realignment era cohort and thus differences between pre-realignment and post-1924 voters could be detected in these data.

FIGURE 1
ERIKSON-TEDIN AND REDEFINED CATEGORIES
OF VOTERS FOR 1928, 1932 AND 1936

	Erikson-Tedin Categories		*Redefined Categories*	
Election	*Established Voters*	*New Voters*	*Pre-Realignment Voters*	*Post-1924 Voters*
1928	pre-1928	1928	pre-1928	1928
1932	pre-1928 and 1928	1932	pre-1928	1928 and 1932
1936	pre-1928, 1928 and 1932	1936	pre-1928	1928, 1932 and 1936

NOTE: Dates in the cells are the year of entry into the electorate.

The second problem of the Erikson and Tedin analysis is the comparison of Democratic support among mobilized voters against an inappropriate baseline. Their baseline is the Democratic support of established voters in each election. The Democratic support of established voters in a particular year was subtracted from the Democratic support of mobilized voters in the same year. The difference was then used as evidence of mobilization effects and, in conjunction with the proportion of new voters in the electorate, used to calculate the contribution of new voters to partisan change. The problem with this baseline is that it does not permit the full measurement of mobilization effects. It permits only the measurement of mobilization effects on partisan change above and beyond

conversion effects. Suppose, for instance, that established (i.e., pre-realignment) and new (i.e., realignment era) voters have identical partisan preferences and are of equal size at the end of the realignment period. The contributions of the converted and mobilized voters to partisan change would appear to be equal. However, the Erikson-Tedin analysis would show no mobilization effect whatsoever. All of the partisan change would incorrectly appear to be the result of conversion.

Given the problems of both the Andersen research and the Erikson and Tedin research, the mobilization-conversion controversy remains un-settled. The intent of this research is to gauge more accurately the contri-butions of both mobilization and conversion to the partisan realignment that took place between 1924 and 1936.[2] Unlike the Andersen research, the possibility of both conversion and mobilization will be considered and the contribution of each will be estimated. Also, rather than using partisan recall data from two decades after the realignment period, the *Literary Digest* and *Gallup* surveys conducted at the time and used by Erikson and Tedin will be employed. Unlike the research of Erikson and Tedin, pre-realignment and realignment era voters (i.e., new voters of 1928, 1932, or 1936) will be separated from one another as clearly as possible for the analysis. The size of each cohort will be estimated from voting records and census information. Finally, the contribution of pre-realignment and re-alignment era voters to partisan change will be calculated using 1924 pre-realignment partisan loyalties as a baseline, rather than the baseline selected by Erikson and Tedin (i.e., the established voters' loyalties in any given election). These improvements over previous research should yield a more accurate and reliable estimate of the relative importance of mobili-zation and conversion to realignment.[3]

Although the principal object of this research is the estimation of mobilization and conversion effects, two related questions will be addressed. First, what accounts for the contributions of mobilization and

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[2] It is an assumption of this research (and of Erikson and Tedin) that the realignment period began with the election of 1928 and ended with the election of 1936. The 1928 election is chosen as the beginning of the realignment since there is evidence of some difference in the loyalties of new voters from the established voters in this election, even though there is no substantial deviation from the normal vote of the pre-realignment period. One could choose to include 1928 as part of the pre-realignment period. However, this definition would oddly attribute the partisan change of the new voters of 1928 to conver-sion. The behavior of these voters is much more like that of the new voters of 1932 and 1936 than the pre-realignment cohort. Thus, it seems more reasonable to assign the 1928 election to the realignment era rather than the pre-realignment period.

[3] The analytic technique used to estimate the relative contributions of converted and mobil-ized voters to partisan change is similar to that developed by Axelrod (1972). Axelrod calculated group contributions on the basis of the number of group members in the total population, voting turnout for the group, and group loyalty to a party. The approach used here differs only slightly. First, we are examining contributions to partisan change rather than to the simple partisan division of the vote and therefore must examine the *change* in partisan loyalties over this period rather than the full extent of partisan loyalty (e.g., the simple percentage of Democrats among new voters in 1928). Second, the size and turnout estimates have been consolidated into a single measure of the propor-tion of each group in the voting electorate.

conversion to partisan change? To the extent that their contributions differ, is it a result of one cohort being larger than the other or of one cohort increasing its loyalty to the Democratic party more than the other? Second, how do the contributions of mobilization and conversion develop over the course of the realignment period? Is mobilization followed by conversion or are they contemporaneous processes?

Because of data limitations, any analysis of mobilization and conversion effects during the New Deal realignment requires the imposition of a variey of assumptions (Wanat 1979). These assumptions will be made explicit at each point in the analysis and the sensitivity of the results to these assumptions will also be explored.

THE ANALYSIS

This analysis will proceed in four steps. The first step is to estimate the dependent variable of the analysis, the extent of partisan change in this period. The second step is to estimate the proportion of pre-realignment voters and the proportion of new voters entering the electorate for the first time in each of the three realignment period elections, 1928, 1932, and 1936. The third step is to estimate the Democratic vote of the pre-realignment and realignment era cohorts. The final step, based on the preceding three, is to estimate the contributions of pre-realignment and realignment era voters to partisan change. In effect, this is to measure the extent of mobilization and conversion.

The Extent of Partisan Change

Before examining the sources of partisan change, the extent of that change must be determined. This, after all, is the fact to be explained. The estimate of partisan change is a function of two distinct estimates — an estimate of party loyalties prior to the realignment and of partisan loyalties after the realignment process. These estimates are not only essential to an appraisal of the overall degree of partisan change, but are necessary to the calculation of the contributions of mobilization and conversion to that change.

There are several possible estimates of the partisanship baseline, the extent of Democratic loyalties in the electorate before the realignment. One possible baseline is the Democratic vote in the election immediately preceding the realignment period, the election of 1924.[4] The Democratic presidential candidate, John Davis, received 28.8 percent of the vote in this election or 34.7 percent of the two-party vote. A single election, particularly one in which a third party candidate received a sizable portion of the vote as LaFollette did in 1924 (16.6 percent), is not necessarily a good indicator of a party's general strength in the period before the realignment. A more accurate baseline can be created from a number of pre-

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[4]This is the baseline used by Erikson and Tedin to gauge the extent of partisan change. However, as already noted, they used the "established voter" Democratic vote as a baseline when computing the partisan change attributable to mobilization.

realignment elections. The baseline chosen for this analysis is the average Democratic vote in the six presidential elections from 1904 to 1924.[5] The average partisan vote in this period is roughly the equivalent of the normal vote (Converse 1966). The average Democratic vote for these elections was 37.5 percent.

With the baseline of Democratic partisanship established, what is the end-point or post-realignment level of Democratic partisanship? Actually, the baseline of Democratic partisanship and the extent of Democratic loyalties in the realignment can be compared at several different points. Since the analysis is concerned with the development of the realignment as well as its end result, the baseline can be compared to several points during the period as well as an overall level of post- Democratic partisanship. The mid-points, or levels of Democratic partisanship during the realignment, can be used to assess the relative contributions of conversion and mobilization as the realignment proceeded through the 1928, 1932, and 1936 elections. The estimates of partisanship at these mid-points is simply the Democratic vote at each of the elections for the relevant cohorts of voters. While the vote reflects a variety of short-term factors as well as partisan voting habits and is, thus, an inappropriate way of calculating the *absolute* contributions of conversion and mobilization, it ought to provide a reasonable estimate of the *relative* contributions of conversion and mobilization.[6]

The end-point of the realignment, the level of Democratic partisanship after the realignment process, can be estimated in several ways. One possible estimate is the 1936 Democratic vote. However, like the baseline, an estimate of the end-point based on a single election may poorly reflect the actual level of Democratic partisanship produced by the realignment. In particular, the 1936 Democratic vote exaggerates the actual level of post-realignment Democratic partisanship. The 1936 election was an abnormally good one for the Democrats. Their 60.8 percent share of the 1936 vote was considerably greater than the post-realignment normal vote. In the six presidential elections from 1928 to 1948, the average Democratic vote was 52.8 percent or 8 percent less than their 1936 vote. Thus, rather than use the Democratic vote of 1936, this analysis will use the average Democratic vote in the three realignment period elections as

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[5] Only votes in presidential elections were used. The six-election average seems to employ a good deal of information without going too far back in history. It is also about in the middle of estimates based on averages of from one to seven elections before the realignment. The number of elections on which the average is based and the average Democratic vote follows: 1 election, 28.8 percent; 2 elections, 31.5 percent; 3 elections, 37.4 percent; 4 elections, 38.5 percent; 5 elections, 37.5 percent; 6 elections, 37.5 percent; and 7 elections 38.6 percent.

[6] If one wanted estimates of the actual or absolute contributions, the short-term factors would have to be taken into account. One method of doing this would be to adjust all estimates of partisan loyalties by the national deviation from the normal vote. Such a procedure assumes that short-term forces have an equal impact on all groups of voters. A much more troubling assumption is that the normal vote is constant over all these elections. This most certainly is not the case during a realignment period. A realignment, after all, is the process of redefining the normal vote.

the estimate of post-realignment Democratic partisanship. The average Democratic vote in the 1928, 1932, and 1936 elections is 53 percent.

Given the above calculations of the partisan divisions in the pre-realignment and post-realignment periods, it appears that the realignment produced a shift of 15.5 percentage points in the Democratic direction, from 37.5 percent before the realignment to 53 percent after the realignment. It is this 15.5 percentage point change that must be explained by some combination of conversion and mobilization.

The Composition of the Electorate

The estimation of conversion and mobilization effects requires information about the numbers of pre-realignment and realignment era voters in the electorate. The 1928 electorate must be divided into pre-realignment voters and those voting for the first time in that election. Voters in the 1932 electorate must be divided into those who were pre-realignment voters, those who first voted in 1928 and those who first voted in the 1932 election. Finally, the 1936 electorate must be divided into the pre-realignment cohort, the new voters of 1928, the new voters of 1932 and the new voters of 1936.

The first assumption of this analysis is that the number of voters in the 1924 election approximate the number of pre-realignment voters. Of course there were pre-realignment voters in 1924 who did not vote in that particular election though they had voted in some previous election. This does not indicate that pre-realignment voters are undercounted by the 1924 estimate. In any election there will be some slippage. Some pre-realignment voters who did not vote in 1924 may vote in 1928. But by the same token, some of the pre-realignment voters who voted in 1924 may, for one reason or another, not vote in 1928. This research assumes that these two groups of voters are of roughly the same size. If this is true, the pre-realignment electorate in 1924 can be fairly accurately estimated by the actual voting electorate of 1924 at about 29.1 million voters.

Given that pre-realignment voters in the 1924 election constituted 100 percent of the electorate, what proportion of the 1928 electorate were pre-realignment voters and what proportion were new voters? The number of pre-realignment voters in the 1928 electorate can be estimated from the number of pre-realignment voters in 1924 less those who had died in the interim. The number of deaths of pre-realignment voters in this period can be approximated from three facts: the number of deaths per year in the entire population (about 1.4 million), the proportion of total deaths among those of voting age (about .82), and the proportion of the voting age population actually voting (the 1924 turnout rate for pre-realignment voters of .44). The product of these three figures yields an estimate of about one-half million pre-realignment deaths per year or approximately 2.0 million deaths between the 1924 and 1928 elections. The number of pre-realignment voters in 1928 is, thus, the 29.1 million pre-realignment voters in 1924 less the 2.0 million who died before 1928 or, after rounding, 27.0 million voters.

   The number of new voters in the 1928 electorate can now be easily calculated. Since there was a total of 36.8 million voters voting in the 1928 election and 27.0 million were pre-realignment voters, the difference of 9.8 million must have been new voters. In relative terms, the 1928 electorate was composed of 73 percent pre-realignment voters and 27 percent new voters.[7]

   The 1932 electorate can be decomposed in a similar fashion. Three cohorts are involved: the new realignment era voters of 1932, the new voters of 1928 and the pre-realignment voters. Assuming a constant turnout rate for this group, the number of pre-realignment voters in 1932 is equal to the 27.0 million estimated to be in the 1928 electorate less those who died between these elections. The number of death in this groups can be estimated from the appropriate mortality rates during these years.[8] Based on these mortality rates, about 2.0 million of the 27.0 million pre-realignment voters of 1928 died before the 1932 election and about 25.0 million survived to vote in that election.

   The new voters of 1928 can be separated into two categories: the young voters between the ages of 21 and 24 who were eligible to vote in their first election and older voters voting for the first time in 1928. It is necessary to make this distinction since the two subgroups have very different survival rates. Based on the age distribution in the 1930 census and turnout estimates for young voters, about 3.5 million of the 9.8 million new voters of 1928 were between the ages of 21 and 24 and the remaining 6.3 million were 25 years of age or older.[9] Applying the appropriate mortality rate to each group indicates that about 50 thousand of the 3.5 million young new voters of 1928 died before 1932 and about .5 million of the 6.3 million new

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[7] The Erikson and Tedin estimate of new voters is higher. They estimated that about 30 percent of the 1928 voters were new voters, based on the assumption that the 1928 surge of new voters was comparable to the 1952 surge (p. 955). They admit, however, that their estimate "may be slighly generous." According to the estimate developed here, they are generous to the tune of 1.2 million voters. They are, nevertheless, significantly closer to our estimate than the *Literary Digest* poll that estimated new voters at only 18 percent of the electorate. As Erikson and Tedin noted, the *Literary Digest* poll seriously undersampled new voters.

[8] The mortality rate of course depends on age. The voters in the pre-realignment cohort were at least old enough to vote in the 1924 election. Thus, they were at least 26 to 29 years old in 1929 (the first year of the four-year period between elections) and 29 to 32 years old in 1932. To simplify things a bit, a mortality rate for those 30 years of age and over was computed on the basis of the age distribution of the population aged 30 and over and the corresponding mortality rates for each age bracket of those 30 and older. This yielded a mortality rate of 1925 per 100,000 population per year. This rate was applied to the 27.0 million pre-realignment voters of 1928 to yield a little over .5 million deaths. These were then subtracted from the 27.0 million base to establish a base for the second year's calculation. The same procedure was then followed for the third and fourth years.

[9] Based on an estimate from the 1930 census, about 8.3 million Americans were between the ages of 21 and 24 in 1928. Given that turnout in the 1928 election was about 52 percent nationally and that by Wolfinger and Rosenstone's estimates, taken in the 1970s, voters in this age group participate at about 10 percent below the national average (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980), about 42 percent of this 8.3 million voted in 1928. This amounts to about 3.5 million voters.

voters of 1928 who were over 25 years of age died before 1932.[10] Taken together, about 9.2 million of the new voters from 1928 election survived to vote in 1932.

The number of new voters entering the electorate for the first time in 1932 is now easily calculated. The number of new voters of 1932 is equal to the total number of voters in the 1932 election less the surviving pre-realignment and the new 1928 voters. Since 39.7 million votes were cast in the 1932 election of which 25.0 million came from surviving pre-realignment voters and 9.2 million from surviving new voters of 1928, there were approximately 5.5 million new voters in 1932. The 1932 electorate was, therefore, composed of 63 percent pre-realignment voters, 23 percent realignment era voters from the 1928 election, and 14 percent realignment era voters from the 1932 election.[11]

Four groups of voters composed the 1936 electorate: pre-realignment voters, new voters from the 1928 election, new voters from the 1932 election and the first time voters of 1936. The procedures used to estimate these groups are the same as those used for the 1932 election.

The pre-realignment voters in the 1936 election are equal to the 25.0 million who survived to the 1932 election minus those who died between 1932 and 1936. Using the appropriate mortality rate for this group, we estimate that about 2.1 million died between the two elections.[12] This

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[10]The mortality rates used here may overestimate the mortality of the older subgroups of new voters and underestimate that of the established or pre-realignment voters. The mortality rates of the older subgroups of new voters are based on the assumption that they are older than those who were first eligible by age to vote in the particular election but that they otherwise have an age distribution like the total population. Given the simple logic that the opportunity to jump into the electorate for the first time presents itself at younger ages before older, the age distribution of the older subgroup of new voters ought to be somewhat younger than the general population. A younger population, of course, means a lower mortality rate. The mortality rate of the pre-realignment groups is perhaps somewhat underestimated because of underestimating its age. The pre-realignment voter is one who voted in 1924 or before. Certainly older voters, say those who were first eligible by age to vote in 1900, had more opportunities to vote before 1928 and were probably more likely to have done so than young voters who may have had their only opportunity to vote in the pre-realignment era in the 1924 election. Thus, to assume that the pre-realignment voters' age distribution is like the voting age distribution in the general public probably underestimates the age of pre-realignment voters. To underestimate this group's age is to underestimate its mortality rate. The precise impact of the misestimation of these mortality rates cannot be known without accurate information about the age composition of each group involved; however, the direction of the misestimations is known. Although one might suppose the impact to be slight, if there is any effect at all it would be to underestimate the number and therefore the contribution of mobilized voters and overestimate the number and contribution of converted voters.

[11]This estimate of the number of new voters in the 1932 electorate differs substantially from the estimate offered by Erikson and Tedin (1981: 955). They estimated 20 percent of the 1932 voters were new voters, fully 6 percentage points above the estimate made here. This amounts to a difference of more than 2.4 million voters. They correctly note that their estimate may be generous and that this overestimate only makes their case for the conversion hypothesis more difficult to defend.

[12]Pre-realignment voters were at least 33 to 36 years of age by the 1936 election. Using a minimum age of 35 years to simplify calculations, a mortality rate was computed from

leaves a total of 22.9 million pre-realignment voters in the 1936 electorate.

The second group of voters in the 1936 election, the new voters of 1928, are equal to the 9.2 million who survived to the 1932 election minus those who died between 1932 and 1936. Again because of the difference in mortality rates, this group must be divided into the young voters (21 to 24 years of age in 1928 and 29 to 32 years in 1936) and the remaining voters (at least 33 years old in 1936). Applying the appropriate mortality rates, about 65 thousand of the 3.4 million of the young category and nearly .5 million of the 5.8 million of the remaining new 1928 voters died between 1932 and 1936. This leaves 3.4 million young voters in this group and 5.3 million of the remaining voters among the new voters of 1928.[13] In short, the 1936 electorate contained 8.7 million voters who had voted for their first time in 1928.

The third group of voters in 1936, the new voters of 1932, must be divided into those who were between the ages of 21 and 24 in 1932 and those who were older. As in the case of the new voters of 1928, this division is necessary to estimate survival rates more accurately. Using the census estimates that about 8.6 million were between age 21 and 24 and that about 43 percent of this group voted in 1932, the young new voters of 1932 numbered about 3.7 million. Given the previous estimate of 5.5 million new voters in 1932, about 1.8 million new voters of 1932 were older than 25 years. Applying the appropriate mortality rates to the 3.7 million young and 1.8 million older new voters of 1932 reveals that about 50 thousand of the young subgroup and 140 thousand of the older subgroup died between 1932 and 1936.[14] Subtracting these from the ranks of the 1932 figures leaves about 5.3 million new voters of 1932 surviving to vote in 1936.

The final group of voters in 1936, the new voters of 1936, can now be estimated. A total of 45.6 million voted in 1936. Of this total, about 22.9 million were pre-realignment voters; about 8.7 million were the new voters of 1928; and about 5.3 million were the new voters of 1932. The remainder, about 8.7 million, were the new voters of 1936. In percentage terms, the 1936 electorate was 50 percent pre-realignment voters, 19 per-

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the age distribution of those over 35 years old and the corresponding mortality rate for the age subgroup. This weighted average mortality rate was 2,157 deaths per year per hundred thousand persons over 35 years old. This rate was then applied to the 25.0 million pre-realignment voters who voted in the 1932 election.

[13] The text indicates that 3.4 million of the young voters in this group voted in the 1932 election and the 1936 election. No decrease is evident in these figures because of the small number of deaths and the fact that the numbers are rounded to the nearest hundred thousand. The mortality rate used for the younger voters in this group was 480 deaths per year per hundred thousand; for the remaining voters who were at least 33 years old in 1936 it was 2,157 deaths per year per hundred thousand. Both of these rates were derived from population distributions in the age groups covered and by the corresponding mortality rate for those ages.

[14] The mortality rates were 370 per hundred thousand for the younger subgroup and 1925 per hundred thousand for the older subgroup. The mortality rate for the younger subgroup is the approximate rate of those who were 21 to 24 in 1932 and 25 to 29 in 1936. The mortality rate for the older subgroup is that for the general population over age 30.

cent new voters of 1928, 12 percent new voters of 1932, and 19 percent new voters of 1936.[15] These figures demonstrate that the American electorate's composition was significantly altered in the space of three elections. *Half of the voters participating in the 1936 election had not participated in an election before the realignment began.* The estimates for each cohort of voters participating in the 1924, 1928, 1932 and 1936 elections is summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1
NUMBER OF VOTERS IN COHORTS AT EACH ELECTION*

Election	Pre-Realignment (1)	1928 New Voters (2)	1932 New Voters (3)	1936 New Voters (4)	Realignment-Era (2 + 3 + 4) (5)	Total (1 + 5) (6)
1924	29.1 (100%)	—	—	—	—	29.1 (100%)
1928	27.0 (73%)	9.8 (27%)	—	—	9.8 (27%)	36.8 (100%)
1932	25.0 (63%)	9.2 (23%)	5.5 (14%)	—	14.7 (37%)	39.7 (100%)
1936	22.9 (50%)	8.7 (19%)	5.3 (12%)	8.7 (19%)	22.7 (50%)	45.6 (100%)

*The entries are in millions of voters. The percentages are   row percentages.

The Democratic Vote in the Electorate

The next step is to reconstruct the party preferences of each group of voters in each of the three realignment era elections.[16]

The Democratic preferences of the pre-realignment and new voter cohorts in the 1928 election are fairly easily obtained. They are measured directly by the *Literary Digest* poll of that year. By these data, Democratic

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[15]Our estimate for the new voters in the 1936 election is quite close to the rough estimate (20 percent) offered by Erikson and Tedin (1981: 955).

[16]This analysis, like that of Erikson, and Tedin, uses the vote as an indicator of partisanship rather than reported party identification. One reason for this measurement is that the party identification measure is not available for this period. However, one can argue that the vote measure is also in some ways preferable to the party identification measure. The important indicator of partisan change is the change in the voter's voting habits. Voting habits, whether one votes habitually for Democrats or Republicans, may differ from the vote in a particular election or from a party identification. In particular, one might expect a difference between party indentification and voting habits among converted voters. There may be a substantial lag between a change in habit and the willingness to admit and report the change of a long held party identification. If this is true, then an analysis that examines partisan change with a party identification measure may underestimate conversion effects. Of course the vote measure may not correspond to true partisan change since it encompasses a variety of transient political forces as well as partisanship. However, the average of votes over several elections may reduce the impact of these transient forces.

Presidential candidate Al Smith captured only 32 percent of the vote of pre-realignment voters but 47 percent of the new voters of 1928. These are the etimates used by Erikson and Tedin and correspond closely to those used by Andersen. These poll data, however, are not without problems. Logically one ought to be able to reconstruct the actual percentage of the 1928 Democratic voter from the Democratic vote of the pre-realignment and new voters of 1928 and the size of each group in the electorate. The 40.8 percent Democratic vote share ought to be equivalent to the weighted average of the 47 percent Democratic vote attributed to new voters and the 32 percent Democratic vote attributed to pre-realignment voters. How-ever, the weighted average of these two groups produces a Democratic vote of only 36.1 percent, fully 4.7 percent short of the actual vote. Although the error causing this shortfall could come from any element, it seems most likely that the error is in the estimated Democratic vote for the two groups rather than the size estimates of these groups or the actual reported national vote for the Democrats. Most probably, voters simply under-reported their votes for the losing Smith candidacy. Assuming that the underreporting was equally likely for both group of voters, thus preserv-ing the observed 15 percentage difference in Democratic support between the groups, corrected Democratic vote estimates may be calculated.[17] Cor-rected vote estimates, estimates that are consistent with the actual Demo-cratic vote, indicate that 36.8 percent of pre-realignment and 51.9 percent of new voters supported the Democratic candidate in 1928.

Arriving at the Democratic vote of the cohorts in the 1932 election is a bit more complex. The main piece of evidence is the *Literary Digest* poll results for new voters in 1932 and all other voters, these include pre-realignment voters and the new voters of 1928. The first step in moving from this evidence to estimates of the Democratic vote among the cohorts is to determine how well the poll results mesh with the actual vote. As in the analysis of 1928, the actual Democratic vote should be a weighted average of the Democratic vote in the groups. The weighted average using the *Literary Digest* figures overestimates the true vote, a weighted average of 59.4 percent and a true Democratic vote of 57.4 percent. In other words, Democratic loyalties in 1932 were overreported by 2 percentage points. Corrected estimates indicate that the new voters of 1932 gave 60 percent of their support to the Democrats and that pre-realignment and new voters of 1928 together gave 57 percent of their support to the Democrats.

The second step in estimating the 1932 vote is to disaggregate the Democratic votes of the pre-realignment and new voters of 1928. One assumption in the disaggregation of these preferences is that the 15 per-cent Democratic difference between the two groups of voters observed in

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[17]Corrected loyalty figures can be computed by adding the 4.7 percent to the original esti-mates. This is equivalent to solving the following equation: % Actual Dem. Vote = (% Dem. Vote of New Voters x % New Voters in Electorate) + (% Dem. Vote of Pre-Realignment Voters x % Pre-Realignment Voters in Electorate). Using actual figures: $40.8 = (x + 15)(.27) + (x)(.73)$, where x is the % vote for the Democrat among Pre-Realignment voters and (x + 15) is the % of vote for the Democrat among New Voters. The solution indicates that x = 36.75.

1928 is maintained in the 1932 election. That is, since the new voters of 1928 were 15 percentage points more Democratic than the pre-realignment voters in the 1928 election, the same relationship probably holds in the 1932 election.[18] With this assumption and previous estimates of the proportions of each group in the 1932 electorate, a simple algebraic equation can be written to decompose the 57 percent Democratic vote attributed jointly to the two groups. Where x is the percent Democratic vote among pre-realignment voters, the equation is: $57 = (x)(.73) + (x + 15)(.27)$.[19] Solving this equation produces a 53.0 percent Democratic vote among the pre-realignment voters and 68.0 percent Democratic vote among the new voters of 1928.

The final step in the analysis of the Democratic vote in 1932 is to combine the Democratic vote of new voters in 1928 and in 1932 into a single figure for all realignment era voters. Weighting the loyalty of each group by its size or proportion of this combined group, it appears that realignment era voters were 65.0 percent Democratic. Perhaps more to the point, realignment era voters were 12 percent more Democratic than pre-realignment voters in the 1932 election.

Democratic votes in the 1936 election can be estimated by the same process as that used in the 1932 election. The first step in this process is to examine the consistency of the poll results, the size of the cohorts and the actual vote total. For the 1936 election, Gallup poll data indicates that 59 percent of the new voters of 1936 and 60 percent of all other voters supported the reelection of the Democratic administration of Franklin Roosevelt. These data and the relative sizes of these two groups suggest that 59.8 percent of the 1936 vote was Democratic. The actual vote, however, was 60.8 percent Democratic. After correcting for this apparent 1 percent underestimation of the Democratic vote by the poll data, the new voters of 1936 were 60 percent Democratic and the remaining voters were 61 percent Democratic. These remaining voters, of course, encompass three groups: the pre-realignment voters, the new voters of 1928 and the new voters of 1932.

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[18]Andersen argues that estimates of conversion may be exaggerated (1979a: 66). She argues that the attrition of pre-realignment voters is not politically neutral, that the older pre-realignment voters were disproportionately Republican and had a higher mortality rate. If one does not take this into account, the disproportionate deaths of old Republicans might be interpreted erroneously as conversion. This entire point, however, rests on the premise that Republicans in the pre-realignment group were older than the Democrats. One might actually suppose the opposite. The 1896 election is commonly though of as an election in which Republicans strengthened their hold on the party system. If this is so, one might suppose that voters entering the electorate before 1896 were less Republican than those entering after that election. If this supposition is correct, the older cohorts (say in their 50's and 60's) at the outset of the New Deal realignment were actually less Republican than the middle-aged cohorts. However, lacking data to indicate the degree of any differences within the pre-realignment group, this analysis assumes that mortality in the group is politically neutral.

[19]The coefficients on the right-hand side of the equation are the proportion of pre-realignment (.73) and new 1928 voters (.27) in the 1932 electorate that were not new voters of 1932. As indicated in the text, the x plus 15 term is the loyalty of the new voters of 1928 in the 1932 election.

Given the preferences of new voters in 1936, the second step in the analysis of the 1936 Democratic vote is to decompose the vote of all other voters. The decomposition of this vote requires some assumptions about the relative Democratic loyalties of pre-realignment voters, new voters of 1928 and of 1932. From the analysis of the 1928 election we know that the new voters of 1928 were 15 percentage points more Democratic than pre-realignment voters (51.8 vs. 38.8 percent). From the analysis of the 1932 election we know that the new voters of 1932 were 7 percentage points more Democratic than pre-realignment voters (60 v. 53). These observed differences are assumed to exist also for the 1936 election. Using these assumptions and the distribution of voters in the three groups, the Democratic loyalties can be derived by solving the following simple algebraic equation: $61 = (x)(.617) + (x + 15)(.235) + (x + 7)(.148)$, where x is the 1936 Democratic vote of pre-realignment voters.[20] Solving this equation indicates that 56.4 percent of pre-realignment voters, 71.4 percent of new voters of 1928, and 63.4 percent of new 1932 voters supported the Democrats in 1936.

The final step in the analysis of Democratic loyalties in 1936 is to combine the Democratic vote of the three new voter categories into a single figure for all realignment era voters. A weighted average of the new voters of 1928, 1932, and 1936 indicates that realignment era voters gave 65.1 percent of their support to the Democrats. The Democratic vote for each cohort of voters participating in the 1924, 1928, 1932, and 1936 election is summarized in Table 2.

TABLE 2
DEMOCRATIC VOTE OF COHORTS AT EACH ELECTION

Election	Pre-Realignment (1)	1928 New Voters (2)	1932 New Voters (3)	1936 New Voters (4)	Realignment-Era (2 + 3 + 4) (5)	Overall Democratic (6)
1928	36.8%	51.8%	—	—	51.8%	40.8%
1932	53.0%	68.0%	60.0%	—	65.0%	57.4%
1936	56.4%	71.4%	63.4%	60.0%	65.1%	60.8%

The Contributions of Conversion and Mobilization

It is now possible to estimate the actual contribution of conversion and mobilization to partisan change at each of the three realignment era elections. The elements of conversion and mobilization effects and their contributions to partisan change are presented in Table 3. The first two

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[20]The percentages on the right-hand side of the equation are the proportion of all voters who had voted before 1936 in the pre-realignment, new voter of 1928 and new voter of 1932 categories. The first term is the contribution of pre-realignment voters to the 61 percent Democratic vote for this combination of groups. The second term is the contribution of new voters of 1928. The third term is the contribution of new voters of 1932.

TABLE 3
CONTRIBUTIONS OF COHORTS AT EACH ELECTION

	Size (1)	Democratic Vote (2)	Change from Pre-Realignment Normal Vote (3)	Percentage Contribution (3 x 1) (4)	Relative Contribution (5)
1928 Election					
Realignment Era	28%	51.8	14.3	3.9	115%
Pre-Realignment	73%	36.8	-.7	-.5	-15%
1932 Election					
Realignment Era	37%	65.0	27.5	10.2	52%
Pre-Realignment	63%	53.0	15.5	9.8	48%
1936 Elelction					
Realignment Era	50%	65.1	27.6	13.8	59%
Pre-Realignment	50%	56.4	18.9	9.5	41%

columns of the table, size and loyalty (i.e., Democratic share of the vote), simply summarize evidence already developed. Column three presents computations of the deviations of loyalty from the baseline of Democratic loyalty prior to the realignment, a constant of 37.5 percent. These loyalty changes are then weighed by the particular cohort's size to estimate how much of the national shift can be attributed to each cohort. These figures, the cohort's contribution to partisan change, are presented in terms of actual percentage point contributions in column four and in terms of their relative contributions for the particular election in column five.

The 1928 election showed only a small sign of electoral change, only a 3.3 percent gain in the Democratic vote over the pre-realignment normal vote. The evidence suggests that whatever change occurred in this election can be traced entirely to the new voters. The pre-realignment voters actually were slightly less Democratic than they had been traditionally.

The 1932 election showed stronger signs of change. The Democratic vote was about 16.6 percent more than it had been in 1928 and about 19.9 percent more than the pre-realignment normal vote. Conversion and mobilization seem to account nearly equally for this change, though for different reasons. About 9.8 percentage points of the 19.9 percent gain can be traced to pre-realignment voters. They voted 15.5 percentage points more Democratic than prior to the realignment period. Although possibly only an aberration, it might also be evidence of considerable conversion. What makes it particularly important is that it is a shift in a particularly large cohort. In 1932, more than three out of five voters were pre-realignment voters. While the contribution of the pre-realignment cohort depends substantially on its size, the contribution of realignment voters depends more heavily on the extent of their Democratic loyalty. Despite being only 37 percent of the voting public, realignment era voters contributed 10.2 percentage points to the 19.9 percent vote change. The basis of this contribution is clear: they were 27.5 percent more Democratic in their vote than were voters prior to the realignment.

In the 1936 election, the balance of mobilization and conversion effects tips again in the direction of mobilization. In this election the Democrats won 23.3 percent more of the vote than their pre-realignment normal vote. Of this gain, 13.8 of it came from realignment era cohorts and 9.5 from the pre-realignment cohorts. In relative terms, 59 percent of this gain was a consequence of mobilization and 41 percent was a consequence of conversion. By this point in the realignment, the groups were of nearly equal size. The difference in their contributions stems entirely from differences in their partisan loyalties. In 1936, realignment era cohorts were 8.6 percent more Democratic than the older pre-realignment voters.

The pattern of mobilization and conversion contributions in these three elections may seem erratic. Mobilization is all that occurs in 1928. Mobilization and conversion contribute equally to change in 1932. Conversion accounts for some change, but mobilization is the greater force in 1936. However, two clear trends underly these findings. One trend is obvious. The proportion of the pre-realignment voters diminishes and the ranks of realignment era voters expand with time. The second and countervailing trend is less obvious. The loyalty differences between the pre-realignment and realignment era voters declined over this period. They declined from a 15 percent difference in 1928 to a 12 percent difference in 1932 to an 8.7 percent difference in 1936. To the extent that the vote measures party loyalties, this decline apparently occurred while the Democratic loyalties of both sets of voters were increasing. This trend suggests that the changes in the loyalties of pre-realignment voters lagged behind changes of the realignment era voter.[21] Pre-realignment voters, having a voting history and habits built on that history, were slower to move away from their previous standing decisions. Realignment era voters, lacking a voting history and the accompanying habits, had little stake in past partisan divisions and, thus, could change partisan orientations more rapidly.

As indicated earlier, the analysis of the 1936 vote does not yield appropriate measures of the contributions of conversion and mobilization to the realignment. The Democratic vote in 1936 was substantially greater than the normal vote following the realignment. Estimates of the contributions of each cohort to the 1936 Democratic vote will exceed their actual contributions to partisan change. Reasonable estimates of each cohort's contribution can only be obtained if the post-realignment normal vote for

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[21] An alternative hypothesis can be offered to explain the apparent developmental sequence of partisan loyalties, the fact that the loyalty gap between pre-realignment and realignment era voters declined over the three elections. While the decline may in part be the result of a lag in conversion, it may also be a result of the earliest realignment cohort, the new voters of 1928, being largely comprised of Catholic immigrant voters. Although two-thirds of the new voters of 1932 were young voters, only about a third of the new voters of 1928 were between the ages of 21 and 24. One might suspect that a good portion of the remaining two-thirds, about 6.3 million, were immigrants activated by the candidacy of Al Smith, a Catholic. Moreover, one might also suspect that these immigrant voters were more Democratic than the younger new voters of 1928 (Petrocik 1981: 39). Thus, the pattern of a declining loyalty gap may be partially the spurious consequence of the selection of a Catholic candidate at the beginning of the realignment.

each cohort is estimated. This normal vote for each cohort can be calculated in the same manner as it was for the entire electorate, by calculating the group's average Democratic vote in the three realignment period elections. These calculations indicate that the post-realignment normal vote for the pre-realignment cohort was 48.8 percent Democratic. For the realignment era cohorts, the normal vote was 63.8 percent Democratic for the new voters of 1928, 55.6 percent Democratic for the new voters of 1932, and 52.3 percent Democratic for the new voters of 1936.[22] A weighted average of the normal vote of all three realignment era cohorts was 57.5 percent Democratic.

The overall contributions of mobilization and conversion to the realignment are now easily computed. First, the difference between pre-realignment and post-realignment normal votes are computed for both pre-realignment and realignment era voters. These differences are then weighted by the size of the group in the electorate. This is the absolute contribution of the group partisan change. This value can be divided by the total amount of partisan change to indicate the group's relative contribution to that change. These figures are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4
CONTRIBUTIONS OF MOBILIZATION AND CONVERSION TO REALIGNMENT

Cohort	Size (1)	Post-Realignment Normal Vote (2)	Difference of Post and Pre-Realignment Normal Votes (3)	Percentage Contribution (3 x 1) (4)	Relative Contribution (5)
Realignment Era Voters	50%	57.5	20	10.0	64%
Pre-Realignment Voters	50%	48.8	11.3	5.7	36%

This analysis indicates that of the 15.7 percent Democratic gain in the realignment, 10 percentage points were produced by the infusion of new voters into the process and 5.7 percentage points were produced by the conversion of voters to the Democratic party. In relative terms, nearly 64

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[22]Estimating the normal vote of the new voters of 1932 and 1936 presents a difficulty. These voters were by definition absent from at least one of the three elections used to calculate the normal vote. However, given known differences between these cohorts and pre-realignment voters, gaps in the data can be filled by predictions. Had the new voters of 1932 actually voted in 1928, we can predict that they would have voted 43.8 percent Democratic, 7 percent more Democratic than pre-realignment voters. Using this figure and the data from the 1932 and 1936 elections, the normal vote of the new voters of 1932 can be estimated at 55.6 percent Democratic. The data gaps in the case of the new voters of 1936 can similarly be filled in for purposes of calculating a normal vote. If these voters had voted in 1928 and 1932 and had maintained a 3.5 percent more Democratic orientation than the pre-realignment voters, they would have voted 40.3 percent Democratic in 1928 and 56.5 percent Democratic in 1932.

percent of partisan change was a result of mobilization and about 36 percent was a consequence of conversion.[23]

ALTERING ASSUMPTIONS

Throughout this analysis a number of assumptions have been made because of the nature of the data. While these assumptions are reasonable and derived from pertinent facts when possible, they are nevertheless assumptions and may lead to erroneous conclusions. For this reason it would be imprudent to place great faith in point estimates of conversion and mobilization. Consequently a rough confidence interval of conversion and mobilization was constructed by reanalyzing the data with two alternative sets of assumptions — one favorable to mobilization and another to conversion.

The alternative assumptions favorable to conversion include two changes from the initial assumptions. First, it is assumed that the number of pre-realignment voters may have been underestimated by as many as a million voters at the beginning of the realignment period. Second, it is assumed that the partisan differences between realignment era and pre-realignment voters observed in the poll data may not be precisely accurate. It is assumed that the gap is only 80 percent of the observed gap (e.g., the 1928 gap is 12 rather than 15 percent). Given these revised assumptions the estimate of conversion increases from 36 to 42 percent and the estimate of mobilization decreases from 64 to 58 percent.

Only a single assumption was revised to be more favorable to mobilization. Actual partisan differences between realignment era and pre-realignment cohorts were assumed to be twenty percent greater than the observed difference (e.g., the 15 percent gap in 1928 is presumed to be actually 18 percent). Using this assumption the estimate of mobilization increases from 64 to 67 percent and conversion decreases from 36 to 33 percent.

On the basis of these reanalyses one may feel quite confident that *mobilization accounted for 58 to 67 percent and conversion accounted for 33 to 42 percent of partisan change in the New Deal realignment.*

CONCLUSION

Mobilization, rather than conversion, was the dominant process responsible for partisan change in the New Deal realignment. The entrance of new voters into the electorate between 1928 and 1936 accounted

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[23]The estimate of mobilization and conversion contributions to partisan change in 1936 is quite close to the estimate alluded to by Andersen (1979b: 87). It is unclear exactly how she reached this estimate and even more unclear why she apparently neglected to discuss the 40 percent contribution of conversion. The estimate is quite different from that calculated in the Erikson and Tedin research. Whereas the calculations presented here indicate 59 percent mobilization and 36 percent conversion, Erikson and Tedin (1981: 956) estimate 18 percent mobilization (4.9 percent of the 27.7 percent change by their calculations) and, by implication, 82 percent conversion. The analytical problems in the Erikson and Tedin research that were noted earlier account for most of this discrepancy.

for only slightly less than two-thirds of the shift to the Democratic party. Two reasons account for the extent of mobilization effects. First, re-alignment era voters were simply more Democratic in their orientations than the pre-realignment voters. Despite declines in the Democratic gap between the pre-realignment and realignment era voters in each of the three successive elections, realignment era voters were in each election significantly more Democratic than their pre-realignment counterparts. Moreover, each of the new voter cohorts (i.e., the new voters of 1928, 1932 and 1936) were more Democratic than the pre-realignment voters. Second, the numbers of realignment era voters grew substantially. While one would naturally expect their ranks to grow, they grew so rapidly in the space of three elections that they composed fully half of the electorate by 1936.

In the debate over the sources of the New Deal realignment these findings confirm to a substantial degree the previous findings of Andersen (1979a and 1979b), Petrocik (1981) and others of the mobilization school. They significantly disagree with the conversion explanation offered by Erikson and Tedin (1981). The *Literary Digest* and *Gallup* poll data, used by Erikson and Tedin, when properly disaggregated, tells roughly the same story as the partisan recall data used by Andersen. The story is largely, though not exclusively, a story of mobilization.

Although mobilization effects accounted for the majority of the parti-san change, they should not completely overshadow the conversion pro-cess. Conversion also had a sizable impact on the realignment. It accounted for about 36 percent of the eventual change. Put another way, had there been no conversion, had the pre-realignment voters maintained their Democratic loyalty at the pre-realignment rate of 37.5 percent, the realignment would have shifted the normal vote to only 47.5 percent Democratic, short of a majority and nearly 6 percentage points less than the actual post-realignment normal vote. Of course, one may argue that this would only have meant a delay in the shift to the Democrats, that the shift would have been less abrupt without conversion but of no lesser magnitude. Nevertheless, conversion appears to have had an appreciable impact on partisan change during the New Deal realignment.[24]

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[24]It is quite likely that the absence of conversion would have had a sizeable impact on the 1932 and 1936 elections. Given that the post-conversion normal vote of the pre-realignment cohort was 48.8 percent Democratic, their 1932 vote was 4.2 percent above normal and the 1936 vote was 7.7 percent above normal. These figures can be used to approximate the short-term effects in these elections. If conversion did not take place, if their normal vote remained at 37.5 percent, the pre-realignment cohort's vote would have been about 41.7 percent Democratic in 1932 (37.5 plus the 4.2) and about 45.2 percent Democratic in 1936. Given this vote among pre-realignment voters, the Demo-crats would have received only 50.3 percent of the 1932 vote, about 7.1 percent less than they actually received. In 1936, they would have received just 55.2 percent of the vote, about 5.6 percent less than their actual total.

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