Explaining the Contemporary Alignment of Race and Party: Evidence from California’s 1946 Ballot Initiative on Fair Employment*

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Abstract: Virtually all blacks vote Democratic today, while most racially conservative whites vote Republican. On the dominant account, this realignment was set into motion when party elites chose divergent responses to demands for racial equality during the mid-1960s. Republican elites adopted racial conservatism, while Democratic elites chose racial liberalism, embracing "color-conscious" policies. The result was a "backlash" against the Democratic party and the migration of racially conservative whites into the GOP. This explanation rests on the assumption that Republican elites could have led their voters in a racially liberal direction. We investigate this assumption through the history of Proposition 11, a 1946 California ballot initiative that would have outlawed racial discrimination in employment and established a Fair Employment Practices Commission. Drawing on newly uncovered archival and statistical evidence, including a unique dataset of precinct-level returns, we find that Republican voters were much more likely than Democrats to oppose the initiative, despite Republican governor Earl Warren's support for fair employment practices. We conclude that postwar Republican voters may not have been responsive to elite signals that were racially liberal. Our findings cast doubt on the dominant explanation, and have implications for understanding the relationship between elites and masses in party competition.
INTRODUCTION

The past half-century has witnessed a substantial shift in the racial alignment of the two major U.S. parties. Millions of African Americans have entered the electorate, almost all as Democrats, while millions of white southern voters have switched from voting overwhelmingly Democratic to voting majority-Republican. At the same time, there has been a substantial exodus of northern, white, working-class voters out of the Democratic party. Many observers have characterized these erstwhile Democrats, not inaccurately, as “racially resentful” or “racially conservative.” Today, virtually all African Americans regularly vote Democratic, while most racially conservative whites cast ballots for Republican candidates or initiatives. Why did this voter alignment develop? Why has it persisted? Was it inevitable?

The dominant theory suggests that the current alignment of race and party was not inevitable; it was actually set into motion by the strategic choices of party elites during the mid-1960s. First promulgated by Edward Carmines and James Stimson in their landmark study, Issue Evolution, this theory begins with the premise that the mid-1960s was a critical juncture in American political history. Demands for racial equality were reaching a crescendo, and party elites had to respond. Under the leadership of President Lyndon Baines Johnson, Democratic elites chose to commit their party to the black freedom struggle, and the Democratic party soon became identified with racial liberalism, attracting the votes of white liberals as well as newly enfranchised African Americans. Even more crucial were the decisions of Republican elites, whose party was then in the minority. Mindful of their heritage as the party of Lincoln, Republican elites could have chosen a path of racial liberalism as well, continuing to compete for the votes of white liberals and African Americans by supporting a strengthened government role in safeguarding civil rights. But GOP elites instead embraced racial conservatism. Over the
years, Republican voters grew racially conservative and increasing numbers of “racially resentful” Democrats joined the ranks of the GOP. What eventually resulted from the strategic choices of party elites was the alignment of race and party that we know today.

This theory is extraordinarily influential, but rests on the general assumption that ideological and partisan divisions in the mass electorate were malleable enough to be molded by elite leadership. More specifically and crucially, it rests on the assumption that Republican elites could have led Republican voters in a racially liberal direction. How empirically valid is the assumption? This is a question of some significance. If there is evidence that the assumption is warranted, it would represent a powerful confirmation of the dominant theory. However, if the assumption is not warranted, then it would cast a degree of doubt on elite-led theories of politics, and it would encourage future scholars to look elsewhere to explain contemporary alignment of race and party. Despite the importance of the question, however, it has yet to receive sustained scrutiny, mainly because there are few known instances in which voters in a competitive, two-party system (i.e., outside the South) before 1964 were asked to decide a referendum about civil rights that was not sectionally specific (e.g., poll taxes or lynching).

This paper investigates the politics of one such instance in Proposition 11, a little-known but important California ballot initiative in 1946 that would have outlawed job discrimination and created a state Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) to enforce the law. Based on extensive archival research, as well as an analysis of precinct-level election returns, we find evidence that Republican voters were much more likely than Democrats to oppose Proposition 11, despite Republican governor Earl Warren’s vocal support for fair employment practices. We argue that Republican party leaders were more constrained by their constituents than the theory of issue evolution would imply, and we suggest that the contemporary alignment of race and
party is less contingent and more structurally determined than political scientists have thus far appreciated.

Our paper proceeds in four sections. The first second describes the conventional wisdom on the relationship between racial politics and voter alignment; offers some reasons for rethinking it; and suggests how Proposition 11 can be used to explore some plausible counterfactual alignments of race and party. A second section provides a brief historical sketch of the battle for fair employment in California. The third section describes our unique dataset of precinct-level election returns for the initiative itself as well as other statewide races in 1946. The dataset contains the universe of observations for 14,000 California precincts. We also report our results. Our empirical analysis of the data indicates that the core constituencies of the two parties were highly polarized on the initiative. A minimum of 60% of Democrats in heavily Democratic districts approved of Proposition 11, compared to a maximum of 15% of Republican in heavily Republican districts. Moreover, ecological analysis suggests that this partisan polarization was nearly as strong when we examine the behavior of all Democratic and Republican voters in the state as a whole. The final section discusses the implications of the study for understanding the relationship between elites and voters in party politics, as well as the importance of redistributive policies in shaping our contemporary alignment of race and party.

The Conventional Wisdom on Race and Party Alignment

In Issue Evolution, Carmines and Stimson argue that “the struggle over race….permanently rearranged the American party system.” What they term the issue evolution of race transformed American party politics through a complex but comprehensible process: party elites staked out different positions on racial policies; these changes helped clarify for the
masses the parties’ different approaches; and this clarity changed voters’ affect toward the parties, thus commencing the “mass alignment” we recognize today.³ Their influential interpretation is incredibly rich and compelling. Here, we stress three important features: its emphasis on elite agency, the belief in the radical contingency of alignments of parties and voters, and its reliance on a “white backlash” narrative of recent racial politics.

According to Carmines and Stimson, Democratic wins in the 1958 Senate elections—themselves contingent events—facilitated racially liberal Democrats’ pressure on President Johnson, as well as Goldwater’s rise to prominence in the Republican party. These twin changes, in turn, allowed 1963/1964 to be the “critical moment” of the issue evolution of race, as the two presidential candidates staked out highly divergent ground on the question of how the federal government would—if at all—attempt to ameliorate America’s racial inequalities.⁴

Before 1964, Carmines and Stimson claim, the two sides of the racial debate were “progressivism” and “racism.” Republican politicians were often highly supportive of civil rights policies in Congress and on the campaign trail. Many of the party’s leading lights actively sponsored anti-poll tax, anti-lynching, and pro-fair employment legislation. But in opposing the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Goldwater developed a new ideological species called “racial conservatism.” This began “as a minor adaptation from…general conservatism.” By offering this new ideological strain (and in concert with emboldened racial “liberals” on the Democratic aisle in Congress), Goldwater allowed the parties to begin acting—and seeming—highly different on race.⁵

Meanwhile, the Democratic party divided, often bitterly, between liberal northerners representing working-class white and black congressional districts, and reactionary southerners devoted to protecting the prerogatives of the region’s authoritarian enclaves.⁶ Party politicians
often equivocated in their support of civil rights; before 1964, the national party never committed itself fully to a broad legislative and executive program on civil rights. By strongly backing the Civil Rights Act (and the Voting Rights Act of the following year), Lyndon B. Johnson committed his party to the black freedom struggle, with dramatic consequences for the Democratic coalition: newly enfranchised southern blacks began to join the ranks of the party as disaffected white southerners left it.

By presenting voters “with a clear choice between major-party candidates holding sharply different positions on civil rights,” the 1964 presidential election “greatly clarified party images on race and citizens responded accordingly.” Soon, racial attitudes provided “a significant and stable element in the meaning of liberal/conservative political beliefs.” The sorting out of voters into parties that followed led to a self-reinforcing process of polarization among party identifiers in their racial attitudes.7

With the advent of Goldwater’s “southern strategy,” Republican politicians began appealing successfully to white southerners, beating a steady retreat from racial liberalism. The move did not succeed for Goldwater, but four years later, Nixon successfully pursued his own southern strategy; Reagan would perfect the technique in 1980. In a short period, Republican elites had succeeded in shepherding the Republican masses toward racial conservatism.

As Carmines and Stimson and many other commentators suggest, the loss of the white South might not have been a critical blow for the Democrats were it not for another contingent outcome: the “change in the civil rights agenda itself.” “That agenda,” according to the Thomas and Mary Edsall, “shifted away from an initial, pre-1964 focus on government guarantees of fundamental citizenship rights (such as the right to vote and the right to equal opportunity), and shifted toward a post-1964 focus on broader goals emphasizing equal outcomes or results for
blacks, often achieved through racial preferences.” The urban violence that peaked in 1967 and 1968 of course reinforced the GOP appeal. If the party had remained committed to color-blind policies, it might have survived the mass exodus of white southerners. Instead, however, the Democratic party threw itself behind color-conscious policies such as affirmative action and busing. Overall, the result was a far-reaching transformation. From Goldwater’s appeals to southern whites and George Wallace’s surprising successes in the north in 1964 and 1968, from Nixon’s “silent majority” to the birth of “Reagan Democrats,” a new voter alignment developed.

Voter Alignment as Elite-Led

As the narrative above suggests, party leaders occupy the driver’s seat of partisan change. Indeed, as Carmines and Stimson put it, “[t]he mass electorate…[i]s the environment of elite politics.” The “decisive importance” of the electorate is that it “chooses to respond (or more often not to respond) to new issues and new issue definitions.” The post-1964 voter alignment depended on an ongoing evolution among political elites in their position-taking on racial policies, which they view as driven primarily via the mechanism of replacement. As the quotation from the Edsalls’ also suggests, elite agency continued to shape the sorting of voters into parties after the fateful choices by Goldwater and Johnson; Democrats’ support of policies based on “equality of opportunity” sealed their party’s fate. In other veins of research, elite racial appeals are granted significant causal weight in explaining electoral outcomes.

Voter Alignment as Contingent

By “contingent,” we simply mean that Carmines and Stimson and other commentators consider our contemporary racial equilibrium as only one of many plausible outcomes. Each
possible issue evolution would “reshape the party system, replacing one dominant alignment
with another and transforming the character of the parties themselves.” But each such evolution
outcome had a very small chance of occurring. They sustain this argument empirically, as well.
As noted above, the critical moment in their story—the 1964 presidential election—was itself
contingent on a little-noticed change in the composition of the U.S. Senate following the 1958
midterms—the loss of non-southern Republican seats. This change emboldened race liberals in
the Democratic caucus, as well as racially conservatives across the aisle. In sum, although
Carmines and Stimson do not sketch other plausible patterns of party composition, the sorting of
voters into parties that did occur was a highly contingent outcome, something that “only appears
inevitable in hindsight.”

Voter Alignment as Fueled By “White Backlash”

The notion that a “backlash” enacted by angry white voters outside the South—usually
viewed as blue-collar “ethnics”—has become a dominant feature of the conventional wisdom on
the impact of racial politics on voter alignment. This narrative is now familiar to all political
observers. A key component of this narrative—and, indeed, the very concept of backlash—is
the belief that before the mid-1960s, whites outside the South were “on board” with local, state,
and federal policies designed to secure “equality of opportunity” for people of color. The
backlash idea thus helps explain the conventional wisdom’s claim of a sharp discontinuity in
American racial politics before and after the landmark civil and voting rights legislation of the
mid-1960s.

In sum, the conventional wisdom is viewed as a highly contingent, elite-led process
accelerated by a mid-1960s backlash by non-southern whites to the Democratic party’s perceived
approach to racial inequalities. In the hands of Carmines and Stimson, this view is advanced in impressive manner. Their ambitious and powerful theoretical framework illuminates the processes by which the growing polarization of the national parties on race and race policy produced a new voter alignment. Moreover, their argument relies on a wide array of survey data, party platforms, congressional roll-call analysis, and other data. This account, in sum, is sophisticated and compelling; any discussion of the topic is indebted to their research. Moreover, the importance of *Issue Evolution* extends beyond its account of race and party politics, as the concept has been applied to other issues, such as abortion and women’s rights.16

**Problems with the Conventional Wisdom**

A few elements of the conventional wisdom suggest that it warrants a closer look. First, its chronology may be disputed. As described above, the conventional wisdom rests on an understanding of the history of American racial conflict as sharply discontinuous around 1964. On this view, the non-South before 1964 did not feature electorally salient white resistance to racial equality. The wave of resistance that followed was sparked not by black demands (or, in a party-led view, party elites’ position-taking on) formal equality, but by excessive demands out of step with America’s liberal culture. Backlash narratives have been strongly challenged by historians.17 Examining racial inequality in the pre-1964 North, historians Arnold Hirsch and Thomas Sugrue find that Republicans opposed the passage of local and state civil rights laws, particularly on housing and employment. Hirsch and Sugrue also unearth substantial evidence of resistance to these laws among white northerners, even when the laws were cast in terms of equal treatment. Violence often accompanied this resistance, especially in urban areas. Their findings challenge two key tenets of the backlash thesis—that Republicans were champions of civil rights
in the 1940s and 1950s, and that northern whites resisted civil rights only after the rise of black power and race consciousness.18

In a study of the postwar campaign to regulate racial discrimination in employment, sociologist Anthony S. Chen draws parallel conclusions. Examining battles over congressional fair employment practices (FEP) legislation from the 1940s through the 1970s, he finds that conservative Republicans joined with southern Democrats at key moments to block the passage of race-neutral legislation that would have mandated equal treatment in employment and established a new federal regulatory agency with administrative enforcement authority. More important, he finds evidence that non-southern state legislatures before 1964 were far less likely to pass FEP laws if Republicans controlled a “veto point” in the legislative process—even when taking differences in public opinion into account. Indeed, fights over state FEP legislation in the 1940s and 1950s were the crucibles in which the key themes of “backlash” rhetoric—including the charge of “quotas” and preferential treatment—were initially forged.19 In sum, if no “backlash” occurred, but instead there existed a substantial continuity in white resistance outside the South, it is harder to sustain the belief that elite-led position-taking after the mid-1960s is the prime mover in voter alignment on race. And it calls into question the standard periodization of voter alignment in which historical time begins in the early 1960s.

The issue evolution perspective can also be challenged on theoretical grounds. First, it grants significantly more causal weight to elite choices than is normally given in accounts of cleavage formation and party competition. These accounts—whether advanced by political sociologists or political scientists—typically emphasize social structure and the timing of macro-historical processes, such as industrialization.20 Relatedly, it is unsatisfying to imagine that there are a vast number of possible sortings of parties and voters of various social groups. Indeed, it is
quite a dismal outcome if our accounts of electoral competition cannot provide more guidance. While it is of course true that ambitious politicians affect the timing and pace of partisan change, our theoretical priors suggest that the impact of social cleavages on electoral competition is not radically contingent on political processes. Regarding the U.S. case, the impressive continuity in partisan outcomes suggests that contingent elite decisions may be less important than the issue evolution view holds. John Gerring demonstrates such continuity in party ideology, and Larry Bartels’ recent research suggests that there is a good deal more continuity in the New Deal coalition over the past seventy years than has been appreciated.21

Scholars have also begun to question the dominance of elites in public opinion formation. This presumption drives the entire issue evolution model. However, Taeku Lee finds that public opinion on racial politics was shaped much more by grassroots mobilization and less elite-led than previously thought. Significantly, he also finds that this bottom-up process shaped the position-taking of party elites.22 Besides the constraints on elite agency in shaping public opinion, scholars of party politics also emphasize the ways in which coalition-building imperatives and the power of organized interests narrow party elites’ room for maneuver.23

Thus, while this body of related work give us reason to question the conventional account of the timing and elite impetus of the current racial alignment, what we take to be the most theoretically compelling feature of the standard account remains untested. The central, and most general, implication of this conventional wisdom is that different elite choices could have resulted in different outcomes. However, Carmines and Stimson do not speculate about what types of choices might have resulted in different partisan alignments by race. At one point in their narrative, they do entertain the possibility that elite position-taking may be constrained by mass attitudes. In discussing how Republican elites before 1960 were restrained in their position-
taking on racial matters, they mention that these elites were “severely constrained in moving rightward” by a Republican self-image as the Party of Lincoln. However, they do not imagine how these elites could be constrained from moving leftward on race.\textsuperscript{24} It is, of course, difficult to assess the plausibility of counterfactual alignments that never occurred. But this is precisely what is needed to evaluate the central claim of the conventional wisdom—that the alignment we live with today could have turned out differently.

**Counterfactual Alignments of Race and Party**

If the conventional wisdom is correct, we should be able to ponder other plausible sets of choices by party politicians in the postwar period and suggest the alignments they might have engendered. Otherwise, an alternative perspective—that the alignment we have today was effectively structurally determined by class cleavages—would still be a live option.

We contend that there was not a limitless number of plausible scenarios by which elite choices on racial politics could generate party alignments. This view is based on the multifaceted nature of the demands for racial equality and their interaction with the class status of black Americans. After outlining this view, we argue that there were (and remain) serious logical constraints on the room for maneuver of Republican party leaders in position-taking on race. We then describe the most realistic scenario and suggest how to test its plausibility.

First, when considering the types of positions party elites might have staked out on the issue of race, it is necessary first to distinguish among three different types of demands for racial equality. Historically, blacks and their supporters have made demands on the polity for civic, social, and material equality. Regarding civic equality, blacks have called for securing permanent, first-class citizenship. This was articulated most forcefully in demands for suffrage,
but civic equality also relates to fair treatment by law enforcement, service on juries, and other matters of legal standing. Second, blacks have demanded social equality—equal standing in the public sphere. This has meant the cessation of formal and informal arrangements restricting black access to park benches, beaches, workspaces, schools, lunch counters, and even bedrooms.

Third, blacks have demanded material equality, or, at the very least, a massive reduction in racial inequality of material endowments. From the days of the Freedman’s Bureau to the New Deal to the Great Society to contemporary discourse on reparations, blacks and their supporters have called for redistributions of America’s wealth.25

These three types of demands for racial equality have never been directed only at the U.S. state. But the state is implicated in each of them, from safeguarding voting rights to regulating education policy to opening state coffers. Given the seemingly permanent status of blacks as substantially poorer than whites, black demands for racial equality will likely always mean demands for redistribution. In this sense, the dimensions of race and the traditional left-right dimension are never fully orthogonal. In other words, the politics of race will always invoke the traditional, left-right dimension of modern politics.26 The organized interests and parties that demand racial equality will, ultimately, be calling for the intervention of the central state apparatus27 in the operation of markets.28 This fact suggests real constraints on Republican party leaders, past and present, in forcefully backing most calls for racial equality.

With these claims in mind, let us now imagine a few possible scenarios in postwar racial politics. By the end of World War II, it was clear that the black freedom struggle had reached a point of no return; all national politicians would be forced to reckon with a myriad of black demands on the polity.
In the first scenario, Republican politicians take the lead in calling for black civic equality, and their voters follow them. Democratic politicians follow on race, but only manage to split the racially liberal vote. This scenario, which would have effectively taken the issue of civic equality off the table, may seem plausible. After all, the Republican party traditionally was the home of white politicians who supported black suffrage during and after Reconstruction. The question, though, is whether the party, in a full-throated way, could have championed black suffrage after World War II without going on to call for black social and material equality. It seems unlikely that blacks and their white supporters within the party would have agreed not to make these further demands. Moreover, if these constituencies refused to put these concerns material concerns aside, Republicans could have found themselves with neither racially conservative voters, who would be alienated by their support for civil rights, nor black voters, who would find their stance on formal racial equality acceptable, but the pull of Democratic economic policy stronger.

In the second scenario, Republican leaders would have endorsed both civic and social equality but not material equality while Democratic elites would have remained committed to white supremacy. If the Democratic party had hewed to this position then the cross-pressures on black voters – a choice between a racially liberal and economically conservative Republican party and a mirror-image Democratic party—might have made the Republican strategy electorally tenable. However, there is good evidence that the Democrats’ ideological commitment to inclusion generally was locked in after the 1930s raising doubts about this scenario. Moreover, much earlier than the 1960s, there were already strong elements within the Democratic coalition committed jointly to racially and economically progressive policies,
making this alignment unlikely. The bottom line is that it is hard to imagine a Democratic party holding to this fully racially conservative position.

In the third scenario, Republican leaders would lead on all three types of racial equality, and their voters would follow. Democrats would be equally solicitous towards racial minorities, and the loyalties—and votes—of blacks would be split between the parties. Policies designed to reduce material inequality might range from housing and health care to education, jobs and job training, to income transfers. For the reasons suggested above, it is likely that the party backing any one claim for racial equality would come to embrace all three. Thus, at issue here is the likelihood that leaders of the Republican party—the party of free enterprise—would back black demands for redistribution and their constituents would follow them. Historically, this seems unlikely. After all, after the 1890s, Republican legislative proposals relating to black America were either highly cynical (since they knew southern members would defeat them) or did not involve redistribution (anti-poll tax legislation, anti-lynching, and so on). Still, if we accept the issue evolution view that Republican party leaders could have positioned the party differently, and accept that the party that welcomed blacks and white liberal clients would ultimately be forced to support redistributive proposals, then it seems that this third scenario is the most plausible counterfactual set of elite choices and voter alignments. If we find evidence that Republican voters would not follow their leaders in this sense, then both features of the conventional wisdom—its emphasis on elite agency and its claim of contingent outcomes—are placed in doubt.
Testing the Conventional Wisdom

Assessing the plausibility of this third scenario is difficult, but not impossible. There are a few requirements of such a test. First, there should be a political contest in which prominent Republican leaders staked out a racially liberal position. Second, following the ‘backlash’ narrative of Carmines and Stimson, the contest should be outside the South and take place before the early 1960s. Third, ideally the contest would be a plebiscite, so that we could examine voter choice by party on an election or referendum that was clearly about a single issue of racial policy. Fourth, to test the third scenario above, the policy in question should have ramifications for state expansion or redistribution in order to find evidence of Republican voters’ willingness to compromise on the party’s traditional ideological commitments. 1940s California provides an excellent test along these lines.

Proposition 11, a 1946 California ballot initiative, involved the prohibition of racial and religious discrimination in employment and mandated the creation of a state Fair Employment Practice Committee (FEPC) to enforce the law. It was closely identified with the state’s most powerful Republican party leader, the wildly popular Governor Earl Warren. As a single-issue referendum, it is ideal. Fair employment is, with fair housing, one of two civil rights issues that is unlikely to trigger the sectional biases activated by issues like education, lynching, and other issues associated with Jim Crow segregation. Additionally, in its call for the development of a new state regulatory apparatus and the intervention of the state into the workplace, Proposition 11 serves as an excellent test of party leaders’ ability to convince their constituents to overcome their traditional antipathy to state regulation of markets. As we detail below, some features of California’s political environment place important limits on the inferences we can draw from an
analysis of voting patterns of Proposition 11. However, it does provide an excellent opportunity to begin to test the merits of the conventional wisdom.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Proposition 11 remains unknown among most scholars outside of historians of twentieth-century California. But its important features make it useful for investigating the key tenets of Carmines and Stimson’s account of how elite leadership on racial issues shaped today’s electoral realignment. This section sketches out the political history of Proposition 11 and highlights selected facts of the case that are theoretically relevant.

The National Context

The impetus for Proposition 11 began to emerge at the end of the Second World War, when Roosevelt’s Fair Employment Practice Committee (FEPC) started faltering under pressure from a cross-party, conservative coalition in Congress. The committee had been created in 1941 after A. Philip Randolph—head of the all-black Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters—threatened to stage a massive march on Washington to protest black exclusion from the national defense program. In response, FDR established the FEPC and gave it the responsibility of monitoring job discrimination in war-related industries. The committee quickly garnered political support from liberals hoping to expand the role of the federal government in addressing racial and religious inequality, particularly in the labor market. But the FEPC also sparked substantial ire on the part of conservatives, despite the fact that it lacked any formal enforcement authority. Economic conservatives, such as Sen. Robert A. Taft (R-OH), considered the committee a dubious symbol of government interference in the private sector and a gross abridgement of management’s prerogative to hire and fire whomever it pleased.
conservatives, like many southern Democrats, perceived it as a major threat to the racial and economic order of their region, which depended crucially on a racially segregated labor market. By 1945, conservatives had succeeded in defanging the committee; they had obstructed attempts to put the committee on statutory footing, slashed its appropriations, and ordered its liquidation by the next year.33

In response to their dimming prospects on Capitol Hill, liberals turned their attention to the states. Justice Brandeis had famously likened states to the laboratories of democracy, and his metaphor furnished the basic insight of their strategy. If liberals could convince some states to pass fair employment practice (FEP) laws, then perhaps they could generate wider momentum for nationwide legislation.

The first breakthrough came in 1945, when an interracial and interfaith coalition of liberals won the passage of New York’s Ives-Quinn law, which prohibited racial and religious discrimination and established a powerful enforcement agency. Although the final tally of votes was lopsided in both chambers—only a few upstate Republicans cast their ballots against the bill—victory did not come easily. A major revolt among Republican legislators had thrown the outcome in doubt. Rank-and-file Republicans professed abhorrence of discrimination, but most claimed that any attempt to “legislate tolerance” would only lead to special treatment for racial and religious minorities, and exacerbate racial divisions. The insurgency among Republican members was remarkably broad-based and energetic. It faded only after Republican governor Thomas E. Dewey threw his weight behind the bill and liberals mobilized grassroots support of unprecedented proportions, culminating in a dramatic showdown at a legislative hearing in Albany.34 Still, it was a distinctly hopeful moment for liberalism. Ives-Quinn was everything
they had wanted. The battle over “fair employment practices” would certainly be hard-fought, but passing a law was no longer manifestly impossible.

**Earl Warren and FEPC Legislation in California**

Three thousand miles away, liberals in the California Assembly were immersed in their own campaign for a state FEP law. They took eager note of Ives-Quinn, whose passage had been widely reported across the state (LAT, March 15, 1945, 2; *ibid.*, April 5, 1945, A4; Hawkins 1988: 132). Perhaps it would help them extract their own FEP bill from the Republican-controlled Assembly Committee on Governmental Efficiency and Economy. That bill had been introduced in January by a bipartisan, interracial group of urban legislators, led by the perspicacious state Representative Augustus F. Hawkins of south-central Los Angeles (*Assembly Final History* 1945, 178). It was not hard to understand the strategy of Hawkins and his allies. Demand for protection from job discrimination ran highest in their districts, which had experienced a wartime boom in industrial production and a massive influx of African Americans looking for work. Many such districts were also witnessing a surge of labor organizing by unions affiliated with the Congress of Industrial Organizations, and African Americans were among their most important constituencies. For a brief time, it seemed that the passage of Ives-Quinn had expanded the horizons of political possibility in California politics. Hawkins and his allies successfully pried their bill loose from the Committee Efficiency and Economy and set to work on bringing it to the floor. But the bill was quickly referred to the Republican-dominated Assembly Committee on Ways and Means, which failed to report it out (*Assembly Final History* 1945, 178; Chen forthcoming). All further attempts to obtain a floor vote failed (*Los Angeles
Times, June 14, 1945, 2). It seemed that California’s experiment with civil rights would have to wait.

It did not have to wait long. California’s legislature normally met in odd-numbered years, but Republican governor Earl Warren called a special session in 1946, hoping to pass a program that would enable the state to meet the myriad challenges of demobilization. Along with full employment and health insurance, fair employment practices legislation formed a centerpiece of his plan. This was not wholly surprising. Warren was a Republican cast from a liberal mold. In 1948, he would become the vice-presidential running mate of New York’s Dewey—another prominent liberal Republican—in his ill-fated bid for the White House. Warren’s avowed support for FEP nonetheless represented something of a departure for him. He had supported a study commission the previous year (LAT, June 14, 1945, 2; ibid., June 18, 1945, 2), but his proposal never made it out of committee. Despite the failure, he was evidently prepared to go much further in 1946, publicly endorsing and strongly prioritizing a bill that was nearly identical to Ives-Quinn (LAT, December 13, 1945, 1; ibid., January 6, 1945, 2; ibid., January 8, 1946, 1, 8; Beach Vasey to Earl Warren January 14, 1946, F3640:8401, EW-CSA).

Party calculations figured considerably in Warren’s change of heart. As early as 1945, his main legislative aide, Beach Vasey, had warned him that the GOP was continuing to lose ground among black voters in California. Vasey was reporting back about a meeting he had held with a well-known trio of black Republicans, who impressed upon him that “negro voters have been so thoroughly sold on the advantage of an FEPC that such a measure should be amended into your bill.” All three believed that Warren’s educational commission would prove the “more important bill” for race relations in the long term, but they cautioned Vasey that “Assemblyman Hawkins is making so much capital of his FEPC bill that he is solidifying the present Democratic swing
among the negro voters” (Beach Vasey to Earl Warren, F3640: 6100, February 28, 1945, EW-CSA). A fellow Republican—and chairman of a Statewide FEPC Petition Committee—made the same point several months later, urging Warren to throw his full weight behind a FEPC law. Any failure to take strong action would mean “goodbye to the Republican Party in California as far as the Negro goes” (William Nickerson, Jr., to Earl Warren, September 7, 1945, F3640: 8452, EW-CSA).36

If their message made a definite impression on him, he nonetheless proceeded with characteristic caution. Warren began by asking his legislative aides to carry out a comprehensive review of California laws to determine whether a similar measure would be appropriate for the state (Beach Vasey to Thomas E. Dewey, March 15, 1945, F3540: 3656, EW-CSA; Beach Vasey to Earl Warren, March 24, 1945, ibid.; J. Welsh to Beach Vasey, March 23, 1945, ibid.). Another trusted advisor, Walter A. Gordon, was dispatched to New York and New Jersey in order to interview their top officials and determine whether their anti-discrimination statutes were legally and operationally sound. The research led to mixed counsel. Gordon recommended the passage of a law along the lines of Ives-Quinn, which he considered more administratively sound than New Jersey’s law (Walter A. Gordon to Earl Warren, November 29, 1945, F3630: 8452, EW-CSA). But advisor Thomas Coakley voiced a common concern that FEP legislation of any kind would “aggravate rather than solve problems” (Beach Vasey to Earl Warren, December 18, 1945, F3640: 8452, EW-CSA). It would be up to Warren to make a final decision.

Electoral considerations won out in the end, and Warren decided to back a strong bill for the 1946 session. Yet he had tremendous difficulty finding someone who would introduce it into the Assembly on behalf of his administration. At least four Republicans privately rejected his overtures (Beach Vasey to Earl Warren, January 14, 1946, F3640: 8452, EW-CSA). Their
reluctance proved prescient. Raup Miller (R-Santa Clara) eventually agreed to sponsor Warren’s bill, but it met a quick defeat in February. Though it managed to escape the Governmental Efficiency Committee, it lost by a 10-6 vote in the Republican-controlled Ways and Means Committee (LAT, February 16, 1946, 2), which refused to report the bill. Warren’s careful preparations had amounted to naught, and he would have to find another way to compete for black ballots.

The same fate had befallen other FEP proposals during the special session. Not to be outdone by Warren, liberals had introduced two FEP proposals. One was sponsored by Hawkins (D-Los Angeles), Edward J. Carey (R-Alameda), Kathryn T. Niehouse (R-San Diego), and William Rosenthal (D-Los Angeles); it was essentially the same bill that had been buried in the previous session. The other was sponsored by John W. Evans (D-Los Angeles). Neither of them made it further than Warren’s bill. The bill pushed by Hawkins and his allies found itself tabled by the Republican-controlled Governmental Efficiency Committee by a 10-7 vote (LAT, January 18, 1946, A4), while the other bill fared even worse. It was clear that committees dominated by Republicans would not report a FEP bill, no matter who was backing it.

The Politics of Proposition 11

Hawkins and his allies had anticipated as much, and a contingency plan was already in motion by the time it became clear that the special session would not yield any FEP legislation. At the end of 1945, Hawkins and other liberals had launched a grassroots campaign to place a FEP referendum on the 1946 ballot (“Group Maps Plan for FEPC Initiative Campaign,” California Eagle, Nov. 11, 1945). A coalition of interest groups was beginning to circulate a statewide petition, hoping to collect the three-hundred thousand signatures required to qualify a
referendum for the ballot (“The Truth about the FEPC Bill,” California Eagle, February 21, 1946). Among the most active groups in the campaign were the Los Angeles, San Francisco, and State CIO Councils; San Francisco Lawyers Guild; Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Regional Offices of the NAACP; San Francisco Council for Civic Unity; and the San Francisco Council of Churches. The ongoing failure of FEP legislation in Sacramento only intensified their efforts. This supportive coalition would have to take fair employment practices directly to the people of California.

The referendum, labeled Proposition 11, touched off a firestorm of controversy. Hyperbole abounded on both sides of the issue. “To the minority groups,” wrote the enthusiastic editors of the California Eagle, a statewide black newspaper, “it will be salvation. It will be a gate opening into a Paradise of freedom from the hell of discrimination practices against Negroes, Catholics, Mexicans, and others [for] so many years” (California Eagle, October 11, 1947, 7). Critics were no less guilty of exaggeration. Employers warned that the state agency established by Proposition 11 would make enable racial minorities to wrest jobs away from hard-working Americans: “anybody believing himself held back by his color, his race, his religion, his national origins, or his ancestry needs only to complain. The commission could force him into your job”.37 Opinions about Proposition 11 were strongly held.

Warren’s position on this measure was ambiguous. Although he remained a strong backer of fair employment practice legislation, he never made public his views on Proposition 11. Basic credit-claiming was the simplest reason why. How could he claim to have exercised leadership on civil rights if he merely threw his support behind a campaign led by a partisan competitor? But he also had substantive concerns. Privately, he had been advised by Vasey that the two measures posed a “real difference” in the way that “judicial review” was handled (Beach Vasey
to Earl Warren, October 10, 1946, F3640: 8854, EW, CSA). Proposition 11 limited judicial review to *certiorari* in the district court of appeals; prohibited judicial injunctions against the enforcement agency; and restricted the kinds of court orders that judges had the discretion to issue. These problems were plainly evident in the wording of the initiative itself, but Warren nevertheless avoided taking sides in public. As late as mid-October, observers wondered why Warren had not spoken up (Verne Scoggins to F.A. Ferguson, October 15, 1946, F3640: 8854, EW, CSA). Only after the initiative went down to defeat did Warren express his agreement with Vasey’s concerns. The court procedure, as he wrote to one Californian, was simply too deficient to warrant his endorsement (Early Warren to Felix A. Manley, December 13, 1946, F3640: 8854, EW, CSA). Yet he insisted that a proposal along the lines of Ives-Quinn would have enjoyed a “much better showing” than Proposition 11 (Earl Warren to Felix A. Manley, December 13, 1946, F3540: 8854, EW-CSA). If the initiative had envisioned a proper and robust role for the courts, it might have garnered more electoral support.

There is little evidence to suggest that Warren was correct in his belief. Complex questions about judicial review simply did not figure centrally among the criticisms of Proposition 11. It is easy to understand why a former District Attorney for Alameda County—and the future Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court—would ground his objections in the arcane details of regulatory design. But even the most politically sophisticated elites had more basic concerns about FEP laws, whether they were established by statute or referendum. When the members of the 16th Assembly District Republican Club passed a resolution opposing an FEP bill in 1945, they worried that any such legislation would “aggravate the problem and injure the people it is proposed to protect.” They were convinced that the “best cure” for the problem entailed “education and enlightenment of the general public” (Charles W. Fisher to Earl Warren,
April 2, 1945, F3640: 7769, EW-CSA). San Francisco mayor, Roger D. Lapham, similarly argued that “man-made laws”—or what he labeled the “compulsory method”—was decidedly “not the right way to deal with a human relations problem of this kind.” Instead, “[e]ducation—the cultivation of tolerance, and the effort to understand the other man’s viewpoint is a much more effective approach than legal compulsion” (Roger D. Lapham to Earl Warren, May 23, 1945, F3640: 7769, EW-CSA). The most legalistic attacks came when Kyle Palmer, columnist for the Los Angeles Times, claimed that Proposition 11 would become a “legal straightjacket” for California (LAT, August 25, 1946, A4). Palmer was concerned that the statewide commission would unwisely fuse the functions of judge, jury, and executioner into one entity; he also argued that the passage of Proposition 11 would all but eviscerate the right to trial by jury.

Neither did the powerful California Chamber of Commerce (CCC) specifically mention judicial review when it decided in September to declare its opposition to Proposition 11. Board directors offered numerous other reasons for their decision (Minutes, September 6, 1946, 5, Folder: 1946-1947, Box 2242, CCC-CSL). The most important among them was the argument that it was “not possible to legislate prejudice and intolerance out of people.” Any attempt to do so would backfire—and exacerbate rather than reduce discrimination. But board directors also expressed the concern that the initiative targeted “wrong parties—that is, at the employer.” The target should not be employers but “those whose prejudices actually cause unfair employment practices,” by which they meant to implicate unions. The closest that the CCC came to a legalistic critique was the claim that the initiative would lead to the “destruction of certain constitutional rights of employers.” As one official would later clarify to the press, Proposition 11 would “[a]uthorize imposition of critical penalties without trial by jury, one of our most valued constitutional rights” (LAT, October 11, 1946, 2).
The mass public seemed equally unconcerned about judicial review. The branch manager for a sign company based in Los Angeles wrote Warren to ascertain his “attitude toward the FEPC bill.” It was unclear whether he was referring to the three bills in the legislature (which had long since died in committee) or Proposition 11, but he was clearly a critic. “We cannot understand,” he wrote, “how any American could approve of setting up another Government snooping bureau to force employers to hire a certain percentage of Negroes, Japs, Hindus” (F.A. Ferguson to Earl Warren, October 14, 1946, quoted in Chen, forthcoming). A lengthy pamphlet authored by the Women of the Pacific, a statewide right-wing organization, offered eighteen well-elaborated reasons to oppose Proposition 11. Its inadequate provision for judicial review was only one of these, and it was listed seventh—behind “Employer Would Be Helpless,” “Soviet Formula,” “Branding Employers as Criminals,” “You Would Be A Lawbreaker,” “The Dragnet,” and “Propaganda of Hate.” (Women of the Pacific, “Employers! FEPC IS On Your Doorstep!” n.d. [circa 1946], F3540: 8854, EW-CSA). After the defeat of Proposition 11, another resident of Los Angeles, J.M. Whitley, did not bother to remark on how the integrity of judicial review had been preserved. Instead, he wanted to make a different point: “Th[e] overwhelming vote against proposition 11 means that the people of this state want no kind of action forcing negroes upon then. It means that the people of California realize that negroes simply constitute a blight upon an otherwise nearly perfect area” (J.M. Whitley to Earl Warren, January 8, 1947, F3640: 3657, EW-CSA).38

Since 1945, it had been clear that Warren was a strong supporter of “fair employment practices”—and since 1946 that he was a strong supporter of FEP legislation. There was no shortage of articles throughout the winter clearly and correctly reporting his position. “Governor Warren Set to Back FEPC” proclaimed one ecstatic article in the Los Angeles Sentinel, southern
California’s biggest black newspaper (Los Angeles Sentinel, November 29, 1945, 5). When the governor spoke about his reconversion program before the legislature, he singled out FEP legislation for special mention (California Senate Journal, 1946). The state’s most influential paper, the Los Angeles Times, carried front-page articles reporting the speech, and his support for fair employment practices was accorded prominent mention (LAT, January 8, 1946, 8). And when Warren’s FEP bill was defeated in February, it made bold headlines again: “‘FEPC’ Measure Killed by Assembly Committee.” The article itself clearly identified Warren as the most powerful figure supporting the referendum: “The defeat gave Gov. Warren victory in only one of the three social measures he proposed this session” (LAT, February 16, 1946, 2). While Hawkins was the elected official most closely identified with Proposition 11, Warren’s support for FEP legislation 1946 clarified in voters’ minds the position of the state’s most popular politician.

Proposition 11 went down to a “smashing” defeat in November (Oakland Tribune, November 6, 1946, 1), collecting only 675,697 out of the 2,358,343 votes (State of California Statement of Vote, General Election, November 5, 1946), or only 29% of the ballots cast. Its failure greatly strengthened the hand of the conservative Republicans that dominated relevant Assembly and Senate committees.39 They succeeded in obstructing FEP legislation for more than ten years afterward, despite repeated campaigns by the liberal coalition. Only in 1959 did the Golden State manage to enact a FEP law. The newly elected Democratic governor, Edmund G. Brown, had made it a major pledge in his gubernatorial bid, and his party controlled both chambers of the legislature—marking the first time in the twentieth century that Democrats controlled both the legislature and governor’s office. It was little surprise to perceptive observers that the bill passed without substantial delay.
The battle over Proposition 11 can serve as a fruitful case for exploring the conventional
wisdom about how elite leadership on racial issues contributed to electoral realignment. The
ideal test case would have involved a state in which the Republican leadership campaigned
aggressively for a ballot initiative establishing a FEPC. But the history of Proposition 11 is
nonetheless analytically useful. On the most important criterion there can be little doubt: Warren
was a Republican politician who was strongly and publicly associated with a racially liberal
position on “fair employment practices.” Not only did he support the principle of equal
treatment, but he also supported strong legislation—almost identical to legislation that Dewey
successfully pushed through the Albany statehouse in the previous year. It is also worth
reiterating that Warren enjoyed enormous popularity. He was not just any elected official, but the
most popular politician in California, having served first as attorney general for a term before
convincingly winning the gubernatorial race against Culbert L. Olson in 1942. In fact, Warren’s
popularity extended across the country; he was the favorite contender for the vice-presidential
nomination in 1944 and might have easily landed it, but he took himself out of the running.40

Hence the voting behavior of the California electorate on Proposition 11 is still highly
informative. It may have gone down to a massive defeat, but what exactly was the partisan
breakdown of the vote? More precisely, what fraction of Republican voters supported
Proposition 11? How did their support compare with Democratic voters? Were they more likely,
less likely, or equally likely to support it than the average Democrat? The theoretical stakes of
the question are important. If it is true that Republicans voted for the Proposition 11 in greater
proportions than Democrats—or even in equal proportions—then the account propounded by
Carmines and Stimson would receive further support. It is plausible that Republican party leaders
could have built a viable electoral coalition around racial liberalism. This, in turn, would
necessarily imply that the strategic choices of party elites about race and civil rights were
decisive in shaping the course of electoral realignment. On the other hand, if Republican support
for Proposition 11 is low—in absolute and relative terms—then it is implausible that Republican
elites could have build a racially liberal coalition. Their mass public would not have permitted
them. Similarly, if elements of the Democratic coalition showed substantial support for the ballot
measure, it is harder to envision an alignment in which the Democratic elite remained committed
to white supremacist policies that would open up a wedge allowing Republicans to attract black
voters without advancing the cause of material equality. Indeed, as Republican support for
Proposition 11 falls, so does empirical support for the conventional wisdom.

ANALYSIS OF VOTING ON PROP. 11

Data

We collected all of the available precinct level data from the 1946 statewide election in
which Proposition 11 was considered. This consisted of observations from 14,909 precincts
across 56 California counties, aggregating the results from 2,336,068 individual ballots. To
gauge the partisan balance of each precinct we used the results of a US Senate race between
Knowland (R) and Rodgers (D) and the Lieutenant Governor race between Knight (R) and
Shelley (D). The Republican candidates won these races by similar margins, and in the precincts
in our sample both received 55% of the two-party vote. In our subsequent analysis we use the
Democratic share of the two-party vote in the Lieutenant Governor’s race to measure the
partisanship of a precinct, and often simply refer to precincts as more “Democratic” or
“Republican” based on this measure.
Figure 1 presents a scatter plot of this data with support for Proposition 11. There are two broad patterns in the figure worth commenting on before deepening out analysis further. First, there appears to be a strong positive relationship between the Democratic proportion of precincts and their level of support for the ballot measure. Second, it is evident that Democratic precincts have substantially more heterogeneous views concerning the FEPC proposal than Republican precincts. We suspect this may be due to a variety of factors, including the greater variation in the racial or union member composition of Democratic-leaning precincts. We will return to this issue in our subsequent analysis, but we next proceed to see if the data allow us to solidify, quantify, and extend these basic inferences about the differences between Democratic and Republican voters on this ballot measure.

**Deterministic Bounds**

One method for drawing more concrete inferences about the behavior of individuals with this sort of aggregate data is examining the deterministic bounds—the minimum and maximum possible rates at which Democratic and Republican voters in the state could have supported Prop. 11. These bounds can be determined by relatively simple calculations. For example, the maximum bound on the rate at which Democratic voters in California voted for Prop. 11 is $\text{MIN}(\frac{Y}{T_d}, 1)$, where $Y$ is the proportion of voters that approved of the measure and $T_d$ is the proportion of voters that voted for the Democratic candidate in the Lieutenant Governor’s race. The minimum bound is $\text{MAX}(0, \frac{(y - (1 - T_d))}{T_d})$, where $(1 - T_d)$ is the proportion of voters that voted for the Republican candidate in that race. Table 1 reports the bounds for the full dataset and for subsets of homogenously partisan precincts.43
As is typically the case, the bounds for the full dataset provide only a limited amount of information. However, they do indicate that, at most, 47% of those who voted for the Republican candidate supported the FEPC proposition. They also reveal that the highest possible level of Democratic support for the proposition was 59%. However, the true rates for each partisan group could be anywhere below these limits, and the bounds certainly do not preclude the possibility that the rates of support in the two partisan groups are identical.

One approach to gaining more information from the bounds is to calculate them for more homogenous subsets of the data. To do this we examine precincts that voted more than 80% for the Democratic or Republican candidate for Lieutenant Governor. Choosing a more homogeneous subset of precincts could lead to even narrower bounds, but would come at the cost of being able to generalize to less of the state. The bounds in 80% homogenous precincts do provide the grounds for substantially stronger inferences. They indicate that in strongly Democratic precincts a minimum of 61% and a maximum of 77% of people who voted for the Democratic Lieutenant Governor candidate also supported the FEPC proposition. They also reveal that, at most, 16% of Republican voters in Republican precincts voted for the proposition. Thus, we can conclude with certainty that members of each party in that party’s core precincts were strongly polarized on the ballot measure. This suggests, more generally, that at the very least central elements in the electoral coalitions of each party had distinctive views on this particular racial issue in 1940s California.

The bounds in the homogenous precincts also provide suggestive evidence that Democratic voters across the state may have supported Prop. 11 at substantially higher rates than Republican voters. One limit of examining the bounds in homogenous precincts, however, is that they do not allow one to compare the behavior of Democratic and Republican voters in the
same precincts. Thus, this analysis does not circumvent the inferential problem which arises from the fact that partisans in one type of precinct may have behaved differently than those in another type of precinct. For example, Democrats in overwhelmingly Republican precincts may have opposed the Proposition and Republicans in very Democratic precincts may have been overwhelmingly supportive; the bounds in such precincts cannot rule out this possibility. In fact, the bounds in this case provide some evidence that Democratic voters in heavily Democratic precincts were more supportive of the proposition than their co-partisans in other districts. This is implied by the fact that the maximum possible level of support for the proposition among all Democratic voters in the state is 59%, and the minimum possible level in the homogenous Democratic precincts is 61%. In the next section, we employ methods for ecological inference that are designed to generate reliable population level estimates of support even when there is this sort of aggregation bias in the data. Still, the bounds demonstrate that, at the very least, central elements in each party’s electoral coalition had distinctive views on Prop. 11, but that there also may have been substantial heterogeneity among Democrats.

Ecological Regression Analysis

The bounds can only tell us the absolute limits of support or opposition among particular group, in the next three sub-sections we explore different methods for ecological inference that estimate where, within the bounds, the levels of for Proposition 11 among Democrats and Republicans across the state fall. We employ three different methods – quadratic regression, King’s method of ecological inference, and Goodman’s regression with demographic controls, because each is premised on different assumptions and they allow us examine the robustness of
our results. Before doing this we first introduce a standard method that is not robust to aggregation bias in the data known as Goodman’s regression.44

This method is built on the fact that the fraction of ballots recording approval for the measure in any particular precinct is given by the accounting identity \( Y = \beta_d T_d + \beta_r (1 - T_d) \), where \( Y \) is the votes for Prop. 11 as a proportion of votes, \( \beta_d \) is the rate at which Democratic voters support the proposition, \( \beta_r \) is rate at which Republicans do so, \( T_d \) is the Democratic share of total turnout, and \( (1 - T_d) \) is the Republican share. Rearranging these terms gives \( Y = \beta_r + (\beta_d - \beta_r) T_d \). If the parameters \( \beta_d \) and \( \beta_r \) are constant across precincts, we can estimate them via a Goodman’s regression of \( Y \) on \( T_d \) and a constant term.45 This produces the following estimates with standard errors in parentheses: \( \hat{Y}_i = .047 (.003) + .551 (.007) T_{di} \).46 These estimates imply that 59.8 percent of the citizens who voted for the Democratic candidate in the Lieutenant Governor’s race supported Prop. 11, while only 4.7 percent of those who voted for the Republican candidate did so.

There are at least two reasons to doubt these estimates. First, the bounds also indicate that the maximum possible level of Democratic support for the proposition statewide was 58.9 percent, which is lower than the estimated level of support produced by the standard Goodman’s model. Moreover, we also have evidence from the bounds that suggests that \( \beta_d \) changes with the partisan composition of precincts—Democrats in heavily Democratic precincts appear more likely to support the proposition than Democrats elsewhere.47 The standard Goodman's regression does not allow this variation and thus is vulnerable to aggregation bias in the data, which can occur when the parameters of interest (in this case the support for Prop.11 among different partisan groups) are correlated with the regressors.
Quadratic Regression

One statistical approach to addressing potential aggregation bias in the data is offered by Achen and Shively, who derive an extended version of Goodman's regression and prove that it helps mitigate the effects of aggregation bias.48 Adopting their strategy, we relax the assumption that the parameters are mean-independent of the regressors and instead model support for the proposition in each district $i$ as linear functions of $T_{di}$. Let $\beta_{di} = b_1 + b_2 T_{di} + e_{di}$ and $\beta_{ri} = b_3 + b_4 T_{di} + e_{ri}$. By substitution into Goodman's regression we obtain $Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_{di} + \beta_2 T_{di}^2 + e_i$, where $\beta_0 = b_3$, $\beta_1 = b_1 - b_3 + b_4$, and $\beta_2 = b_2 - b_4$. The coefficients of this quadratic equation can be estimated by regressing $Y_i$ on $T_{di}$, $T_{di}^2$, and a constant term.49

To convert the estimates of $\beta_0$, $\beta_1$, and $\beta_2$ into measures of $b_1$, $b_2$, $b_3$, and $b_4$, we need to make an assumption. Only $b_3$, the intercept for Republicans, is identified by the quadratic regression, but we calculate values for the other $b$'s by assuming that either $b_2$ or $b_4$ is zero. This assumption makes our model less restrictive than the basic Goodman regression, which constrains both $b_2$ and $b_4$ to be zero and thus does not allow the support rate of either group to vary with the composition of the precinct. In cases like ours, the added flexibility from letting even one support rate change with $T_d$ reduces aggregation error relative to the basic specification.50

The criteria for identification are straightforward. Note that $\beta_2$ represents the difference between $b_2$ and $b_4$. Suppose that the proportion of votes for the proposition increases—or at least does not decrease—for both partisan groups as precincts become more Democratic. If the estimate of $\beta_2$ is positive, we conclude that $b_2 > b_4$, which means the support for the measure among Democrats increases more quickly than among Republicans as $T_{di}$ rises. Consequently, we set the smaller of these values ($b_4$) to zero, allowing us to solve for $b_1$ and $b_2$. 
In this example, Republican support for Prop.11 is held constant across precincts, while Democratic support is allowed to vary with the partisan composition of precincts.\textsuperscript{51}

Our data are consistent with this example, as a regression of $Y_i$ on $T_{di}$, $T_{di}^2$ produces the following estimates with standard errors in parentheses:  
\[
\hat{Y}_i = .137 (.007) + .112 (.031) T_{di} + .472 (.032) T_{di}^2 .
\]
Because the estimated coefficient on $T_{di}^2$ is positive and statistically distinguishable from zero, we identify the model by assuming that Republican support for the proposition across districts is constant and Democratic support varies. This identifying assumption is also consistent with our analysis of the bounds, which provided evidence that Democratic support is higher in more Democratic precincts.

We employ a simulation-based procedure described in Tomz and Van Houweling to translate these coefficient estimates into estimates of partisan rates of support for Prop. 11 and calculate associated confidence intervals.\textsuperscript{53} Table 2 presents our findings using this method, as well as those from three primary alternative methods we explore in the paper. The quadratic method lead us to estimate that 48.6 (95% c.i.: 12.4 -15.1) percent of those who voted for the Democratic candidate in the Lieutenant Governor’s race supported Prop. 11, while 13.8 (46.6 – 50.3) percent of those who voted for the Republican candidate approved of the ballot issue. These estimates imply that Democratic voters were much more supportive of the ballot issue than Republican voters, but the difference between the two groups (35 percent, 32-38) is significantly smaller than the difference we estimated with a standard Goodman’s regression (55 percent, 54-56). Thus the quadratic method confirms the overall distinctiveness of the two partisan groups, but also suggests the standard Goodman’s regression overstates this distinctiveness due to aggregation bias in the data.
King’s Ecological Inference

King introduces a method for ecological inference that incorporates information about precinct-level bounds to estimate precinct-level and aggregate quantities of interest. Because it systematically employs this information, it is more robust to aggregation bias in the data than standard procedures such as Goodman’s regression. The method is implemented in a software package EzI, which we used to estimate support for Prop. 11 among Democratic and Republican voters. Table 2 displays the estimates and confidence intervals produced by this procedure, which peg Democratic support for the ballot issue at 50.0 percent and Republican support at 12.0 percent. The estimates are very similar to those produced by the quadratic model, though they imply a slightly larger gap between the two partisan groups. Thus, using this distinct approach to addressing potential aggregation bias we reach substantively similar conclusions, suggesting that our findings are relatively robust.

Goodman’s Regression with Demographic Controls

A third approach to confronting aggregation bias is to estimate a model that allows support rates to vary with contextual demographic factors, rather than the percentage of Democratic voters in the precinct. In this analysis, we let support rates of Democratic and Republican voters depend on average levels of urbanism, the share of non-whites in the population, and value-added manufacturing per capita in their counties. This might mitigate aggregation bias that could arise if Democratic and Republican inhabitants of the same precinct are similarly influenced by their context. We do not use controls to equalize (in a statistical sense) the demographic characteristics of areas that people inhabit. Instead, we model the
implications of those demographic characteristics on approval of the FEPC ballot issue, and impound them into estimates of the rates at which each partisan group supports the initiative.

To do this, we define $\beta_d = b_1 + b_2\text{Urban}_i + b_3\text{Nonwhite}_i + b_4\text{VAM}_i + e_{di}$ and construct an analogous equation for $\beta_r$. This leads us to regress $Y_i$ on a constant, $T_{di}$, percent urban, percent non-white, per capita value-added manufacturing and interactions among these demographic measures and $T_{di}$. We choose these demographic variables because each would plausibly affect the overall political support for the measure, or partisan polarization on the measure, in a political jurisdiction. In particular, the urbanism of an area and the level of per capita value-added manufacturing have potential implications for the type of employment its inhabitants are engaged in. The measure of per-capita value-added manufacturing also taps into the extent of likely union penetration in an area, which is relevant because unions were strong advocates for the initiative. The percent non-white has similarly obvious consequences for how the adoption of an FEPC would affect the day-to-day lives of the residents of particular areas. Our measures of these demographic variables unfortunately contain error -- they refer to the overall population rather those who actually voted, are recorded at the county rather than the precinct level, and are not measured in 194657 -- but they are the best available data.

We use the method employed by Tomz and Van Houweling to translate the regression estimates of our quantities of interest. In short, we used the actual values of $T_{di}$ and the demographic variables to obtain simulated values of $\beta_{di}$ and $\beta_{ri}$ for each precinct $i$. Then we computed a weighted average of the precinct-level estimates for each partisan group. This method estimates that 60.0 percent of Democratic voters and 4.3 percent of Republican voters approved of the initiative. It appears that this is not an effective way to address aggregation bias in this dataset, as it generates population level-estimates similar to a standard Goodman’s
regression and outside of the deterministic bounds. In the analyses reported below, however, we further explore the impact of these contextual demographic factors using a different approach.

Subsets of the Data

Our final approach to addressing the robustness of our results is to examine subsets of counties that are demographically distinct. Specifically, we divide the counties into halves depending on whether they were above or below the median county on each of the potentially influential demographic factors described above. Then we use the quadratic approach to make inferences about the behavior of voters in these subsets of the data.59

Figure 2 presents scatter plots of these data with quadratic regression lines. Two common features run though all of the demographic comparisons presented here. First, in the group of counties which are relatively rural, white, and have low levels of value-added manufacturing, the relationship between the Democratic proportion of the vote and approval of Prop. 11 is more linear than in the other subset of counties. Second, the Democratic precincts in this subset of counties are much less heterogeneous in their support for the ballot issue than is the case in the more urban, non-white, and manufacturing-intensive groups of counties. One could speculate that this is because the members of the Democratic coalition that were most supportive of the proposition were those who themselves were non-white, and/or lived in urban areas, and/or were engaged in (unionized) manufacturing. However, the data provide no more than circumstantial evidence suggesting this possibility.

Somewhat surprisingly, given the evident differences in the scatter plots, the estimates produced by quadratic regressions, presented in Table 3, are remarkably similar across the subsets of counties.60 This pattern adds to our confidence in our overall estimates.
However, one notable exception to the pattern bears attention. When the counties are divided by their level of value-added manufacturing, we do detect statistically significant differences. In the low value-added manufacturing counties, we estimate that 19.4 percent of Republican voters supported the ballot issue, while we estimate that only 13.1 percent of their co-partisans behaved likewise in high value-added manufacturing counties. For Democratic voters the estimated relationship was opposite, with more in high-manufacturing counties supporting the measure than in low-manufacturing counties (49.5 percent vs. 40.2 percent). Moreover, for both partisan groups these differences across counties are statistically significant, judging from the related 95% confidence intervals presented in the table.

In short, the only difference we detect across subsets of counties is that partisans were more polarized about the ballot measure areas with relatively high levels of manufacturing than were those in areas with relatively low levels. At least two accounts of the politics of the initiative are consistent with this finding. First, it is possible that voters in low-manufacturing areas, where the existence of an FEPC was likely to have minimal effects, were not driven by their own instrumental ends to take opposing positions on the measure. On the other hand, voters in high-manufacturing areas were much more likely to be personally affected by the passage of the proposition, and were polarized by these personal stakes.

Second, one might also suspect that the increased level of support in areas with high manufacturing activity is due to the strong support of unions, which were likely to have large memberships and be well organized in these areas. This seems to be a plausible explanation for the relatively high Democratic levels of support in these areas, but somewhat less likely to explain the low levels of Republican support.
In sum, the deterministic bounds in precincts that supported either party by more than 80% indicate that core elements of the Republican electoral coalition overwhelmingly opposed Proposition 11, while core elements of the Democratic coalition strongly supported it. There is evidence that aggregation bias in the data infects a standard Goodman’s regression on these election returns. However, two distinct methods of ecological inference aimed at confronting such aggregation bias add weight to the conclusion that, statewide, there was substantial Democratic support and Republican opposition to the FEPC ballot measure. Finally, even in low value-added manufacturing counties, where the estimated gap between the two partisan groups of voters is lowest, we nevertheless infer that the share of Democratic voters approving the measure was more than twice as large as the share of Republican voters doing so. In the next section, we consider the implications of these findings.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The origins of the current alignment of party and race remain a topic of considerable debate. The most influential explanation, embodied in Carmines and Stimson’s *Issue Evolution*, highlights the critical role of party elites. This view, which has acquired the status of conventional wisdom, holds that the current alignment is a product of a critical juncture during the mid-1960s, when party elites chose very different responses to rising demands for racial equality. Inspired—and pressured—by the black freedom struggle, Democratic elites chose to embrace racial liberalism, exacerbating the sense of partisan alienation among southern whites and stoking racial resentment among white ethnics outside the South. More importantly, Republican elites chose to reorient their party partly around racial conservatives, leading
Republican voters to become more racially conservative themselves, and helping to welcome former Democrats into the Republican fold. On this view, the current alignment of race and party was thus a contingent, elite-led phenomenon, and the choices of elites were critical.

This article presents empirical evidence that contradicts a key assumption of the conventional wisdom; namely, that Republican elites could have led Republican voters in a racially liberal direction before 1964. Based on a close reading of archival documents, as well as an ecological analysis of an original, precinct-level data set, we find that Republican voters were more likely to have voted against the passage of Proposition 11 than Democratic voters. This ballot proposition, featured in California’s general election of 1946, would have outlawed job discrimination and created a FEPC to enforce the law. Hence, well before the “chain reaction” of race, rights, and taxes that is presumed to have been set off in the mid-1960s, Republicans voters exhibited a far greater degree of racial conservatism than their Democratic counterparts, despite Republican governor Earl Warren’s identification with very similar legislative initiatives.

Proposition 11, of course, would provide a stronger test of the conventional wisdom if Republican officeholders had unambiguously led in a racially liberal direction. Instead, there was heterogeneity in the positions, and the messages they sent were mixed. Nevertheless, opposition to Prop.11 would seem to be the “natural” ideological position of California’s Republican voters, one that was not disturbed by the advocacy of similar measure by a very popular Republican leader of their state.

If the racial conservatism of Republicans voters does not appear elite-led, neither does the racial liberalism of Democratic elites. Our findings suggest that any Democratic efforts to make inroads among Republicans by adopting a racially conservative position on fair employment practices would have been fraught with substantial electoral danger. It could have cost them the
loyalty of racial liberals and thereby risked splitting their heterogeneous electoral base. In the
case of Republicans and Democrats, then, it appears plausible that the masses were constraining
partisan elites rather than being led by them. This finding is in tension with contemporary
research on parties and party competition. Downsian models of party competition highlight elite
choice, while historical-institutionalist modes of explanation emphasize the contingency of
political outcomes and processes. It may be that the social bases of party competition have gone
underappreciated, and undertheorized, in the process.62

However, our findings are in line with a growing body of interdisciplinary research that
challenges the conventional wisdom about the origins and development of the current alignment
of party and race. Much more research remains to be done, however. Are there other similar
ballot initiatives—state or municipal—that might be provide opportunities for similar analysis in
other contexts beyond mid-century California? More research on the intervening period between
1946 and 1964, perhaps using early public opinion data, could also help shed on light how the
mass bases of the politics of race developed between the period we have studied and the moment
the conventional wisdom identifies as pivotal in shaping the political alignment of today’s
parties.
Table 1. Aggregate Bounds on Support for Proposition 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Precincts</th>
<th></th>
<th>Homogenous Precincts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Bound (%)</td>
<td>Upper Bound (%)</td>
<td>Lower Bound (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Voters</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>60.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican Voters</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Homogenous precincts are defined as those composed of at least 80% Democratic voters for Democratic bounds or 80% Republican voters for Republican bounds. In the full dataset there are 14,909 precincts, of which 209 are homogenous Democratic precincts and 754 are homogenous Republican precincts.
Table 2. Estimated Support for Proposition 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Republican Voters</th>
<th>Democratic Voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% Yes (95% c.i.)</td>
<td>% Yes (95% c.i.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quadratic Regression</td>
<td>13.8 (12.4 - 15.1)</td>
<td>48.6 (46.6 - 50.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological Inference</td>
<td>12.0 (11.9 - 12.1)</td>
<td>50.0 (49.9 - 50.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodman's Regression</td>
<td>4.7 (4.1 - 59.9)</td>
<td>59.8 (59.1 - 60.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodman's w/ controls</td>
<td>4.3 (3.8 – 5.0)</td>
<td>60.0 (59.2 – 60.7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The number of precincts in the full sample is 14,909. The quadratic estimates were identified by fixing the proportion of Republican voters supporting Prop. 11 across precincts and allowing the proportion of Democratic voters supporting Prop. 11 to vary with the proportion of Democratic voters in a precinct. In the Goodman's regression with controls, there are county-level controls for percent urban in 1940, percent nonwhite in 1940, and population growth from 1940 to 1950. The estimates of both the standard Goodman's regression and the Goodman's regression with controls are misleading because of aggregation bias in the data. In particular, the estimate of support among Democratic voters is outside of the maximum deterministic bound reported in Table 1. We present them here only for comparative purposes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Republican Voters</th>
<th>Democratic Voters</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% Yes (95% c.i.)</td>
<td>% Yes (95% c.i.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Urban</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940 &lt; median</td>
<td>14.7 (10.1 - 19.5)</td>
<td>47.3 (42.0 - 53.8)</td>
<td>1156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; median</td>
<td>13.7 (12.2 - 15.1)</td>
<td>48.6 (46.7 - 50.4)</td>
<td>13753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-White Population 1940</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; median</td>
<td>10.4 (7.6 - 13.8)</td>
<td>53.8 (48.6 - 57.9)</td>
<td>2761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; median</td>
<td>13.6 (11.6 - 15.1)</td>
<td>48.6 (47.0 - 50.1)</td>
<td>12148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value-Added Manufacturing 1947</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; median</td>
<td>19.4 (14.7 - 23.3)</td>
<td>40.2 (34.6 - 46.4)</td>
<td>1462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; median</td>
<td>13.1 (11.7 - 14.8)</td>
<td>49.5 (47.4 - 51.5)</td>
<td>13447</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The sample is split into counties above and below the median for each demographic measure. The median California county was 30.7 percent urban in 1940, 3.85 percent non-white in 1940, produced $9,094 of value-added manufacturing per capita in 1947. All of the estimates were produced using the quadratic model. The sign of the quadratic term dictated that all but one (below median non-white) of the models should be identified by fixing white support from Prop. 11 across precincts.
Figure 1. Scatter Plot with Quadratic Fitted Values
Figure 2. Scatterplots for subsets of Counties with Quadratic Fitted Values

Below Median % Urban

Above Median % Urban

Below Median % Non-White

Above Median % Non-White

Below Median VAM

Above Median VAM


4 Carmines and Stimson, *Issue Evolution*, xi-xii. The view that the year 1964 was causally “critical” for producing the contemporary sorting out of voters into parties is advanced by the vast majority of political scientists and historians writing on the subject.


12 This contingency is, of course, a necessary corollary of the emphasis on elite agency—different elite choices can produce different paths to different alignments.
13 Carmines and Stimson, *Issue Evolution*, 9, 11, 186. Carmines and Stimson declare themselves “intellectually at war...with any notion of inevitability.” They “encounter no situations in the political evolution of race where...it could only have happened as it did. Our scenarios will instead be more akin to Tolstoy battle scenes, where calculation, force, confusion, and chance commingle to produce an outcome, the appearance of which is only orderly after the fact.” Carmines and Stimson, *Issue Evolution*, 16, 18.


15 Political scientists and historians have employed a “white backlash” frame to interpret other episodes throughout the twentieth century, including struggles over the Fair Employment Practices Committee; school desegregation cases; white (and especially southern) mass response to the passage of landmark civil rights legislation; welfare policies and “welfare dependency;” and, most recently, affirmative action in hiring and higher education.


17 This section draws on Daniel T. Kryder and Robert W. Mickey, “The Politics of Backlash: Consequences of a Metaphor” (unpublished manuscript in the authors’ possession).


23 David Karol, *Coalition Management: Explaining Party Position Change in American Politics*, unpublished manuscript. Karol also shows that non-southern Democratic congressional representatives began voting (slightly) more liberally than Republicans on civil rights proposals as early as the 1940s.


25 Moreover, in the twentieth century, public sector employment has been of great importance to black America.

26 Of course, relative to other democratic polities, the midpoint of the left-right dimension in the United States through most of its history has been on the right. Still, the distance between the two major parties has been persistent, and the parties have often been polarized on this dimension. Gerring, *Party Ideologies in America*.

27 Given the black American experience with southern state governments, as well as the fact that federalism effectively disempowers subnational governments from redistributing income, it is understandable that black America’s target, and dim hope, has been the federal government. Mickey, *Paths Out of Dixie*, ch. 2; Paul E. Peterson, *City Limits* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), and *The Price of Federalism* (Washington: Brookings, 1995); Michael Dawson, *Behind the Mule* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

28 However mistily Americans now conjure up the 1963 March on Washington as a call for children of all races to play together, the March was at the time a march for “jobs and justice.”


33 Ruchames, *Race, Jobs, and Politics*; Reed, *Seeditime for the Modern Civil Rights Movement*.

34 Chen, “’The Hitlerian Rule of Quotas,’” 1238-64.


36 Albert Johnson called to make a similar point to Warren about the significance of FEP to the black electorate. See Beach Vasey to Earl Warren, August 17, 1945, F3640: 3656, EW-CSA.


39 Chen, *The Fifth Freedom*.

40 In his keynote address to the GOP national convention in 1944, Warren decried New Dealers’ attempts to ensnare workers in regulation that would reduce their opportunity to work where they please, and prevent business owners from running their firms as they saw fit (*New York Times*, Jun. 25 and 27, 1944, 12; *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 27 and 28, 1944, 2).
Records for two counties, Kern and San Mateo, are no longer available.

Due to a coding error in some precincts we cannot use the Senate race as a benchmark for the entire state, although it produces nearly identical results to the Lieutenant Governor’s race in the subset of correctly coded precincts.


Goodman, “Ecological Regression.”

This regression is based on 14,909 precincts, and the r-squared statistic is .30. Table 2 presents the associated confidence intervals, which are constructed using the simulation based procedure outlined in Michael Tomz and Robert Van Houweling, “How Does Voting Equipment Affect the Racial Gap in Voided Ballots?”, *American Journal of Political Science* 47 (2003): 46-60.


The heteroskedasticity in the error term $e_i = e_i + (e_d - e_r)T_d + v_i$ does not bias the point estimates, though it does affect their variance, an issue we address by computing heteroskedastic-consistent standard errors in our regression models.

Achen and Shively, *Cross-Level Inference*.

If instead the estimate of $\beta_2$ is negative, implying that $b_4 > b_2$, we identify the system of equations by setting $b_2 = 0$, thereby fixing Democratic support for Prop. 11 at a constant level while letting Republican support depend on the partisan composition of precincts.

This regression is based on 14,909 precincts, and the r-squared statistic is .31.


King’s method also allows us to let the rates of support for Prop. 11 by one of the partisan groups vary with, $T_d$, the partisan composition of the precincts, in a way analogous to the quadratic model. When we let the rate of one group or the other vary with the composition of precincts, the estimates produced by EI were nearly identical to those produced when we fixed the rates of both groups across precincts.

Percent urban and percent non-white are drawn from the 1940 census. Value-added manufacturing data are from 1947.

Tomz and Van Houweling, “How Does Voting Equipment Affect the Racial Gap in Voided Ballots?”.
We adopt this method because it is straightforward and produces the most conservative estimates of the difference between the partisan groups of the three methods we have employed. Results using King’s EI are very similar to those we report.

We also divided the counties based on their rate of population growth between 1940 and 1950, and detected no significant difference in the behavior of either partisan group depending on the rate of growth in the counties they inhabited.

Of course, this ambiguity may reflect a prescience about their inability to lead “left” on race.