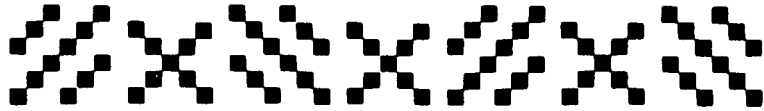


## Voting for Minor Parties in the Antebellum Midwest

*Ray M. Shortridge\**



During the two decades preceeding the Civil War, three important minor parties contested presidential elections in the Midwest. These parties raised issues which the major parties, the Democrats and Whigs, chose to ignore. Two of the minor parties, the Liberty party and the Free Soil party, injected antislaveryism into presidential elections in 1844, 1848, and 1852; the third, the American party, campaigned on nativist principles in 1856. Although the Democrats and Whigs were strongly entrenched in the region, the minor parties exerted significant influence in midwestern politics. Midwesterners played important roles in the development of antislavery doctrines and in the organization of the antislavery parties.<sup>1</sup> The electorate in the region responded to these efforts by the leaders: from 2.2 percent to 7.6 percent of the estimated eligible electorate in the Midwest voted for the Liberty or Free Soil parties in the presidential elections from 1844 to 1852.<sup>2</sup> Although the major strength of the nativist Know Nothing movement lay elsewhere, Know Nothing or American party candidates garnered votes from 6.9 percent of the Midwest's estimated electorate in 1856. Moreover, in 1860 both the anti-

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<sup>1</sup> For example see Dwight L. Dumond, *Antislavery: The Crusade for Freedom in America* (Ann Arbor, 1961); Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York, 1970), 73-102.

<sup>2</sup> The number of voters was obtained from Walter Dean Burnham, *Presidential Ballots, 1836-1892* (Baltimore, 1955). The eligible electorate consists of the white adult males aged twenty or more enumerated in the United States Census for 1840, 1850, and 1860. Estimates for intercensus years are computed by linear interpolation.

slavery people and the nativists were crucial groups within the Republican party's winning electoral coalition.<sup>3</sup>

Political histories have dealt with the nuances of the ideologies propounded by these minor parties, painstakingly traced the maneuverings of the leaders, and offered intriguing explanations for the social, economic, and cultural pressures underlying their appearance. By and large, however, little is known about the place of the minor party in the flow of the vote from one election to another. Did the minor party draw its support disproportionately from one or the other of the major parties, or did it mobilize its voters from among those who hitherto had not voted? And, what choices did these voters make when the third party's organization ultimately collapsed? A close inspection of the midwestern electoral support for these three minor parties helps clarify the role they played in the antebellum electoral system.

Answering these questions entails following the flow of the minor party vote from one presidential election to another. Ideally, one would wish to employ information regarding the choices made by the individual voters in successive elections and the level of turnout attained by the parties in the geographic units within which the individuals resided. Incorporating both levels of data enables the analysis to gauge the influence of both individual and group level effects on voting for a third party.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, the full array of data required for a multilevel analysis is not available for the antebellum period. The group level voting information is readily found, aggregated at the county level. The deficiency lies in the absence of records indicating the voting choices made by individual voters. A few such records survive in the form of poll books which contain the publicly announced choice of each voter. Voting by ballot superseded viva voce voting, however, and, by the 1840s, the use of poll books was no longer a common practice in the Midwest. As a consequence, an inquiry into the flow of the vote for the midwestern electorate must rest solely upon an examination of the aggregate election data.

This study draws upon the election data aggregated at the county level for all of the counties in the four most populous

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<sup>3</sup> Ray M. Shortridge, "The Voter Realignment in the Midwest during the 1850's," *American Politics Quarterly*, IV (April, 1976), 215, 218-22.

<sup>4</sup> Gudmund R. Iversen, "Contingency Tables without Cell Entries" (mimeographed, University of Michigan, 1970); Lawrence Hugh Boyd, Jr., "Multiple Level Analysis with Complete and Incomplete Data" (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Political Science, University of Michigan, 1971).

states in the Midwest—Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio. About three hundred counties are used in the analysis, a number large enough to ensure that a few cases with extraordinary values do not unduly influence the estimates. The actual variables consist of the proportion of the estimated eligible electorate which voted for each party—called party turnout—and the proportion which did not vote in the presidential elections from 1840 to 1860. Party turnout was computed by dividing the number of votes cast for a party by the number of eligible voters estimated to have been living in a county during the election. Public records report the number of ballots cast for each party in an election, but they do not contain a count for the size of the eligible voting population. Consequently, the number of white adult males enumerated by the federal census was used as the estimate for the eligible voting population for the census years, with the number for intercensus years calculated by linear interpolation.<sup>5</sup>

Part of the analysis infers individual level patterns from aggregate level information and, in so doing, encounters the cross-level inference problem called the “ecological fallacy.” The ecological fallacy entails assuming that the zero-order correlation calculated for a distribution of geographic or other units along two variables is an accurate measure of the association between the variables among the individuals within the units.<sup>6</sup> Several procedures for obtaining less specious estimates have been posited;<sup>7</sup> this study employs the coefficients obtained by the “ecological regression” procedure to estimate the individual level patterns.<sup>8</sup> For example, a party turnout variable is re-

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<sup>5</sup> The data utilized in the analysis were made available in part by the Inter-university Consortium for Political Research. The Consortium bears no responsibility for either the analysis or the interpretations presented here.

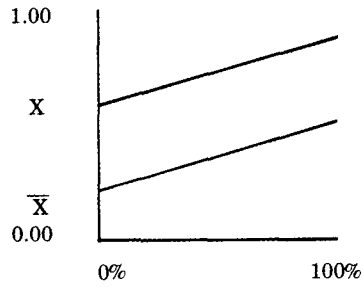
<sup>6</sup> W. S. Robinson, “Ecological Correlations and the Behavior of Individuals,” *American Sociological Review*, XV (June, 1950), 351-57; Hayward R. Alker, Jr., *Mathematics and Politics* (London, 1969), 101-106.

<sup>7</sup> Otis Dudley Duncan and Beverly Davis, “An Alternative to Ecological Correlation,” *American Sociological Review*, XVIII (December, 1953), 665-66; Philip E. Converse, “Survey Research and the Decoding of Patterns in Ecological Data,” in *Quantitative Ecological Analysis in the Social Sciences*, edited by Mattei Dogan and Stein Rokkan (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), 459-85.

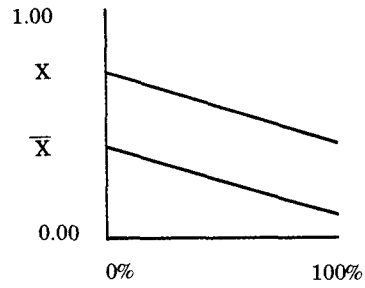
<sup>8</sup> Leo A. Goodman, “Ecological Regressions and the Behavior of Individuals,” *American Sociological Review*, XVIII (December, 1953), 663-64; Leo A. Goodman, “Some Alternatives to Ecological Correlation,” *American Journal of Sociology*, LXIV (May, 1959), 610-25; J. Morgan Kousser, “Ecological Regression and the Analysis of Past Politics,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* (Autumn, 1973), 237-62.

FIGURE A  
Illustrations of Aggregate Level Effects\*

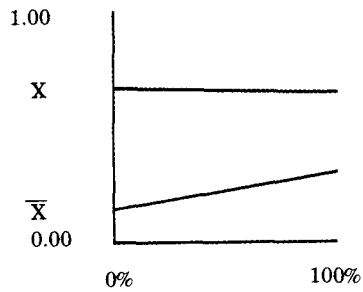
1. Positive Group Level Effect



2. Negative Group Level Effect



3. Interactive Group Level Effect



\*Horizontal Axis—Turnout Level for Party X in  $t_1$   
 Vertical Axis—Probability of Voting for Party Y in  $t_2$   
 X—Group Casting Party X Ballots in  $t_1$   
 $\bar{X}$ —Group not Casting Party X Ballots in  $t_1$

gressed upon the turnout variable for a party in the preceding election. Equation (1) presents this regression model:

$$(1) \bar{Y} = b_0 + b_e \bar{X}_j + b_r \bar{X}_j^2 + E_j$$

$\bar{Y}$  is a party's turnout level for a presidential contest in the  $j$ -th county;  $b_0$  is the intercept;  $b_e$  is the regression coefficient for  $\bar{X}$ , a party's turnout in the  $j$ -th county for the preceding election;  $b_r$  is the coefficient for  $X^2$ , the square of the party's turnout for the preceding election in the  $j$ -th county; and  $E$  is the residual.

An ecological regression, however, cannot obtain separate measures for the aggregate and individual level effects. The individual level effect is the difference in the likelihood of voting for party  $Y$  between those who voted for party  $X$  in the previous contest and those who did not (the difference between the probabilities  $X$  and  $\bar{X}$  in Figure A). The aggregate level effect is the impact of the strength of the vote for party  $X$  in a county on the likelihood of voting for party  $Y$  in the following campaign. This effect could be positive (Figure A<sub>1</sub>), or negative (Figure A<sub>2</sub>), or interactive (Figure A<sub>3</sub>). The last possibility, interaction, can be tested for by introducing an exponential term into the regression, such as  $\bar{X}^2$  in equation (1). A non-differential aggregate or group level effect, such as those depicted in Figures A<sub>1</sub> and A<sub>2</sub>, cannot be directly detected by a coefficient in the equation. One can, however, infer the presence of a group level effect when the ecological regression estimates exceed unity—that is, when more than 100 percent of those voting for  $X$  are estimated to have also voted for  $Y$  in the subsequent election.<sup>9</sup> These sorts of statistical evidence provide clues to the character of the subtle, aggregate level pressures at work influencing voter choice.

The ecological regression procedure is not sufficiently refined to estimate the proportion of major party voters subsequently casting minor party ballots. The disparity in the size of major and minor parties is too great to obtain meaningful estimates. Consequently, in order to trace the flow of the vote between major and minor parties, the analysis correlates the change in turnout for a major party between two elections with the change in minor party turnout. The rationale for this approach lies in the expectation that the defection experienced by a major party would appear as a decline in its turnout recorded for the county from the first election to the second, while the

<sup>9</sup> Gudmund R. Iversen, "Recovering Individual Data in the Presence of Group and Individual Effects" (mimeographed, University of Michigan, 1971).

same defection would register as an increase in turnout for the minor party. The greater the number who defected, the greater the decline observed for the major party and, conversely, the greater the increment observed for the minor party. This pattern in statistical terms would produce a negative correlation.<sup>10</sup>

The opposite statistical association applies for assessing whether non-voters in an earlier election voted for the minor party. In this case, the greater the number of previous abstainers who cast minor party ballots in an election, the greater the increase in the third party vote. This situation statistically results in a positive correlation. Of course, the ebbs and swirls within the flow of voters among the parties from one election to another ensure that a perfect one-for-one voter shift does not emerge in the turnout patterns. However, this approach does provide an empirical basis for assessing whether Democrats, Whigs, or abstainers were the voter reservoirs for the minor party's electoral support.

Once the groups from which the minor party drew support have been identified, then causal models can be used to gauge the relative importance of these groups in the minor party's electoral coalition. Because of the obvious interrelationship between a change in the turnout recorded for the major parties and the change in total turnout, the elegant four variable recursive causal model containing variables measuring the change in the two major parties and the change in total turnout cannot be used in the analysis.<sup>11</sup> Instead, the inquiry employs three variable causal models which are applied in separate steps in order to assess the relative importance of the groups in the minor party's electoral strength.<sup>12</sup> The dependent variable, which is the phenomenon to be explained, is the change in turnout estimated for the minor party. The two variables incorporated in the model as predictor variables are the change in the turnout for one of the major parties and the change in total turnout. Standard least-squares statistical

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<sup>10</sup> The 1844 Liberty party turnout is taken as the dependent variable because the 1840 Liberty vote in the region was minute. A change in Liberty party turnout variable between 1840 and 1844 would thus be of little value. The expected statistical relationships are, of course, the converse of those recounted in the hypothetical case in the text.

<sup>11</sup> H. M. Blalock, Jr., "Four-Variable Causal Models and Partial Correlations," in H. M. Blalock (ed.), *Causal Models and the Social Sciences* (Chicago, 1971), 18-32.

<sup>12</sup> Herbert A. Simon, "Spurious Correlation: A Causal Interpretation," *ibid.*, 5-17.

techniques can be used to measure the relative strength of the predictor variables in explaining the support for the minor party.<sup>13</sup>

The inquiry utilizes these statistical models to analyze county level party turnout in order to observe the flow of the vote to and from minor parties. The study focuses first on the Liberty party, then turns to examine the Free Soil party, and concludes by considering the American party. For each of these minor parties, the analysis seeks to identify the electoral origins of those who voted for the minor party and, upon the disappearance of that political institution, to discern the subsequent electoral choices made by the minor party voters.

In the late 1830s, an increasingly well organized and active movement worked tirelessly for the abolition of slavery within the United States. By inundating Congress with antislavery petitions and by propagandizing the public through the press and the pulpit on the evils of slavery, the abolitionists sought to pressure the national government into withdrawing federal support for the South's peculiar institution. Some abolitionists believed that direct political action was required and that an antislavery political party should contest the 1840 presidential election against the two major parties, the Whig and the Democrat. James G. Birney, a prominent abolitionist and former slaveholder, agreed to head the ticket of the newly formed Liberty party.<sup>14</sup>

The Liberty party effort was not a success: Birney spent the campaigning season in England; many abolitionists opposed an antislavery political party; and the party organization necessary for distributing ballots and producing voters was woefully scant. The Liberty party received only 1,062 votes from

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<sup>13</sup> Using the ecological regression procedure and the causal models to gauge the flow of the vote among the parties from one election to another violates the assumption that the population was closed. The composition of the electorate doubtlessly changed from one election to another because of mortality, migration, and maturation. This introduces random variation into the bi-variate distributions for the party turnout levels. With regard to the ecological regression analysis, the effects of this artifactual variation is to bias the intercept toward the mean party turnout computed for the set of counties and to bias the ecological regression coefficient toward zero. With respect to the causal models, the random variance would tend to lower the correlation between the change variables. The presence of this conservative bias in the estimates serves to increase the confidence one might take in any differences that emerge from the analysis.

<sup>14</sup> For accounts of the Liberty party see William B. Hesseltine, *Third-Party Movements in the United States* (Princeton, 1962); Theodore Clarke Smith, *The Liberty and Free Soil Parties in the Northwest* (New York, 1897).

the four midwestern states in the 1840 election. The party's fortunes improved in the following off-year contests, and in the 1844 presidential election 17,261 midwesterners cast their ballots for Birney. In 1846, the Liberty party more than equalled its 1844 tally, but it did not survive to contest the 1848 election. The brief, tempestuous life of the Liberty party terminated in the conventions which led to the organization of the Free Soil party in the summer of 1848.

What were the political origins of the Liberty party voters? Contemporaries, particularly Whig politicians and editors, maintained that Liberty voters were Whig defectors. During and after the campaign in 1844, Whig spokesmen bitterly denounced the Liberty men for bringing about the defeat of their candidate, Henry Clay. This view appears in the historical literature as well.<sup>15</sup> To corroborate the contention that the bulk of the Liberty voters were former Whigs, historians point to the Whiggish background of many Liberty party leaders, to the efforts made by Whig politicians to lure Liberty people to their standard, to the presence of non-Liberty abolitionists in the Whig ranks, and to the vitriol in the Whig attacks on the Liberty men. This interpretation is congenial to the notion that the Whig party suffered from a lack of cohesion, perhaps an excess of anti-party sentiment; it views the defection of Liberty men as the first phase of the fragmentation of the Whig party.<sup>16</sup> Yet the Liberty party also possessed a potential appeal to antislavery Democrats.<sup>17</sup> And it is possible that the moralistic antislavery crusade drew into the political world men who were previously inactive in politics—men who were indifferent to the issue dimensions defining the Whig-Democrat conflict and had therefore abstained in 1840. The Liberty party, then, might have been a more heterogeneous group than many scholars have suggested.

The analysis used to detect the political origins of the Liberty party voters examines the changes registered in party turnout and total turnout from 1840 to 1844. If the 1844 Liberty vote came from among those voting Whig or Democrat in

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<sup>15</sup> See for example Elbert B. Smith, *The Death of Slavery: The United States, 1837-1865* (Chicago, 1967), 73; Louis Filler, *The Crusade Against Slavery, 1830-1860* (New York, 1960), 177; Roy F. Nichols, *The Stakes of Power, 1845-1877* (New York, 1961), 9.

<sup>16</sup> Ronald P. Formisano, *The Birth of Mass Political Parties: Michigan, 1827-1861* (Princeton, 1971).

<sup>17</sup> Kinley J. Brauer, *Cotton versus Conscience: Massachusetts Whig Politics and Southwestern Expansion, 1843-1848* (Lexington, Ky., 1967), 21-22.



TABLE I  
Zero-Order and Partial Correlation  
Coefficients for Change  
Variables (1840-1844) and 1844 Liberty Party Turnout

n=282 (Counties)	
	<i>1844 Liberty Turnout</i>
<i>Zero-Order Correlation</i>	
Change in Democratic Turnout	0.20
Change in Whig Turnout	0.32
Change in Total Turnout	0.10
 <i>Partial Correlation</i>	
Change in Democratic Turnout, Controlling for:	
Change in Whig Turnout	0.08
Change in Whig Turnout, Controlling for:	
Change in Democratic Turnout	0.40
Change in Total Turnout, Controlling for:	
Change in Democratic Turnout	-0.10
Change in Whig Turnout	-0.27

1840, then one would expect a positive correlation between the change in party turnout (1840-1844) and the Liberty turnout. Conversely, if the Liberty support stemmed largely from among those who did not vote in 1840, then one would expect a negative association between change in total turnout and the 1844 Liberty turnout. The zero-order correlation coefficients presented in Table I show a mild positive association between both the change in Democratic turnout and the change in Whig turnout and the Liberty party turnout. These correlations suggest that people voting Democrat and Whig in 1840 moved into the Liberty ranks in 1844. The zero-order coefficient for change in total turnout and Liberty party turnout is positive, which does not support the hypothesis that many 1840 non-voters turned out for Birney in 1844.

Not surprisingly, however, each of the changes in major party turnout variables correlates well (at the 0.80 level) with the change in turnout variable. Moreover, the party turnout variables correlate positively with each other at the 0.40 level.

This pattern of intercorrelation raises the possibility that the zero-order correlations are not accurately measuring the independent association between each change variable and Liberty party turnout. Consequently, the inquiry must incorporate multivariate statistical models in order to measure the correlation between a change variable and Liberty party turnout with the effects of the other change variables controlled. For reasons discussed above, the analysis employs a series of three-variable causal models in order to test for the independent correlation between the change variables and Liberty party turnout. If a major party turnout variable is indeed independently correlated with the Liberty vote, then the partial correlation coefficient between it and Liberty turnout, controlling for the change variable for the other major party, should remain positive and retain a non-trivial level of magnitude. Similarly, if the change in turnout actually is negatively associated with the strength of the Liberty party in 1844, then the three-variable statistical model should produce negative partial correlation coefficients when the change in party turnout is controlled.

The partial coefficients presented in Table I conform to the pattern expected if the Liberty party voters stemmed not only from 1840 Whigs but also from 1840 Democrats and non-voters. The first partial coefficient measures the independent association between the Liberty turnout and the change in Democratic turnout, with the change in Whig turnout controlled. The partial coefficient indicates a much weaker covariation between change in Democratic turnout and Liberty turnout than the zero-order coefficient implied; yet, the faint positive association suggests that a relatively modest number of 1840 Democratic voters supported Birney in 1844. The evidence pointing to a flow of 1840 Whigs and non-voters into the Liberty ranks in 1844 is much stronger. When the change in Democratic turnout is controlled, the correlation between the change in Whig turnout and Liberty turnout exceeds the zero-order correlation. The findings for the change in total turnout variable are even more striking. When the party turnout variables are controlled, the correlation between change in turnout and Liberty turnout changes in sign from positive to negative and attains non-trivial levels of magnitude. These negative partial correlations support the notion that many 1840 non-voters turned out in 1844 to vote for the Liberty party. The multivariate analysis, then, suggests that in 1844 the Liberty party drew some support from 1840 Democratic voters and significant support from 1840 Whig voters and 1840 non-voters.

The people from these varied political backgrounds who supported the Liberty party apparently voted for it regularly. Several characteristics of the turnout for the party point to this conclusion. The Liberty party vote tended to be concentrated in a limited number of counties. For example, only seventy of the 282 counties (28 percent) surpassed the 1843 mean turnout level of 1 percent in the off-year elections; ninety-four (33 percent) surpassed the 1844 mean turnout level of 2 percent; and 105 (37 percent) surpassed the 1846 mean turnout level of 2 percent. Moreover, the same counties were generally producing the higher turnout rates for the Liberty party; the zero-order correlation between Liberty party turnout for 1843 and 1844 was 0.68 and for 1844 and 1846 it was 0.88. The probability that an 1844 Liberty man again cast a Liberty ballot in 1846 estimated by the ecological regression exceeds 1.00. This, of course, is an inadmissible estimate, which suggests the presence of an aggregate level effect. The analysis testing for an interaction form of this effect (illustrated by Figure A<sub>3</sub>) produced trivial coefficients indicating that a group level effect (illustrated by Figure A<sub>1</sub>) produced the inadmissible estimate. The magnitude of the group effect cannot be measured, but evidently both Liberty voters and those not casting Liberty ballots in 1844 were more likely to vote Liberty in 1846 in those counties where the Liberty party drew well in 1844. This inference again points to the concentrated nature of Liberty voting. Liberty men apparently remained steadfast in making a political expression of their antislavery views, and their presence apparently conditioned others to do so as well.

In 1848, a new third party campaigned against extending slavery into the territories won in the Mexican War. The leaders of the Free Soil party came from various political backgrounds: prominent Liberty men such as Salmon P. Chase; Conscience Whigs like Charles Francis Adams, the party's vice-presidential nominee; and disgruntled Democrats such as Martin Van Buren, the party's presidential nominee. The Free Soilers united on the antislavery expansion principle expressed in the Wilmot Proviso in order to combat the dominant influence exercised by southern politicians in the national government.<sup>18</sup> Although an uneasy alliance with a weak organization, the Free Soil party garnered ballots from 69,767 people in the

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<sup>18</sup> For studies of the Free Soil party see Frederick J. Blue, *The Free Soilers: Third Party Politics, 1848-54* (Urbana, Ill., 1973); Joseph G. Rayback, *Free Soil: The Election of 1848* (Lexington, Ky., 1970).

four midwestern states in 1848, considerably better than the support registered for the Liberty party in earlier elections. The Free Soil tide ebbed rapidly after the election. Throughout the North, many of the party's political leadership made accommodations for themselves with either of the two major parties and abandoned the Free Soil party. In 1852, 55,618 midwesterners voted for John P. Hale, the Free Soil party's last presidential candidate.

In looking for electoral groups who might have voted Free Soil in 1848, the obvious one to consider is the Liberty men. Although the Free Soil party resolutely avoided associating itself with abolitionism, the party's platform did express opposition to extending slavery into the territories and called for prohibiting slavery in the District of Columbia. The rank and file Liberty men apparently recognized the Free Soil party as a legitimate antislavery political organization because the evidence suggests that they followed their leaders into the new party. The correlation between the 1844 Liberty party turnout and the 1848 Free Soil turnout is 0.81, indicating that the strong Liberty counties were also strong Free Soil counties. A sense of the relationship between the Liberty and Free Soil parties is provided by the ecological regression estimates for the probability that an 1844 Liberty voter would also cast a Free Soil ballot in 1848. The estimate exceeds 1.00, which suggests the presence of either group level (illustrated by Figure A<sub>1</sub>) or interactive (illustrated by Figure A<sub>3</sub>) effects. A polynomial regression testing for the presence of interaction produced trivial coefficients for the interaction term, which suggests that a group level effect contributed to the excessive estimate. That is, Liberty men apparently were quite likely to vote for the Free Soil ticket in 1848, but, in addition, the probability that they and non-Liberty people would do so increased with the strength of the 1844 Liberty vote in their county.

Who were the non-Liberty men turning out for the Free Soil party in 1848? The historical literature typically points to a substantial movement of Whig voters into the Free Soil ranks. Moreover, recent studies of the Free Soil party contend that a significant number of antislavery Democrats also voted for Van Buren.<sup>19</sup> Although generally ignored in historical accounts, non-voters also might have been attracted to Free Soilism in 1848. The approach adopted for answering this

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<sup>19</sup> See for example Daniel A. Mazmanian, *Third Parties in Presidential Elections* (Washington, D.C., 1974), 73-74; Rayback, *Free Soil*, 299-301.

TABLE II  
Zero-Order and Partial Coefficients  
for Change Variables (1844-1848) and Change  
in Liberty-Free Soil Parties' Turnout

n=282 (Counties)	
<i>Zero-Order Correlation</i>	
Change in Democratic Turnout	1844 Liberty- 1848 Free Soil -0.12
Change in Whig Turnout	-0.53
Change in Total Turnout	0.16
<i>Partial Correlation</i>	
Change in Democratic Turnout, Controlling for:	
Change in Whig Turnout	-0.03
Change in Whig Turnout, Controlling for:	
Change in Democratic Turnout	-0.52
Change in Total Turnout, Controlling for:	
Change in Democratic Turnout	0.36
Change in Whig Turnout	0.56

question entails correlating the change in the antislavery turnout between 1844 and 1848 with the change in the Democratic and Whig parties' turnout and with the change in total turnout. If the surge in the antislavery vote was due to the movement of either Whigs and Democrats to the Free Soil banner in 1848, then the change in Whig or Democratic party turnout variables should correlate negatively with the change in the Liberty and Free Soil vote variable. On the other hand, if large numbers of 1844 non-voters cast Free Soil ballots in 1848, then the change in total turnout variable should correlate positively with the Liberty-Free Soil change variable.

The zero-order correlation coefficients presented in Table II tend to conform to the patterns expected if Whigs, Democrats, and non-voters in 1844 all played an important role in the increase in the antislavery vote between 1844 and 1848. Although the coefficients are only mildly strong, the antislavery change variable correlates positively with the change in turnout variable and negatively with the change in Democratic turnout variable. The negative correlation between change in

TABLE III  
Zero-Order and Partial Coefficients  
for Change Variables (1848-1852) and Change  
in Free Soil Turnout

n=281 (Counties)	
<i>Zero-Order Correlation</i>	<i>1848-1852 Free Soil</i>
Change in Democratic Turnout	-0.06
Change in Whig Turnout	-0.25
Change in Total Turnout	0.26
<i>Partial Correlation</i>	
Change in Democratic Turnout, Controlling for:	
Change in Whig Turnout	0.05
Change in Whig Turnout, Controlling for:	
Change in Democratic Turnout	-0.25
Change in Total Turnout, Controlling for:	
Change in Democratic Turnout	0.57
Change in Whig Turnout	0.61

antislavery turnout and Whig turnout attains moderate strength which suggests a more important Whig component in the surge in antislavery support.

However, the zero-order coefficients are to a considerable degree deceptive. The partial correlation coefficients in Table II indicate that, when the change in Democrat turnout is controlled, the change in Whig turnout retains its moderate negative association with the antislavery increase. On the other hand, controlling the change in Whig turnout sharply reduces the association between change in Democratic turnout and the change in the antislavery vote to a trivial level. Apparently, only an insignificant number of 1844 Democratic voters turned out for the Free Soil party in 1848 in the Midwest. The partial correlation coefficients between change in total turnout and the change in antislavery turnout with the Democrat and Whig variables controlled both markedly exceed the zero-order coefficient. This sharp increase indicates that the changes in party turnout variables both markedly exceed the zero-order coefficient. This sharp increase indicates that the changes in party

TABLE IV

*Estimates for the Proportion of 1852 Electoral Groups  
Casting American Party Ballots in 1856*

n=309 (Counties)

<i>1852 Electoral Groups</i>	<i>Percent Casting American Ballots, 1856</i>
Abstainers	21.7
Democrats	0.0
Whigs	21.5
Free Soilers	0.0

turnout variables were masking an important independent association between change in total turnout and the change in the antislavery turnout. This evidence suggests that the major elements in the surge in antislavery turnout between 1844 and 1848 consisted of people who either voted Whig or did not vote in 1844.

In 1852, the Free Soil electoral strength waned. Free Soil turnout in the four midwestern states declined from 7.6 percent in 1848 to 5.1 percent. The correlation coefficients presented in Table III suggest the character of the political choices made in 1852 by those who left the Free Soil ranks. If 1848 Free Soil voters tended to vote for one of the major parties in 1852, then one would expect a negative correlation between the change in the Free Soil turnout and the change in party turnout variables. Additionally, if 1848 Free Soil voters withdrew from politics in 1852 and abstained, then one would expect a positive correlation between the Free Soil change variable and the change in total turnout. The zero-order coefficients indicate only a negligible association between the difference in Free Soil turnout and the change in Democrat turnout, but a stronger association between it and the Whig and the total turnout variables. Moreover, the negative correlation computed for change in Whig turnout and the positive correlation computed for change in total turnout conforms to the predicted directions. As the table shows, these relationships hold for the partial correlation coefficients, too. Apparently, the 1848 Free Soilers who did not support the party four years later either cast a Whig ballot or abstained in 1852.

Most of the 1852 Free Soil voters evidently came from those who supported the party in 1848. According to the estimates produced by ecological regression, 60 percent of the 1848 Free Soilers voted for the party again in 1852. Who were those faithful Free Soilers? Apparently, many of them were the Liberty men. There is a strong correlation between Liberty turnout in 1844 and 1852 Free Soil turnout (0.73), indicating that the two parties tended to draw their strength from the same counties. The ecological regression estimate for the proportion of 1844 Liberty men voting Free Soil in 1852 exceeds 100 percent, which points to the presence of group or interactive effects on 1852 Free Soil voting. The subsequent analysis suggested that group effects rather than interaction contributed to the inadmissible estimate. A persuasive explanation for this finding is that the 1844 Liberty men, joined by others in the counties in which Liberty voters were numerous relative to elsewhere, were the heart of the Free Soil support in both 1848 and 1852. When the Republican party campaigned against the expansion of slavery in 1856, virtually all 1852 Free Soilers turned out to cast their ballots for Republican candidate John C. Fremont.<sup>20</sup>

The vote in 1856 was complicated by the fact that nativism in the form of the American party burst upon the political scene. As a suspicious and hostile orientation toward immigrants, nativism had long been present in American culture, manifesting itself in suffrage restrictions, discrimination, and riots. During the antebellum period, the nativist impulse also figured in local politics in such efforts as preventing parochial schools from benefitting from public tax revenue and closing beer gardens on Sunday.<sup>21</sup> As the Whig party collapsed, in the early 1850s, many politicians sought to mobilize an opposition to the Democracy around such nativist causes as restricting public office to the native born and tightening the immigration laws. Coming together as the American party, these nativist forces nominated Millard Fillmore for the presidency in 1856. Although Fillmore received ballots from 89,781 voters within the four midwestern states, the American party faded rapidly after 1856 and did not contest the 1860 presidential election in the region.

What were the political origins of the American party voters and where did they go? The historical literature typically

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<sup>20</sup> Shortridge, "Voter Realignment," 212.

<sup>21</sup> On nativism see Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (New York, 1938); Ira M. Leonard and Robert D. Parmet, *American Nativism, 1830-1860* (New York, 1971).



TABLE V  
 Estimates for the Proportion of 1856 Electoral Groups  
 Casting Republican Party Ballots in 1860

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n=312 (Counties)

<i>1856 Electoral Groups</i>	<i>Percent Casting Republican Ballots, 1860</i>
Abstainers	24.1
Democrats	4.8
Republicans	87.3
Americans	64.7

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stresses the Whiggish background of the American party, and, in the four midwestern states, 1852 Whig voters were indeed more likely than most to cast a nativist ballot in 1856. As Table IV indicates, an estimated 21.5 percent of those voting for Whig candidates in 1852 also voted for Fillmore four years later. Michael F. Holt's recent study of the Know Nothings suggests that the impatient political climate of the 1850s also led many Democrats to support the American party: "When both the Democrats and Whigs courted these [immigrant and Catholic] groups rather than redressing the Protestants' grievances, voters bolted to the Know Nothing order which promised that it would jettison the unresponsive political power-brokers who ran the major parties. . . ." <sup>22</sup> However, the evidence in Table IV suggests that very few Democrats in the Midwest voted for the Know Nothings. The estimates do suggest that the American party drew substantially from among those who did not vote in 1852. An estimated 21.7 percent of the 1852 non-voters cast American party ballots in 1856. Table V shows that the midwestern Know Nothings, upon the collapse of their national party in 1860, tended to move into the Republican ranks. An estimated 64.7 percent of them voted for Lincoln in the 1860 election.

The minor parties in the antebellum Midwest held several characteristics in common. The leaders concentrated on a single overriding issue to attract voters: the Liberty party focused on

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<sup>22</sup> Michael F. Holt, "The Politics of Impatience: The Origins of Know Nothingism," *Journal of American History*, LX (September, 1973), 331.

antislaveryism; the Free Soil party stressed antislavery expansion; and the American party vigorously propounded nativism. This approach succeeded in attracting support from people who, although relatively modest in numbers, voted rather consistently for their minor party. Supporters of the earliest of these minor parties, the Liberty party, evidently steadfastly voted for antislavery candidates, even later when they ran as Free Soilers and Republicans. Those joining with the Libertymen under the Free Soil banner in 1848 were also likely to cast Free Soil and then Republican ballots in subsequent elections. The American party campaigned for the presidency only once in the Midwest, but those voting Know Nothing in 1856 moved largely as a group to the Republicans in 1860.

A major feature of political life in the 1840s and 1850s was the capacity for the minor parties to mobilize support among voters who had not participated in the preceding presidential election and from those who had cast Whig ballots. The Liberty party evidently drew largely from the Whig ranks and the abstainers, although some of its initial support stemmed from Democratic voters. Similarly, the Free Soil party in 1848 and also the American party in 1856 apparently benefitted from those voting Whig or not voting in the preceding contest. Finally, these groups of former Whig voters and non-voters who supported the Free Soil and American parties ultimately found a place in the Republican electoral coalition.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> For another example of the role of minor parties during a voter realignment see John L. Hammond, "Minor Parties and Electoral Realignment," *American Politics Quarterly*, IV (January, 1976), 63-85.