ABSTRACT

This paper examines the distribution of votes, particularly among counties, in the 1992 Presidential election in the state of Wisconsin. The thesis of this paper is that, despite the relatively strong showing of third party candidate Ross Perot, there are strong continuities between the 1992 election and those preceding it. Counties which had strong supported Republican candidates in the past—suburban Milwaukee and the counties of the Fox Valley—could be found in the Bush-Quayle camp in 1992. In a similar manner, those counties which had consistently supported the Democratic ticket in previous presidential races in this state continued to do so in 1992. These included the industrial, heavily urbanized counties in the state, “cutover” counties in the northeast, and Dane county. Mr. Perot’s support, on the other hand, was more evenly distributed throughout the state. Moreover, many of the variables associated with voting patterns in previous elections were also important in this election. These include socio-economic status, size of place and race and ethnicity. In general, counties containing large cities, significant numbers of inhabitants with relatively low incomes, and/or relatively high concentrations of individuals of Scandinavian heritage are more likely to have supported the Democratic ticket in 1992 and in the recent past. Conversely, counties with high median incomes, proportionately large numbers of individuals of German descent, and medium-sized cities are more likely to have supported the Republican ticket.

INTRODUCTION

The 1992 Presidential election in this country exhibited characteristics that set it apart from many of its immediate predecessors. For one thing, a Democrat won. Secondly, for the first time since 1968, the American voters were faced with a “viable” alternative to the major party candidates. While it is unlikely any serious political analyst thought Ross Perot had a meaningful chance of winning the election, it was clear that he had the strong support of a substantial number of voters. Before the election, impact of the Perot phenomenon was unclear. From whom would he draw votes disproportionately, Bush or Clinton? Would he get enough electoral votes to throw the election in to the House of Representatives. If so, what would happen then?

In the end, the Perot candidacy did not have the impact some hoped for and others feared. The election did not go to the House of Representatives; indeed, Mr. Perot carried no state. Nor did his candidacy seem to affect who won. Polls indicated that those who supported the third party candidate came about equally from those who would have Clinton or Bush in a two way race—or would not have voted at all (Milwaukee Journal, November 1, 1992). In the short term, including the immediate electoral outcome at least, the impact of Ross Perot was similar to that of many third party candidates in the past --
negligible. At the same time, commentators are still discussing the long term impact of the Perot candidacy.

While the preceding discussion and a plethora of print and visual media sources have focused on the 1992 at the national level, little attention has been paid to the election at the regional and state levels. This paper seeks to begin to address this imbalance by focusing on 1992 spatial voting patterns in the state of Wisconsin. In particular, we will look at county-level voting data and compare them with the 1990 socio-economic and demographic county-level data as well as with county-level voting statistics from fifteen previous presidential elections (since 1932). The thesis of this paper is that, viewed from this particular level of analysis, the election of 1992 exhibited many continuities with its immediate predecessors.

THE 1992 ELECTION IN THE NATION

Like many other states, Wisconsin supported William Jefferson Clinton over his rivals. However, like many other states, Wisconsin also experienced a strong showing for a third party candidate. Indeed, Perot's support—almost 22% of the three-way vote in Wisconsin—was the strongest third party showing for a Presidential candidate in the state since 1924, when native son Robert W. LaFollette carried the state on his way to garnering 16% of the total popular vote in the country (Diamond, 1975). Moreover, just as different parts of the country varied in their support of the different candidates, different counties in Wisconsin also varied in their relative support. Finally, just as Ross Perot carried no state in the union, he carried no county in Wisconsin.

As usual, there were ways in which Wisconsin differed from the nation as a whole. For one thing, it is not unusual for the state of Wisconsin to support the Democratic party’s candidate for President. Indeed, while the nation as a whole has elected a Democrat in only two of the seven elections held since 1964, Wisconsin has supported the Democratic ticket in the majority of elections during this period (Fonstad and Jones, 1989). However, while the state has voted more heavily for the Democratic candidate than has the U.S. as a whole in the recent past, this was not the case in 1992. Whereas Clinton received slightly more than 43% of the three-way vote nationally, in Wisconsin he gained 41.3% of that vote. Moreover, George Bush also did more poorly in Wisconsin than nationally (37.7% and 37.0% respectively). On the other hand, Ross Perot received nearly 22% of the Wisconsin three-way vote in contrast to his nation-wide total of approximately 19%. Thus, the state continued to be somewhat different from the U.S. as a whole in its voting patterns.

THE 1992 ELECTION IN WISCONSIN

In contrast to many previous elections, Wisconsin in 1992 was perceived as a swing state in what possibly would be a close election in 1992. Consequently, the state received many visits from the major party candidates. Obviously, the Clinton-Gore message received a warmer welcome than did that of the Bush-Quayle ticket. Not only did the Democratic ticket receive a plurality of votes in the state, it also won in 50 of the state’s 72 counties, gaining an absolute majority in six (Ashland, Dane, Douglas, Menominee, Milwaukee, and Richland). The Republican ticket, on the other hand, carried only 22 counties, gaining a majority in but two counties (Ozaukee and Waukesha). Perot came in third in 71 counties. Only in Green Lake county did he come in second.

There was a great deal of variation among the counties in Wisconsin for the major party candidates. Support for the Clinton-Gore ticket ranged from a high of 59.6% of the total presidential vote in Menominee county to a low of 26.6% in Washington county. President Bush, on the other hand, received as much as 53.2% of the vote in Ozaukee County to as little as 21.1% of the vote in Menominee county (see Figure 1). In both cases, from a percentage perspective, support for these two candidates where they were most popular was more than twice that of counties in which they were least popular. In contrast, support for Perot was not as uneven. He received from as little as 15.1% of the vote in Dane county to as much as 29.6% in Green Lake County.
Figure 1. The 1992 Presidential election in Wisconsin: voting patterns by county (Source: State of Wisconsin Elections Board).
From a geographic perspective, support for Mr. Clinton tended to be concentrated in the industrial counties of the southeast and the "cutover" counties in the northwestern part of the state. President Bush, on the other hand, tended to receive his greatest support from the suburban counties ringing Milwaukee and those in the Fox River Valley. Analysis of voting patterns at the minor civil division level also reveals the presence of significant disparities in voting behavior within individual counties. Although Clinton won in Racine and Kenosha counties, for example, most of his supporters in these counties were residents of the two largest cities—Racine and Kenosha; a great majority of rural residents in central and western parts of these counties voted for Bush (see Figures 2 and 3). Similar disparities in voting behavior were also observed in Milwaukee county. Fifty-eight percent of residents of the city of Milwaukee voted for the Democratic candidate, but the majority of population in the suburban areas voted for the Republican ticket. Excluding minor civil divisions with less than 500 votes, the highest proportion of votes for Bush (78%) was recorded in Oostburg village in Sheboygan county and Dunbar town in Marinette county. Among settlements with a population of over 10,000, Bush received the highest percentage of votes in the cities of Brookfield (61%) and Mequon (60%). President Clinton was most popular in the town of Madison (65%) and village of Shorewood Hills (63%), both in Dane county. He also received a significant majority of votes in the cities of Madison (62%), Milwaukee (58%) and Superior (58%). Finally, Perot was most popular in the towns of Gibson (39%) in Manitowoc county and Chilton (38%) in Calumet county (see Figure 4).

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE, THE MORE THEY REMAIN THE SAME: 1992 IN LIGHT OF PREVIOUS ELECTIONS

One way to look at the 1992 election in an historical context is to compare it to its immediate predecessor in terms of simple inferential statistics. The examination of scattergrams reveals very close relationship between Democratic and Republican voting patterns in the 1988 and 1992 elections (see Figure 5). For instance, the correlation between proportion of the total vote for Bush in 1992 and proportion of the two party vote for him in the 1988 election is over 0.87. A similar correlation between Clinton in 1992 and Dukakis in 1988 is over 0.90. Both of these relationships are statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Most counties that gave the greatest relative support to the Bush-Quayle ticket in 1988 also gave the strongest support to the same candidates in 1992. Likewise, counties which traditionally most heavily slanted to the Democratic party were in 1988 also the strongest supporters of Clinton in the last presidential election.

Moreover, if one compares these elections with earlier ones, one again finds a substantial amount of continuity. An earlier work comparing the 1988 election with that of 1960 (one in which Richard Nixon carried the state by a small margin over John F. Kennedy) found substantial similarities between these two elections in terms of the spatial distribution of the vote. In the 1960 election the Democratic candidate received his strongest support in Portage and Manitowoc counties and in the northwestern and southeastern parts of the state, while the Republican candidate was relatively strongest in the central parts of the state, including the Fox Valley area. There were, of course, differences. For instance, the suburban counties were not as heavily Republican in 1960 as they were in 1988 and 1992. However, these counties have undergone substantial population growth in the intervening years (Fonstad and Jones, 1989). Other differences may be accounted for in part by a religious issue (Kennedy’s Roman Catholicism) that was apparently important for many voters in 1960 (Converse, et al., 1961; Baggaley, 1963) but has not surfaced since.

Another way to examine continuity in voting patterns is to compare party strength in 1992 with tendencies in several earlier elections. In Fonstad and Jones (1989), building on a previous work by James Donoghue (1974), constructed maps showing the counties in which one party or the other was historically dominant. Counties showing dominance were identified as those "which gave their
Figure 2. The 1992 Presidential election in Wisconsin: percent of votes for the Democratic candidate (Clinton) by minor civil division (Source: State of Wisconsin Elections Board).
Figure 3. The 1992 Presidential election in Wisconsin: percent of votes for the Republican candidate (Bush) by minor civil division (Source: State of Wisconsin Elections Board).
Figure 4. The 1992 Presidential election in Wisconsin: percent of votes for the Independent candidate (Perot) by minor civil division (Source: State of Wisconsin Elections Board).
### Table 1


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presidential Election (Year)</th>
<th>Democratic Vote Coefficients</th>
<th>Republican Vote Coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>-0.302</td>
<td>-0.202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>0.214</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>0.595</td>
<td>0.379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>0.652</td>
<td>0.457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>0.739</td>
<td>0.622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>0.660</td>
<td>0.472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>0.808</td>
<td>0.726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>0.585</td>
<td>0.465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>0.751</td>
<td>0.674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>0.753</td>
<td>0.594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>0.756</td>
<td>0.575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>0.792</td>
<td>0.820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>0.880</td>
<td>0.759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>0.914</td>
<td>0.808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>0.932</td>
<td>0.879</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: computed by the authors from various issues of the Wisconsin Blue Book

support to at least one of the two parties in at least eleven of the last fourteen elections (over seventy-five percent of the time)" in the Presidential elections 1932-1984 (Fonstad and Jones, 1989, 5). The counties that could be classified as “Democratic-dominant” during that time were Kenosha, Milwaukee, Dane, Portage, Menominee, Iron, Ashland, Bayfield, and Douglas. All of these counties could be found very firmly in the Clinton camp in the 1992 Presidential elections.

Furthermore, an examination of correlation coefficients comparing support for Democratic candidates in all presidential elections since 1932 with the 1992 election shows strong positive correlations for every year since 1944 (see Table 1). This, too, suggests a high level of continuity in Democratic voting patterns in this state for the past half century. There has been some change, however, in the Republican camp. Many of those counties which fit the category of “Republican dominance” during the period 1932-1984 were not quite as strongly Republican in 1992. This is especially true of relatively rural counties in the central and southwestern parts of the state. Indeed, correlation coefficients of Republican presidential voting since 1932 are less strong than those of Democratic voting. Figure 6, showing the number of elections won by the two major party candidates during the 1932-1992 period in each county, identifies several Democratic and Republican strongholds in Wisconsin. The four counties in the northern part of the state (Douglas, Ashland, Bayfield and Iron) plus Milwaukee, Dane, Kenosha, Portage and Menominee counties are the major Democratic strongholds. In these
Figure 5. Relationship between voting patterns in the 1988 and 1992 Presidential elections in Wisconsin at the county level (Source: Computed by the authors from data provided by the State of Wisconsin Elections Board and from Wisconsin Blue Book, 1990-91).

Figure 6. Democratic and Republican strongholds in Wisconsin during the 1932-1992 period (Source: various issues of Wisconsin Blue Book).
counties a Democratic candidate won at least 13 out of 16 presidential elections. Douglas and Menominee counties have always voted for a Democrat during the examined period. The Republican strongholds, on the other hand, include 14 counties in east-central and south-eastern Wisconsin plus Door, Richland, Wood and Sawyer counties. In Walworth county a Republican candidate has won each of the last 16 presidential elections, while in Waukesha and Waushara counties he was successful in 15 and 14 elections respectively.

The vote distribution in Republican strength among counties in the 1992 election, which is consistent with that found in the 1988 election, may indicate a shift in strength for the Republican party from rural areas to the suburbs and the moderately large cities of the Fox Valley as part of a "secular realignment" (Key, 1959; Hopkins and Lyons, 1980). The fact that these are some of the fastest growing parts of the state in terms of population may bode well for Republican strength in the state over the coming years. Even taking this change in to account, however, there has been substantial continuity in voting patterns for the two major parties in Wisconsin for several decades.

EXPLAINING THE PATTERNS OF VOTING IN WISCONSIN ELECTIONS

Students of political behavior have identified a number of factors likely to have an impact upon the voting preferences of the electorate, and three of these will be used to help explain the distribution of votes in the state in the 1992 election. These include socio-economic status, settlement size, and ethnicity.

Socio-Economic Status

In the view of many political analysts, economic status is an important determinant of an individual's voting decision. Most voters, it is argued, seek to use their political power to enhance their perceived economic self-interest. In this view, the relatively poor are likely to support Democratic candidates, while more affluent citizens will tend toward supporting Republicans (Popkin, et al., 1976).

Does what holds true at the individual level apply at the county level in terms of Wisconsin voting patterns? The answer appears to be yes. For instance, as was noted earlier, the Bush-Quayle ticket received a majority of votes cast in only two counties in this state—Ozaukee and Waukesha. These two counties, measured in terms of median per capita income in 1990 are the most wealthy in the state (see Figure 7). Washington county, which was also very strong in its support of the Republican ticket, is also a very affluent county by this measure. In a similar fashion, counties in the Fox Valley are also quite rich by Wisconsin standards and they also tended to support President Bush rather strongly in the 1992 election.

At the other end of the economic spectrum lies Menominee county, which is, by the measure of median personal income, the poorest county in the state. It is also the county which gave proportionately the fewest votes to George Bush in the 1992 election. Indeed, three of the five counties in the state least supportive of Bush are in the lowest economic quartile in the state, measured in terms of median personal income.

There are, of course, exceptions. For instance, Dane (the county seat of which is Madison) county is one of the most well-to-do areas in the state, yet it was also one of the least Republican in its vote in the 1992 Presidential election. On the other hand, the citizens of Langlade county, one of the poorer in the state, supported Mr. Bush over his rivals in this election.

What is true of this election was also generally true for the previous presidential election in this state. In that election, too, the counties in the upper quartile economically were generally in the Republican camp, while those in the lowest quartile tended to vote Democratic (Fonstad and Jones, 1989). Moreover, the relationship between the income variable and the relative support for the two major party candidates in the 1992 election was quite strong—a positive 0.63 for the Republican vote and a negative 0.43 for the Democratic vote (see Table 2). Correlation between voting behavior and another measure of economic status—
TABLE 2
THE 1992 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN WISCONSIN: VOTING BEHAVIOR AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Votes for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean income per capita in 1990</td>
<td>0.627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of population below the poverty line</td>
<td>-0.610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of labor force unemployed</td>
<td>-0.509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of population employed as professionals</td>
<td>0.281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of population with a college degree</td>
<td>0.349</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: computed by the authors from the Wisconsin Blue Book 1993-94 and the 1990 Census of Population and Housing.

Population below poverty line—was even stronger (-0.61 for Bush and 0.62 for Clinton) than that for the income variable. Similarly strong relationship was also observed with regard to employment status. A majority of unemployed voters supported the Democratic ticket as suggested by a strong positive correlation between the proportion of unemployed persons and votes for Clinton (0.49) and strong negative for Bush (-0.51). In might be noted that the relationship was somewhat stronger in the 1992 election than in its immediate predecessor. Does this mean economics was more important in this election? Perhaps. Certainly there is a strong relationship between income and voting at the county level in the 1992 Presidential election.

Although two other variables measuring socio-economic status, namely proportion of population employed as professionals and population with a college degree, were not strongly correlated with the proportion of votes the Democratic candidate and showed only a moderate positive correlation with votes for the Republican ticket, they had quite a strong negative correlation with the proportion of votes for Perot.

Size of Place
Another factor seen to have an impact on voter behavior is “size of place” (Epstein, 1958). Persons living in large urban aggregations, particularly in central cities, tend (other things being equal) to be stronger supporters of the Democratic party. This relationship, it has been suggested, may come about because the urbanization process may increase the need for governmental services, objects more likely to be provided by Democrats rather than by Republicans.

Another factor associated with city size and voting behavior deals with neighborhood homogeneity. Epstein has suggested that in large cities residents area are apt to live in economically and socially homogeneous neighborhoods. This is less likely to be the case in smaller cities. Consequently, the development of class consciousness seems less likely to take place in the latter than in the former (Epstein, 1959; Campbell, et al., 1964). Thus, according to the logic of this argument, factory workers in Milwaukee would be more likely to see themselves as members of that working class than would their counterparts in smaller cities like Oshkosh. As a result, the former may be...
Figure 7. The 1992 Presidential election in Wisconsin: relationship between income per capita and voting behavior at the county level. (Source: Computed by the authors from data provided by the State of Wisconsin Elections Board and from the 1990 Census of Population and Housing).

Figure 8. The 1992 Presidential election in Wisconsin: relationship between the “size of place” and voting behavior at the minor civil division level. Shown are only cities and villages with a population of 5,000 and more. (Source: Computed by the authors from data provided by the State of Wisconsin Elections Board and from the 1990 Census of Population and Housing).
state does not exhibit high degree of racial diversity, having a population of non-white that make up only 6.5% of the state's population (Bureau of the Census, 1992). Consequently, in most of the state, racial identification may not have a great direct impact on county voting patterns. However, Milwaukee county's relatively large black population may help account for its strong support of Democratic candidates, since, “in election after election blacks have been the most reliable Democratic voters in the nation (Sigelman and Todd, 1992, 238). Moreover, the fact that Menominee county is almost exclusively populated by American Indians (in addition to its relative poverty) may also help explain its overwhelming support for the same ticket.

While the state may be rather racially homogeneous, it is ethnically quite heterogeneous, and some analysts have suggested that this ethnic heterogeneity has had an impact on its voting patterns (Fenton, 1966; Jones, 1983; Fonstad and Jones, 1989). Ethnic groups which have had an impact on Wisconsin politics include Yankee-Protestants, Germans, Scandinavians, and Poles (Fenton, 1966; Brye, 1979). An important fact for our analysis is that many of these ethnic groups tended to settle within distinct parts of the state. Moreover, once voting patterns became established they remained quite stable (Brye, 1979). For instance, eastern Wisconsin, including the Fox River valley area, was traditionally settled by large numbers of immigrants of German descent. Large contingents of Polish immigrants settled in Milwaukee and in Portage county (the Stevens Point area). Scandinavians, who came to Wisconsin somewhat later, tended to congregate predominately in the western and northwestern parts of the state, although significant areas in southern Wisconsin were also settled by Norwegians (Brye, 1979). Thus, while the state as a whole is ethnically quite diverse, substate areas tend to be relatively much more homogeneous in this respect.

Although these immigrant waves ended years ago, ethnicity still seems to have a contemporary relevance, though it may be an indirect one. Ethnic background often suggests a certain cultural heritage. This, in turn, can affect political attitudes and affiliations (Wolfinger, 1965). Thus, ethnicity can have a continuing influence on a voter's partisan identification (Nie, et al., 1976).

In the context of Wisconsin politics, for example, Fenton (1966) has argued that the Scandinavian immigrants brought with them a tradition of class-based politics. This was fortified by their support of the LaFollette Progressive in the early part of this century. They supported LaFollette’s successful candidacies for governor and were rewarded by governmental programs they favored. This positive reinforcement encouraged them to continue to support liberal causes. In recent years this has meant voting for candidates of the Democratic party. Thus, Fenton found in his examination of the 1960 gubernatorial election, a positive correlation of 0.58 between percent Scandinavians in a county and support for the Democratic candidate. In the 1992 elections those parts of the state settled earlier by Scandinavians did tend to support the Clinton-Gore ticket.

In contrast, many of the Germans who settled outside Milwaukee, particularly those moving in to the Fox River Valley area, have continued their conservative traditions. In the post-war era, this has translated into a tendency to vote Republican. Moreover, Democratic control of the Presidency during both world wars did not endear the party to many voters of German descent (Fenton, 1966; Brye, 1979). For instance, in the 1960 election, the correlation between the percentage of the population identified as German in Wisconsin counties and the Democratic vote was a negative 0.44 (Fenton, 1966). These heavily German counties have also voted strongly Republican in the past two Presidential elections.

Ethnicity may also help explain why some relatively poor counties tended to support the Republican ticket in 1992. For instance, while both Shawano and Waushara counties are in the third quartile of the state in income, they both gave a plurality of their vote to the Bush-Quayle ticket in 1992. Indeed, both were in the top quartile of the state in terms of support for the Republicans in 1992. They also voted strongly Republican in 1988 (Fonstad and Jones, 1989). Both counties have a relatively high proportion of residents of German descent.
TABLE 3

THE 1992 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN WISCONSIN: VOTING BEHAVIOR AND ETHNICITY AND RACE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Votes for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of population of German ancestry</td>
<td>0.620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of population of Scandinavian ancestry</td>
<td>-0.529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of population of Polish ancestry</td>
<td>0.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of population of Irish ancestry</td>
<td>-0.029</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: computed by the authors from the Wisconsin Blue Book 1993-94 and the 1990 Census of Population and Housing.

In a similar fashion, ethnicity may also help explain why two neighboring counties, Portage and Waupaca, have such different voting patterns. The latter, though slightly less affluent than the former, has a persistent tradition of Republican voting in Presidential elections. It strongly supported Bush-Quayle in 1988, and continued its support in the 1992 election. The former, on the other hand, was highly supportive of the Democratic ticket in 1992, as it had been in 1988. Neither county is dominated by a large urban agglomeration.

The difference may lie in the two counties’ ethnic heritage. Whereas Portage has a highly Polish composition, and Poles in Wisconsin have a Democratic tradition (Brye, 1979), Waupaca is peopled largely by people of German stock. Thus, ethnicity may help explain the difference in the voting patterns of these two counties.

In order to determine more precise statistical relationships, simple correlations between county support for the three candidates and a proportion of non-white population and that of German, Scandinavian, Polish and Irish ancestry (the four largest ethnic groups in Wisconsin) were computed (see Figure 9 and Table 3). A number of these were quite pronounced. For instance, the relationship between the minority population and support for the candidates was fairly strong. It was also (in the case of the two major party candidates) in the expected direction. In the case of the Republican ticket the relationships were negative while they were positive for the Democratic candidates. They were also strongly correlated in a negative direction with support for Perot. Relationships between the relative voting strength of the candidates and some of the ethnicity variables were also quite strong. These, too, were in consonance with previous findings (Fenton, 1966; Fonstad and Jones, 1989). For instance, there was a strong relationship between percentage of a county’s German ancestry and its support for various candidates, a positive 0.62 with the Bush-Quayle ticket, a negative 0.70 with the Clinton-Gore ticket, and a positive 0.35 with the Perot candidacy. On the other hand, there was a rather strong negative correlation between percentage of a county’s population that is of Scandinavian background and support for President Bush (-0.53) and a rather strong positive correlation between that variable and support for Clinton (0.48). There is little relationship between it and support for Perot (-0.04).

Thus, it appears that ethnicity may still have an impact on county-level voting behavior. It is, of course, possible, that the ethnicity variable is a spurious one, since some measures of Scandinavian stock at least are correlated with some income measures. However, evidence exists that ethnicity may have an impact on a county’s voting patterns.
Figure 9. The 1992 Presidential election in Wisconsin: relationship between ethnicity (German and Scandinavian ancestry) and voting behavior at the county level. (Source: Computed by the authors from data provided by the State of Wisconsin Elections Board and from the 1990 Census of Population and Housing).

though that impact may be declining (Lorinskas, et al., 1969).

Thus, each variable—income, settlement size, and ethnicity—had an impact on the 1992 Presidential election in Wisconsin, just as it did in previous contests. This, too, suggests a high degree of continuity between this election and its predecessors.

CONCLUSION

In a number of ways the 1992 election in Wisconsin was similar to its predecessor. The Democratic ticket won in both elections, and those counties which supported one party over the other in 1988 tended to do likewise in 1992. Moreover, in both elections, many of the same variables helped explain county level voting behavior. For instance, in both elections, levels of socioeconomic status appeared to have a strong impact on county level voting behavior. Counties with relatively high mean levels of income and education and low levels of poverty and unemployment strongly supported the Bush-Quayle ticket in both election, while counties with relatively low average levels of income and education and high levels of poverty and unemployment tended to vote strongly for the Democratic ticket in 1988 and 1992. In a similar manner, “size of place” variables exhibited a consistent pattern in both elections. Democratic Presidential candidates tended to do relatively better in the most and least populous counties while moderately populated counties seemed to favor the Republicans in each election. Patterns of ethnicity also continued to have a strong association with county voting tendencies in Wisconsin. Counties in which there are relatively high numbers of individuals of German ancestry maintained a pattern of high Republican support, while counties in which descendants of Scandinavian and Polish immigrants predominate tended to be strongly supportive of Democratic candidates.

However, there were differences, many of which may be explained by the candidacy of Ross Perot. Support for both of the major party candidates was lower in 1992 than it was in 1988. Support for Perot, however, did not appear to come disproportionately from either of the two major parties. The Perot candidacy may also have affected factors associated with support of the major party.
candidates to some degree. Thus, while Mr. Perot’s candidacy did not appear to affect the outcome of the election in Wisconsin, it did have an impact upon voting patterns in the Wisconsin Presidential election of 1992. Despite this impact, much of what took place in this election is consistent with Wisconsin’s recent electoral past.

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