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## Party Building Factors to Encourage Third Party Support Among 18-24 Year Olds

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**Party Building**  
**Factors to Encourage Third Party**  
**Support Among 18-24 Year Olds**



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Department: Political Science

Advisors: Dr. Michelle Pautz and Dr. Daniel Birdsong

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# **Party Building**

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#### **Abstract**

Third parties have always existed within American politics, yet have never claimed the ultimate political victory: the Presidency. Third parties often enjoy support from a strong, concentrated group of serious devotees and brief flashes of public support, but they often fail to attract the larger, more consistent backing enjoyed by the two major parties. A significant source of third party patronage is also found on the university campus, yet this support often fades shortly after college. Using survey data, this research analyzes the potential impact party building and media campaign strategies would have on third parties in gaining the lasting support of 18-24 year old voters. It also examines how the voting behavior and political affiliations of this group have changed since coming to college and how their perceptions of third parties could change in the future. This foundation could provide a path for third parties to begin building a young, loyal coalition that would continue their support after college, allowing third parties to perhaps gain enough momentum to take the national stage with a presence and power that could legitimately challenge the major two parties.

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# Table of Contents

Abstract	Title Page
Literature Review	1
Methods	16
Findings	18
Discussion	32
References	37
Appendix A – Survey Instrument	39

Despite their efforts third parties have remained on the fringes of the American political system for over 200 years. Researchers have sought to explain this marginalized participation in American politics by examining history, laws, and public opinion, often arriving at varying results. These investigations present a broad analysis of the reasons why third parties have generally been unable to succeed in American politics, but they lack a close examination of those particular groups that might potentially support third parties. This study seeks to fill those gaps by surveying a population of 18-24 year olds at a mid-sized Midwestern Catholic university to begin to determine what factors could encourage this demographic to support third parties on a consistent, life-long basis. The research findings here suggest that there is a likelihood that 18-24 year olds are willing to support third parties and that those individuals most likely to support third parties are already politically involved or have recently changed their political views. Furthermore, the research suggests that if third parties focus on state and local elections and/or work to increase their media presence through a public relations or advertising campaign they could bolster additional support within this demographic.

Before delving into the study's results, there is first a discussion of some of the existing research on the current position of third parties starting with background information on how the two party system formed and has been maintained throughout American history. It also defines the factors that facilitate the creation of third parties along with the different barriers - institutional and cultural - that third parties face. Next there is an overview of factors that affect voter choice along with a discussion of popular voting models. This idea of voter choice narrows to explore the characteristics that would specifically encourage a voter to support a third party. Finally, I explore the

unique nature of the 18-24 year old voter before identifying the gaps in the existing research which lead to my research question. This research seeks to fill this gap by examining the voting behavior and political opinions of 18-24 year olds, a group of citizens that has just begun their lives as electoral participants and has, historically, been most likely to support a political third party (Behr 1984; Southwell 2003). This research begins with the population of a single university, but future research could widen to examine the opinions of this age group nationwide, hopefully giving third parties more definitive strategies for rising to prominence.

### **What is a Third Party?**

Most simply put, a third party in American politics is any political party that is not either the Republican or Democratic parties. A more detailed definition is offered by Gillespie (2012) that helps explain the basic structure of a third party. A third party is an

organized aggregate of leaders, members and supporters that designates itself a party, articulates interests of its devotees, presses these interests using electoral and/or other political methods, and either never attains or is unable to sustain the primary or secondary share of loyalties of people making up the national electorate (Gillespie 2012).

Thus, third parties essentially mirror the structure of the two major parties.

Gillespie (2012) differentiates third parties though by adding to this definition saying that there are three types of political third parties. The first type is the continuing doctrinal and issue parties; these parties, such as the Communist and Prohibition Party, often focus on a single issue or political ideology (Gillespie 2012). They have a small, extremely loyal base. Short-lived parties are another type of political third party, which form in response to a current issue in American culture (Gillespie 2012). They may enjoy a brief stint of popularity, but it quickly fades as the issue moves to the backburner. Finally, significant state or local parties, like the Populists of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, form in

response to regional needs; this could be in response to the dominance of one of the major parties or an issue that is prevalent only in one part of the country (Gillespie 2012). They have a tough time gaining national prominence because of the fact that their issues are not applicable on a national scale.

In the same way that there are different types of third parties, these parties also form for a number of different reasons. Both Bibby (1998) and Behr (1984) agree that third parties are formed for one of four reasons. The first reason is the result of a splinter candidacy, which occurs when an individual fails to secure his/her major party nomination for office, so he/she bolts the party and forms his/her own in order to still run for the office (Bibby 1998; Behr 1984). A prominent example of a splinter candidacy can be found in Theodore Roosevelt's creation of the Bull Moose Party after he failed to secure the Republican nomination for President against William Taft (Bibby 1998; Behr 1984). Another version of party bolting leads to the creation secessionist third parties. These groups used to belong to one of the two major parties, but became discontent with how the party was handling issues and left to form a new party, more to their liking (Bibby 1998; Behr 1984). The Tea Party is a modern day example of this phenomenon. Traditional doctrinaire parties form around political ideologies like communism or socialism that are not accepted by the Republicans or Democrats; these groups do tend to be more hard lined in their beliefs because they are prescribing to political ideologies that differ greatly from traditional American political views (Bibby 1998; Behr 1984). Finally, there are what are known as "new" parties which form around cultural issues that have come to the fore of political discussion (Bibby 1998; Behr 1984). Cultural issue

parties have run the gamut from abolitionist to temperance movements and often eventually see their views co-opted by major parties.

### **Formation and Maintenance of Two Party System**

The initial formation of the two party system goes back to the founding of our government (Bibby 1998). Although, initially, there were no political parties, two major groups formed immediately following the writing of the Constitution: the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists. These two groups argued for and against the ratification of the Constitution. As Bibby et al. (1998) point out, the fact that the ratification of the Constitution, arguably our nation's first political decision, was only a yes or no argument set a precedent that other political decisions would only have two possibilities. In fact, the first two political parties would eventually grow out of the Federalist and Anti-Federalist positions after the ratification of the Constitution, reinforcing the dichotomous system which had been spontaneously created during the ratification process.

This initial two-sided question set a cultural precedent. Since the founding of the country, there have only been two political parties which could be considered truly viable in winning an election on a national scale at any given time and most political issues are viewed as only having two solutions (Bibby et al. 1998). Lewis-Beck (2008) notes that the biggest reason for the continued success of a two party system is that the American people consistently support it and consider it a part of their cultural fabric. Both Behr (1984) and Lewis-Beck (2008) agree that support of the two party system even makes up a part of childhood political socialization. The process of socialization is when most cultural traits are passed on to the next generation. Parents teach their children what it means to be a member of society and the particular culture of that society, and, in turn,



children internalize these beliefs to make up the core of their ideas about identity and cultural truths. In America, a part of our political culture is the two party system (Behr 1984; Lewis-Beck 2008). Throughout socialization, the two party system and its importance are internalized by the next generation (Behr 1984; Lewis-Beck 2008). This makes it difficult for young voters to break the mold of the two party system when they attain voting age because they have always been taught that it is the cornerstone of our political system.

Bibby (1998) adds depth to this cultural trait, explaining that Americans prefer two moderate solutions to a political issue with one solution just right and one just left of center on the political spectrum, while they shun political extremists, although he offers little explanation as to why. Again, looking through history, those parties that have risen to be contenders in the two party system have tended to occupy the most moderate positions on the political spectrum, while more extreme parties, like the Socialist Party or the Communist Party, failed to garner widespread support, instead often earning the derision of most Americans (Bibby 1998). The fact that the two party system is a part of the cultural fabric of America is its best security because changing this system would require not just a change in laws, but also a change in American culture (Lewis-Beck 2008).

Systematically, it is widely agreed that Duverger's law plays the biggest role in supporting the two party system (Abramson 1995; Doyle 2006; Gillespie 2012). Duverger's law states that the simple majority, single ballot system the U.S. has favors a two party system. This has both a mechanical and a psychological effect on third parties and their voters. The mechanical effect is that third parties may win many votes

nationwide but this adds up to few or no electoral votes in individual states (Abramson 1995). Because the two major parties still dominate the vote share, they are most likely to win a plurality of the votes, even if the third party is fairly popular (Abramson 1995). For example, if a third party somehow won at least one third of the votes in every state, this would represent an equal vote share. However, in the same contest, one of the two major parties is still most likely to win a plurality of the votes, for example that party would win 40% of all votes in every state to the third party's 33% vote share. This political party would then win all of the electoral votes and the election and the third party would have nothing to show for their significant vote share. The psychological effect is that people want to feel that their vote counted so they participate in tactical voting in which they vote for the major party they support most, even if they agree with a third party more (Abramson 1995).

There is evidence of this phenomenon in Ross Perot's two bids for the presidency. Abramson (1995) suggests that had more people felt like Perot had a shot of winning, they would have voted for him. The implications of this law make it difficult for third parties to begin gaining a following simply because people are less likely to begin or continue supporting a party that they feel has low viability, protecting the two party system.

Aside from Duverger's law and the cultural implications, Bibby (1998) and Behr (1984) agree on a number of other institutional safeguards that protect the two party system. The first of these is the structure of the national election cycle (Bibby 1998; Behr 1984). Presidents, representatives, and senators all have different term lengths, and all of the elections do not occur in the same year. As a result, political parties need to

have a strong, consistent party base which can handle permanent campaigning. The two major parties have the funds to do this, while third parties do not, which works to the advantage of the two major parties (Bibby 1998; Behr 1984).

Direct primaries also safeguard the two party system by allowing voters to have a say on which party members end up on the November ballot (Bibby 1998; Behr 1984). This allows the two major parties to absorb more radical political positions because any party member can run on its platform for the primary, but if he/she loses, sore loser laws prevent him/her from bolting to a third party (Gillespie 2012).

Public funding plays a role in protecting the two party system as well (Bibby 1998; Behr 1984). To receive public funding, a party must have received at least 5% of the popular vote in the previous election, which most third parties fail to do.

Furthermore, nationally televised conventions and debates add to the media attention of the two major parties, while third parties receive little coverage and are excluded from the debates (Bibby 1998; Behr 1984). These institutional factors reinforce the power of the two major parties and weaken third parties which could disrupt the system.

### **Barriers to Success**

Whatever their classification or reasons for forming, third parties face barriers to success that the two major parties do not have to take into account. As mentioned earlier, Abramson (1995), Doyle (2006), and Gillespie (2012) all assert that Duverger's law is the simplest reason that third parties cannot succeed in American politics. Behr (1984) and Bibby (1998) agree that this fact causes many third parties to simply become discouraged and fold or get absorbed by the more established parties. Behr (1984) states

that since 1840, 87% of third parties have participated in no more than three elections. This lack of longevity offers few benefits to supporters and keeps them from getting in the habit of voting for a third party (Behr 1984; Bibby 1998).

There are two types of legal barriers that both Behr (1984) and Bibby (1998) cite as specifically preventing third party success. The first barrier is the laws governing ballot access. The two major parties automatically appear on the ballots in all fifty states because they regularly win a plurality of the votes, but third parties have to go through the process of petitioning state election officials to be on the ballot (Bibby 1998; Behr 1984). To complicate this extra step, all fifty states and the District of Columbia have slightly different processes and deadlines for this crucial step (Behr 1984). This means that a third party must have both the manpower and the money to go through this process fifty one separate times in order to launch a national campaign, draining precious resources which could be spent on campaigning (Behr 1984).

The 1974 Federal Election Campaign Act enhanced the disparity between major and third parties. Under the law major parties can receive public funding up front, but third parties are only able to receive this assistance if they are on the ballot in ten states and garnered at least 5% of the national vote to demonstrate that their widespread popularity and viability, which is a near impossibility for third parties (Allen 2005). In fact, only 10 of the 148 third parties which have emerged in more than one state since 1840 would have qualified for this funding (Behr 1984; Bibby 1998). Thus, not only do third parties have to spend more to get on the ballot, but they generally do not receive financial assistance in this process either.

Gillespie (2012) cites one additional legal barrier that is a blow to third parties. Anti-fusion laws prevent the same candidate from being nominated by multiple parties (Gillespie 2012). Without these laws it would be possible for the candidate to appear on the ballot next to each political party that nominated him/her, which would increase visibility and appeal. He/she would also likely garner more votes as all of the supporters of those multiple third parties would now be throwing their support behind a single candidate. However, anti-fusion laws were upheld in *Timmons v. Twin Cities Area New Party* (1997), preventing third parties from attempting this tactic and splitting their supporters votes among a plethora of candidates.

Third parties also face barriers that are not legal, but the practical results of trying to compete in the two party system. Once again Behr (1984) and Bibby (1998) agree that these factors introduce hurdles to third parties that the major parties do not have to face. The first is campaign resources. As mentioned above, campaign finance laws and ballot access restrictions place additional financial strain on third parties, but third parties also face a deficiency in other resources as well. Although this could be a problem for any political party, attractive candidates and supporters are difficult to find. An attractive candidate for a third party would have added benefits because he/she would already have name recognition and be able to bring major financial backers in order to set up the campaign as legitimate. Unfortunately for third parties, most of these individuals belong to one of the two major parties, and it is extremely rare for them to leave their party (Bibby 1998; Behr 1984). President Theodore Roosevelt was an example of this anomaly (Bibby 1998; Behr 1984). Without this well-known, politically attractive candidate, it is difficult for third parties to attract supporters. This problem is only compounded by the

fact that most third parties only run a national candidate for president, giving potential supporters little opportunity to become familiar with the party before the presidential election (Bibby 1998; Behr 1984).

Third parties are also shirked by the media. In the 1980 presidential election, print media gave Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter ten times more coverage than all eleven third party candidates combined (Behr 1984). The media generally do not feel the need to cover third parties because they know they will not win, so they do not think that their audience is interested (Bibby 1998; Behr 1984). Instead, the media focuses on the horse race between the two major parties. Third parties also do not have the free coverage that the two major parties get through their televised conventions, major debates, and daily news reports, putting them at an even greater disadvantage because they must pay for almost all of the media coverage they want to receive instead of just a part (Bibby 1998; Behr 1984). Instead of news reports then, third party advertisement and air time comes in the form of ad time, direct mailers, or half hour long television blocks, all of which must be purchased.

Perhaps one of the biggest obstacles third parties face is not institutional, but simply the negative attitude that the American public has towards third parties (Behr 1984; Bibby 1998). As mentioned before, the two party system is culturally ingrained in the American psyche. For some voters, this is a hallowed aspect of our political system, and it should not be tampered with by supporting third parties (Bibby 1998; Behr 1984). Other voters fear the social stigma associated with voting for a third party that is thought to be too extreme (Bibby 1998; Behr 1984). In the end, this creates a self-fulfilling prophecy for third parties. The voters see them as outsiders who have no chance of

winning, so they do not want to waste their vote on a third party (Doyle 2006; Southwell 2003). Third parties then get few votes and do not win the political office.

Given these barriers and the small vote share that third parties garner, winning just 5% of the national vote, or any electoral votes, for that matter, is considered significant for a third party (Allen 2005). No matter how small the margin though, this does mean that third parties have supporters who are willing to vote for them despite their slim chance of winning. There is a diverse body of literature that discusses factors which encourage people to vote and various voting models which could help explain why people choose to vote for third parties or one of the two major parties (Lewis-Beck 2008; Doyle 2006; Hill 2006; Southwell 2003; Bowler 2000).

### **Voter Choice**

Lewis-Beck (2008) puts forth some long and short term factors that would encourage citizens to vote for a particular party. Long term factors depend on the individual beliefs of a citizen. Social demographics, party identification, and political ideology all depend on how an individual classifies him/herself within society and how that individual labels him/herself politically (Lewis-Beck 2008). Short term factors focus more on the political stage. These factors include the candidates and whatever issues may have become important during a particular campaign. An individual will become more loyal to a party as he/she continues to vote for them over time; however, those times that an individual deviates and votes for another party are times when vote choice has been influenced by a particular candidate or the party's current image (Lewis-Beck 2008).

Lewis-Beck (2008) also offers his own model of voter choice called the Social Psychological Model of Voting Behavior. In this model, an individual voter considers six factors before voting: the Republican candidate, the Democratic candidate, foreign policy issues, domestic policy issues, social group interests, and the performance of each party as managers of government (Lewis-Beck 2008). A voter will consider each of these six factors in either a positive or a negative partisan light, allowing him/her to select which candidate he/she will vote for (Lewis-Beck 2008). Some individuals may belong to many social groups, some of which have competing interests which Lewis-Beck (2008) refers to as cross-pressures. An individual who is experiencing cross-pressures is more likely to decide later in the election who he/she is voting for, and he/she is more likely to not vote with a straight party ticket (Lewis-Beck 2008).

Hill (2006), Southwell (2003), and Doyle (2006) discuss models similar to Lewis-Beck's (2008) Social Psychological Model of Voting. The Rational Choice Model and Strategic Voting Model both focus on the voter's decision to vote for the party that will bring the most benefit to that voter (Hill 2006; Southwell 2003; Doyle 2006). In these cases, a voter's beliefs may align most closely with a third party; however, there is little benefit to the voter if he/she votes for that party because they are unlikely to win, so he/she votes for one of the major parties instead, hoping for the benefits they offer should they win.

Doyle (2006), Southwell (2003), and Bowler (2000) also put forth two models that offer a path that leads voters to decide to vote for a third party. The first is called Inverse Tactical Voting (Doyle 2006). This model only works under certain conditions. The voter must live in an area where one of the two major parties is completely dominate



and support the party that is not dominate (Doyle 2006). In these circumstances, the voter is then more likely to vote for a third party because they actually have a greater chance of winning in that area than the other major party and there is less risk of wasting one's vote than there would be in other areas (Doyle 2006). The other model that Doyle (2006), Southwell (2003), and Bowler (2000) all agree upon is the Protest Voting Model. This model operates works when voters know that a third party has little chance of winning because their distrust of the two major parties leads them to vote for third parties as a form of protest (Southwell 2003; Doyle 2006; Bowler 2000). Some people who would not have voted otherwise turn out to cast a protest vote against the two major parties. This helps third parties to build up a small base, but it is not necessarily a loyal base because protest voters are not necessarily agreeing with a third parties platform by voting for them, they are simply indicating they dislike the actions of the other parties.

### **Who Supports Third Parties?**

Although these models often explain why voters choose not to vote for a third party candidate, they do not explore the reasons that certain individuals do support third parties. Those voters who feel the government is responsive to their votes are less likely to vote for a minor party, while those who label themselves independent, distrust the government, or feel alienated by it are more likely to vote for a third party (Peterson 1998; Behr 1984; Southwell 2003; Bowler 2000). Likewise people who have voted for a third party in the past or are members of a third party are more likely to vote for those groups (Allen 2005; Bowler 2000; Gold 2005). This group of individuals acts more like those who do support one of the two major parties because their votes begin to come out of loyalty to that party instead of as an independent choice each election cycle. Third

parties have the opportunity to foster this loyalty voting in young people, who are also more likely to support third parties, because young people tend to have fewer partisan ties and are more likely to vote independent (Behr 1984; Southwell 2003). This is because young people have participated in fewer elections, which have been shown to cement partisan ties (Behr 1984; Southwell 2003). However, third parties do need to foster this support early on because, as a person goes through his political life, he will become less likely to change his political views or his party of support.

### **Young Voters and Third Parties**

Not much has been written on the political views of young people with regards to third parties, although there are some important facts that have been noted about their tendencies as an age group. The 18-24 year old age group has a much lower voter turnout rate than other age demographics (Southwell 2003). This could be because they are cynical in regards to government or because they have few political ties at this stage in their political lives (Southwell 2003; Behr 1984; Lewis-Beck 2008). Learning about and supporting the two party system is part of childhood socialization, as mentioned earlier, but as young people begin their political life as voters they have no well-established loyalties outside of what beliefs they may have picked up from their parents (Behr 1984; Lewis-Beck 2008). Young people are also more likely to change their beliefs over time while the older cohorts are more resistant to this change because they have participated in more elections, cementing their political beliefs (Behr 1984; Lewis-Beck 2008). Each time a voter participates in an election, they build up a loyalty to the party they voted for, thus older voters have had more opportunity to build up their loyalty to a specific party as they continually vote for the same party election after election (Behr

1984; Lewis-Beck 2008). However, this change must come early because, as an individual ages, they become more attached to one partisan group or another (Behr 1984; Lewis-Beck 2008).

### **Gaps in the Literature**

As the literature reveals, much research has been done in regards to the barriers third parties face and the reasons that motivate individuals to vote for a particular political party; however, there are gaps in this research. In defining the barriers third parties face, there is little discussion of how these barriers might be overcome. Some parties, notably the Republican Party, have overcome the limits of being a third party to become a major player in the electoral system, yet the literature fails to explain how this shift took place. Furthermore, the arguments regarding the strength of the two party system offer no pathway for change other than a cultural shift, when, in reality, a legal change could make third parties more of a player in American elections.

The examination of voter choice models also leaves something to be desired. Many models explain why individuals vote for either the Republican or Democrats, and there are two systems which end in a voter voting for a third party, but there is no voter choice model offered to explain the voting behavior of someone who votes for the third party simply because they support them. Particularly with voter choice, the literature identifies a few characteristics that make individuals more likely to vote for the political third party. However, the literature does not synthesize these characteristics with one another. It also fails to examine how factors which make individuals more likely to vote for a third party act on the age cohort which most actively supports third parties--18-24 year olds.

The following research examines the specific political views of this age group, focusing on factors that could make these individuals more active supporters of a political third party than their older counterparts. The goal here is to explore whether or not third parties can establish a loyal base among younger cohorts that will represent a more substantial proportion of the national vote share.

## **Methods**

The gaps present in existing studies of American party politics and voter choice leave an opening for a study to examine specifically what factors drive vote choice for 18-24 year olds and how those factors could also drive them to vote for a third party. I decided to do a survey because individuals do not always wish to disclose their political beliefs to others, and the survey offered anonymity to respondents, allowing them to answer more truthfully. I began to craft a survey that would address these gaps and help answer the overarching question: Can third parties develop a significant base among 18-24 year olds?

To develop this survey, I first examined what other survey work had been done with regards to third parties by the Pew Center and Gallup so that I could base my survey on questions which had already been tested and proven to be valuable survey questions. I used two questions from the Pew Center and Gallup that asked whether the respondent thought a third party was needed and the respondent's opinion of the current political parties then I began to build my own survey questions. My study surveyed 18-24 year old University of Dayton students. I chose this population because my study is an exploratory study, so focusing on a single university population allows for the development and refinement of a methodology (Newcomer and Triplett 2004). The

University of Dayton has an undergraduate population of around 8,000 students with the majority of them falling within the age parameters of my study. There are four different schools in the university as well: the College of Arts and Sciences, School of Engineering, School of Education and Health Sciences, and the School of Business.

First, I piloted my survey in an introductory level American political systems course (N=30) (Newcomer and Triplett 2004). This pilot survey ensures that my survey questions made sense and have the potential to produce valuable, measurable results. Many academic programs on campus require social sciences credits so introductory level classes include students from numerous majors and stages in their university career, so this class was a good environment to test out the survey. I reviewed the comments from this group, made edits, and was ready to begin conducting the survey.

This survey was carried out during the summer session in 2013 when a majority of students are not on campus, so in order to reach my survey population, I put together a list of every professor teaching a summer class on campus, online, or abroad. I then drafted an email explaining my research and asking professors to pass along the survey link if they desired to do so (Newcomer and Triplett 2004). There was no incentive offered for either professors to send out the survey or students to participate in it, nor was it mandatory. My faculty advisor then sent out the email to every professor on the list. The link to the survey was also promoted on the University of Dayton Political Science Department's Facebook page and reminder emails were sent out to professors a few weeks after the initial email. The survey was open for two months, encompassing both summer sessions on campus before it was closed just after the start of the fall semester. The total number of students who took the survey was 208.

Since it was not mandatory for professors to send this survey out to their students and most faculty did not report whether or not they had passed the survey along, there is no way to determine the survey's response rate, which stymies efforts at determining a response rate and presents challenges with the generalizability of the survey's results. Nonetheless, the survey produced valuable results that could be used to open up new opportunities for research and perhaps aid third parties in beginning to grow their base among 18-24 year olds. Future research should expand the survey pool to represent university students nationwide and to other populations of 18-24 year olds not enrolled in university.

## **Findings**

The results of this survey reveal that there could be potential for third parties to grow their base among 18-24 year olds. The research initially confirmed that the 18-24 year old age group is likely to consider supporting third parties. The likelihood of support was also found to be tied to factors such as political involvement and current political beliefs. The survey also determined that factors, such as minor media presence and limited success, are holding 18-24 year olds back in their support of third parties and that a focused media campaign and electoral wins on the local and state level would be likely encourage them to support a third party. These findings seem to provide a pathway for third parties to explore as they attempt to gain a more widespread following. However, while this study certainly seems to indicate that there is a possibility that third parties can have a hand in growing their own base among 18-24 year olds, serves as a base for future studies.

## **Survey Population**

The population that was surveyed fell in the 18-24 year old age range, and all respondents were current students of the University of Dayton enrolled in summer classes. Respondents were 69.4% female and 30.1% male which could open the results up to a slight bias. The national population hovers at around 50% female and 50% male, while college enrollment is around 56.4% female and 43.6% male (Borzelleca 2012). The University of Dayton reports 49% of students are female and 51% are male (University). The breakdown of survey participants by sex could therefore be explained by a higher female enrollment in summer courses.

Likewise, 70.4% of respondents were in their first three years (20.9% first years, 21.4% sophomores, and 28.1% juniors) at the University of Dayton with just 26.2% of respondents reporting that they had attended the university for four or more years. Not all students complete their degrees within four years, particularly engineering students, so this accounts for the population of students who reported that they had attended the university for four or more years. This bias towards underclassmen could be because younger students tend to be enrolled in the summer classes that the survey was sent to since graduate students and out-going seniors do not normally need to enroll in summer courses.

Respondents also were asked to self-report what political party they currently supported (See Table 1). Thirty two point four percent reported themselves as Republicans, while 33.8% labeled themselves Democrat. Seven point eight percent of the survey population reported supporting another party and 17.7% did not support a political party. This is similar to the national figures for party affiliation where 25% of

respondents identify as Republicans, 30% identify as Democrats, and 42% identify as independents (Gallup 2014).

Republican	32.4%
Democrat	33.8%
Another Party	7.8%
Not Affiliated	17.7%

Finally, respondents were most frequently students in the School of Education and Health Sciences (35.7%) or the School of Engineering (27.0%) followed by the Social Sciences (17.9%), Business (14.8%), and Humanities (14.3%). It is unclear why so many respondents were from the School of Education and Health Sciences and how this would bias the results, although engineering students more frequently take summer classes and it is likely that they are offered more summer classes as well.

### **Would this age group support a third party?**

The findings from this research support the conclusions of other studies that 18-24 year olds are likely to consider supporting third parties (Behr 1984; Southwell 2003).

The first hypothesis of this study was that 18-24 year olds are likely to at least consider supporting a third party. This was a necessary first step because it verified past research that this age group is likely to consider a third party in the first place, validating the remainder of my findings. Ultimately, 66% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they would consider supporting a third party. Thus, with a strong majority of survey participants, there is evidence that 18-24 year olds are likely to consider supporting a third party. This could be as a result of current disgust with the two major



parties or frustration with partisan bickering. There could also be an element of social desirability to say that you would be willing to support a third party.

Respondents who identified as Democrats were more likely to consider supporting a third party with 60% strongly agreeing or agreeing that they would consider a third party while men were also more likely to consider supporting a third party than women with 76.3% of men strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement. It is unclear why more Democrats would be likely to consider supporting third parties; however, it could be because the Democrats surveyed identify as more centrist Democrats and thus may not have all of their views represented by the Democratic party. A third party could then represent all of these views allowing these Democrats to shift their support. It is likewise difficult to assess why men would be more likely to consider supporting a third party, but the gender bias in this survey could be skewing the data.

This study did not examine any other age groups, but other studies have demonstrated that 18-24 year olds are also more likely than other age cohorts to support a third party which could be extended to the willingness to consider supporting a third party (Behr 1984, Southwell 2003). This could be explained by the fact that during this time 18-24 year olds are trying to discern where their political views lay on the political spectrum and have no predetermined political loyalties. As a result, they would be more open to supporting a third party than they would later in life when they had cemented their party loyalties. The study also found that only 11.5% of respondents currently support a third party suggesting that third parties must convince the rest of the population that would consider following them before they actively support a third party. It could be that although young people say they are willing to consider supporting a third party, they

ultimately feel that their vote would have more meaning if they vote for one of the two major parties, causing third parties to lose their support.

Respondents also indicated that a third party is needed in American politics. Students were asked to respond whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement “a third major political party is needed to represent the American people.” Fifty-one point five percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. This is only a slight majority, which was surprising and could be explained by the fact that the 66.17% of respondents reported that they already support the Republican or Democratic Party so they feel that their political needs are met. This demonstrates that 18-24 year olds are likely to consider supporting third parties and that they are likely to think a third party is needed perhaps as a result of the partisan gridlock between the two parties or the wish for a party that more comprehensively represents their views.

### **How do political beliefs affect party support?**

Respondents confirmed that the 18-24 year old age group is likely to consider supporting a third party, but to further examine the likelihood of this cohort actually transferring support to a different party, the survey needed to measure what respondents’ current political opinions were based on. The survey confirmed that 18-24 year olds largely base their political opinions on their personal beliefs. Before being asked whether or not respondents would be willing to consider supporting a third party, respondents were asked to give reasons why they currently support or would support a political party. Overwhelmingly respondents reported that they would support a political party because it reflected their political beliefs, economic views, and social views. Again, there could be

a social desirability factor in claiming that you support your political party because they reflect your beliefs because it indicates that you are politically aware and involved.

Just 10.1% of respondents reported that they currently support a party because their peers support that party and only 1.89% of respondents said that they would consider supporting a party because their peers support it. These numbers could be smaller than they actually are because there is a social desirability to appear that you think for yourself and make your own decisions. Men were more likely than women to report that they currently support a party because their peers do with 57.1% of those respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement that they currently support the party they support because their peers do identifying as male. Likewise, Republicans were also more likely to report that they currently support a party because their peers do with 71.4% of those respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement that they currently support the party they support because their peers do identifying as a supporter of the Republican Party. There was little evidence to suggest why this trend was so strong and could offer an interesting topic for study. It could be that those who reported that they supported the Republican Party because their peers did feel some sort of a negative peer pressure to support this organization.

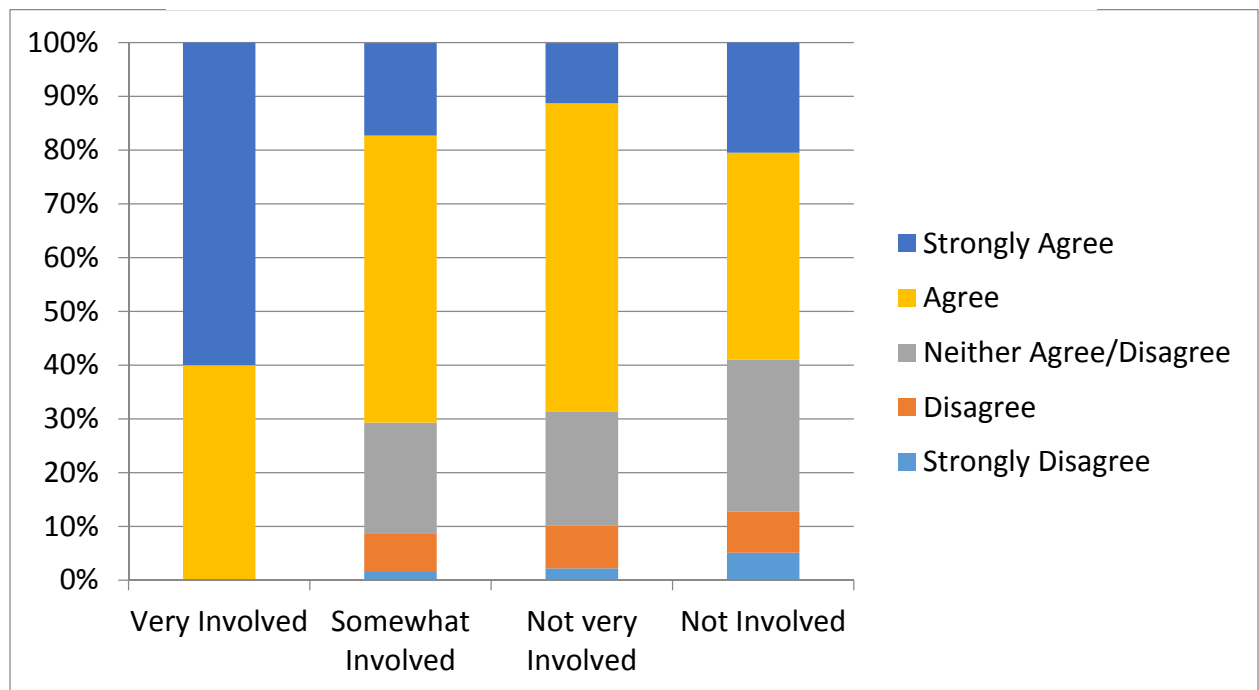
This demonstrates that the majority of the age group bases their decisions on personal beliefs instead of peer beliefs. No other studies were found to compare this data to; however, the survey results seem to fall in line with conventional logic that many people hold political opinions based on their own beliefs rather than the opinions of others. This could be built upon further though with research that studies the reasons that individuals decide to support third parties outside of political beliefs.

## Do political involvement, interest, and changing political beliefs have the same affect?

The survey found the political involvement and changing political beliefs affect how likely someone is to consider supporting a third party; however, political interest

**Chart 1**

### Political Involvement and Support for Third Parties



(operationalized as having an interest in political matters) has no effect on how likely someone is to consider supporting a third party. First, the survey considered political involvement. The survey found that 100% of respondents who considered themselves very involved in politics agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they would consider supporting a third party (Chart 1). This strongly supports the idea that those who are more involved in politics are more likely to consider supporting a third party.

This was an initially surprising finding as it was assumed that the most involved would already be involved in supporting one of the two major political parties and thus

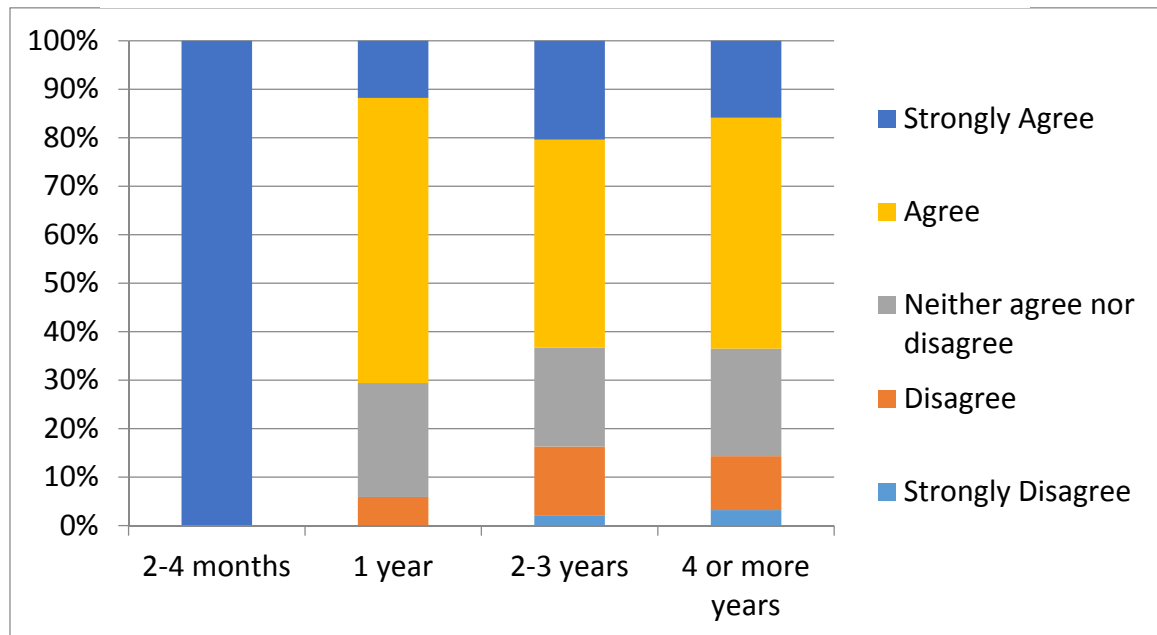
would not be interested in considering a third party. However, there could be a number of reasons for this trend. Those who are already involved in politics likely have a better understanding of the workings of the American political system as well as its flaws, allowing them to better understand the need for a third party. It also could be that those more involved are currently working for a third party and are so involved because they are passionate about what that third party represents.

It is unclear why those who are not politically involved are less likely to consider supporting a third party. The initial hypothesis assumed that the less politically involved would be more likely to consider supporting a third party because those individuals would not be involved in a system they felt alienated from and, thus, would be looking for alternative options. There are a few possible explanations though. It could be that because these individuals are not politically engaged they do not realize that a third party is an option. Another reason could be that they are not involved because they are completely content with the system and the party they support so they see no reason to become involved or try to bring change. This particular aspect of the survey opens up a lot of possibilities for future research into the political beliefs of the politically involved and the uninvolved.

The survey also found support for the hypothesis that those whose political views had changed since coming to college would be more likely to support a third party (See Chart 2). As was mentioned in the literature review, younger voters are less tied to a particular party because they have participated in fewer elections. This makes it easier for them to change their support for a party because they do not feel the loyalty that is created by repeatedly voting for the same party that affects older voters. It also indicates

that the 18-24 year old is more likely to still be developing his/her political views leaving oneself more open to the ideas presented by a third party. Those who reported that their

**Chart 2**  
**Changing Political Views and Support for Third Parties**



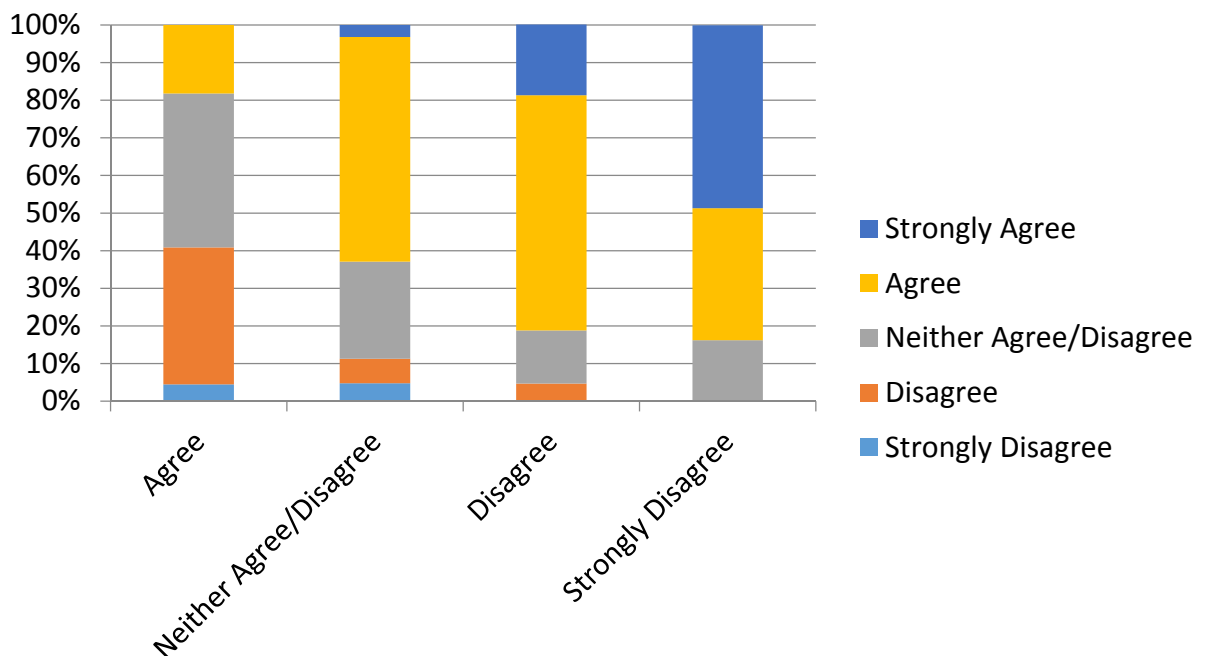
political views had changed in the last year were also slightly more likely to consider supporting a third party. Both of these figures confirm that youth and change in political beliefs make individuals more likely to considering more political views including those of third parties. Those whose views had not changed were less likely to consider supporting a third party. This seems to support the ideas from the literature that when an individual participates in multiple elections supporting a single party, he/she builds up a party loyalty (Behr 1984; Lewis-Beck 2008). This leaves him/her less inclined to consider the different political ideas of other parties.

Political interest and willingness to consider supporting a third party were also examined; however, there seemed to be no relationship between these two variables. Of those who reported they were interested or very interested in politics, 64.4% strongly

agreed or agreed that they would consider supporting a third party while those who reported they were disinterested or very disinterested in politics strongly agreed or agreed with that statement 60% of the time. This nullified the hypothesis that those who were more politically interested would be more likely to consider supporting a third party. This could demonstrate that those who are interested in politics understand the need for a third party, as hypothesized, while those who are disinterested are uninterested in politics because they feel alienated by the current political parties and, thus, would consider a third party because it either matches up more closely with their political beliefs or is a departure from the way the Republicans and Democrats view government. It could also reflect a general disenchantment with the political party structure in the country. Either way, as there were no other studies to compare these results to, this question leaves considerable room for future research.

### What is the effect of the two major parties?

**Chart 3**  
**Republican/Democrat Job Performance and Third Party Support**



The study found that those who are content with the Republican and Democratic parties are less likely to consider supporting a third party (See Chart 3). Forty point nine percent of respondents who agreed (no respondents strongly agreed) with the statement that the Republicans and Democrats are doing an adequate job reported that they were less likely to consider supporting a third party, while 82.2% of those who disagree or strongly disagree reported that they were likely to consider a third party. This makes sense because those who are satisfied with the current political options would see no reason to add another party or consider supporting another party, while those dissatisfied with the current status quo would feel otherwise. These individuals who responded in support of the Republicans or Democrats are likely to strongly support one of these two parties and have done so for some time, otherwise, they would fit the profiles of the voters just previously discussed whose political views have changed fairly recently. It is also important to note that few respondents agreed with the statement that the Republicans and Democrats are doing an adequate job (11.4%) so this applies to a fairly small group of loyal supporters of the two major parties. This is a fairly logical aspect of the research studies and lines up with other studies, so no real research questions emerge from this portion of the findings; however, it does serve to validate other results which may not have the backing of past surveys.

### **What's holding people back?**

Respondents were hesitant to support third parties for a variety of reasons, but the reasons seemed to focus on the idea that third parties appear to be too far outside of mainstream political culture. The survey asked respondents to select all reasons that kept



them from supporting third parties from a given list, so the items in this list are not mutually exclusive (Table 2).

Increased public presence	56.0%
Increased political influence	55.4%
Actively support all of my political views	82.4%
Major political officeholder is a member of the party	21.2%
Public/celebrity support of the party	5.2%

Overwhelmingly the most popular response to this query was that third parties cannot win major political office (65.1%). This response is to be expected given some voting models discussed earlier that show voters try to vote for parties that are more likely to win over parties they agree with the most. Additionally, respondents felt that there is no public support for third parties (39.2%) and that their lack of media attention was a deterrent (43.9%). This is also evidenced in past studies.

Two more surprising responses were that respondents felt that third parties' views were either too extreme (28.0%) or that they were too focused on a single issue (23.3%). All of these results seem to indicate that third parties have an image problem. The public often sees them as lacking outside support and focusing on a just a few, select issues, so they believe that not only are third parties not a viable option, but they do not represent the issues a voter believes in. These reactions are documented in past studies; however, it also opens up some areas for future research. It is likely that respondents hold this opinion because of the way third parties are portrayed in the media, but who offers up this picture and how does it differ from the image third parties themselves are trying to

portray? Overall this offers some insight into how third parties are currently perceived by 18-24 year olds, which in turn offers some ways to help fix this image.

### **How can third parties improve their image?**

As a whole, respondents felt that third parties should focus on smaller elections first and a media campaign that bolsters their appearance on the national stage. The survey asked what third parties could do to increase support and presence among 18-24 year olds. The previous results demonstrated that 18-24 year olds are willing to consider supporting third parties, but in reality only 11.5% of 18-24 year olds surveyed reported currently supporting a third party. This demonstrates a clear gap in actual support, so the survey attempted to identify what factors could close this gap. Fifty-two point eight percent of respondents reported that they would be more likely to support a third party candidate in a state election, and 61.5% and 46.7% of respondents reported that they would then be more willing to support a third party candidate in a national office if a member of that party had first held a state or local office (See Tables 3 and 4).

<b>Table 3</b>	
<b>I would be more likely to vote for a third party candidate in a state or local election.</b>	
Strongly Agree	13.2%
Agree	39.6%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	29.0%
Disagree	10.2%
Strongly Disagree	2.0%

<b>Table 4</b> <b>I would be more likely to support a presidential third party candidate if a member of that party had previously held statewide office.</b>	
Strongly Agree	10.3%
Agree	51.3%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	36.7%
Disagree	5.1%
Strongly Disagree	1.0%

This seems to indicate that third parties should start by focusing on smaller elections and build their base. There were no previous studies to corroborate these assertions, but this survey seems to indicate that third parties could begin to gain support similar to those of the two major parties on a local level, particularly if only one party is strong in a given area, and that this support could potentially continue to grow as third parties accrue a series of smaller successes. It would also be useful to create a study to examine third parties who had used this strategy versus third parties that only focused on the national stage to see what kind of support each party initially had and how that changed over time.

Respondents also appeared to confirm the hypotheses that they would support third parties who held all of their political views (82.4%), increased public presence (56.0%), and increased political clout (55.4%). Some current third parties may already hold all of the same political beliefs as a respondent and they simply do not realize it because the party's views are not well known or the respondent wrote the party off before understanding their political views. Third parties could alleviate this problem if they

were to launch a media campaign aimed at portraying more fully the views of the party and examples of the influence and successes they have had in politics. It is unclear whether there have been studies on or even third parties that have attempted this type of media campaign, but if a third party were to attempt such a media campaign in the future, it would be worthwhile to study the effects of those efforts.

It is also important to note that not all of these items are immediately under control of a third party. Some perceptions can be damaging and tricky to overcome, so it may take time for the public to change their views of a particular party. For instance, the Green Party is often seen as only pursuing environmental issues when, in reality, the party has a fully fleshed out platform that covers a range of issues. If they were to run such a media campaign, they would need to focus on those issues that they are not already well known for such as feminism and gender equity. It is important to note that a third party cannot control elections, so if it cannot successfully win political office, it was by the choice of the voter not the party. Thus, third parties must focus their efforts on convincing voters to support their efforts. Nonetheless this research question offers useful suggestions and points of inquiry for future research into the perception and involvement of third parties in the American political system.

## **Discussion**

This research demonstrates the potential for third parties to garner support from 18-24 year olds; however, the research also reveals many challenges third parties will need to overcome if they seek to build a reliable base. Four key points from the results are essential to future research.

The first point to remember is that 18-24 year olds in this study are likely to consider supporting third parties. Given that other age cohorts are not as likely to consider third parties, this makes focusing on the 18-24 year old cohort all the more important (Behr 1984, Southwell 2003). Furthermore, this is a key period in the political life of the individual when individuals are just beginning to become politically involved and shaping the political views that they are likely to hold throughout their life. As a result, this is an important time for third parties to try and gain supporters. As this cohort ages, their political loyalties will become cemented, which could gain third parties lifelong supporters, so gaining this cohort's support early on is of the utmost importance.

It is also important to note that the individual who is most likely to consider supporting a third party has recently changed his/her political views and is politically involved. This might indicate a young person who is politically educated and interested. This education could come from a number of places and at any time, but this formative process largely occurs during a college education for 18-24 year olds that attend college. This should (and for some does already) encourage third parties to target college campuses not only because this is a central location for this age cohort, but also because colleges and universities are hubs of political activity. Young people often first become politically aware in college, often through classes and on-campus clubs. Students have numerous opportunities to channel these interests through university organizations and on-campus events that bring political speakers to campus. This is especially true during election years when universities often host candidates, debates, get out the vote drives or simply encourage increased awareness among their students. Third parties should attempt to become more involved in this culture by trying to find ways to get students

excited about their political message. Third parties could send representatives to campus during get out the vote drives and political debates or help to found an on-campus organization by participating in organization fairs that are aimed at the newest students to the campus population. They can also focus door to door campaigns in neighborhoods that have a dense population of students. This will increase visibility and accessibility for students which will, in turn, build up support among the age cohort and encourage their peers to consider this political party as well. Not every person this age goes to college, however, so in considering this population we must consider other forums where young people learn about politics: the news media, family, and peers. As a result, this specific solution would not be applicable to every 18-24 year old and other solutions would need to be considered.

Additionally, survey respondents offered an array of suggestions for third parties to improve support that ranged from local to national. At first this sounds like a difficult balance for third parties to strike, but it is possible, and its success can be seen in President Barack Obama's own campaign. The Obama campaign made use of local grassroots chapters to grow support on a local level, but then was also able to quickly gain followers on a national level as people across the country were drawn to the individual grassroots campaigns in their own cities. Thus, Obama was able to launch a successful national campaign that felt like a local campaign. This strategy could work for third parties who are already skilled at grassroots campaigning. Third parties could begin establishing small chapters across the country that would become self-sufficient and continue to grow the base with little expense or effort. Respondents reported that they would be more likely to support third parties in national elections that had had success at

the state or local level. If these local grassroots groups could become mobilized in more local elections, it could translate in electoral wins in these different levels of government. This could also translate into a feeling of viability on a local level as their third party candidate wins office, exciting people and encouraging them to parlay their local support of third parties into support of those political organizations' national campaigns. Third parties could then gain national support if they, like Obama, were able to successfully launch multiple grassroots campaigns across the country simultaneously.

This study was limited to a single university, and thus, cannot be used to generalize the beliefs of the entire 18-24 year old population. Furthermore, this study exhibited a gender bias as well as a bias towards certain academic departments at the university. In future, this survey should expand to include a more representative sample of this university then enlarge its scope to look at universities nation-wide. Ways of reaching a representative population of 18-24 year olds who do not attend college is also important to refrain from having a bias towards those who attend traditional four year universities.

These are all suggestions that could increase the visibility and viability of third parties on the political stage, but it is also key to remember that third parties will always face additional barriers in a two party system. Not only do they currently face a deficit in support, they also have more difficulty raising money and drawing media attention than Democrats and Republicans. This means that to gain the same amount of support, third parties must do additional work in raising awareness and communicating their message.

Hopefully this research begins to provide some of those answers and opens the door to future research that can build off of this work. It would be interesting to see if

any third parties are doing work similar to that described here and use them as a case study to measure the effectiveness of such steps in growing the party's base. It would also be useful to learn more about the views of 18-24 year olds on a national level and specifically what types of third party success would convince them to become long term supporters of these parties.



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## Appendix A – Survey Instrument

Thank you for participating in this study on third party support at the University of Dayton. This study is being conducted as a part of my Honors thesis. As a participant we ask that you be voting age – at least 18 years of age. You will be asked about your political beliefs and the likelihood that you would ever support a third party in a national election. It should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete the survey.

Your confidentiality is ensured as this is a blind survey. You do not need to provide your name on this survey and there will be no way to link your responses to you.

There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. I need your honest and thoughtful judgments about political parties. Your opinions and perceptions are very useful to this study. If you are interested in the results from this survey, please email or call me and I'll be happy to forward them to you. I hope you find it interesting.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me, Amy, at [timmerman1@udayton.edu](mailto:timmerman1@udayton.edu) or 317-750-7872 or my thesis advisor Dr. Michelle Pautz at [mpautz1@udayton.edu](mailto:mpautz1@udayton.edu) or 937-229-3651.

## Basic Information

1. How would you rank your level of political interest?
  - Very interested
  - Interested
  - Neither interested nor disinterested
  - Disinterested
  - Very disinterested
  - Don't Know/Prefer Not to Answer
  
2. How would you rank your level of political involvement?
  - Very involved
  - Somewhat involved
  - Not very involved
  - Not involved
  - Don't Know/Prefer Not to Answer
  
3. Are you registered to vote?
  - Yes
  - No

If you answer no to question three, please skip to question six.

4. If you are registered to vote, in what state are you registered? \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. If you are registered to vote, are you registered as belonging to a specific party?
  - Yes
  - No
  
6. What political party do you support?
  - Republican
  - Democrat
  - Other
  - Don't Know/Prefer Not to Answer
  
7. If you answer "other" to question six, please write in what political party you support. \_\_\_\_\_

***If you support a particular political party in question six, skip to question eight and answer questions 8-15.***

***If you do not support a political party, please skip to question 16.***

### Reasons to Support a Political Party

For the following questions please read the statement and then mark if you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree, or don't know/prefer not to say.

8. I support the party I chose because it reflects my political beliefs.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Don't Know/Prefer Not to Answer
9. I support the party I chose because it reflects my economic position.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Don't Know/Prefer Not to Answer
10. I support the party I chose because it reflects my position on social issues.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Don't Know/Prefer Not to Answer
11. I support the party I chose because my peers support this political party.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Don't Know/Prefer Not to Answer

12. For how long have you supported the political party you chose?

- 1 month
- 2-4 months
- 5-7 months
- 8-11 months
- 1 year
- 2-3 years
- 4 or more years
- Don't Know/Prefer Not to Answer

13. In what way(s) do you support the political party you chose? Please mark all that apply.

- Voting
- Volunteering
- Donating
- Political discussion
- Advocacy
- Signing petitions
- Attending rallies
- Other
- Don't Know/Prefer Not to Answer

14. If other, in what way do you support the political party you chose above?

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Please skip to question 20.

### Reasons to Potentially Support a Political Party

For the following questions please read the statement and then mark if you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree, or don't know/prefer not to say.

15. I would support a political party because it reflects my political beliefs.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Don't Know/Prefer Not to Answer
16. I would support a political party because it reflects my economic position.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Don't Know/Prefer Not to Answer
17. I would support a political party because it reflects my position on social issues.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Don't Know/Prefer Not to Answer
18. I would support a political party because my peers support this political party.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Don't Know/Prefer Not to Answer

19. If other, please explain what factors would cause you to support a political party.

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## Third Parties

For the following questions please read the statement and then mark if you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree, or don't know/prefer not to say.

20. My political views have changed since coming to college.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know/Prefer Not to Answer

21. If you agree or strongly agree, in what way?

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22. The Republican and Democratic parties do an adequate job of representing the American people.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know/Prefer Not to Answer

23. A third major political party is needed to represent the American people.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know/Prefer Not to Answer



24. We should have a third major political party in this country in addition to the Democrats and Republicans.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know/Prefer Not to Answer

25. I would consider supporting a third party.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know/Prefer Not to Answer

26. I actively support a third party currently.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know/Prefer Not to Answer

27. If disagree or strongly disagree, why do you not currently support a third party?

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28. I would be more likely to vote for a third party candidate in a state or local election.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know/Prefer Not to Answer

29. I would be more likely to support a presidential third party candidate if a member of that party had previously held statewide office.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know/Prefer Not to Answer

30. I would be more likely to support a presidential third party candidate if a member of that party had previously held a local elected office.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know/Prefer Not to Answer

31. What would encourage you to support a third party? Mark all that apply.

- Increased public presence
- Increased political influence
- Actively support all of my political views
- Major political office holder is a member of the party
- Public/celebrity support of the party
- Other
- Prefer not to say

32. If other, please explain:

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33. What currently keeps you from supporting a third party? Mark all that apply.

- Cannot win major political office
- Too focused on individual issues
- Political views are too extreme
- No public support for third parties
- Lack of media attention given to third parties
- Other
- Prefer not to say

34. If other, please explain:

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## Demographics

35. Gender?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer Not to Answer

36. Years in school at UD?

- One
- Two
- Three
- Four
- Five
- Six
- More than six
- Don't Know/Prefer Not to Answer

37. Area(s)/Field(s) of Study? Mark All that Apply

- Education or Allied Professions
- Engineering
- Fine Arts
- Performing Arts
- Social Sciences
- Humanities
- Natural Sciences
- Business
- Don't Know/Prefer Not to Answer