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## Religion and Third Parties: The 2016 Presidential Election in Utah

Nathan Lee Osborne  
*Utah State University*

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RELIGION AND THIRD PARTIES: THE 2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN UTAH

by

Nathan Lee Osborne

A thesis proposal submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

Political Science

Approved:

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Damon Cann  
Major Professor

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Randy Simmons  
Committee Member

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Josh Ryan  
Committee Member

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## Introduction

Despite no mention of political parties in the Constitution, political parties have played a major role in United States elections, from almost the beginning<sup>1</sup> (Jefferson 1898). These parties act as vehicles to help citizens understand and participate in the political process as well as express and form political preferences (Koch 2003; Downs 1957).

In some instances, the Constitution is very explicit on the practical considerations related to running the government. For many other matters, “the founders left a lot of room in terms of how the actual plumbing would work” (Dubner 2018). When it comes to political parties and the rules governing their actions, many of the norms and policies have been created by the actors themselves (Dubner 2018).

Political parties act in order to win office, as well as to further their ideology (Lewis-Beck Squire 1995. 420; also agreeing with Downs 1957). This party ideology helps citizens form their own personal political opinions, and the structure of the party acts as a “mentoring” function to citizens (Koch 2003; 60-61). When it comes to winning office, major political parties use their power in the policy-making arena to reduce competition from alternate parties (Lewis-Beck Squire 1995). Parties will also act strategically to advance both their platform (ideology) and political power (win office) (Lewis-Beck Squire 1995).

Due to the plurality-based elections within single-member districts, the United States is predisposed towards a two-party system (Duverger 1954). This has certainly been the case when it comes to presidential elections, as every president since Lincoln in 1860 has been a member of

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<sup>1</sup> Two political Sects have arisen within the U. S. the one believing that the executive is the branch of our government which the most needs support; the other that like the analogous branch in the English Government, it is already too strong for the republican parts of the Constitution; and therefore in equivocal cases they incline to the legislative powers: the former of these are called federalists...: the latter are styled Republicans, Whigs... etc. (Jefferson 1898.)

one of the two major parties. In Utah specifically, recent history shows a dramatic shift to consistent and high levels of support for the Republican party and candidates. With rare exception, Republican presidential candidates dominate in Utah. Breaking from a long trend of higher Republican support, 2016 was the lowest electoral level of support of any Republican candidate since 1992, and before that 1948 (“Historical Election Results” 2017). Part of this past success is the increasing level of support from the state’s dominant religion, The Church of Jesus-Christ of Latter-Day<sup>2</sup> Saints, for the Republican party. This trend has become even more pronounced in the past 50 years (Campbell et al. 2014). Utah County, a major Utah population center that is also predominantly populated by members of the church, gave Evan McMullin the highest non-Republican vote share since 1968 (England). With the exception of Ross Perot in 1992, McMullin is the most successful third party candidate in Utah since the Beehive State obtained statehood in 1896.<sup>3</sup>

This unusual electoral outcome is clearly a puzzle. To what does candidate Evan McMullin owe his success in Utah? He did not have the prestige, name recognition, or significant financial support that has accompanied successful third party candidates in the past. He was also facing the same disadvantages that any third party candidate in the United States would face. To properly examine this specific election, I will begin with an analysis of the position of third parties in US politics and election impacts generally. I will also summarize what specifically brings about third party success, along with the commensurate challenges unique to third party campaigns. I will then focus the influence of religion on voting behavior

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<sup>2</sup> In accordance with the revised style guide released by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, more common references to the church and their members such as “LDS” or “Mormon” are not used except in direct quotations where those phrases are used. Phrases such as “Church of Jesus Christ” and “Latter-Day Saints” will be used per request of the church (Weaver 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Teddy Roosevelt was essentially even with McMullin in 1912 with 21.53%, and Robert LaFollette was also close as an independent candidate in 1924 with 20.81%.

which has traditionally been examined only through the lens of a two-party structure, and connect that to Utah specifically with its predominantly Latter-Day Saint population. Using data from the 2016 BYU exit poll, I will explore possible explanations for McMullin's success. Finally, I will examine the relationship between religious affiliation, religious activity, and support for Evan McMullin in 2016 through a multi-nominal logit model.

## History of Third Parties

*When the variety and number of political parties increases, the chance of oppression, factionalism, and non-critical acceptance of ideas decreases.*

*-James Madison*

To say the United States has always been a two party system would be a myth (Lowe 1983; 701). The 19<sup>th</sup> century was the golden age for third parties, and saw the highest level of success in campaigning and electing third party candidates to national office.<sup>4</sup>

Although there were major and minor parties earlier than the mid 1800s, by the 1840 election, “two party alignments had been established throughout the nation and... within each region—and in most states—these parties were balanced and competitive (McCormick 1966, 342).

With the 1860 election of Abraham Lincoln as president, the Republican party did what no other minor party has done since—replaced one of the current major parties (Gillespie 2012, 41). The Republican/Democrat duopoly began in 1860 and has remained to the current day, with few credible challengers. Only the 1890 Progressive Party, whose platform, candidates, and voters were largely adopted by the Democrats, and Teddy Roosevelt's Bull Moose Party have

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<sup>4</sup> 51 members of the US House of Representatives in 1855 were third party, in contrast to the most successful 20<sup>th</sup> century year of 1936 with only thirteen. (Gillespie 2012, 41)

been notable threats (Gillespie 2012). Since the 1912 campaign of Teddy Roosevelt, only four third party candidates have received more than 5 percent of the popular vote (Gold 1995, 751).<sup>5</sup>

## Challenges to Running as a Third Party Candidate

*I'd rather be right than President, I want my conscience clear; I'll firmly stand for the truth and right, I have a God to fear. I'll work and vote the way I pray—no matter that the scoffers say—I'd rather be right than President, I want my conscience clear (Gillespie 2000, 45).*

- Prohibitionist Party song

Numerous polls show a longstanding discontent with the two major parties. In both the 1995 and 1999 Gallup poll, over two-thirds of those interviewed were in favor of other candidates who could run against the two major parties at the presidential, congressional, and state level (Bibby & Maisel 2003, 57-58). These polls are not alone. Nevertheless, the two major parties that have dominated national elections since 1860 still remain. Third parties must overcome a litany of obstacles to be successful in elections, beginning with structural roadblocks that favor the major parties.

### Duverger's Law

The “first past the post” plurality-based, single district election system in the United States is a powerful influence towards a two party system (Bibby & Maisel 2003, 60-61; Neto & Cox 1997). “An election is usually reduced to a contest between the two most popular candidates” (Duverger 1954). Duverger’s “physiological effect” of abandoning trailing

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<sup>5</sup> Robert La Follette, 1924; George Wallace, 1968; John Anderson, 1980; Ross Perot 1992, 1996

candidates because of a feeling that a vote for a candidate with little or no chance of winning will be essentially “thrown away” and instead supporting one of the major parties “between whom the election really lies” illustrates the difficulty of a minor party candidate struggling with low support, which usually drops further as the election approaches (Duverger 1954).

For the US presidential election specifically, the electoral college and the “winner take all” allocation of electoral votes in all but two states pushes towards a two party system even more. Even a respectable 18% of the popular vote for Ross Perot in 1992 resulted in zero electoral votes, as he was unable to reach a majority in any individual state (Bibby & Maisel 2003, 62).

Despite the strong power the electoral structure exerts towards a two party system, it does not, by itself, bring about a robust two party system (Lewis-Beck & Squire 1995, 426-7). Theodore Lowi also asks the question, “if a two-party system is so natural, why are there so many rules and laws defending it?” (1983, 702) Although the two major parties are at odds over many policy matters, together they create and enforce policies to maintain the duopoly status quo (Gillespie 2012, 1).

## Ballot Access

Electoral structure is not all that challenges third party candidates; ballot access is also problematic. Parties used to be able to add candidates into a race simply for the cost of printing a ballot. In the 1880s, the rolling introduction of the Australian ballot system in the United States moved the burden of access to elections from the parties to the individual states (Rosenstone et al. 1996, 22). While some states follow a more lenient example like that seen in Sweden, many states have high barriers of entry for new parties. Collecting signatures is a requirement in most

states with the average required number being 17,580 (Rosenstone et al. 1996, 420). Beyond the numeric challenges of signature collection, the designated time periods which signatures can be gathered, the rules defining who is authorized to sign, and other regulations make registration difficult (Rosenstone et al. 1994, 20-21; Gillespie 2012, 26).<sup>6</sup>

Those who are unsuccessful in campaigning in a primary election of a major party have additional limitations should they want to run outside of the party. Some states have passed laws to prohibit write-in candidates, and the Supreme Court has upheld them<sup>7</sup> (Gillespie 2012, 27). Sore loser provisions, present in almost all states, prohibit candidates who have run in a party primary from running in other parties or as an independent<sup>8</sup> (Gillespie 2012, 28).

Anti-fusion laws were used effectively by third parties in the past to either gain support for their policy goals by endorsing a major party candidate, or to band together as a number of third parties to challenge a major party candidate (Gillespie 2012, 28-30). When upholding a Minnesota law banning the use of fusion, William Rehnquist wrote in the majority opinion that states have the right to “[decide] that political stability is best served through a healthy two-party system” and “need not remove all of the many hurdles third parties face in the American political arena today” (*Timmons v. Twin Cities Area New Party*, 520 U.S. 351. 1997).

This is not to say that the courts have not also struck down the most stringent ballot requirements, and even Justice Rehnquist clarified that “unreasonably exclusionary restrictions”

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<sup>6</sup> Not all results of the Australian (secret) ballot are a disadvantage to third parties. The fact that it is secret decreases the potential social cost of defecting from a major party. Speaking of three anonymous “defectors” from the major party who voted for a Progressive candidate, a citizen of Middletown commented “if we could discover the three people who disgraced our district by voting for La Follette, we’d certainly make it hot for them!” (Schmidt 1960, 243; quoted in Rosenstone et al. 42)

The Australian ballot also makes split-ticket voting a simpler process. (Rosenstone et al. 25)

<sup>7</sup> *Burdick v. Tukushe*, 504 U.S. 428 (1992).

<sup>8</sup> *Storer v. Brown*, 414 U.S. 737 (1974). The court upheld a California law that, among signature requirements, independent candidates must not be a member of any political party for at least one year prior to the primary election. The same restriction was placed on running in any alternate party.



were prohibited (Timmons 1997, 31-32). Wallace, McCarthy, and Anderson were all third party candidates who challenged state ballot access laws and had ballot requirements overturned.<sup>9</sup>

## Strategic Voting

In order to prevent an undesirable election outcome, people can vote strategically instead of sincerely. In an election between only two candidates, voters will simply choose their preferred candidate of the two, but in an election with more than two candidates, the possibility of strategic voting exists (Ordeshook & Zeng, 1997). Strategic, or tactical, voting is a disadvantage for the third party candidates as voters, wary of “throwing away their vote,” will support their preferred major party candidate instead of their true preference. Even well-known third party candidates who poll well early often see their numbers fall as the campaigns progress. Voters shift support from their preferred minor party candidate to a major party candidate who is further from their ideological ideal point but more likely to win, casting a strategic vote instead of a sincere one (Rosenstone, Behr, & Lazarus 1996, 41; Lacy & Monson 1998, 441). This phenomenon was dubbed the “third party squeeze” by Bruce Cain (1978) and accurately depicts the reality of many third party elections. The following is a single example of potential strategic voting at the presidential level; while 98% and 85% of voters supporting Reagan and Carter voted for their preferred candidate, only 41% of Anderson supporters reported voting for him (Abramson et al. 1995, 360).

All voters have three choices in any election; vote sincerely, vote strategically, or abstain. Strategic voting is most likely to occur when your preferred candidate has a low probability of

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<sup>9</sup> William v. Rhodes 393 U.S. 23 (1968) specifically called out Ohio state law as being discriminatory by giving the two established parties “a decided advantage over new parties.” Anderson specifically challenged numerous state laws dealing with sore loser and ballot access laws in cases such as Anderson v. Babb, Anderson v. Celebrezze, and Anderson v. Mills

winning and the utility difference between your preferred candidate and your preferred major party candidate is small (Cain 1978, 639).

Despite some theories eliminating any possibility of anything beyond sincere voting,<sup>10</sup> Ordeshook and Zeng found that voters will be strategic in multi-candidate elections (1997).

Of note is the fact that the viability of a candidate in a presidential election in a single state does not necessarily connect directly to their viability in the nation at large when it comes to casting a sincere versus a strategic vote (Ordeshook & Zeng 1997, 15).

Speaking generally, factors like “citizen duty”<sup>11</sup> and closeness of an election influence the decision *to* vote, while expected utility and net benefits between candidates influence *for whom* to vote (Ordeshook & Zeng, 1997). A succinct summary of strategic voting follows:

That is, as the race tightens between a voter's second and third preference, as a voter's preference for the second choice increases relative to that of the last choice, and to the extent that one of these candidates is the likely winner, then that voter becomes increasing likely to cast a strategic vote for the second ranked candidate. We have here, then, clear evidence of strategic voting associated with the third party "squeeze" that is the basis of Duverger's hypothesis about winner-take-all plurality elections (Ordeshook & Zeng 1997, 15).

These difficulties faced by all third party campaigns help to explain the very low level of success of almost all third party candidates in vote share. However, this is not always the case; although rare, there are third party success stories. Many times this success is due to unique circumstances surrounding a specific election, but there are explanations as to why a voter will reject both major party candidates and instead vote third party.

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<sup>10</sup> The minimax regret model, for example, states simply that people will act to minimize the maximum (minimax) regret. According to this theory, voters will simply choose their first preference. (Ferejohn & Fiorina 1974)

<sup>11</sup> Added to the formula  $R=PB-C$  where P is the probability that a voter can make a difference in the outcome of the election, B being the net benefit to the voter between candidates, and C being the cost of voting. (Ordeshook Zeng 1997) It was added to account for the reason people continue to vote even when the probability of influencing an election is very small, especially in relation to the cost (C) of voting.

## Why Do Voters Choose Third Parties?

Voting for a third party candidate can be explained just as we can explain voters supporting the major parties. George Chressanthis applies a modified rational voter model<sup>12</sup> to show that the motivations for minor party support at the polls mirror the motivations of major party supporters (1990, 193). Voters are not irrational, nor do third party voters feel they are “throwing away their vote” when supporting a third party. “Votes for third parties represent a transmission of individual preferences by people who think their vote is important and, as a whole, [are] seen as a signal to alter the direction of current policies by the major parties” (Chressanthis 1990, 193).

### Protest Vote

In addition to voting sincerely for preferred policy positions, a third party vote can also be cast as a form of protest against both major parties when either the positions of the parties or the candidates themselves are unattractive (Gillespie 2012, 3). 1968 presidential candidate George Wallace was quoted as claiming that there was “not a dime’s bit of difference between the two major parties,” tapping into the public sentiment that both major parties were not being receptive to voters’ preferences (Gold 1995). As the positions of both parties increase in distance from a voter’s preference, and as the salience of that policy goes up, the likelihood of defecting to a third party increases (Rosenstone et al. 1996, 127-30).

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<sup>12</sup> The model is from the Barzel and Siliberberg 1973 article “Is the Act of Voting Rational?” Modifications were made due to the use of presidential elections. The initial model did not use presidential elections because of concerns that the electoral college might bias results. Because third party campaigns for president are much more prevalent than for state-level positions, presidential election data was used in this case.

## Low Trust in Government

Many successful third party candidates capitalize on a lower level of trust in both the government and the major political parties. Analysis of the Miller Index of Trust in Government (TIG) leads Peterson and Wrighton to conclude that “in all of our analyses, we have found consistent support for the use of the trust index as a predictor of third-party voting. The results have clearly demonstrated the long-term durability of the index, and we have shown that the index is not merely a predictor of trust in the incumbent government” (Peterson & Wrighton 1998, 17). Multiple tests confirm that hypothesis.

Wallace and Perot both drew votes from the distrustful (Heatherington 1999, 312) while Anderson and Perot ran during times where measured trust in the government was low (Heatherington 1999, 313). Voters in this situation are “pushed” to a third party due to major party failure (Allen & Brox 2005, 630) or “pulled” to a third party through identification with, and loyalty to, the party or positive evaluations of a specific third party candidate (Allen & Brox 2005).

## Candidate Traits

Beyond capitalizing on popular discontent with the major parties, third party candidates with appeal to voters can motivate people to vote for someone with little to no chance of winning (Heatherington 1999). There have been volumes of literature stating that candidate personality and campaigns play a very minor part in voter selection. Numerous studies found that vote choice made in the spring before any serious campaigning (and even before some primaries) changed very little when it came to election day in November (Lazarsfeld Berelson & Gaudet, 1944). Party identification has been shown in numerous studies to be the single most important variable when predicting vote choice (Campbell, Converse, Miller, Stokes. 1960). This research

is difficult to counter and is still correct when applied to the two major parties.<sup>13</sup> However, the effect of a candidate's personality and their campaign does impact candidate success to a higher degree when applied to third parties. Popkin (1994) explains that party affiliation is a long-standing identity indicator that simplifies the voting process for the average voter. Independent candidates have no structured positions connected to a well-known party, and third party positions are not as well understood by the public who use party affiliation for a voting cue. Third parties lack the existing predispositions that exist connecting the candidate to a list of political positions common to a major party candidate. This opens the door to candidate personalities and campaigns becoming greater influencers over voter preference (Luks Miller & Jacobs 2003, 12). Over half of a third party candidate's votes will come from independents (Flanigan & Zingale 2002, 83), so in order to know a third party candidate's positions, voters must follow the campaign to find this information. By examining trait ratings of both major and minor party candidates, Luks, Miller, and Jacobs (2003) show that partisan identification is a small and often statistically insignificant impact when it comes to rating third party candidates.

Third party candidates can be grouped into three levels of recognition; non-prestigious, prestigious, and nationally prestigious (Rosenstone et al. 1996, 140-1). Prestigious candidates are defined as being well known in specific geographic areas, such as senators, representatives, or governors, none of whom have run in a national campaign. Nationally prestigious candidates would have run for national level offices before, and include current or former presidents and vice-presidents (Rosenstone et al. 1996, 140).

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<sup>13</sup> Glenn Tinder's phrase "the politics of convenience" is particularly appropriate here, describing the major political parties as a low cost way to express preferences (1986, 172-73).

Candidates already well known in the voting area can more easily overcome the anonymity that third party candidates usually face (Lacy & Monson 2002, 411). The success of George Wallace in the South can be partially attributed to his prestige or reputation in that specific geographic area. A rising level of prestige equals a commensurate rise in vote share (Lacy & Monson 2002, 411). As illustrated by Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus in *Third Parties in America*, non-prestigious presidential candidates are overwhelmingly (87.7%) likely to net less than 1% of the popular vote share, while prestigious candidates are most likely to carry from 1-3% of the vote share. Nationally prestigious candidates are also most likely to net over 9% of total popular votes, something that has never happened with a non-prestigious candidate (Lacy & Monson 2002, 141).

### Economic Hardship

Voters feel disillusionment from the established parties for many reasons. Long-term economic stagnation or recession is a cause for rising support for alternate parties. A short-term economic downturn during the leadership of a single party will pull median voters towards the other major party. However, after a period of time where both major parties have tried and failed to produce economic results, support for third parties will rise in the form of protest votes or as an expression of distrust and dissatisfaction with the status quo. The voter strategy to abandon the major parties in times of dissatisfaction is not unique to the United States. Studies from Spain (Roberts 2017, 31), Belgium, the Netherlands (Hooghe & Dassonneville, 2018; Schumacher and Rooduijn, 2013; cited in Hernandez 2018, 460), and others show this idea to be common in democracies. Voters connect problems to the mainstream parties because the perception is that they are part of the system as well as part of the problem (Gillespie 2012).

## Populism and Major Party Failure

When a critical mass of the population no longer believes the establishment is working towards their best interests, alternate methods of representation can appear. Especially in systems where political parties are so intertwined with the political process, alternate parties are a common method of populist<sup>14</sup> expression. Despite populist movements “offering more direct forms of democratic empowerment,” (Roberts 2017, 2) we still must understand populist movements within the scope of political parties. A third party is the “electoral vehicle” by which alternate candidates attempt to sway voters (Roberts 2017, 2).

Major parties are perceived to be out of touch when they are seen not as an intermediate institution representing the people in the government, but as “semi-state agencies” protecting the status quo (Roberts 2017, 8). This “Organizational Cartelization” paints the parties as unchanging structures more interested in their own interests than those of the voters and as holding positions that may no longer accurately represent the positions of the public generally (Roberts 2017, 8).

“When the mainstream political forces become too similar, they provide fertile ground for the rise of populism” (Torre & Kaltwasser 2015, 189; quoted in Roberts 2017). When both major political parties begin to converge on platforms of salient political positions, more and more voters feel alienated and without adequate representation. Once again, due to parties being so integrated in the US political system, alternate parties are more likely to either form or increase in popularity as more voters seek out representation.

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<sup>14</sup> It is outside the scope of this paper to attempt to exactly define, or argue the semantics of, populism, something many have stated is difficult to pin down exactly<sup>14</sup>. It is sufficient to say here that it is “anti-establishment appeal to mass constituencies” or “the quintessential expression of anti-elite and anti-establishment politics.” (Roberts 2017, 4)

Both “Organizational Cartelization” and “Programmatic Convergence” (Roberts 2017, 8-12) are explanations for major party failure that lead to increased support for third parties under the broader theory of populism.

In summary, unacceptable primary party candidates, combined with the availability of viable and attractive third party candidates, can pull voters with both low trust and negative attitudes towards government, as well as weaker party ties, to support a third party campaign.

### **Traditional Third Party Success**

Candidates in third parties approach elections strategically, just as major party candidates do (Rosenstone Behr & Lazarus 1996, 190). Downs explicitly states that political parties or candidates work towards the goal of “the income, prestige, and power which come from being in office” (Downs 1957, 28). Third parties are no different. As conditions supporting a third party begin to align, the chance of third party runs will increase. Even so, the chance of a third party presidential win is almost zero. If candidates run without much hope to win, what is it that motivates a campaign? Some run to advance a cause. By bringing an issue to the forefront, a show of public support can force a major party to take up that cause in the future to draw those voters to the party (Rosenstone et al. 188-189). As both major parties are seen as out of touch with a critical mass of voters, third parties can be the “vehicles for presenting, channeling, and pursuing views of the disaffected” (Gillespie 2012, 49).<sup>15</sup> Some candidates run to establish themselves as a political figure and gain recognition (Gillespie 2012). Instead of running to win a

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<sup>15</sup> Third parties are also referred to as “safety valves for discontent” by Rosenstone et. al (1996. 9) referring to their ability to channel opposition to the major parties into visible public support for those alternate positions. Thus third party success is also seen as “major party failure” (Rosenstone et al 1996. 126-7).



campaign, some may run in opposition to a political foe (Gillespie 2012) such as the incumbent president (Rosenstone Behr & Lazarus 1996, 198) or a political party they feel has deteriorated. This deterioration must be significant in order to counter the high cost of defecting from a major party and the low probability of success of third party campaigns (Rosenstone Behr & Lazarus 1996, 198).

Third party campaigns will often emerge due to major party failure (Rapaport & Stone 2009). A disaffected constituency voting third party sends a message to the major parties who must then appeal to this group to gain, or re-gain, their support. The larger the group, the greater the motivation of each major party to draw votes from this disaffected group during an election (Rapaport & Stone 2009).

This major party failure could be seen as either a candidate selection (short-term) failure, or a party position (long-term) failure. When both parties present unattractive candidates, a larger group of voters will be disaffected to the point of turning to alternative candidates from third parties. This problem of candidates for the major parties should be considered a short-term party failure. A possible situation that would bring about this major party failure would be extreme and highly active minorities from both parties exerting a disproportional influence on primaries or caucuses, which leads to a candidate who is unappealing to median voters. Long-term, or policy-focused, major party failure deals with the issues the parties choose to emphasize, or the positions taken on those issues. This failure goes beyond simply fielding an unattractive candidate who will be gone the next election cycle, and hits more to the core of the party identity. The lasting effect of long-term party failure is that these positions linger beyond a single candidate and continue to plague major parties until they rebrand themselves in a more

palpable way to the median voters.<sup>16</sup> A shift to the far right or left from either major party would cause discontent with median voters in a similar way that the single extreme candidate would.

Examining third party supporters of significant third party candidates for president reveals trends and paints a picture of the traditional third party voter. Ross Perot took advantage of anti-partisan sentiment as well as general frustration with the government and politics. Exit polls describe the majority of his supporters as those in more difficult economic situations, younger voters, and those not affiliated with either party (Gold 1995). Ralph Nader supporters were further to the left on ideology, and he also appealed to those with low levels of satisfaction in the government (Allen & Brox 2005). George Wallace similarly capitalized on perceptions of the national government being out of touch with citizens. He also had support from those with low partisan attachment and younger voters (Gold 1995). Almost half of John Anderson voters were casting a vote against other candidates, as opposed to a vote for Anderson (Gold 1995).

## **Unique Definition of Third Party Success**

“A third party vote does not merely signify the selection of one of three equally attractive options; it is an extraordinary act that requires the voter to reject explicitly the major parties.”<sup>17</sup>

It is accepted that numerical support for third parties at the polls is low on almost all levels of elections and in almost all regions of the country. This leads many papers and

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<sup>16</sup> As far as the scope of this paper, my focus is on the 2016 presidential election and the influence of short term major party candidate selection failure by both the Republican and Democrat parties. Because candidate selection is varied in each election cycle, results in the coming presidential election may not be influenced in the same way.

<sup>17</sup> (Rosenstone et al. 1994, 15)

discussions to be limited to the two major parties as a sufficient overview of elections<sup>18</sup> (Lee 2012, 146). However, these campaigns can impact elections beyond what would be assumed based on vote share alone.

If a third party campaign attracts a large base of support during an election, both major parties will attempt to address their concerns by shifting their platforms or the salience of specific issues to attract those voters (Lee 2012, 139). This could be another type of success for a third party as the policy grievances that led to third party support initially are now being addressed by one or both major parties. Abstaining from elections, or strategically voting for your most preferred major party candidate instead of a third party, sends a weak message and may lead to major parties continuing on with “business as usual” (Peterson & Wrighton 1998, 30).

An example of primary party shift is the Populist Party movement in the late 1800s and early 1900s that was adopted by the Democrat Party through New Deal legislation<sup>19</sup> (Lowi 1983, 703; Lee 2012, 139). Labor unions and other donors who had traditionally supported the Populist Party increasingly began sending campaign donations to the Democrat party (Hirano & Snyder, 8). Similarly, well-known populist candidates began campaigning under the Democrat flag<sup>20</sup> (Hirano & Snyder, 9). A more contemporary example of this adopting of third party policies is the campaign of Ross Perot in his 1992 and 1996 presidential campaigns. Seeing his

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<sup>18</sup> Even the most famous case of third party election impact at the presidential level, when Ralph Nader supposedly cost Democratic candidate Al Gore the presidency in 2000, might not be as clear of an impact as Nader pulled voters away from Gore, giving the majority to Republican George W. Bush. (Lee 2011, 138; Herron & Lewis 2007; Lacy & Burden 1995).

<sup>19</sup> Hirano and Snyder provide ample evidence of this “co-opting” phenomenon, including a list of prominent new deal legislation supported by the far left and a reduction of campaign contributions to the Democrats by banks and businesses.

<sup>20</sup> Success is also not defined the same in different parties. Policy-seeking parties would most likely view major party co-option of their platform as success, while candidate-seeking parties would not.

success,<sup>21</sup> Republican leadership, through their “Contract with America,” made a concerted effort to contact Perot supporters (Rapaport & Stone 2007, 237). This effort highlighted similarities between the Republican and Perot platforms, while remaining silent on the differences. On the other side of the political spectrum, Democrats used this same strategy by emphasizing issues such as income inequality due to the campaign success of Ralph Nader in the 1990s.

Even the threat of third parties, or a sufficiently large base of support for a minor party, can lead to shifting positions within the major parties irrespective of major party failure, close elections, or other abnormal circumstances (Lee 2011, 138).

## **Utah 2016 Presidential Election**

Moving beyond this background of major party failure theory into the Utah 2016 election, how were the two major party candidates seen by the voters? Commenting on the major party choices in 2016, Daniel Thatcher, a Republican serving in the Utah State Senate, said “they’re both awful” and, “they’re both quite possibly the two worst people in the universe” (Merica & Simon, 2016). He also called the odds for each candidate in the state “50/50.” While this commentary is extreme, it illustrates the frustration that many Utah voters felt with both major party candidates. Utah, the long-time Republican stronghold, put Trump third in the caucus vote, and his crass commentary and behavior caused many Utahans to rescind endorsements and withdraw support. Opinions of Clinton were no better, with 80% of the state

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<sup>21</sup> The only third party candidate to receive at least 5% of the popular vote in two successive elections since the forming of the Republican party in the 1850s, as well as the most popular third party candidate since Teddy Roosevelt in 1912 (Rapaport Stone 2007, 235).

(including many Democrats) calling Clinton untrustworthy at the time of the election (“*Utah College Exit Poll*” 2016).

It was in this environment that candidate Evan McMullin became one of the most successful third party candidates, by vote share, in the history of the state of Utah. He is an outlier from both the common theories of third party success, as well as previous examples of successful third party candidates for president. McMullin had no large sums of money to campaign with as Ross Perot. He had no prestige or name recognition<sup>22</sup> in Utah at all, having only lived in the state for a short time. He had no experience in political campaigns, and he had never held, or even run for, elected office before. Regarding candidate traits, he does not stand out among other third party candidates in a way to explain his unusual success. Perhaps he appealed to the voters who were dissatisfied with both major parties, but Utah has had candidates from the Libertarian and Constitutional Parties for decades who could have appealed to the same voters, yet never did to this degree.

A short-term candidate selection failure in both major parties created a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for a third party campaign. It is also clear that Evan McMullin did not follow the traditional paths of success used by other third parties. It is this specific electoral condition that makes Utah a valuable and unique case study to examine additional routes of success for third party candidates and campaigns. The peculiar population of the state of Utah in regards to religious affiliation could be a casual mechanism that led to higher than normal defection rates from a major party and the unusual success of Evan McMullin.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> The book title “*Actor’s Athletes, and Astronauts*” is especially appropriate highlighting the advantage name recognition brings to amateurs running for political office, especially against seasoned and incumbent opponents, something Evan McMullin had none of.

<sup>23</sup> Religion could be a mechanism despite Evan McMullin downplaying religion as a motivator for his presidential run. “It’s about principles. They’re not only Mormon principles, they are the principles of millions of Americans, I am the only true conservative in this race” (McCombs, Brady 2016)

## Religion is Still Significant in US Elections

Despite the great amount of attention given to divisions like race, gender, or socioeconomic status, religion as a variable in voting behavior is still worthy of study. The United States retains a higher religious identification than many other developed countries based on numerous comparative analyses (Manza & Brooks 1997), and has remained so throughout upheaval periods such as the New Deal era, which emphasized class differences as a new cleavage that might re-define party support. Even with a growing secularization in the US and an overall diminishing level of religious influence, this does not mean that religious cleavages no longer exist or are no longer influencing behavior (Manza & Brooks 1997, 71-73). Especially with the religious right emerging as a non-trivial voting bloc, it seems that religion remains an important part of voter identification.

This is not to say that religious affiliation is the only variable when predicting vote choice, or even the most significant. Many religious groups suffer from their own cleavages between the hard-core purists and the pragmatists, who are more willing to accept compromise (Manza & Brooks 1997, 12). Candidates supported by the purists will have little chance of winning wide-spread support outside of the narrow base, and pragmatic candidates may not be supported initially by purists (Manza & Brooks 1997, 12). For this and other reasons, hypotheses about religious impact on voting involve a list of complex social relationships and are far from a dichotomous division between “religious” and “non-religious.” While religion exerts a relatively minor level of influence when compared to factors such as party identification, occasional elections and candidates will show a much larger impact due to religious affiliation. Prominent

examples of this are the 1960 election of John F. Kennedy<sup>24</sup> and the campaigns of Jimmy Carter in 1976 and 1980.<sup>25</sup>

### Impact of the Latter-Day Saint Vote Specifically

Study of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints' influence on voting behavior is interesting because political activities of its members are influenced by their religious beliefs (Cann 2009, 111; Campbell & Monson 2003). Although the church did take official positions on specific candidates and political positions earlier in its history,<sup>26</sup> church policy no longer allows for endorsing parties, candidates, or platforms, the use of church buildings or resources for partisan purposes, direction of vote choice, or dictating the actions of a government leader (*Political Neutrality*, Global Newsroom). However, the church will occasionally make statements regarding moral issues.

It is clear that external forces can influence a religious bloc in a way that decreases their unity at the ballot box. Adapting a theory of public opinion by John Zaller (1992), Campbell and Monson use the pattern of *receiving* information, deciding whether or not to *accept* it, and then making a *decision* based on information received (Zaller 1992, 42-51). The crucial adaptation made by Campbell and Monson in the Zaller theory is a substitution of the knowledge variable with a measure of devoutness, which they argue will influence both how an individual member will receive statements from church leadership, as well as the likelihood that they will act in line with it.

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<sup>24</sup> Catholic voters were 3.3 times more likely to vote for Kennedy, all else being equal. (Manza Brooks 1997. 53)

<sup>25</sup> Conservative Protestants were more likely to support Jimmy Carter.

<sup>26</sup> In the early history of the church, leaders asked members to vote together to increase their political influence. This took place both in Illinois, as well as when the membership at large moved to the Salt Lake valley (Cann 112).

When studying Latter-Day Saints as a political unit, you need not examine their internal unity only, but also the criticism against them from the population at large. Campbell, Breen, and Monson propose that both high “internal solidarity” as well as high “external tensions” have created a Mormon voting bloc that is more cohesive than almost any other religious organization<sup>27</sup> (2014, 46-53). Beyond just a religious identity, Latter-Day Saints are more politically united than almost any other demographic of race, ethnicity, or socio-economic status (Fox 2006). The membership was even united during periods of political vacillation, where Utah voters would swing wildly between supporting Republicans and Democrats<sup>28</sup> (Brown 2018, 34). The unique moral identity of Latter-Day Saints, that is both separate from secular Americans as well as members of most other religions, makes members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints an interesting case study in political behavior.

It is an oversimplification to connect the Utah vote with the church vote directly. However, 55% of the Utah’s population are members of the church, by far the highest percentage of church members of any state in the country. For the past 50 years, the percentage of Republican voting in this cohesive Utah Latter-Day Saint population has increased steadily over time. In the 1970s, Utah was voting Republican at a 10% higher rate than the country-wide average, and by 2012 it had risen to over 40% (Campbell et al. 2014, 83).

Utah seems to be a unique situation for both members and non-members of the church. It is already clear that Utah is a Republican stronghold, and has been for decades. Factoring in the variables of being a citizen of the state of Utah, as well as being a Latter-Day Saint, increases the chance of identifying as Republican from 39% to 78% (Brown 2018). However, for a person living in Utah who is not a member of the church, their chance of identifying as Republican

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<sup>27</sup> Data gathered from the 2007 Pew Religious Landscape Survey.

<sup>28</sup> During the early period after archiving statehood, both the House and Senate in Utah had periods of Republican and Democrat control. Since the 1970s, however, both houses have been solidly Republican. (Brown 37)



decreases by 34% (Brown 2018). This is not the drastic correlation between members of the church and Republicans, but further shows that membership of Utah's largest church is a significant political cleavage. Even before Utah gained statehood in 1896, the People's Party and the Liberal Party offered a clear political line that mirrored the division between members and non-members of the church (Brown 2018). It seems that the Republican/Democrat division is a de facto mechanism to divide members and non-members.

Although Mitt Romney predictably did very well in Utah (72.62% overall, and 78% from Mormon voters), he is hardly an outlier. In 2008, John McCain received 75% support from Utah Latter-Day Saints, and 79% of members supported midterm Republican candidates in 2010. However, simply examining the support of political parties does not convey the more complex relationship that Latter-Day Saint voters have with other GOP-supporting religious groups. Members of the church depart from the party line on immigration, and they have more moderate views on gay marriage (allowing for civil unions) and abortion (some allowance for rape, or in cases where the health of the mother is at risk) (Campbell et al. 2003, 127). These are differences specifically compared to evangelicals, a group often compared to Latter-Day Saints in voting behavior. It is the nuanced differences between these religions that make the Latter-Day Saint vote unique, and it is these same differences that could cause defection from the Republican Party in situations where Evangelicals and other religious groups would remain loyal. Even on the campaign trail, Donald Trump recognized the struggle he was having in appealing to the Republican stronghold that is Utah Mormons.<sup>29</sup> Adam Brown observed that "Trump lagged in Utah because he activated precisely those cleavages that make Utah's Mormon Republican most different from Republicans elsewhere" (2018, 159).

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<sup>29</sup> Trump mentions having a "tremendous problem" in Utah (Tom Hamburger and Sean Sullivan Washington Post August 11, 2016 "Trump makes play for evangelicals...").

## Hypothesis

Use of the Utah 2016 presidential election allows testing of theories developed earlier. Because Evan McMullin does not share the same advantages many successful third party candidates have had in the past, religious identity is proposed as a causal mechanism for Evan McMullin support. Despite the declining impact of denominational cleavages between voters (Brooks & Manza 1997), these divisions still exist in a statistically significant way with the Latter-Day Saints due to their generally high levels of participation or activity.

Hypothesis 1: Latter-Day Saints will be more likely to vote for Evan McMullin than would any other religious group, all else being equal.

In addition, Utahans are more active in their religion on average,<sup>30</sup> and one theory is that many religious people (irrespective of affiliation) were bothered by Donald Trump's morals and behavior, which led to decreased support. Republican political leaders<sup>31</sup> in the state rescinded support for Trump after a tape recording was leaked where Trump bragging about "groping and kissing women without their consent" (Gildea, Terry 2016). Based on the adaptation of the Zaller theory substituting cognitive knowledge with devoutness (Campbell & Monson 2003), the more active a member is,<sup>32</sup> the more likely they are to vote together.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Based on a self-described survey in the 2016 exit poll.

<sup>31</sup> Including Governor Gary Herbert, Jon Huntsman Jr., Mitt Romney, and Senator Mike Lee.

<sup>32</sup> "Religious commitment has been shown to be an important mediator between denominational affiliation and its effect on political behavior" (e.g., Legee & Kellstedt 1993; Kohut et al. 2000).

<sup>33</sup> This hypothesis refers to membership in general, as Latter-Day Saint political elites are not likely to vote as a bloc in the same way (Cann 2009).

Hypothesis 2: Irrespective of religious affiliation, a higher level of religiosity (measured as self-described level of activity) will correspond with a higher level of support for Evan McMullin.

Finally, in order to quantify major party failure and set the stage for third party success, trust levels in each candidate can be measured based on feedback in the exit poll.

Hypothesis 3: Support for Evan McMullin will be highest from those who distrust both major party candidates.

## **Data and Results**

To verify these hypotheses, I turn to the 2016 BYU college exit poll for the state of Utah. This exit poll has been the longest-running exit poll in the state and was started in 1982 by David Magleby, a political science professor at Brigham Young University (Jenkins 2012). The data is generally very accurate, and since its inception over 30 years ago, this poll has never incorrectly called an election (Donaldson 2018).

The poll data will be compared to actual election results, as well as general demographic data of the state of Utah to verify that the sample of voters represents the state at large and is not influenced by exogenous variables. Figure 1 compares the exit poll predictions to the actual vote counts, while Figure 2 compares data from the exit poll to the demographic data from the US Census Bureau. The exit poll predicted slightly lower support for Trump with a commensurate higher predicted support for Clinton, while observing support for Evan McMullin almost exactly. The number of men and women represented in the exit poll mimics the actual population within

one percent. The exit poll also drew a slightly larger percent of college educated people vis a vis high school level, although the differences are slight. Other observations are represented in figures 1 and 2 below.

It is clear that the exit poll represents an accurate cross-section of Utah and is valid data to draw results from.

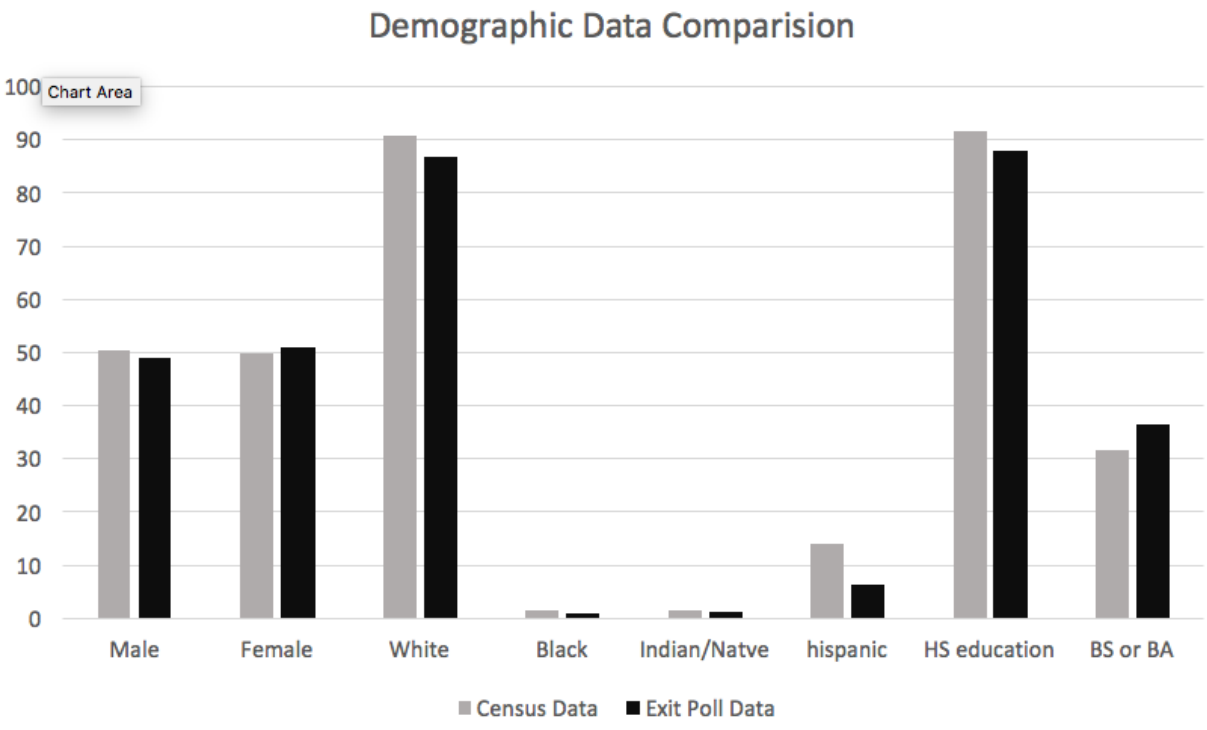


Figure 1

### Vote Data 2016 Presidential, Senate, and Governor Comparison

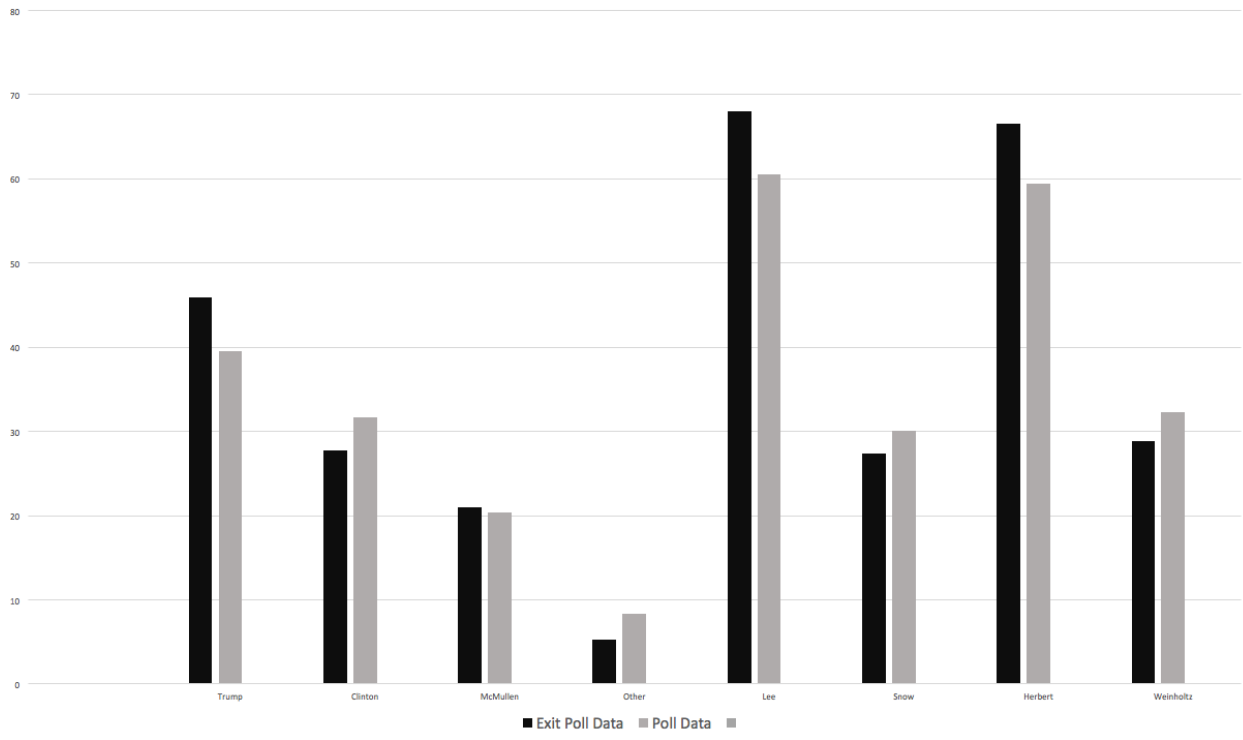


Figure 2

There were several notable third party candidates during this time, which accounts for the spikes in third party support. Ralph Nader in '98, Ross Perot in '92/'96, John Anderson in '80, and George Wallace in '68 were all well-known third party candidates throughout the country, and higher numbers of third party votes in these elections would be expected. These elections are shown in Figure 3, which shows Utah presidential election results from 1960 to the most recent 2016 election.

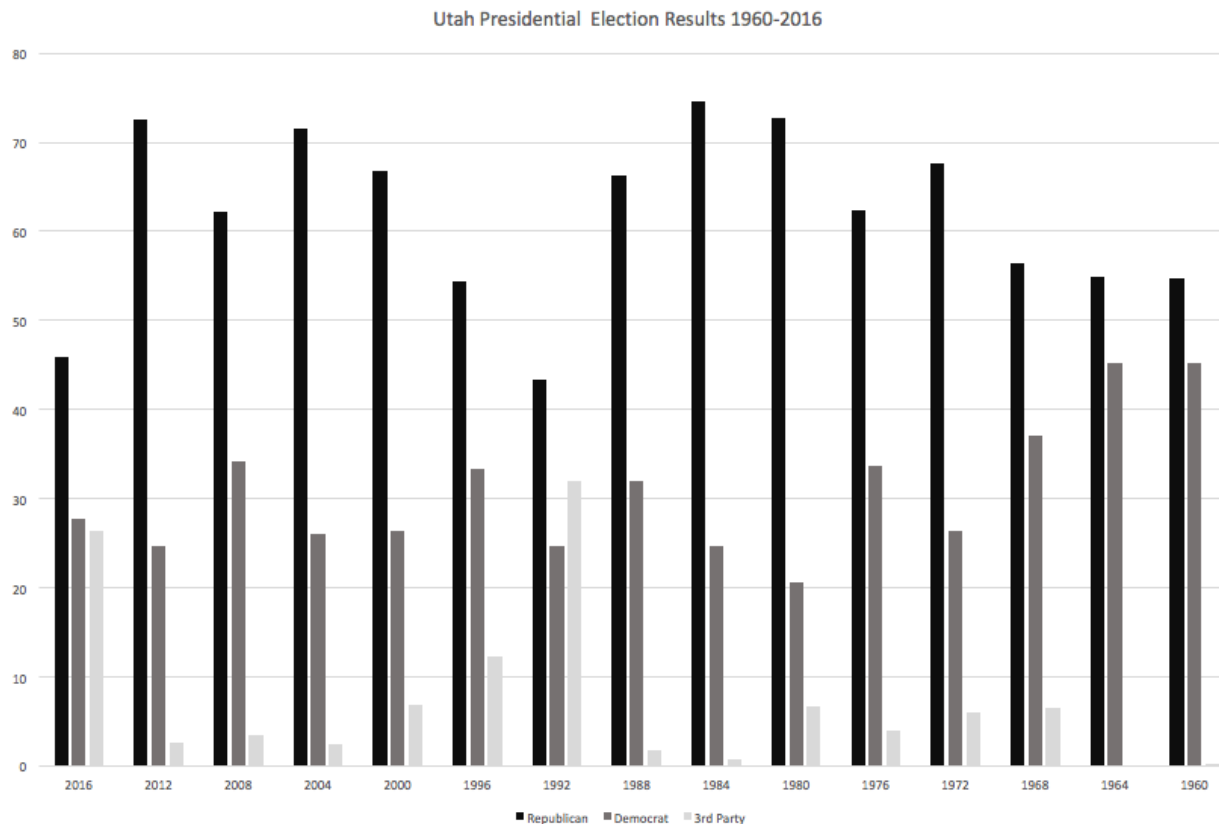


Figure 3

It is also important to mention Mitt Romney, the Republican candidate in 2012 who received the second highest percentage of the popular vote in the timespan shown. It would be suspected that if Evan McMullin's membership in the LDS church would impact voting, then the same might be said for Mitt Romney, although I am not examining that election specifically.

The 2016 election was ripe for a viable third party candidate in Utah, with both major parties fielding unattractive candidates. For the Latter-Day Saint community specifically, both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump carried heavy baggage regarding their moral or policy positions.

Hypothesis 3 states support for Evan McMullin will be highest from those with low trust in both candidates. Based on the cross-tab found in table 1, 36% of Evan McMullin voters

distrusted both major party candidates, a higher than voters for Clinton, Trump, or other third party candidates.

Table 1. Cross Tabulation of Trust and Vote Choice

	Trust One or Both	Distrust Both	Total
<i>Donald Trump</i>	10,857	1,259	12,216
	41.47%	30.63%	40.01%
<i>Hillary Clinton</i>	8,933	858	9,791
	33.81%	20.88%	32.07%
<i>Evan McMullin</i>	4,822	1,483	6,305
	18.25%	36.08%	7.28%
<i>Other</i>	1,712	501	2,222
	6.48%	12.41%	7.28%
<i>Total</i>	26,424	4,110	30,534
	100%	100%	100%
<i>Pearson X<sup>2</sup></i>	1000		
	<i>p</i> <.05		

Examining the influence of religiosity and vote choice in Table 2, we see that while Donald Trump did well with active voters, which is expected from the Republican candidate, Evan McMullin did even better, with 80% of his supporters identifying as “Very Active,” compared to Trump’s 60%. As expected, Hillary Clinton was lower at 24%.

Table 2. Religiosity and Presidential Vote Choice

<i>Activity</i>	Very	Somewhat	Not Very	Not	Does Not/ N/A	Total
<i>Donald Trump</i>	6,774	1,825	859	986	951	11,395
	59.45%	16.02%	7.54%	8.65%	8.35%	100%
<i>Hillary Clinton</i>	2,298	1,357	932	1,503	3,196	9,286
	24.75%	14.61%	10.04%	16.19%	34.42%	100%
<i>Evan McMullin</i>	4,866	584	184	181	226	6,041
	80.55%	9.67%	3.05%	3.00%	3.74%	100%
<i>Other</i>	838	317	180	251	519	2,105
	39.81%	15.06%	8.55%	11.92%	24.66%	100%
<i>Total</i>	14,776	4,083	2,155	5,921	4,892	28,827
	51.26%	14.16%	7.48%	10.13%	16.97%	100%
<i>Pearson X<sup>2</sup></i>	64000					
	$p < .05$					

Following is a cross-tab of votes for president in 2016 and self-identified party affiliation. Table 2 divides results between those identifying as “LDS” and “Not LDS” and describes their respective support for presidential candidates.



Table 3. Cross Tabulation of Religious Affiliation and Presidential Vote Choice

<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Not LDS</i>	<i>LDS</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Donald Trump</i>	4,160 30.29%	8,056 47.96%	12,216 40.01%
<i>Hillary Clinton</i>	7,419 54.01%	2,372 14.12%	9,791 32.07%
<i>Evan McMullin</i>	871 6.34%	5,434 32.35%	6,305 20.65%
<i>Other</i>	1,286 9.36%	936 5.57%	2,222 7.28%
<i>Total</i>	13,763 100%	16,798 100%	30,534 100%

*Pearson X<sup>2</sup>* 7,000  
*p*<.05

Not surprisingly, the “Not LDS” population highly favored Hillary Clinton, while the inverse was true for the “LDS” population. It is interesting to note that Evan McMullin comes in second place, in front of Clinton, among Latter-Day Saint voters overall.

Table 4. Cross Tabulation of Age and Presidential Vote Choice

<i>Presidential Vote</i>	<i>Recode of Age</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>18-39</i>	<i>40-64</i>	<i>65+</i>	
<i>Donald Trump</i>	4,348	4,847	2,061	11,256
	31.8%	45.72%	49.02%	39.53%
<i>Hillary Clinton</i>	4,554	3,276	1,359	9,189
	33.31%	30.90%	32.33%	32.27%
<i>Evan McMullin</i>	3,374	1,933	638	5,945
	24.68%	18.23%	15.18%	20.88%
<i>Other</i>	1,395	545	146	2,086
	10.2%	5.14%	3.47%	7.33%
<i>Total</i>	13,671	10,601	4,204	28,476
	13,671	10,601	4,204	28,476
	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

*Pearson X<sup>2</sup> 920.3607*  
*p < .05*

Accounting only for age in comparison to presidential vote, Republican voting patterns were normal in that increasing age correlated to a higher percentage of Republican support. Support for Hillary Clinton remained constant across the age spectrum. Evan McMullin had slightly higher support in the 18-39 age range, but not significantly, and it would be difficult to attribute age as the only cause. Younger voters also tended to have less partisan attachment, which could have played a part in the results.

Table 5. Cross Tabulation of Self-Identified Party Affiliation and Presidential Vote Choice

<i>Presidential Vote</i>	<i>Three-Category Party ID (Self-Identified)</i>			
	Democrat	Independent	Republican	Total
<i>Donald Trump</i>	258	1896	9286	11440
	3.17%	32.37%	62.21%	39.56%
<i>Hillary Clinton</i>	7082	1561	688	9331
	87.07%	26.65%	4.61%	32.27%
<i>Evan McMullin</i>	380	1,363	4,295	6,038
	4.67%	23.27%	28.78%	20.88%
<i>Other</i>	414	1,038	657	2,109
	5.09%	17.72%	4.40%	7.29%
<i>Total</i>	8,134	5,858	14,926	28,918
	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Pearson X<sup>2</sup> 18000*  
*p < .05*

Examining self-identified political affiliation with presidential vote choice shows a typical distribution of Democrat voters; a very high level of support for Clinton and almost none for Trump. Trump did not see Republican Party members turning out for him in the same way that Democrats did for Clinton. While Independent candidates, also as expected, see their highest level of support from self-identified Independents, Evan McMullin did not share that median voter support. The Republican voters who did not show up for Trump did vote, and they voted for McMullin. Republican and Democrat support for other Independent candidates was nearly as low as support for the candidate of one party from members of the other, but Evan McMullin drew a large number of Republican voters away from Trump. This explains the lower

level of support for Trump by Republicans compared to the strong Democrat support for Clinton. With only three divisions of party affiliation, trends are more difficult to see. Returning to the original seven divisions of self-described party affiliation and re-running the cross-tab shows a more detailed breakdown and a clearer image of support for Evan McMullin throughout the political spectrum.

Table 6. Cross Tabulation of Self-Identified Political Affiliation and Presidential Vote Choice<sup>34</sup>

<i>Presidential Vote</i>	<i>Political Identification</i>							Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
<i>Donald Trump</i>	71	64	123	950	2692	1534	5060	10494
	2.19%	5.19%	3.36%	28.49%	50.21%	51.93%	76.55%	39.76%
<i>Hillary Clinton</i>	3,072	1,037	2,973	991	355	220	113	8,761
	94.76%	84.04%	81.27%	29.72%	6.62%	7.45%	1.71%	33.19%
<i>Evan McMullin</i>	40	73	267	829	1,956	1,056	1,283	5,504
	1.23%	5.92%	7.3%	24.87%	36.48%	35.75%	19.41%	20.85%
<i>Other</i>	59	60	295	564	359	144	154	1,635
	1.82%	4.86%	8.06%	16.92%	6.7%	4.87%	2.33%	6.19%
<i>Total</i>	3,242	1,234	3,658	3,334	5,362	2,954	6,610	26,394
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Pearson X<sup>2</sup> 19000*

McMullin, surprisingly, is strongest with Independents leaning Republican and Not So Strong Republicans, with 36 and 35 percent respectively. Support then drops to 19% with Strong Republicans. Clearly, while diehard Republican Party members, as a whole, remained

<sup>34</sup> 1="Strong Democrat" 2="Not so strong Democrat" 3="Independent leaning Democrat" 4="Independent" 5="Independent leaning Republican" 6="Not so strong Republican" 7="Strong Republican"

loyal to the party candidate, the weaker and leaning members were more likely to defect to McMullin.

Table 7. Cross Tabulation of Self-Identified Party Affiliation and Presidential Vote Choice (LDS only)

<i>Presidential Vote</i>	<i>Three-Category Party ID (Self-Identified)</i>			
	Democrat	Independent	Republican	Total
<i>Donald Trump</i>	120	1010	6888	8018
	6.22%	34.23%	58.19%	47.96%
<i>Hillary Clinton</i>	1477	442	443	2362
	76.57%	14.98%	3.74%	14.13%
<i>Evan McMullin</i>	250	1109	4048	5407
	12.96%	37.58%	34.2%	32.34%
<i>Other</i>	82	390	458	930
	4.25%	13.22%	3.87%	5.56%
<i>Total</i>	1929	2951	11837	16717
	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Pearson X<sup>2</sup> 7900*  
*p < .05*

Table 8. Cross Tabulation of Self-Identified Party Affiliation and Presidential Vote Choice (non-LDS only)

<i>Presidential Vote</i>	<i>Three-Category Party ID (Self-Identified)</i>			
	Democrat	Independent	Republican	Total
<i>Donald Trump</i>	138	886	2398	3422
	2.22%	30.48%	77.63%	28.05%
<i>Hillary Clinton</i>	5,605	1119	245	6969
	90.33%	38.49%	7.93%	57.12%
<i>Evan McMullin</i>	130	254	247	631
	2.1%	8.74%	8%	5.17%
<i>Other</i>	332	648	199	1,179
	5.35%	22.29%	6.44%	9.66%
<i>Total</i>	6,205	2,907	3,089	12,201
	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Pearson X<sup>2</sup> 7700*  
*p < .05*

Tables 7 and 8 compare self-identified party affiliation with presidential vote choice for both members and non-members of the church. As predicted in Hypothesis 1, support for McMullin among Latter-Day Saints is higher across the political spectrum compared to non-members. Also, members' support for Trump among Republicans was 20% lower than non-member Republicans.

Table 9. Cross Tabulation of Self-Identified Religious Activity and Presidential Vote Choice for LDS members.

<i>Presidential Vote</i>	<i>Self-Proclaimed Level of Activity in Religion</i>					<i>Total</i>
	<i>Very</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Not Very</i>	<i>Not Active</i>	<i>Does Not</i>	
<i>Donald Trump</i>	6,001	1,152	452	375	55	8,035
	46.92%	50.93%	49.94%	52.96%	51.4%	47.94%
<i>Hillary Clinton</i>	1,435	436	251	219	25	2,366
	11.22%	19.27%	27.73%	31.51%	23.36%	14.12%
<i>Evan McMullin</i>	4,714	513	126	56	17	5,426
	36.86%	22.68%	13.92%	8.06%	15.89%	32.38%
<i>Other</i>	640	161	76	45	10	932
	5.00%	7.12%	8.4%	6.47%	9.35%	5.56%
<i>Total</i>	12,790	2,262	905	695	107	16,759
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Pearson X<sup>2</sup>* 816.256  
*p*<.05

Table 10. Cross Tabulation of Religious Activity and Party ID of LDS McMullin Voters

<i>Activity Index</i>	<i>Three Category Party ID</i>			
	Democrat	Independent	Republican	Total
<i>Very Active</i>	184	883	3628	4695
	73.9%	79.69%	89.76%	86.96%
<i>Somewhat Active</i>	47	162	302	511
	18.88%	14.62%	7.47%	9.46%
<i>Not Very Active</i>	10	43	70	123
	4.02%	3.88%	1.73%	2.28%
<i>Not Active</i>	8	13	32	53
	3.21%	1.17%	.79%	.98%
<i>N/A No Reply</i>	0	7	10	17
	0.00%	.63%	.25%	.31%
<i>Total</i>	249	1,108	4,042	5,399
	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
<i>Pearson X<sup>2</sup></i>	126			
	<i>P</i> <.05			

Building from Hypothesis 1 and an analysis of Tables 9 and 10, the data for Latter-Day Saints is further scrutinized by stratifying activity levels among members of the church only. Hypothesis 2b, as an adaptation of the Zaller theory, predicts a higher level of support for McMullin as activity in the church rises. As expected, there was an increased level of support for McMullin as church activity levels increased, while support for Trump remained consistent across the activity spectrum. Table 8 analyzes only McMullin voters who are also Latter-Day Saints, and clearly the strongest voter turnout for McMullin was among Republican voters who are also Very Active members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.



As a final analysis of the 2016 presidential election in Utah, I combined the individual variables into a single multinomial logit model. This allows factoring of multiple variables to account for common influences on voting behavior, such as age (in years), gender, education level, and race, while simultaneously examining potential independent variables that are statistically significant. This is especially useful when multiple variables apply to every data point, such as this example, where individual voters filled out an exit poll. In this model, the baseline is a vote for Donald Trump, and the three columns are votes for Hillary Clinton, Evan McMullin, and the catch-all category ‘Other’ for all remaining candidates. The results of this analysis appear below in Table 11.

The variables *Active LDS* and *Not Active LDS* represent voters who self-identified as either active or not active in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Partisan identification labels from *Strong Democrat* to *Strong Republican*, such as the religious affiliation and activity measurements, are also self-identified. The *Age* variable divides voters by one year age increments. As expected, the coefficient is small, but becomes more significant as wider age ranges are measured. *Male*, *College*, and *White* are categorical variables identifying the gender, education level, and race of voters. The *Distrust* variable was created by coding voters’ responses to the question of whether each candidate was considered “Honest and Trustworthy” by the voter. Voters were coded as having distrust if they marked both major party candidates as not being honest and trustworthy on the exit poll. Most partisans would consider their own candidate as more trustworthy than the other major party candidate, so being distrustful of both candidates was one way to indicate low levels of trust. It could also indicate major party failure and a higher likelihood to vote for an alternate candidate.

Table 11.

	<i>Hillary Clinton</i>		<i>Evan McMullin</i>		<i>Other</i>	
	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.
<i>Active LDS</i>	-.58034*	.0594	1.8608*	.0582	-.3430*	.0700
<i>Not Active LDS</i>	-.63503*	.0747	.8316*	.0718	-.4535*	.0882
<i>Age</i> <sup>35</sup>	-.00514*	.0015	-.0213*	.0011	-.0303*	.0019
<i>Weak Democrat</i>	-.9190*	.1850	.4648*	.2720	.1255	.2617
<i>Leaning Democrat</i>	-.5554*	.1567	1.0741*	.2327	.9763*	.2143
<i>Independent</i>	-3.6195*	.1336	-.0200	.2100	-.3330	.1925
<i>Leaning Republican</i>	-5.564*	.1387	-.5555*	.2072	-1.733*	.1949
<i>Weak Republican</i>	-5.4952*	.1469	-.7516*	.2094	-2.0937*	.2067
<i>Strong Republican</i>	-7.2878*	.1597	-1.7256*	.2079	-3.0851*	.2049
<i>Male</i>	-.3029*	.0500	-.2637*	.0374	-.0020	.0595
<i>College</i>	.7633*	.0515	.4752*	.0382	.4406*	.0605
<i>White</i>	-.3680*	.0748	.1107*	.0719	-.0994	.0902
<i>Distrust</i>	.1786*	.0737	.8395*	.0489	.9140*	.0744
<i>Constant</i>	4.2173*	.1552	-.4446*	.2196	1.0851*	.2128
<i>Model Info</i>						
<i>N</i>	25258					
<i>X<sup>2</sup></i>	2847.97					
	p<0.0001					
<i>Pseudo r<sup>2</sup></i>	.3828					

\* significant at p<.05 |

As predicted by the cross-tabs, the model supports the theory of higher levels of support for McMullin by members of the Church of Jesus Christ. This idea is strengthened by noting that those same members were not more likely to support any third party candidate, just McMullin.

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<sup>35</sup> In years.

In addition to the “pushing away” that these these voters felt from the Republican party and candidate Trump, McMullin also pulled them in and away from either the other major party or from alternate third parties. This effect was seen more in those with high levels of religiosity, but was also significant for those identifying as not active. A higher age across the board led to greater levels of support for Trump. Along political ideology, standard behavior was found as expected. Clinton did best among strong Democrats, and support for her fell moving down the spectrum to *Strong Republican*.

McMullin did not do well with strong Republican voters, and the targeted defection is supported here once again. *Strong Republicans* still turned out in force for their party candidate. *Male* and *White* voters also showed lower levels of support for McMullin, although both of these effects are small. Clinton, as the Democrat nominee, was stronger with women, minorities, and those with a college education. Not surprising, both McMullin and *Other* candidates did well with voters expressing distrust with both major party candidates. Clinton also fared better than Trump among the same distrustful voters.

Independent voters were an even mix of genders and races, but favored those who were college educated. Some evidence of strategic voting is found as those identifying as true independents with no party leaning were not more likely to vote for McMullin *or* any other party. It appears as if many who were unaffiliated with a party still chose to support Trump, but were not as likely to cast a vote for Clinton.

It is clear that being a Latter-Day Saint and Republican was a significant indicator of McMullin support. By examining to what extent activity level in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints predicted support for Evan McMullin, it is also clear that the most active members were also the most likely to defect from the party and cast a vote for McMullin.

## **Conclusion**

Much of the research surrounding political parties excludes third parties. This paints an incomplete picture and minimizes the impact that third party campaigns, as well as voting third party, has on policy. Third parties have their own unique and significant history in the United States. They have their own advantages and deal with their own unique challenges when it comes to furthering their policy goals. This unique impact is illustrated in the Utah 2016 presidential election.

When it comes to the impact of religion and voting behavior, Utah presents a unique and interesting case study. This is due to the predominant religion and the intertwined history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints with the territorial, then state, government of Utah. Members of the church are among the most united of any voting bloc. They are also categorized much like evangelicals by many, despite crucial differences which were illustrated in the 2016 presidential election.

Exit poll data clearly shows the unique identity of Latter-Day Saints in Utah and how cleavages between them and other traditional religious Republicans caused a defection from the party where other religious groups, such as evangelicals, remained loyal to the party. Despite Latter-Day Saint voters being some of the strongest Republican supporters for the past 50 years, candidate Donald Trump was plagued by cleavages between Latter-Day Saint voters and other Republicans, which caused a dramatic shift in support in the presidential election.

Donald Trump's policy focus and behavior clearly ignited those cleavages in Utah, resulting in a major party failure by nominating a presidential candidate who was unappealing to the Latter-Day Saint Republicans living in Utah. If President Trump runs in 2020 as the

Republican nominee which is likely, I would expect to see a similar defection should a viable third party candidate appear. I also predict this to be a short-term, candidate-focused failure of the Republican Party, and when the time comes that a more viable candidate runs under the Republican flag, support from Utah will return. Studying future elections in Utah would be a valuable subject of research, as would examination of the Utah Latter-Day Saint voting bloc behavior in general.

Regarding generalizability of the findings, members of the church are a self-described “peculiar people,” and it would be difficult to extend the hypotheses of this paper to other groups directly. Voting behavior is influenced by a range of priorities and perceptions and the nuance of voter preferences is lost in a simple vote choice. Due to the structure of voting in the United States, beyond the macro winner-take-all system, each voter only has a single vote to cast, and they must give full support to a single candidate on their ballot. The difference between a voter who supports a candidate only 51%, and one who supports the same candidate 95% is impossible to measure based on vote data only. The vote shift in the 2016 presidential election in Utah is an excellent example of generally ignored group identities playing a role in vote choice.

Adaptations of Hotelling’s Theory by Black and Downs do not seem to fit the current behavior of either major party. Both parties increasingly appeal to their respective bases, moving further and further from the median voter. Donald Trump is clearly not a traditional Republican nominee, and many of the current potential Democrat nominees are positioning themselves further to the left. Although most voters in the United States eventually vote for candidates from one of the two major parties, each major party is composed of a coalition of voters with varied interests. The 2016 election in Utah is an example within the Republican Party in which a voting bloc from the party chose to abandon a major party and seek representation elsewhere. It is of

great interest that the group defecting was one that, for decades, has been a Republican party stronghold. If the Latter-Day Saint voters were willing to defect from the party due to this candidate selection failure, it is reasonable to assume that defections from either major party by other groups could happen again in the future, especially if more radical or fringe candidate selection behavior continues. The coming elections will show if Donald Trump represents a short-term major party failure or a longer-term repositioning, a failure that would likely result in further defection. For both major parties, the lesson to be learned in Utah is that voting blocs can, and will, defect when their preferred positions are ignored by candidates or parties, despite being long-time supporters in the past.

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