"A Dime's Worth of Difference?":

Understanding Third Party Voters in the 2020 Presidential Election

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INTRODUCTION

The past two Presidential elections have been decided by razor-thin margins in key states, and 2024 appears to be no exception. Focus turned voters who cast ballots for third parties, a small yet apparently determinative group (Silver et al. 2016). Third parties present a fascinating political puzzle. "Voter are socialized into a two-party norm that is constantly reinforced by the common portrayal of elections as contests between Democrats and Republicans," an image that has endured for over 150 years (Duverger, 1967). However, "Gallup polling shows that the percentage of survey respondents agreeing that a third party is needed has increased from 40% in 2003 to 57% in 2016," per Goff and Lee (2019). They add, "[f]eelings toward the major parties have declined over the past couple of decades, and the two major party presidential nominees in 2016 had historically low favorability ratings (Goff and Lee 2019). Still, an astonishingly small number of Americans actually cast a ballot for a third party in 2016 (United States, 2017). Even fewer made the decision to do so in 2020 (United States, 2022). Both Democrats and Republicans deride these voters as the reason that they win or lose (Silver et al. 2016). Simultaneously at the fringes of political discourse and the deciders of key elections, third party voters are an oft-discussed but little understood group. But who are these voters? What do they have in common? In this paper, I will conduct a descriptive quantitative analysis of third party voters in 2020 and attempt to understand just who has cast a ballot for a third party, what they have in common, and what is the implication for the 2024 election.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Third parties in the United States are controversial, and the partisan landscape has evolved substantially since the days of George Washington's nonpartisan ideal. Before I describe the case that voters might - or might not - make about third parties, I first lay out the history of Third Parties in the United States.

HISTORY OF THIRD PARTIES IN THE UNITED STATES

Third party runs for the Presidency seem to take on one of three characteristics, in the form of three overlapping eras: ideologically progressive or left-wing insurgent campaigns, culturally conservative Southern segregationist candidacies, and personality-driven technocratic centrist bids (Allen and Brox 2005; Gold 1995). The structure and character of these parties, and Presidential bids, has evolved in turn. These include, among others, the "Liberty, Free Soil, Know-Nothing, Constitutional Union, Southern Democrat, Greenback, People's, and Prohibition Parties" (Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus 1996, 48; Chamberlain 2012). While these parties span the entirely of the ideological spectrum and cut through many different eras of American history, "Third parties in many ways resembled their major party counterparts" in that they "ran candidates for lower offices, most held conventions to select their nominees, and there were often real fights over who would be the standard bearers" (Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus 1996, 79). In addition, "[t]hey were broad-based coalitions; often their supporters' only common bond was opposition to a particular party, policy or candidate"

(Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus 1996, 48). Notably, most of the nineteenth century's minor parties either came out of, or grew into, a major party: the Republican Party, originally a fringe abolitionist movement in the North, is the most noteworthy such example (Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus 1996, 79).

In contrast, third parties in the twentieth century are better understood as individually-driven independent campaigns for the Presidency rather than political parties (Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus 1996, 81). Many of these candidates failed to win more than a handful of states, if any. Theodore Roosevelt's Progressive (Bull Moose) bid in 1912 was the first such personality-centric bid. Socialist and populist movements with charismatic Presidential candidates including Eugene V. Debs, who ran from prison, and Wisconsin's Robert LaFollete anchored the Presidential race to significant populist, even Communist, agitation prior to World War II. Strom Thurmond's 1948 and George Wallace's 1968 regionally-grounded, segregationist candidacies continued this trend in hopes of upsetting the enduring New Deal coalition (the latter of whom was the last third party candidate to win electoral college votes (Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus 1996). Finally, John Anderson's 1980 campaign for the Presidency between Jimmy Carter and then-gaffe-prone Ronald Reagan, followed by billionaire Ross Perot's two consecutive Reform Party White House bids in 1992 and 1996, demonstrated America's rightward shift and the requisite weakness of third parties (Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus 1996).

However, it was the truly razor-thin 2000 Presidential election, the proverbial "perfect tie," that thrust the paradoxical powerless and all-powerful nature of third party

margins into the forefront (Hood III and McKee 2022; Ceaser and Busch 2001). With an extremely narrow electoral college vote, Florida's extremely close Presidential race - just two thousand votes separating Gore and Bush for a time - focus on the small but mighty margins of third party candidates, especially Green Party nominee Ralph Nader, grew. Hood III and McKee push back against the idea that Nader played a spoiler role:

> *"Many Nader voters might have been Gore voters if Nader had not been in the race… But there are only two states that Bush won where the sum of the Gore and the Nader vote was greater than Bush's total: New Hampshire and Florida, totaling 29 electoral votes… If the spoiler argument is to be followed to the bitter end,it should probably be observed that [Reform Party Candidate] Pat Buchanan might be said to have been a spoiler for George W. Bush. There were four states Gore won, totaling 30 electoral votes, where the Buchanan plus Bush votes were greater than Gore's" (2022).*

This paper does not seek to answer whether third party voters are effective spoilers, but it is difficult to diminish the determinative role these voters can play in tight elections at the Presidential level. The shock and frustration at the closeness of the margin began the twenty-first century with a tense relationship with third parties.

THE CASE AGAINST THIRD PARTIES

Structural Factors

The chief argument against the efficacy and utility of third parties in the United States goes something like this: the federalist structure and culture of American democracy lends itself to a natural dominance of two competing parties for federal elections. This is, in fact, "Durverger's Law": Duverger argues "the simple-majority single-ballot system favours the two-party system" because single member districts with first-past-the-post voting encourages candidates to get as far as possible by any means necessary, incentivizing few broad inclusive coalitions (1967). Notably, Hirano and Snyder "find little support for the hypothesis that the decline of third-party voting was immediately due to electoral reforms such as the introduction of direct primaries and the Australian ballot" (2007). The first-past-the-post system itself incentivizes convergence into two opposing factions.

Third party candidates are not simply additional Presidential candidates but from another party. "Third-party movements are further handicapped because they have fewer resources, suffer from poorer press coverage, usually run weaker, less qualified candidates, and do not share the legitimacy of the major parties" (Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus 1996, 15). They lack a broader ecosystem that, conversely, supports a two party system. Koch adds, "[t]hird party candidates, lacking a forum similar to that of the major party elites, are probably less able to shape the political preferences and concerns of their followers, reducing the distinctions between third party and major party supporters" (Koch 2003, 48). This is pivotal because it only fuels the initial issue of poor candidate quality: "If potential candidates know that conditions are stacked against third party success, then the strongest and most viable candidates will

strategically choose to run as a major party nominee, rather than as a third party candidate" (Goff and Lee 2019). This had direct implications in the recent past, as Goff and Lee argue, "knowing that voters are not likely to defect from a major party candidate to support a third party candidate, Trump strategically ran as Republican nominee, rather than mount an independent campaign" (2019).

Lastly, Third Party voters may not be not representative samples of all constituencies in the United States: "there are character traits and attitudes that make a person more likely to be a 3rd party voter," and these traits are not straightforward and are in some ways contradictory: both privileged (whiter, maler, and more economically secure) and marginalized communities are both traditional third party supporters (Doyle 2006). This not only presents a pragmatic obstacle to organizing a mass coalition, but also demonstrates that third parties simultaneously have to bear the weight of the most privileged and the least privileged, more of which will be discussed in the subsequent section. In addition, Julio Rotemberg "presents a simple model of turnout and voting based on two features of human psychology" in which "[t]he first is the tendency of individuals to be more altruistic towards individuals they agree with" and "[t]he second is the gain in self-esteem and well-being that people tend to experience when they find out that others share their opinions" (2009). This points to the psychological as well as political logic of a two-party system: the "good vibes," for lack of a better term, of the group reinforces itself, and the consequences associated with political marginalization are also both political and psychological.

Political Factors

Similar to the structural argument, the political argument against third parties goes something like this: the two political parties in most ways meet the needs of American voters, or at the very least represent the path of least resistance towards realizing voters' interests. Duverger adds that, "the new two-party system was established only in countries with Socialist parties based on Trade Unions, indirect in structure, with little doctrinal dogmatism, and of reformist and non-revolutionary tendencies" (1967). To that end, the Democratic Party, especially since the construction of the New Deal coalition, has been successful at adopting the policy priorities of the left, absorbed its voter base into its electoral coalition, and effectively de-fanged the third party threat from the left (Hirano and Snyder Jr. 2007). This is why, until Nader's bid in 2000, significant left-wing third party movements dissipated.

Third party voters are not monolithic in any way, particularly ideologically, which presents a political barrier. Per Peress: "my results indicate that the candidates can best compete by adopting centrist positions" and "[w]hile a candidate can increase turnout among his supporters by moving away from the center, many moderate voters will defect to his opponent" (2011). This haunted Ross Perot who contended with an increasingly conservative Bill Clinton and struggled to carve an ideologically moderate lane (Ceaser and Busch 2001). The two party system can both adapt to its own base and, at least at the time, could convincingly keep moderates from defecting.

In many ways, third party presidential candidates have a tall ask for the American voter, as they "must be willing to support candidates who they know have no

chance of winning" (Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus 1996, 18). "Citizens vote for third parties when certain motivations to abandon the major parties are high and the costs of doing so are low," yet "the cost of third party voting is higher in the current polarized era" (Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus 1996, 150; Goff and Lee 2019). Goff and Lee stress "the conditions that increase the demand for third parties are also the conditions that make it harder for voters to actually cast votes for third party candidates" since "[t]he cost of contributing to the victory of the lesser liked major party candidate is too great in the current polarized era, as voters especially dislike their less-favored major party currently" (2019). This leaves third party voters in a significant bind: support a major party by casting a ballot for it, while legitimizing that system, or risk the potentially massive cost of losing to the less favorable of the candidates. This risk would be compounded if these voters were particularly vulnerable. Somewhat contradictorily, Koch notes that "three characteristics that serve to enhance political trust—youthfulness, being male, and being White—also serve to increase the likelihood of supporting a third party" (2003). Katha Pollitt in *The Nation* argues that Nader, Greens, and third party progressives underestimated the consequences of a Bush presidency, especially for abortion rights. "'It's insulting to belittle people's realistic concerns, to wave them away as trivial or overblown or mock them as 'gonadal politics'" (Pollitt 2000, 10).

Overlapping Explanations

The unique pressure of the difficulty of operating as a third party in a two-party political culture, in addition to unique quirks in the communities that America's third parties attract, makes America's third parties unable to grow past 5% on election day, let alone into mass movements (Hughes 2022, 27–45). It is difficult to tease out overlap between political and structural barriers as the latter are often imposed due to the former. For example, North Carolina's Democratic-controlled Board of Elections cited "irregularities" to deny the Green Party U.S. Senate Candidate Matthew Hoh ballot access in 2022 after submitting the required number of signatures; the Elias Law group, a close Democratic Party ally, was involved in the legal effort and is alleged to be involved in a scheme to pressure signers into removing their signatures from Hoh's petitions (Harrison 2022). Schraufnagel and Milita acknowledge that, "[r]esults suggest some of these lower-order institutional impediments to minor party electoral fortunes do yield a statistically significant relationship with minor party voting in the American states" but add, "[h]owever, the influence is of limited practical relevance in expanding the scope of meaningful electoral competition" (2009). If ballot access is downstream of the ability to build meaningful electoral competition, but the structure of both fundraising and ballot access is predisposed to existing institutions, then third parties, this argument goes, are perpetually locked out of true electoral competition.

THE CASE FOR THIRD PARTIES

Rational Voter Model

Popular culture, campaign rhetoric, and previous research all point to a sort of "conventional wisdom" regarding third party voters: that "the reason why people vote for third parties is that they possess inaccurate information about the parties' relative chances of winning" (Raymond and Tromborg 2016, 534–43). In practice, this may be a myth, as Raymond and Tromborg find "possessing accurate information does not prevent most individuals from voting for third-placed parties and that many voters possess reasonably accurate information regarding the viability of the parties in their constituencies," and that, importantly, "[t]hese findings suggest that arguments emphasizing levels of voter information as a major explanation for why multiparty systems often emerge in plurality systems are exaggerated" (Raymond and Tromborg 2016). These voters are not "throwing their vote away," and even if they are, they do so intentionally. In this conception, third party votes represent a rational decision made by informed, engaged voters who are stakeholders in their democracy.

This is consistent with Chressanthis' research, which demonstrates that the "rational voter model," developed by Barzel and Silberg in 1973 did apply to third party voters as of at least 1990 (1990). This is important, as, "votes for third parties represent the transmission of individual preferences by people who believe that their vote is important and that in the aggregate their signal may be interpreted as a signal to alter the direction of current policies as run by the major parties" (Chressanthis 1990). Voters denied their desire to vote third party, or whose views are particularly singled out and marginalized by a major candidate, can respond by simply not voting (Peress 2011). While candidates can, as previously discussed, run up the score with

their own base while alienating moderates, they can similarly alienate their own base to third parties by moving far enough away from them. There is evidence that the belief that a voter can play a spoiler role can even increase willingness to vote third party: Doyle acknowledges "Although it is only significant at the 0.1 level, more interesting is the reversal of sign, which indicates that a respondent is more likely to vote for a 3rd party candidate if the election is perceived to be close" in Congressional elections (2006). I argue this could transfer to the Presidency. Even Rotemberg's psychological model demonstrates that "third-party candidates with no prospect of winning can receive votes that can cost a major candidate the election" (Rotemberg 2009, 223–44). While I do not go as far as Rotemberg in claiming that third-party voters "cost candidates elections," the model holds space for voters who want to deny their vote to major party candidates. "This conclusion likewise suggests that people who vote for third parties do so under similar motivations as people who vote for the major parties," and thus that, "people do not appear to regard votes for third parties as wasted votes or engage in the voting process in an irrational fashion" (Chressanthis 1990).

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Cognitive Dissonance, or the need of a voter to counter-rationalize their decision to cast a ballot, could play a role in why voters cast third party votes. "Cognitive dissonance theory predicts that the act of voting makes people more positive toward the party or candidate they have voted for" (Elinder 2012). It could also make voters feel absolved of guilt, defensiveness, or bias towards decisions made by a partisan

President. Elinder finds no evidence of the act of voting on political attitudes (2012). However, there is some evidence that Green Party voters may adopt the views not only of the party but of the local group itself (Koch 2003). This is important because, in a polarized political climate, more pressure - from media, relatives, acquaintances, and policy decisions - could plausibly act as more stimulus and cause a Cognitive Dissonance effect that forces a voter to rationalize their previous choice: the sheer number of voters who voted for Trump a second time in 2020 speaks to this possibility.

Health of the Democracy

Finally, this argument suggests that third parties play a unique role in a democratic society by holding political elites accountable and improving responsiveness to the voters. "When the two major parties deteriorate–when they neglect the concerns of significant blocs of voters, mismanage the economy, or nominate unqualified candidates–voters turn to a third party alternative" (Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus 1996, 181). Christopher Hitchens makes this case in *The Nation* in 2000, arguing Nader is a progressive of unique integrity because, among other things, he would be willing to impeach and convict Bill Clinton (2000). This claim, importantly, transcends just policy grievance with the centrist turn of the Clinton-esque neoliberals; it also invokes the civic value of political independence from partisan allegiance.

Third parties also offer a legitimate electoral outlet to voters with grievances. Sifry in *The Nation* writes that a third party - the Working Families Party - is responsible for progressive political change in New York, in *spite* of the Democratic Party's strength

in the state (2000). Its supporters at the time argued that its independence was in fact its strength, as Sifry acknowledges, "How not to be a mere adjunct of the Democratic Party is a complicated problem for the WFP that is not about to go away" (2000).

This legitimate outlet of political frustration is critical to maintain trust in democracy, this argument goes. Koch argues, "American third party movements may perform a function commonly assigned to the major political parties: They mentor citizens" (2003). In other words, they keep Americans active in the electoral system, and can even consolidate skills and networks, while performing as something of an "interest group" in practice, even if it does so imperfectly (Hughes 2022). Numerous studies indicate that, in prior years, citizen trust levels are statistically significant, large, robust predictors of third party voting (Peterson and Wrighton 1998; Koch 2003). Yet conceptually, there is some ideological overlap between the distrust expressed here and the distrust espoused by Donald Trump in his 2016 Presidential bid. I hope to uncover if distrusting voters continue to privilege third parties, or if that momentum has been successfully folded into the Republican Party the way that Democrats absorbed the left.

RESEARCH QUESTION, THEORY, and HYPOTHESIS

As discussed in the literature review, third party voters are an oft-discussed but little understood group. But who are these voters? What do they have in common? I will conduct a descriptive quantitative analysis of third party voters in 2020 and attempt to separate empirical fact from political mythology. My theory incorporates elements of the

psychological factors explored in Chressenthis' Rational Voter Model and Cognitive Dissonance Theory, Raymond and Tromborg's findings on third parties and voter information, and Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus' analysis of third party structural barriers (1996; 2016; 1996). I theorize that Americans vote for a third party for the Presidency because they rationally and informatively want to strategically deny a major party their vote.

To that end, I first hypothesize Third Party voters to have largely voted for Third Parties previously, due to the cognitive dissonance effect. I secondly hypothesize Third Party voters to be less white and male than Trump voters but more white and male than Biden voters, an extension of the paradoxical space that third parties structurally occupy between the Democrat and Republican coalitions. Lastly, I hypothesize Third Party voters to be more attentive to the news than Biden or Trump voters, an expected consequence of the Rational Voter Model.

DATA and METHODS

I use quantitative data from the 2020 ANES Survey in order to conduct a descriptive quantitative analysis of Presidential vote choice in 2020 to build a demographic description of third party voters in 2020. I use two dependent variables: the first is 2020 Presidential Vote Choice (V202073), and the second is a binary variable of whether the voter cast a ballot for a major party or not. Since my theory relies heavily on the psychological factors explored in the Rational Voter Model and Cognitive

Dissonance Theory, Raymond and Tromborg's findings on third parties and voter information, and Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus' analysis of third party structural barriers, I operationalize third party support, trust, and news interest by testing for three corresponding independent variables: 2016 Presidential Vote Choice (V202073), whether they believe the government is run by a few big interests or for the benefit of all (V201234), and attention to politics (V202407). I would prefer to run two additional independent variables for gender (V202637) as well as race (V201547), but unfortunately much of this data is unusable and/or confidential. I run a crosstab analysis of each independent variable against the dependent, and subsequently run a chi-squared test for each variable as well.

I note that this analysis is necessarily extremely limited due to the incredibly small number of individuals who cast a ballot for third parties in 2020. The Green Party was also not on all fifty states' ballots. This fact did not change that five states were decided by extremely close margins, and as a feature of a closely divided two-party system, third party voters have uniquely determinative leverage. Although the small sample size prevents statistical significance from being achieved among third party voters, it was worth noting that the sample size itself is small and was worth taking a look at these voters especially in the context of the shock of the 2016 election.

RESULTS

The results of the following crosstab analyses can be seen in figures below.

	Clinton	Trump	Other
Biden (D)	2415 (76.1%)	128 (6.5%)	205 (47.5%)
Trump (R)	82 (2.6%)	1973 (71.8%)	82 (19.0%)
Jorgensen (L)	12 (.4%)	20 (.7%)	23 (5.3%)
Hawkins (G)	7 (.2%)	3 (.1%)	5 (1.2%)
Other	20 (.6%)	11 (.4%)	14 (3.2%)

Figure 1 - 2016 Voters on 2020 Vote Choice (American National Election Studies 2021)

	Special Interests	Benefit of All
Biden (D)	2928 (42.4%)	315 (24.8%)
Trump (R)	1932 (28.0%)	497 (39.2%)
Jorgensen (L)	64 (.9%)	5 (.4%)
Hawkins (G)	21 (.3%)	2 (.2%)
Other	48 (.7%)	6 (.5%)

Figure 2 - Belief that government is run for a few special interests or the benefit of all on 2020 Vote Choice (American National Election Studies 2021)

	Very Closely	Fairly Closely	Not Very Close	Not at All
Biden (D)	888 (57.0%)	1572 (46.2%)	679 (34.6%)	105 (23.1%)
Trump (R)	456 (29.3%)	1169 (34.3%)	684 (34.9%)	134 (29.5%)
Jorgensen (L)	9 (.6%)	26 (.8%)	25 (1.3%)	8 (1.8%)
Hawkins (G)	5 (.3%)	8 (.2%)	9 (.5%)	0 (.0%)
Other	7 (.4%)	21 (.6%)	19 (1.0%)	9 (2.0%)

Figure 3 - Attention to the News on 2020 Vote Choice (American National Election Studies 2021)

	Major Party in 2020	Third Party or Independent in 2020
Clinton (D)	3131 (38.6%)	41 (24.1%)
Trump (R)	2707 (33.4%)	39 (22.9%)
Other	381 (4.7%)	51 (30.0%)

Figure 4 - 2020 Third Party Voters by 2016 Presidential Vote Choice (American National Election Studies 2021)

	Major Party in 2020	Third Party or Independent in 2020
Special Interests	6757 (83.3%)	152 (89.4%)
Benefit of All	1253 (15.5%)	16 (9.4%)

Figure 5 - 2020 Third Party Voters by belief whether government serves interests of a few or benefit of all (American National Election Studies 2021)

	Major Party in 2020	Third Party or Independent in 2020
Very Closely	1536 (18.9%)	22 (12.9%)
Fairly Closely	3339 (41.2%)	65 (38.2%)
Not Very Close	1900 (23.4%)	61 (35.9%)
Not at All	435 (5.4%)	19 (11.2%)

Figure 6 - 2020 Third Party Voters by Attention to the News (American National Election Studies 2021)

The chi-squared analysis (conducted in R) demonstrated that all three independent variables - 2016 third party support, belief that the government is run for the benefit of a few interests, and attention to politics - are statistically significant below the .01 level on 2020 vote choice. 2016 third party support and attention to politics are also statistically significant as to whether an individual voted for a major party or not. However, I lack evidence to reject the null hypotheses.

Per this survey, almost half of all non-major party voters in 2016 defected to Joe Biden in 2020. Another 19%, or just under 1 in 5, defected to Trump. This potentially breathes life into the argument that 2016 third party voters were potential Clinton voters and could have potentially "spoiled" it. Belief that the government is run for a select few rather than the benefit of all has opposite directionality as I expected: 42.4% of voters who said it serves special interests voted for Biden, and only 28.0% did so for Trump. Alternatively, for voters who said it runs for the benefit of all, a little under 1 in 4 voted for Biden while 39.2% voted for Trump. Less than 1% of individuals who said special interests cast ballots for either the Libertarian or Green Party candidates.

I have limited evidence to support my theory and the Cognitive Dissonance Theory. Though most 2016 third party voters defected to a major party (and almost half of those went to Biden), 30% of voters who voted for a Third Party in 2020 also did so in 2016, indicating Third Party voters are likely to vote third party again. However, about 25% each were also Clinton and Trump voters, suggesting third party votes do not play a particularly strategic role. I also have limited evidence to suggest distrust plays a major role: while 89.4% of third party voters in 2020 believed the government only serves a few interests, 83.3% of major party voters said the same. Lastly, my limited evidence does not support my theory that third party voters are attentive and informed: While increased attentiveness to politics was strongly correlated with Biden votes, we see relatively even support for Trump (around 32%) for all four levels of political news consumption. And voters of third parties and major parties follow the same pattern of news consumption: around 40% for both major and third party voters say they fairly

closely follow politics; not very close follows, then very closely, and not at all comes in last, at 5.4% for major party voters and 11.2% for third party voters. Though the sample size limits statistical significance for this relationship, I lack evidence to demonstrate that third party voters are uniquely distrustful or attentive.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

My analysis fails to support my theory that Americans vote for a third party for the Presidency because they rationally and informatively want to strategically deny a major party their vote. 2020 Third Party voters are comprised fairly evenly of 2016 Trump, Clinton, and Third Party voters. Almost 90% believe that the government serves a few special interests and not the benefit of all, but this figure is only slightly above that of partisan voters. They are also, per this limited data set, comprised of a variety of news consumers and do not appear to have different political consumption habits than the other group. While the literature discussed that some individuals might have a personality or positional predisposition to support third parties, my limited evidence if anything suggests third party voters are effectively "randomly sampled" from all Americans. This group also does not appear to be any more similar than major party voters, which may reflect the vastness of ideologies that third parties espouse, and could alternatively indicate that the two parties actually are well representing American voters' preferences.

The implications for this are large and immediate. In a polarized era, margins of victory are extremely influential and decisions made by voters at the margins may well continue to be determinative. How to win these voters is a question that continues to haunt federal candidates, but especially Presidential candidates. Further research should dig into the demographic factors that I was unable to in order to identify more substantive patterns among this group. However, no answers leap off the page about how to win this group or whether their preferences would be any better represented in a particular political party.

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