

Third-Party Survival versus Success: Why the Prohibition Party Failed and Yet Still Exists

Adrienne Martin Amanda Conley
Illinois State University¹

Abstract: American third-party scholars contend that third-parties rarely survive beyond a few decades. The Prohibition Party, however, defies this phenomenon. Seventy-three years after the constitutional repeal of Prohibition, the Prohibition Party continues to run candidates and advocate prohibition. Most research on the Prohibition Party focuses on the party's decline while little research exists regarding its remarkable longevity. Party scholars argue that the Prohibition Party declined because of inconsistency and internal division. This paper asks: Why has the Prohibition Party survived beyond the political relevancy of Prohibition?

¹ We would like to thank Bernard Ivan Tamas for his investment in us and his guidance on this paper, as well as all of the other participants in our Research Seminar on American Third-Parties at Illinois State University.

Conducting a content analysis of party platforms and newspaper commentaries, we conclude that this party has survived long after prohibition by establishing a radical niche. The Prohibition Party's radicalism increased its longevity, but its radicalism also led to its marginalization and ineffectiveness.

The Prohibition Party is an anachronism. The party formed in 1869 to promote the national prohibition of alcohol. Eighty-eight years after alcohol was made illegal, and seventy-five years after alcohol was made legal again, the Prohibition Party continues to hold meetings and run candidates for elected office. In fact, even with the party's low support and electoral failures, the Prohibition Party has run candidates in every presidential election since 1872 (Rosenstone et al. 1984). The Prohibition Party's sheer existence appears its only success. Even Prohibition became one of its failures. The Prohibition Party cannot take credit for Prohibition—credit belongs to the Anti-Saloon League for passing the Eighteenth Amendment. If anything, the Prohibition Party lingered as a counterproductive force to the Anti-Saloon League.

As the Prohibition Party appears an indelible failure, with no national electoral success or credit for Prohibition, another question remains: Why does the Prohibition Party survive despite its obstacles and failures? After the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment, the party saw national prohibition realized in 1920 and repealed in 1933. However, instead of fading into oblivion, the party continues its pursuit for political power. However, the party became irrelevant: the struggle over Prohibition had ended. Further, if the party's irrelevance failed to stop them, the party's inept political strategy, inner disorganization, and low popularity should have.

Third-party scholars provide a variety of explanations for third-party failure: issue cooptation, funding barriers, single-member districts, ballot access laws, voter perception, lack of qualified candidates, and poor media coverage (Rosenstone et al. 1984). There is less literature on third-party survival, and while the Prohibition Party enjoyed little success, the Prohibition Party outlasted all other third parties of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and remains the longest-surviving third-party in American history. Other third parties during the early twentieth century such as the American Party, the Populists, and the Greenbacks performed better in elections but failed to achieve the longevity enjoyed by the Prohibition Party (Rosenstone et al. 1984). The Prohibition Party, however, possesses an asset that even the most effective third parties seem to have lacked: a radical base of zealous, undeviating supporters. Our research on the Prohibition Party suggests a possible explanation for third-party survival: radicalism. Whether unintentional or methodical, the Prohibition Party established a permanent radical niche that has continually enabled the party to assert its political agenda of national prohibition. This paper examines how a third-party

found its radical niche to survive.

The Prohibition Party presented itself in a radical manner and attracted religious and prohibition zealots to its cause throughout its long history. As the party's radical beliefs and unusual political tactics seemed outlandish from the start, the party enjoyed substantial popular support and state electoral success in the 1880s through early 1890s. The party's greatest influence occurred in the presidential election of 1888 when Prohibition Party candidate Clinton B. Fiske polled 2.2 percent of the popular vote (Storms 1972). Subsequently, its popular support dramatically dropped, and prohibition disappeared from national salience. Yet, the party persisted. Its persistence beyond its relevance, popular support, and electoral success reveals its uncommon constituency: extremists. We argue that the Prohibition Party found a radical niche of religious zealots that remained dedicated to principle rather than pragmatic politics. Through success and failure, this core group of radicals ultimately alienated the party from mainstream America while simultaneously sustaining the party in its ostracism. Characterized by extremism, religious zeal, moral righteousness, and impracticality, party extremists only intensified in the party's failures. The Prohibition Party's unparalleled survival perhaps suggests to future third parties that they establish their own base of party zealots because regardless of political relevance and lack of popular support, the party still stands. Party platforms and newspaper commentaries show madness to the Prohibition Party's method and ultimately show third-party survival may lie in incorporating madness into their method.

Literature Review

Most research on the Prohibition Party describes the party's decline rather than the party's survival. However, this emphasis on decline demonstrates the expected weakness and failure of third-parties. Third-parties have had a long, but arduous, history in the United States. The original two parties etched themselves into American history and welded the American model of government. Carving out the party system for two-party dominance, the American political system became an unpropitious environment for minor parties to win seats in government. Despite these odds, some third-parties such as the Greenbacks, Populists, Progressives, and Prohibitionists garnered more electoral support in the past than third-parties gained in recent years (Hirano 2007). Unlike the United States, other democracies, such as the United Kingdom, incorporate third-party representation amid the two dominant parties. Third-parties widely agree that third parties, including the Prohibition Party, largely fail to garner widespread support and win elected office because of an inhospitable political system.

These party scholars generally identify constitutional, legal, and party obstacles third-parties face in the United States. Maurice Duverger argues that the

American electoral system leads to a two-party system. He also states that most major parties have negative views toward minor parties and see them as a "regrettable source of division;" they therefore strive to destroy them (Duverger 1954, 290). Rosenstone cites two major constitutional biases that hinder third-parties: single-member-district plurality system and the Electoral College (Rosenstone et al. 1984). The single-member-district plurality system provides little opportunity for third-parties to win a seat in an election because only the candidate who receives the largest number of votes obtains election to office (Rosenstone et al. 1984). The Electoral College works against third-parties by recognizing only the candidate with the majority of votes, rather than each candidate's percentage of the popular vote (Rosenstone et al. 1984). With the Constitution requiring an absolute majority of electoral votes, it is highly unlikely that a third-party candidate can ever achieve the presidency (Bibby 2003). Three additional legal biases third-parties face include: the direct primary system for nominating congressional and state officials, ballot access restrictions, and campaign finance laws (Bibby 2003; Rosenstone et al. 1984).

Aside from the constitutional biases and legal barriers, third-parties must deal with other handicaps. Major handicaps facing third-parties include limited campaign resources, poor media coverage, and voter perception that a vote for a third-party is a wasted vote (Rosenstone et al. 1984). Finally, the major party strategy of cooptation blocks third-parties; the major parties not only steal the third-party's issues but also the ground on which they are standing. Issue cooptation and financial demands zap third-parties of their purpose, electoral support, and resources. Eventually, most third-parties recede from the political scene because their emergent party organizations cannot compete against the institutional machines of the major parties.

Defined focus and identity would seem strengths of third-parties; however Schattschneider contends that successful parties benefit from decentralized leadership and flexible party identity. Successful parties appear to participate in a political constructivism in which local party leaders synthesize local, state, and national politics and assign it to the party (Schattschneider 1942). Rather than national party leaders pressuring local party leaders, the national party recognizes the local, not national, party as "the seat of authority" (Schattschneider 1942, 171). The major parties which appear disorganized at the national level often operate with effective discipline at the state and local levels, where the local party bosses define the party instead of the party defining itself (Schattschneider 1942). Without centralized top-down leadership, the major parties reflect a consortium of local political sentiment that adjusts according to changes at the local level. Schattschneider considers the lack of centralized leadership and the ability to adapt

key to party success. While many third-parties such as the Prohibition Party recognize the power of local politics, the luxury of ambiguity eludes them.

History of the Prohibition Party:

Focusing on why the party declined instead of why the party survives, Prohibition Party historians remain largely silent regarding to what extent the party struggled with the above third-party biases and attribute party decline to party instability and internal turmoil. These scholars generally believe the perpetual conflict among party members concerning whether prohibition should remain the sole purpose of the party caused the massive exodus of supporters.

Despite all of the obstacles and odds against third-parties, the Prohibition Party enjoyed a margin of success. The Prohibition Party formally organized as a national party and ran their first ticket in Ohio in 1869 (Isaac 1965; Kobler 1973). As a derivative of the Temperance Party, the Prohibition Party became the first third-party to run distinctly for prohibitory liquor laws (Kobler 1973). Prior to the Prohibition Party, Temperance party members belonged to either the Democratic or Republican party and pressured their respective parties to adopt a dry ticket (Kobler 1973). However, many historians suggest the Prohibition Party formed mostly—up to two-thirds—from the Republican Party, as Jack Blocker suggests (Blocker 1976, 40), which burst from the Whig and Democratic parties after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854. At the time, evangelical humanitarians from both the Democratic and Whig parties came to realize that their demands for humanitarian reforms such as women’s equality, labor rights, public education, world peace, abolition of slavery and the “temperance crusade” would remain unaddressed (Storms 1972). Among those reforms, the abolition of slavery and temperance were the highest of priorities in this vision of a just, equal Christian society (Storms 1972).

The Republican Party’s connection to the Prohibition Party is significant: three prohibition parties joined the Republican Party as it provided a political vehicle to realize their revolutionary vision (Storms 1972). Eventually, however, prohibition proponents and temperance reformers found the Republican Party inadequate for realizing their humanitarian reforms after the Civil War, when the Brewers’ Association, mostly composed of Irish and German immigrants, formed in opposition to temperance and lobbied for lowered beer taxes and the formal refusal to support any dry candidates (Behr 1996; Kobler 1973; Storms 1972). After both the Democratic and Republican parties refused to oppose the Brewers’ Association or accept a stance on prohibition in general, the Temperance Party convened and counteracted the Brewer’s Association’s declaration of non-support of dry candidates with this: “...we do not accept the issue thus made, and declare that we will not vote for men who countenance the liquor traffic, or degrade their

official positions by the use of intoxicating liquors" (Kobler 1973, 96). Feeling betrayed by the Republican Party for acquiescing to business and liquor interests at the expense of their humanitarian ideals, calls to political action resulted in the determination to create a party running on a dry plank platform, with Michigan and Illinois being the first two states to form state-level temperance third-parties (Kobler 1973). The Prohibition Party of Ohio ran the first prohibition candidate in 1869—unsuccessfully—with its candidate gaining less than one thousand votes (Kobler 1973).

By the end of 1860s, state-level Prohibition Party leaders such as Neal Dow from Maine, Gerrit Smith from New York, James Black from Pennsylvania, and the American Temperance Union's chairman Edward Delavan, collaborated in forming a national Prohibition Party (Kobler 1973, Storms 1972). Many ministers joined the national party initiative including the Reverend John Russell, who pressured for the formation of a national party and, as editor of the *Peninsular Herald* of Detroit, promoted the concept of a national Prohibition Party in the *Peninsular Herald* for two years until Russell finally "induced the Good Templars to issue a call for a national convention during their sessions of May, 1869, at Oswego, New York" (Storms 1972, 4). The Prohibitionists held their first national convention on September 1, 1869 in Chicago, Illinois, at which 500 delegates from twenty states attended (Storms 1972). The attendees of the convention were circumspect about forming a national party until Gerritt Smith incited them with his address comparing imbibing to slavery (Storms 1972).

Under the urging of party leaders Smith, Russell, and Orne (leader of the Good Templars), the vote of a national party won by a slim majority (Storms 1972). The party fared poorly in its first decade: in 1872, James Black, the Prohibition Party's first presidential candidate's national ballot count compared pathetically to Ulysses S. Grant (Behr 1996); in 1880, Prohibition Party presidential candidate Neal Dow, polled a mere 10,000 (Behr 1996; Blocker 1976). However, the Prohibition Party's popularity swelled in the 1880s; in 1884, their national vote increased to 150,957 and again to 250,122 in 1888 (Blocker 1976). Rosenstone cites 1888 and 1892 as the party's pinnacle, with Prohibition Party presidential candidate Clinton B. Fisk having "polled 2.2 percent of the 1888 popular vote and one-term Representative John Bidwell attracted nearly 2.3 percent in 1892..." (Rosenstone et al. 1984, 77).

The Prohibition Party expected Fisk to win the 1888 election; however, despite the seventy percent increase in votes from 1884, the Prohibition Party lost the election with Fisk having polled only 250,000 votes (Storms 1972). 1888 marked the height of the party's electoral popularity, during which many of the Prohibition Party gained many seats at the state and local levels, their spreading popularity continued, although at a decelerating rate (Blocker 1976; Storms 1972). Party members began to doubt the party's competitive chances; one member stated after the election of 1888: "The Prohibition Party has reached a critical period in its history...The hopes of immediate victory, which inspired its early votaries, have not been realized..." (Blocker 1976, 46). Although discouraged, the party continued their efforts (Blocker 1976).

Party members, who resisted the expansion of the party platform at the convention in 1888, called "Narrow gaugers", blamed the party's failure to the broad platform and urged the party focus solely or, at least mostly, on one issue:

prohibition (Blocker 1976; Storms 1972). Party turmoil intensified the following years, culminating in a party split in 1896 due to polarizing disagreement about their platform, fusion, the role of churches, and the prohibition movement itself (Blocker 1976). The party split into 'Narrow Gauge' Prohibitionists and 'Broad Gauge' Prohibitionists. Narrow gauge Prohibitionists believed liquor traffic was the "paramount problem facing the country," and prohibition needed to be the only thing party members agreed upon, regardless of other political beliefs (Storms 1972, 23); otherwise, narrow gaugers believed, success would be impossible (Rosenstone et al. 1984). In contrast, 'Broad Gauge' Prohibitionists believed the party needed to address "all questions confronting the American people" and expand the platform to garner votes (Rosenstone et al. 1984; Storms 1972, 23). Most scholars attribute the crux of the split to disagreement on free-silver, but the uncompromising single-issue proponents' insistence to adopt prohibition as the party's single issue alienated the broad gauge prohibitionists at which point the broad gaugers left during the national convention to form the National party, which would include prohibition along with many other issues in its platform (Blocker 1976). The National party, also known as the Free Silver Prohibitionists and the Liberty Party, proved unsuccessful, polling less than 20,000 votes in the 1896 national election (Rosenstone et al. 1984; Storms 1972).

The narrow gaugers remained in the Prohibition Party and endured another ideological transformation following 1896 that manifested in changes of the nature and structure of the party (Storms 1972). Storms cites this change as the shift from the initial Prophetic phase to the Prohibition Party's Pragmatic phase (Storms 1972). The party underwent a major turnover in leadership as its original "humanitarian-romanticist traditions of the abolitionists" died with the leaders who embodied it such as Neal Dow, Frances Willard, Clinton Fisk, John P. St. John, John Bidwell, and James Black (Storms 1972, 24). The new party leaders, in contrast, were more pragmatic than the earlier prophetic leaders who believed the Prohibition Party could, as an instrument, engender comprehensive Christian social reform (Storms 1972). Instead, the new narrow gauged, pragmatic party largely abandoned their religious affiliation and evangelical Christian foundation so as to bring in Deists, Jews and other non-Christian voters to gather votes (Storms 1972).

Many of the new pragmatists of the early 1900s operated less on loyalty to party and moral principle; rather, party members strove only to win (Storms 1972). The new generation leaders such as Samuel Small and John Woolley believed prohibition was a cure-all to all of society's ills, but efforts of legal enforcement of prohibition without moral backing lost its backbone (Storms 1972). From the early 1900s to the 1920s, prohibition efforts focused less on Christian change and more on major party pressure politics in passing state referendums for prohibition amendments (Storms 1972). While the Prohibition Party succeeded in passing state prohibitory amendments in seven states, the Anti-Saloon League, a nonpartisan political temperance organization, not the Prohibition Party, effectuated national prohibition in the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment in 1919 (Behr 1996; Blocker 1976; Rosenstone et al. 1984). Despite the Prohibition Party's impotence in the passage of Prohibition, voters blamed the Prohibition Party for the evils of the Prohibition era after liquor traffic and crime increased (Behr 1996). With national prohibition enacted in 1920, one would think the prohibition cause, and hence the party dedicated to prohibition would no longer find reason to exist; however, the

Prohibition Party ran a candidate in every presidential election over the next 84 years, making it the longest-surviving third-party in the history of the United States, despite their embarrassingly low support (Rosenstone et al. 1984).²

Even before the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment in 1920, the Prohibition Party's popularity suffered sharp decline (Blocker 1976; Rosenstone et al. 1984). Rosenstone charts the waning of electoral support following the Prohibition Party's height in 1888: 1904 Prohibition Party presidential candidate Sillas Swallow polled 1.9 percent of the vote, followed by 1912's Eugene Chafin at 1.4 percent, and finally 0.7 percent in 1920 for Aaron Sherman Watkins (Rosenstone et al. 1984). Voter support decreased to 0.2 percent during Prohibition, barely rose after the Eighteenth Amendment's repeal in 1933, and barely reached 7,100 votes in 1980 (Rosenstone et al. 1984). Despite losses at the polls or political irrelevance, the Prohibition Party has never found cause to terminate itself, even after national prohibition seemed to be working—at first, at least—with alcohol consumption having dropped by “approximately 30 percent of its pre-prohibition level” (Behr 1996; Miron, et al. 1991, 242).

Perhaps the decreasing consumption levels only stoked the fire; after the Prohibition Party's height in 1888, morale dropped when 1890s research indicated that alcohol consumption levels were decreasing substantially (Blocker 1976). At the same time, the Prohibition Party faced another threat: the Anti-Saloon League (Behr 1996; Blocker 1976; Rosenstone et al. 1984). Party membership was dropping off before the split in 1896, with many Prohibition Party members furthering the temperance cause through nonpartisan political action (Blocker 1976). The rise of the Anti-Saloon League, a nonpartisan organization, is cited as incurring the party's ultimate demise (Behr 1996; Rosenstone et al. 1984). Rosenstone provides Colvin's argument that the Anti-Saloon League “taught the voter to remain in his old party and work there” (Rosenstone et al. 1984, 78). Temperance reformers established the Anti-Saloon League in 1893, but organized nationally two years later (Blocker 1976). Temperance advocates turned to the Anti-Saloon League as a nonpartisan reaction to the Prohibition Party as a new elitist, anti-democratic, and revolutionary organization (Blocker 1976; Kobler 1973). Unlike the Prohibition Party, the Anti-Saloon League “held religious fanatics at arm's length” (Behr 1996, 49). Many highly educated, business-like liberal prohibitionist members left or refused to join the Prohibition Party when allegiance to the Prohibition Party became a class issue at the expense of reform (Behr 1996; Blocker 1976).

The Anti-Saloon League built a strong base with the middle class, working through various churches, partner temperance organizations, and the major parties without threatening basic American institutions as the Prohibition Party did (Blocker 1976). The Anti-Saloon League maintained the moral basis of their prohibition argument and sought to build public sentiment through moral persuasion, inter-organizational cooperation, and incremental progress (Blocker 1976). After state-wide prohibition attempts failed, the Anti-Saloon League proposed a national prohibition amendment to Congress in 1913; in Congress, the Anti-Saloon League found its influence, and on January 1, 1920 the Eighteenth

² Kershaw, Sarah. October 1, 2004. “In Search of Voters, Prohibition Candidate Runs Dry.” *The New York Times*.

Amendment enforced national prohibition (Behr 1996; Blocker 1976). The general populace acknowledged the inefficacy of the Prohibition Party to bring about the Eighteenth Amendment, but the birth of organized crime and increased liquor traffic weakened the Prohibition Party further (Behr 1996). Social disorder increased, taxes increased, and states began seeking prohibitory repeal (Behr 1996). Prohibition had become its own social ill.

Two additional arguments historians provide having also contributed to the decline of the Prohibition Party are the dominance of the Great Depression in the 1932 presidential contest and the middle-class assimilation of German and Irish (Behr 1996). Behr argues that as the Prohibition Party started out as a nativist reaction to German and Irish immigrants, (as illustrated by membership in the Know-Nothing Party), who threatened the “established” old American identity, the German and Irish immigrants ultimately integrated into the middle class, the general populace came to view the German and Irish immigrants as a non-threat (Behr 1996; Rosenstone et al. 1984). Second, Behr argues that the Great Depression increased liquor taxes thereby motivating wealthy entities to advocate repeal and that the Great Depression itself replaced prohibition as the single most important issue facing the nation (Behr 1996).

Little attention and little party activity are documented beyond the Prohibition era (Behr 1996). Behr suggests that prohibition became a shameful memory the nation wanted to forget; otherwise, references in the 1930s and 1940s indicate that prohibition became a joke (Behr 1996). Storms characterizes the 1932 through 1972 era, the Prohibition Party’s “Fundamentalist period”, which brought the return of simple Protestant fundamentalism, righteousness, and a disdain of the “unclean political process” (Storms 1972, foreword). The 1950s proved a disastrous decade for the Prohibition Party as the party suffered demoralization, financial crisis, ballot access rejection, and a militant party chairman in Lowell H. Coate, who conspired to overhaul the party into a leftist, communist party (Storms 1972). The party generated some support in the late 1950s and 1960s state elections, but the 1960s support dropped even lower when the Prohibition Party changed its name to the American Christian Party in 1962, although they quickly changed it back (Storms 1972). The party ran presidential candidates from 1960 through 2004, although never reaching competitive results or causing disturbance (Storms 1972). The Prohibition Party at times supported Republican Prohibitionist candidates when the Prohibition Party’s candidates faltered (Storms 1972). Prohibition Party happenings remain quiet, except for the activities and values listed on the party’s website, which offers their 2004 party platform and 2007 issues of its publication *The National Statesman* (<http://www.prohibition.org/>). Otherwise, available literature on the Prohibition Party covers until the late 1970s, after which available literature rapidly decreases.

Difficult to deny, the Prohibition Party deserves credit for its longevity. Perhaps its longevity seems more remarkable as internal instability would seem the last factor to destroy the party; however, instead of disappearing, the party almost seemed to revel in its extremity. Through our research, we returned to ask why the Prohibition Party kept going, and we conclude that its radical niche has kept it alive.

Measuring Instability and Radicalism

We sought to determine instability as a cause of the Prohibition Party's decline. Considering previous research attributing the party's decline to instability, we measured instability within the party; yet, we observed another element, extreme rhetoric, in primary party documents which sparked another question: How radical was the party and what effect did radicalism have in the party's dynamics? Taking both questions, we conducted two separate inquiries; one to measure instability and another for radicalism. To measure instability, we looked at the party's Presidential platforms to determine the importance of particular issues over time. For radicalism, we expected the number of radical elements to vary with time.

Instability, for the purposes of this research, means the quality or condition of being erratic or undependable, a constant fluctuation of change, or indecision. While most party platforms change over time, extreme fluctuation would reflect inconsistency. To measure instability, we looked at the number of issues and the types of issues in each party platform. Therefore, the number of issues covered in each platform would reflect which faction of the Prohibition Party had garnered more support in that presidential year. Since the broad gaugers and narrow gaugers were dueling for control of the party, the platforms might jump from covering many issues to few issues rather rapidly.

We also looked at which issues were covered in each platform. Instability surfaced if certain issues were covered in one platform and then not in the next, and so on. The presence of the issues and the amount of time discussing each issue within a platform also attributed to instability. For example, if an issue consumed 25 percent of several platforms and suddenly drops to a mere one percent, that served as a strong indicator of instability.

Platform Data Collection

We acquired the Prohibition Party's platforms at their official website at <http://www.prohibitionists.org/>. We examined each of the Prohibition Party platforms from 1872 to 2008 and coded according to issue. For example, each time the economy issue was discussed, the text used to discuss this issue was highlighted green. Each time religion was discussed, the text was highlighted red and so on for other issues.³

Our dependent variable for this section of research was platform stability measured as a total word count for each issue and total percentage of each document that was used to discuss each issue. The inquiry included two independent variables, the year of the presidential platform and the issues presented in the platforms. To measure our dependent variables better, we also listed rank of issue, total number of ranks, word count on issue, total word count, and examples from the text for each platform. To assist with measuring our dependent variable of radicalism in the next section of our research, the amount of

³ Platform Issues: Prohibition, Right to Vote, Religion, Direct Vote, Economy, Education, Free Institutions, Immigration, Separation of Church and State, Foreign Policy, Law and Order, Dislike for Major Parties, Individual Rights, Agriculture and Environmental, Rights, Unjust Ballot Laws, Labor, Military, Censorship, Gambling, Protection of State's rights, Constitutional Government, Atomic energy, Insurance/Pensions/Social Security, Property, Federal Budget, Public Health, Communism/Totalitarianism, Welfare, Radical Phrases.

radical phrases and examples of radical phrases were coded from each Presidential platform.

The platforms ranked all of the issues by number. The party sequenced all issues in numerical order, most often beginning with the central issue of prohibition, which we thought may be an indicator of issue importance to the party. However, we found that a better indication of stability within the platforms was the percent of the platform used to discuss each issue. Initially the entire document was counted, and then each section discussing a certain issue was highlighted and word counted separately. The percentage of the document spent discussing an issue was determined by taking the word count for the issue and dividing by the total word count for the platform.

Conceptualization of Radicalism

Our other goal was to chart the radicalism of the Prohibition Party throughout its history. Politically speaking, “radical,” describes a group that exhibits extreme beliefs, demands total commitment from their members, and communicates its political ideals with extreme rhetoric. In addition, radical groups are characterized as fundamentalist, or relentlessly adhering to a fundamental belief. Therefore, radicalism is deviation from the majority sentiment, excessive zeal, unreasonableness, extremity, impracticality, and unwillingness to compromise. The definition of “radical” guiding this research includes three components; first, words indicating extremity, absolutism, totality, or universalism within party discourse; second, characterizations of impracticality, unsound judgment, and intemperateness both within party discourse and external sources; third, characterizations of extreme behavior provided by external sources.

The first conception of radical includes words or phrases indicating absolutism, totality, or universalism because this indicates extremity in discourse and belief. Words of absolutism, totality, or universalism such as “all,” “total,” “complete,” and “only,” lend to attempts of the Prohibition Party to bring everyone under the enforcement of prohibition with no moderation or compromise – as though to unify under an universal empire. The second component of ‘radical,’ includes characterizations that describe the Prohibition Party or the Prohibition Party’s behavior as extreme, as perceived at that time. As radicalism is subjective and socially-constructed, the most reliable method for finding whether their religious invocations and demand for complete prohibition were radical, was to review the perceptions people held about the Prohibition Party and Prohibition Party leaders at that time. We included characterizations such as radical, fanatical, mad, crazy, cranks, delusional, crusaders, immoderate, intemperate, and transcendental, as well as words indicating unreasonableness, impracticality, poor judgment, and unwillingness to compromise. Impracticability, lack of wisdom, and poor judgment indicate radicalism because it indicates the fundamental core of radicalism – the relentless adherence to principle despite unpopularity, resistance, or failure.

Collecting data for identifying radicalism entailed qualitative research through content analysis of newspaper sources from 1868 through 2004. The newspaper sources included seventeen different publications from a variety of regions in the United States, but most heavily concentrated on the Chicago Tribune. We accessed the database of newspaper archives including American

Periodicals Online since 1741-1900 and the Chicago Tribune for newspaper commentaries. We also examined articles from *The New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* archives.

We conducted the content analysis by highlighting the words and phrases congruent with our definition of radicalism with different highlight colors indicating whether it was a word of absolutism or totality, extremity or immoderation, a characterization of fanaticism or madness, or a characterization of impracticality or foolish adherence to principle. Although not fully analyzed in the analysis, we also highlighted all religious references. We highlighted the different radical elements with different colors of highlights.

Before highlighting radical elements, we organized and numbered the articles by date. Next, we read through the commentaries and highlighted the radical elements according to our code. After counting the number of total radical elements, we created a chronological list of the newspaper commentaries and recorded the total number of radical elements with at least one example of a radical element. Recording the date of the article and number of radical elements allowed us to graph the fluctuations of radical elements over time.

Why the Prohibition Party Survives:

To determine why the Prohibition Party has survived over the past century, we measured two main variables: ideological stability and radicalism. Our analysis shows that the success of the party is unrelated to prohibition itself, and the party showed ideological instability and administrative disorganization. The party found its sustenance from an appeal to a radical niche composed of religious zealots who fed off of moral absolutism and devotion to prohibition. This radical niche underlies and to a large degree fueled the inconsistencies and turmoil cited by previous scholarship; it reflected a lack of willingness to compromise by the zealots who populated and led the party.

Platform Stability

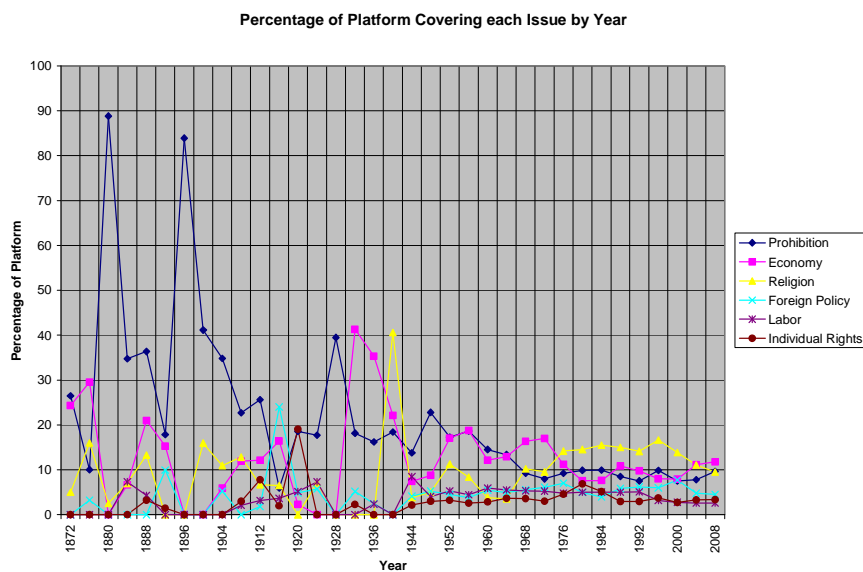
According to previous research on the Prohibition Party, party turmoil over prohibition's prominence and political strategy weakened the Prohibition Party's effectiveness. If the party suffered division among members over the importance of prohibition, party platforms might reveal the party's shifting issue preferences. We reviewed Prohibition Party presidential platforms to determine whether the party's platforms changed erratically over the years. By reviewing these platforms from 1872-2008, we found a certain amount of instability within the party. Figure 1 illustrates the fluctuations among platforms. The Prohibition Party's platforms discussed 9 issues in 1872 and 10 issues in 1876—this seems relatively consistent. However, inconsistency appears in 1880 when then number of issues covered drops to just 3 issues, prohibition, religion, and the right to vote, but rises again to 9 issues in 1884. The party then focused on the same 8 to 11 issues from 1884 to 1892, when again the number of issues covered dropped significantly and the party focused on a single issue: prohibition.

The Prohibition Party's pattern of focusing on approximately 10 issues for 2 or 3 platforms and then dropping dramatically to 1 to 3 issues for a single platform continued for the Prohibition Party until 1944 suggests internal instability within the party between the broad gaugers and the narrow gaugers. Shifts in the

size of the Prohibition Party’s focus occurred at a time when the Anti-Saloon League was working to have the 18th Amendment added to the Constitution. Then, internal instability within the Prohibition Party during the age of prohibition in the United States could have led to the party’s ineffectiveness in contributing to their main cause.

As platform issues varied in importance, how much time each platform spent discussing a specific issue suggested how the importance of each issue fluctuated. The issue of prohibition is of particular importance in showing this instability. Within the first four platforms, from 1872 to 1884, the percentage of the platform spent discussing prohibition jumps from 26.47 percent to 10.04 percent to 88.81 percent to 34.74 percent respectively (Figure 1). Reasonably assumed, the more important the party considered the issue, the more the party spent discussing that issue within the platform. Therefore, the importance of the prohibition issue to the party appeared in constant fluctuation. The Prohibition Party’s dislike for major parties and the economy reflected similar patterns to that of prohibition.

Figure 1
Percentage of Platform Discussing Specific Issue (Most Popular Issues)

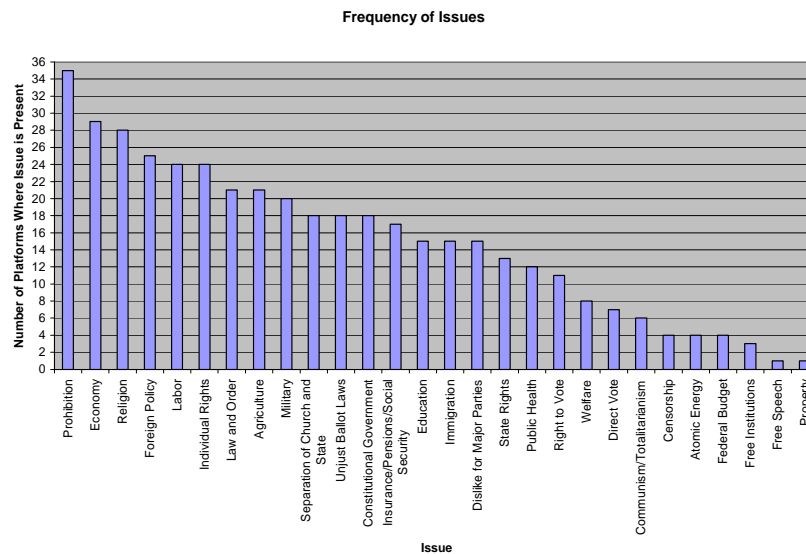


This graph illustrates the inconsistent nature of issue importance within Prohibition Party Presidential platforms over time. The six issues shown in this graph (prohibition, economy, religion, foreign policy, labor, and individual rights) were chosen because these issues were addressed in the most platforms, indicated by Figure 3 below.

The party shuffled all of its issues—including prohibition—according to their relative importance. Even so, the Prohibition Party managed to mention

prohibition in every platform. The party reorganized its synthesis of issues, but focused on two central issues: prohibition and the economy. Out of thirty-five total platforms, prohibition appeared in all thirty-five and the economy, the second most popular issue, appeared in twenty-nine (See Figure 2). If the importance of these issues was in fluctuation within the party, then the development of citizen support may have been difficult.

Figure 2
Frequency of Issues in All Platforms



This graph illustrates the frequency of issues found in each platform.

Our research corroborates scholarship contending that the Prohibition Party suffered from instability and inner party turmoil. We correlate this party’s instability with their decline and assume instability and internal party turmoil did not combat its decline. The party, according to its platforms, constantly fluctuated when prohibition materialized as a political possibility. Prior, during, and following the passage of the 18th Amendment, the constant reorganization of the party’s platforms illustrates the inconsistency that resulted from the conflict between the broad and narrow gaugers. Since instability kept the party from gaining a strong foothold on its major issue, national prohibition of alcohol, party members returned to their parties and continued prohibition efforts through pressure politics. Consequently, credit for the 18th Amendment goes to the Anti-Saloon League, which may have left Prohibition Party supporters disillusioned and disenfranchised.

While previous research has indicated that the Prohibition Party declined and our research also indicates that this decline may have resulted from internal party instability, the question remains as to why the party still exists. If the issues presented by the Prohibition Party were unpopular and the party was internally

unstable, how did the party manage to survive and why does it still exist in modern politics? We contend it was the radical nature of the party that provided the lifeblood the party needed to continue despite its internal conflict, failings and flaws. This lifeblood came from a niche of people, who adhered to the radical principles of the Prohibition Party and stuck by the party as a result of those stark fundamental beliefs.

Radicalism

As evident from presidential party platforms, the Prohibition Party suffered from a lack of party cohesiveness and consistency. Internal conflict regarding platform issues and prohibition itself created a dual natured party facing a horizon of failure. Prohibition Party members' refused to compromise with each other and some party members refused to compromise with the political process itself. Their refusal to reconcile the broad and narrow gauged factions, their unabashed adherence to prohibition and fundamentalist rhetoric reveal a radical source underlying and undermining all of the party's failures. This radical core driving the Prohibition Party reveals itself through the perceptions of the media, the populace, and campaign rhetoric.

Earl Dodge, a long time member of the Prohibition Party captured the presidential candidate party nomination over Gene Amondson in 2004. Amondson, still actively campaigning, considers alcohol abuse to be the number one problem plaguing the United States, demands voters to "Vote Dry!"⁴ and pledges to "...fight booze until hell freezes over," after which he will "...buy a pair of ice skates and fight it some more."⁵ The Prohibition Party continues to promise a cure for all social ills if the federal government regulates alcohol and the party wins office. Not much has changed: in 1908, the party issued this statement: "If the Prohibition Party wins we will write the brightest, longest, purest, and most beneficent chapter that has ever been written by any government in the history of the world."⁶

In addition to candidates, the Prohibition Party currently runs a campaign against restaurant bars.⁷ The party justifies their opposition of restaurants serving alcohol through references to a host of social ills, parental wisdom, and Biblical verses. Communities have "Everything to lose and nothing to gain" by allowing restaurant bars into their area.⁸ According to current party members, allowing bar restaurants in the community hinders "progress" and affronts one's common sense, to which the website frequently appeals.⁹ Most recently, the party issued its 2008 platform, stating its position on public morality:

We favor stronger and more vigorous enforcement of laws against the sale of alcoholic beverages and tobacco products, against gambling, illegal drugs, pornography, and commercialized

⁴ Kershaw, Sarah. October 1, 2004. "In Search of Voters, Prohibition Candidate Runs Dry." *The New York Times*.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "A National Fight for Prohibition." June 4, 1908. *The Independent...Devoted to the Consideration of Politics, Social, and Econ* (64): 1304.

⁷ Prohibition Party website: <http://www.noliquor.us/liquor/prepare/ads/noliquor6.html>

⁸ Prohibition Party website: <http://www.noliquor.us/liquor/prepare/ads/noliquor3.html>

⁹ Prohibition Party website: <http://www.noliquor.us/liquor/prepare/ads/noliquor3.html>

vice, and we will seek to provide moral leadership. We oppose the promotion of unnatural lifestyles. We oppose state lotteries and other legalized gambling.¹⁰

A content analysis of sixty-four articles, with a high percentage from the Chicago Tribune, shows further evidence of this radicalism specifically that throughout the party's history people, including other supporters of the temperance movement, perceived the Prohibition Party as radical. According to the newspaper commentaries we studied, the party has always been characterized as radical—by the media, mainstream populace, prohibition opponents, and fellow temperance advocates. Radical characterizations of the party surfaced before the initial formation of the Prohibition Party in 1868. At the party's incipience, prohibition supporters already doubted the sagacity and practicality of forming a third-party. Much exchange occurred among temperance advocates about the emergence of a third-party with prohibition as its sole purpose during the party's early years; most of the commentators treated them as impractical, unsound in judgment, foolish and unwise.

Our evidence indicated that mainstream Americans perceived the Prohibition Party as admirable for such dedication to moral principal, but very unwise for forming a political party solely on prohibition. Fellow temperance and prohibition reformers proposed such arguments; although some commentators within the prohibition and temperance movements were as biting as the commentators outside the temperance and prohibition movements. How these individuals characterize, interact, and write about the Prohibition Party reveals their general perception of Prohibition Party members. Many commentaries repeated the extreme rhetoric employed by Prohibition Party members even when they did not directly characterize it as radical.

For example, in article two, R E Hott from the *Chicago Tribune* featured a commentary from an ardent Temperance advocate who refused to join the prohibition movement itself; the temperance advocate states: "...prohibition is *utterly impracticable*, and *all* efforts to secure the enactment of laws that cannot be enforced involve a *foolish waste of time* to say *the least*....Those who think it a good thing, will use it, and *all* efforts looking to the enactment of excise laws, on the part of *well-meaning but misguided* prohibitionists will *never dry up the fountains* of intemperance."¹¹ This excerpt contains ten radical elements which are bolded in the above quote. "Utterly", "all", "the least", and "never", as they are used by this author, also suggest radicalism, since they illustrate extremity, totality, and absolutism. "Impracticable", "well-meaning but misguided", and "foolish waste of time" communicate another measure of radicalism, a lack of pragmatism: the author considers their goal utterly impracticable and unwise. The Temperance reformer doubted prohibitionist rationality— the reasoning of the prohibitionists seemed extreme and out of touch to other Temperance reformers. "Dry up the fountains" counts as an extreme element as the author perceives prohibitionist goals as extreme as, continuing his metaphor, prohibitionists sought to dry up liquor intemperance completely without satisfaction for the fountains of intemperance to run less forcefully.

¹⁰ Prohibition Party website: <http://www.prohibitionists.org/Background/background.html>

¹¹ Italics added by authors.

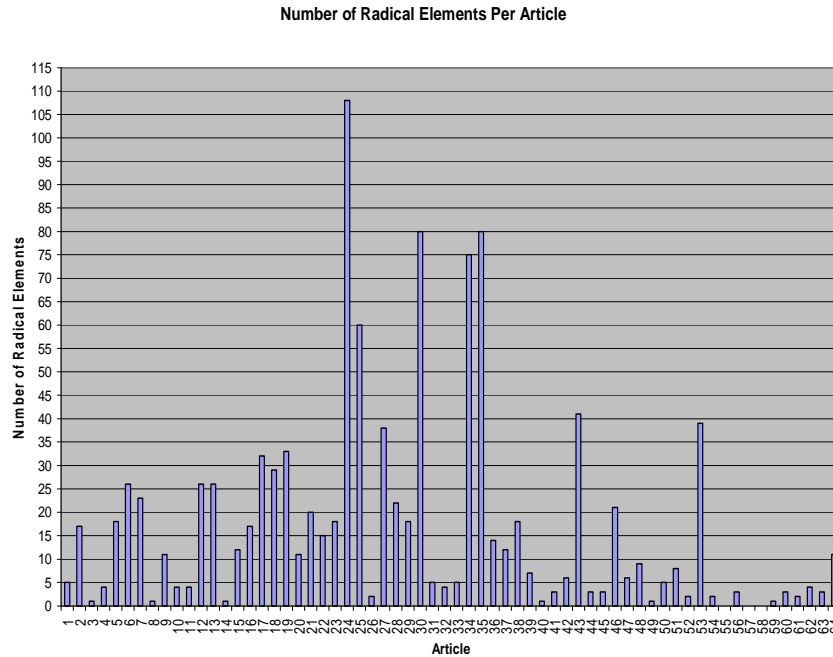
Temperance advocate Reverend Theodore Cuyler, expressed relief when a debate over women's suffrage "...ended in the defeat of the unwise project of recommending a "National Prohibition Party," and for the second time this favorite idea of some of our radical brethren was voted down"¹² to which a party member responds that God favors their "just and holy cause" and that "No matter under what management, it [the party] has been steadily "crazy" on this line [complete enforcement]..." and will continue to be crazy regarding this cause.¹³ These commentaries confirm some temperance advocates perceived the Prohibition Party as radical. Prohibitionists may have been radical for the simple fact they supported prohibition—the complete legal enforcement of alcohol restriction. External sources perceive the basis of prohibition as an extreme and unwise basis for a political party. As the party established itself upon a radical basis, commentary also indicates whether the party neutralized, remained radical, or intensified in their radicalism. According to our longitudinal data, commentaries reveal radical elements throughout their entire history.

To chart the amount of radicalism, we coded and tallied the quantity of all radical elements. To measure the amount of radical elements, we added all radical elements together to chart the total number of radical elements for each article. The total number of radical elements generates the annual level of radicalism for the Prohibition Party. General trends indicate that radical elements were ever-present throughout the history of the Prohibition Party, with highest levels of radical elements found in 1868 through 1908 (the highest in 1888), the 1920s, 1940, and 2004. Figure 3 shows the graph charting the radical fluctuations. Party members often called for victory and triumph with phrases such as: "Granting that many ill-considered and intemperate things were said".... [The new party] will "be helpful in hastening the day when prohibition shall triumph throughout our country," as found in article six. The years with the highest levels of extreme modifiers contained many adverbs such as utterly, only, total, completely, and absolute. Some examples include: the demand for the "prohibition of all alcohol", "only prohibition", "absolute prohibition", "total abstinence", "we utterly reject..."

¹² Cuyler, Theodore L. June 10, 1875. "Temperance—At Chicago." *New York Evangelist*. 46(23):1.

¹³ *Zion's Herald*. December 1, 1870. 47(48): 571.

Figure 3
Number of Radical Elements per Article



This graph illustrates the quantity of radical elements found in each article.

Our definition of radical also included religious references, as the general populace considered religious arguments and rhetoric as apocalyptic and falling short of sound reasoning. Religious references pervade party discourse with the highest levels of frequency, with the most references to God, then "evil", Christianity and various other Christian references. In a few commentaries, members presented prohibition itself as sacrosanct; for example, in article 14, a member assuages fears that suffrage would not “Retard the sacred cause of prohibition.” The most salient religious commentary is provided by Frances Willard, leader of the Prohibition Party, as she responded to the Editor of the Independent calling for the "universal reign of Christ in the customs of society and the laws of the land." Religious references are most copious in the early years of the party, gradually declining until dropping off until 1903. Religious references picked up again in the 1960 article, which supports the literature indicating the abandon of Christian reform during the early to mid 1900s. However, references to the party’s “work of making men good by legal coercion,” as seen in article 19, remains a common theme.

“Making men good,” might seem crusade-like for a religious end, but the Prohibition Party also only solicited membership to people who were upright, devoted, and moral. Several articles call for moral and good citizens to join their cause against intemperance because, as the Reverend Williams states in Article 31, “

it [the Prohibition Party] seeks to secure the highest good of all worthy citizens...” and that “The Prohibition Party...is the only party that favors the suppression of the drink evil. It opposes all forms of license, taxation, or regulation of the liquor traffic which legalize and protect it. It affords the only opportunity for prohibitionists to express their true sentiments at the ballot box and vote for public officers who are entirely free from complicity with this deadly evil.” In this same article, the Reverend Williams also represents their exclusive immigration policy: “We believe that foreign immigration should be so restricted as to exclude criminals, paupers, and other undesirable classes, and that no foreigner should be allowed to vote until after he has been naturalized.”

Party members also used phrases such as "supremely practical methods, "completely revolutionary" to describe their fundamental principles; whereas, non party members describe them as "impatiently intolerant" and "intemperate." In article thirty-six, a party member reports that Prohibitionists are undiscouraged because a party member “never loses sight of the fact that the objective point is the manufacture, and after that the importation, exportation, and transportation, of intoxicating beverages. His plan will prove easy because it is sweeping and complete.” He continues by judging non-party members: “We hold it little less than sinful to vote the ticket of a political party which stands for the saloon policy...To vote for such policy the prohibitionist insists is wrong.” Party members and non party members alike characterized Prohibition Party members as radical, but to what extent? According to sources, there apparently were many accusations and general consensus that the Prohibition Party members were fanatical, mad, crazy, and "cranks". Party members responded to these accusations and never denied the charge; although they have justified it as a Prohibition Party member did in article twenty-two, when he blamed the "crank" characterization on admitting women into the party; he states: 'Women suffragists, say some of the Prohibitionists, 'are impracticable cranks and therefore we are all classed in the same category'. An outside party member in article 28 argues that Prohibition Party members who are called cranks are not even upset by the term; in fact, he states "...even the most devoted of the Prohibitionists think the term "crank" is an appellation of honor..."

As characterizations confirm the radicalism of Prohibition Party members, how did Prohibition Party members perceive others? Prohibition Party members show intolerance not just for alcohol, but for irresoluteness. Articles around elections years consistently featured criticisms of voters who supported prohibition, but were not hardcore Prohibition Party members; Prohibition Party leaders often criticized these easily-influenced voters "teetotalers" or "faint-hearted." The most radical elements were found early in the party's history and maintained high levels of radicalism with relative stability. 1948 through 1954 show the lowest levels of radical elements, with some articles having no radical elements, as is the case with articles 55, 57, and 58. Radicalism picked up again in the 1960s and maintained similar levels of radicalism until 2004.

Prohibition Party members used extreme discourse and were perceived as extreme and deviant from the norm. Indicators of party members' fanatical ideals were their usage of totalizing modifiers, religious references, and their embrace of appellations of craziness and intemperance. External characterizations of Prohibition Party members acting like fanatical cranks demonstrate that they were perceived as extreme at that time. These specific trends, in addition to the

consistent presence of radical elements, support the hypothesis that radicalism may have supported the Prohibition Party throughout its long history.

Research Limitations

Limitations to this study suggest future research. The content analysis regarding the instability of the Prohibition Party is limited by its scope, meaning that party platforms are not the sole indicators of party instability. Also, the characteristics of the platforms that we took to represent instability may have been subconscious actions of the party. Are subconscious actions indicators of the core beliefs of the party? Are they deliberate? The inability to answer these questions creates a potential misunderstanding in our research, and therefore, may not accurately reflect internal party dynamics, thus reducing internal validity.

Subjectivity and linguistic morphology present two major limitations in identifying radicalism of the Prohibition Party. First, content analysis and qualitative research is inherently subjective as its interpretation depends upon personal perception. The second limitation, linguistic morphology, follows from the subjectivity problem as the researchers are temporally confined to contemporary usage of language. By evaluating radicalism from the perspective of English speakers of twenty-first century English, we might have missed a radical component, misinterpreted a radical component, or included a non-radical element. This may compromise the validity of the content analyses because many of the articles and commentaries date back over one hundred years whereby words and arguments which seem radical to the researchers may not have been considered radical at that time. Religious rhetoric illustrates this linguistic limitation.

Religious references were not perceived as radical as today because during that time, especially during the late 1800s and 1900s, church life dominated many other forms of associations and served as the basis of community life during those times. While religious rhetoric may or may not be radical at that time, it was difficult to tell by peering from a twenty-first century lens. A possibility remained to differentiate between fundamentalist and extreme religious rhetoric with relatively common religious references; however, this presented a major challenge in drawing the line between moral arguments and religious fanaticism. If so, religious extremism made the Prohibition Party radical in two ways: being based solely on religious principles and demanding unreasonable outcomes such as total and complete enforcement of prohibition and moral conversion.

This paper opens avenues to future research. As limited by its newspaper sources, the newspaper articles are heavily concentrated on Chicago Tribune commentaries with a few commentaries from the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, magazine sources, and church publications. This might result in a regional bias in media coverage. Nonetheless, our research indicates that current scholarship in the Prohibition Party has missed the more revealing characteristic of this party. Further research on other third parties and factors is needed to more decisively conclude radicalism's effect on third party survival. Further research might include comparative studies on the extent of radicalism in other third parties to determine how radicalism influenced each party's fate. Comparative studies might reveal more about radicalism and its potential as a third party survival strategy. If other third party content analyses reveal consistent levels of radicalism, another factor may have led to the Prohibition Party's survival; however, if other

third parties failed to establish or maintain a radical base, radicalism might present a possible strategy to survive.

Discussion

In this paper, we argued that the Prohibition Party has survived over the last 139 years because it carved itself a radical niche. Our research sought to answer two questions: first, whether instability characterized the Prohibition Party; and second, to what extent was this party consistently radical? Our findings support previous scholarship that indicates that the party had a significant amount of instability, but we found that the primary characteristic of this party, throughout its entire history, was radicalism. As our research revealed, the party's radicalism could have compensated for the instability that contributed to the party's decline.

To determine what distinguishes the Prohibition Party's radicalism as a survival mechanism from other parties' failed experiences with radicalism requires further research. A comparative study of other cases of party radicalism may further detect these distinguishing factors.¹⁴ However, a radical core of supporters may ensure a party's survival by its supporters' extreme and rigid adherence to a single issue—in this case, prohibition. Throughout the party's history, the narrow gaugers consistently opposed the broad gaugers' attempts to expand the party platforms to the range of issues presented by the two major parties. This reluctance to expand the party's platform to a larger constituency is partly due to the refusal of some of the party members to cater to additional interests, or their hostility to the inclusion of lukewarm supporters. Consequently, the Prohibition Party never disbanded due to a lack of devoted supporters. The unusual devotion of the party radicals may be at least partly explained by the transcendent religious motivation underlying their secular political goal. Members often declared their dedication to bring about God's will of fighting intemperance and social ills to restore a morally righteous nation; this might explain why their quest for prohibition and power remain timeless. Their political crusade is perhaps tied to their sense of the eternal glory of God, undeterred by time or hardship. This combination of extremely religious supporters with a transcendental political goal may largely distinguish the Prohibition Party's radicalism from the secular radicalism of other parties and may account for the Prohibition Party's enduring radicals.

We argue that a purist, fundamentalist belief in the party's policy goals not only explains its survival despite existing in a hostile political environment; we also believe that the instability cited by previous scholarship as reasons for its decline—as if any third party needs an

¹⁴ Future research might determine the precise relationship between instability and radicalism in the Prohibition Party by correlating levels of radicalism with electoral success. Further studies might focus on radicalism as a strategy for party survival; i.e. an intentional attempt to continue their political organization amidst political failures. Comparative studies of radicalism in other parties might identify motivations driving party radicalism, the content of the party's radicalism, and whether their radicalism increased the party's longevity.

internal reason to decline—was largely caused by the radicalism needed for its longevity. We offer our conclusion that the Prohibition Party members who demanded that Prohibition remain the sole and ultimate purpose of the party contributed to instability as a result of their unwillingness to compromise while simultaneously contributing to the party's survival by their uncompromising persistence. Radicalism both contributed to the party's instability and enabled the party to survive despite its instability. Radical extremism contributed to inner-party turmoil and alienation from mainstream voters while simultaneously reinforcing radical behavior to continue their quest for power. Survival replaced success when stability gave way to the extremism of the radicals who carried the party through each unsuccessful election. The party's ability to permanently maintain such a devoted base appears to be a rare accomplishment in third party history.

Despite the party's longevity, our research corroborates previous research indicating that the party declined, in both numbers and popularity, as a result of internal instability and lack of focus. The Prohibition Party suffered from instability during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Instability may have contributed to the party's ineffectiveness regarding the promotion of the 18th Amendment in cooperation with the Anti-Saloon League. However, if party instability caused their decline, we would expect that when the party stabilizes, it would regain popularity. However, when the Prohibition Party stabilized in 1944, the party never enjoyed electoral success. As the Prohibition Party obviously outlived its relevance and success, why does it still exist?

Our research also suggests that radicalism may explain why the party survived. The radical temperance reformers, which founded the Prohibition Party, sustained the party through its crushing defeats and public ridicule. The party enjoyed its height of success in finding its niche of religious prohibition zealots who adhered to the prohibition principle despite the party's failures and ineffectiveness. As the Prohibition Party remains, finding a niche appears as a possible third-party strategy for survival. However, with the strategy comes a caveat: in finding such a niche the party may deviate so far from the public norm that the party loses its potential to gain any real policy impact. With the Prohibition Party, its niche, attracting a radical subpopulation, alienated the party from mainstream America and led the party to become a product of ridicule and obsolescence.

Finding a niche within the two-party system may prove as a strategy for survival. While the party may survive, the radicalism strategy has its consequences. If a third-party attracts an extremist core of supporters, the two major parties, which absorb most mainstream issues, will maintain the support of the general constituencies. As a major party technique, the major parties will remain ambiguous in order to keep the United States two-party system in place. Our research suggests that a possible strategy for third-parties is to establish an exclusive and uncompromising niche of supporters. This niche might allow for third-parties to survive despite their lack of both popular and electoral support, as it did with the Prohibition Party. Without popular and electoral support, the party's policy impact remains minimal.

Third-parties in America face tremendous obstacles. Their lives are, to

paraphrase Thomas Hobbes, brutish and short. There is no longer a Greenback Party or People's Party, but the Prohibition Party, which dates back to the same era, continues to hold meetings and run candidates for office. How is this possible so many decades after the failure of the 18th Amendment? Our answer is that the party retained a purist, radical approach that defied even the most minor forms of political pragmatism. This finding, we believe, brings further support to the general trend of third-party scholarship: The only way for a third-party to survive long-term might be for it to attract a radical niche, but the resulting radicalism undermines its ability to effectively challenge the Democratic and Republican parties, thereby reinforcing the American two-party system.

Works Cited

- Behr, Edward. 1996. *Prohibition: Thirteen Years That Changed America*. New York: Arcade Publishing.
- Blocker, Jack S. 1976. *Retreat from Reform: The Prohibition Movement in the United States 1890-1913*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.
- Duverger, Maurice. 1954. *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*. New York: Science Editions.
- Kobler, John. 1973. *Ardent Spirits: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.
- Hirano, Shigeo. 2007. "The Decline of Third-Party Voting in the United States." *Journal of Politics* 69(January): 1-16.
- Isaac, Paul E. 1965. *Prohibition and Politics: Turbulent Decades in Tennessee 1885-1920*. Knoxville, Tennessee: The University of Tennessee Press.
- Miron, Jeffrey A., and Jeffrey Zwiebel. 1991. "Alcohol Consumption During Prohibition." *The American Economic Review* 81(2): 242-247.
- Official Prohibition Party website: <http://www.prohibition.org/>
- Rosenstone, Steven J, Roy L. Behr, and Edward H. Lazarus. 1984. *Third-Parties in America: Citizen Response to Major Party Failure, 2nd edition*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Schattschneider, E.E. 1942. *American Government in Action: Party Government*. New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc.
- Storms, Roger C. 1972. *Partisan Prophets: A History of the Prohibition Party, 1854-1972*. Denver, Colorado: National Prohibition Foundation, Inc.