Alie(n)ation: Political Outsiders in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election

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Abstract

The 2016 U.S. presidential election was noteworthy in that it featured so-called "political outsiders" on both major parties' primary tickets. Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders, neither of whom held formal leadership positions within their party, found surprising amounts of success, with Trump eventually winning the presidency. What explains the ability of these unconventional candidates to capture such broad support? I argue that Trump and Sanders secured "protest votes" from those feeling disaffected from the political system, also known as the politically alienated. Combining open-ended responses about outsider candidates with newly developed text-analysis tools, I show that those alienated from both the inputs and outputs of the political system were more likely to say they liked Trump and Sanders for being outsiders. Then, I show that output-based alienation increased the Trump and Sanders vote, while also having a uniquely positive effect on turnout in 2016 compared to previous elections.

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[1]Replication materials are available here.

1 Introduction

Presidential election cycles in the United States often follow a familiar pattern: Democratic and Republican politicians with the greatest name recognition jump into their party's primary, seeking not only the support of voters, but also the blessings of prominent party leaders.[1] The winners of these primary elections are typically established political figures, often having held office at either the state or federal level and having demonstrated service and loyalty to their party. The 2016 election cycle broke from this tradition, however, in that it featured so-called "political outsiders" on both sides of the aisle: Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders. Neither candidate had previously held a leadership position within their party, with Sanders having been one of the few Independents in the U.S. Senate and Trump having never occupied an elected office. And yet, both Trump and Sanders received a substantial proportion of the primary vote, and even more surprising is that Trump would go on to win the general election over his Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton, whom many would consider the ultimate "political insider."

Recent scholarly efforts to identify the sources of Trump's and Sanders' support have mostly considered factors that fall along social and economic lines such as status threat (Mutz 2018), social identities (Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2018; Mason, Wronski, and Kane 2021), or racial and anti-immigrant resentment (Hooghe and Dassonneville 2018; Hopkins 2021). However, there has been less consideration of the role of negative attitudes towards our political structures in elevating these two political outsiders to national prominence. In this paper, I argue that Trump and Sanders were uniquely positioned to capture "protest votes" (Alvarez, Kiewiet, and Núñez 2018; Southwell and Everest 1998)—or votes cast *against* a particular entity—from individuals that felt disaffected from the political system, also known as the "politically alienated" (Olsen 1969). I highlight two specific dimensions of political alienation, including *input-based alienation*—or alienation from the inputs to the political

[1] This is, more or less, the central argument in *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform* (Cohen et al. 2009).

system such as the electoral process—and *output-based alienation*—or alienation from the outputs to the political system which is often characterized by distrust or cynicism directed toward the government. I argue that both dimensions of alienation are capable of influencing one's evaluations of the candidates, as well as their vote choice. Alienation on either dimension will make individuals attracted to candidates like Trump and Sanders specifically because they present a challenge to the political system, but only output-based alienation is expected to be related to support outsiders at the ballot box. Input-based alienation, however, precludes the use of elections (a political system input) to signal discontent, making it unclear if the presence of outsiders in the race will be sufficient to prime turnout for those alienated on this dimension.

To empirically evaluate my argument, I rely on data from the 2016 American National Election Study (ANES) and the January 2016 wave of the Institute for the Study of Citizens and Politics' (ISCAP) panel study. I begin by using a semi-automated text-analysis approach—the Structural Topic Model (Roberts et al. 2014)—to explore open-ended survey responses describing what people liked about Trump and Sanders. Topics emerge from the models that are directly related to Trump's and Sanders' statuses as political outsiders. The ability of the Structural Topic Model to estimate relationships between variables of interest and topic usage allows me to show that both input- and output-based measures of alienation increase the likelihood that people state a preference for Trump and Sanders due to their "outsider" status. Importantly, these relationships are robust to the inclusion of co-variates that are known predictors of Trump's or Sanders' support, such as ideology, attitudes towards social and racial groups, attitudes toward immigration, and authoritarianism (Hooghe and Dassonneville 2018; Dyck, Pearson-Merkowitz, and Coates 2018; Mason, Wronski, and Kane 2021; Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2018; Mutz 2018; Knuckey and Hassan 2020). Having established that political alienation shapes the way that people view outsider candidates, I then show that alienation also affected vote choice—those alienated on the output dimension were more likely to vote for Trump and Sanders in the 2016 election, while input-based

alienation largely did not benefit these candidates.

The findings presented in this analysis contribute to the public opinion and voting behavior literatures in two ways. First, I unpack the mechanism underlying the protest vote. A protest vote is, by definition, a vote cast for a candidate as a means of signaling discontent with the political system, but no previous work has shown that the politically alienated think of candidates in this way. Through the use of open-ended responses, however, I show that the politically alienated did in fact see Trump and Sanders as vectors for voicing one's discontent, paving the way for a protest vote. Second, I demonstrate that political alienation played a significant role in Trump's and Sanders' electoral success, even when accounting for the factors that are already known to prime support for these candidates (e.g., racial and anti-immigrant animus, identity, status threat, etc.). These results suggest that a complete understanding of the surprising success of these non-traditional candidates, and similar candidates that may emerge in the future, requires serious consideration of the role of political alienation.

2 Political Alienation: Definition and Effects

What does it mean to be politically alienated? The definition given by Citrin et al. (1975, 3) closely reflects the popular conceptualization of political alienation as a "relatively enduring sense of estrangement from existing political institutions, values, and leaders." Typically, feelings of alienation are considered "diffuse" (Easton 1965) in nature, meaning they stem from evaluations of the political system in the broadest sense, and not from evaluations of specific political actors or policies. This definition performs well in capturing the essence of political alienation, but the precise ways in which one is estranged from the political system, and how those feelings of estrangement might influence other political attitudes and behaviors, remain unclear. As such, a number of scholars have delineated the various modes, dimensions, or categories of alienation.

Early work on political alienation (e.g., Horton and Thompson 1962) often applied the typology of social psychologist Melvin Seeman (1959), who identified five different modes of alienation including *powerlessness*, *normlessness*, *meaninglessness*, *isolation*, and *self-estrangement*. Due to inconsistencies in the operationalization of these different modes and a lack of theorizing about their different effects on political behavior, scholars reworked Seeman's (1959) typology into two primary dimensions which guide most contemporary work on alienation. The first dimension relates to an individual's beliefs about their inability to affect the "inputs" (Almond and Verba 1963; Easton 1965) to the political system. This dimension of alienation encapsulates concepts such as "(in)efficacy" (Campbell et al. 1960; Aberbach 1969), "political powerlessness" (Finifter 1970), and "attitudes of incapability" (Olsen 1969). To avoid using all of these synonymous terms interchangeably, I will simply refer to alienation on this dimension as *input-based alienation*. An example of input-based alienation would be if an individual felt that elections were an ineffective mechanism for capturing the attention of politicians.

The second dimension of political alienation relates to one's feelings of discontentment or cynicism directed at the "outputs" of the political system (Almond and Verba 1963; Easton 1965). This dimension encapsulates concepts such as "(dis)trust" (Aberbach 1969), "political normlessness" (Finifter 1970), and "attitudes of discontentment" (Olsen 1969). To again avoid confusion, I simply refer to alienation on this dimension as *output-based alienation*. Individuals that feel the government is untrustworthy and that politicians don't represent the best interests of the people, for example, are said to be alienated from the political system's outputs.

The primary way in which feelings of alienation are known to influence one's political attitudes is that they produce a sense of "negativism" (Horton and Thompson 1962). For instance, Thompson and Horton (1960) found that the politically alienated were more likely

to hold unfavorable views toward a local school bond referendum.[2] Citrin et al. (1975) also showed that the politically alienated held more negative evaluations of the current political climate and were more willing to support systemic change. This is to say that one's feelings of political alienation from the broader political system are known to spillover into one's attitudes toward more specific objects in the political environment, often casting them in a negative light.

The distinction between input- and output-based alienation becomes important when we consider their effects on political action. On the one hand, alienation from the inputs of the political system often appear negatively related to several forms of political participation such as voting (Horton and Thompson 1962; Aberbach 1969; Southwell and Everest 1998) and discussing politics with others (Olsen 1969; Finifter 1970). Given that input alienation is the belief that one is incapable of influencing what goes into the political system, it is unsurprising that those alienated on this dimension would not often use the political process to air their grievances. On the other hand, alienation from the system's outputs appears typically unrelated to political participation (Finifter 1970; Olsen 1969), as those harboring such feelings may or may not see the political process as a viable mechanism for signaling their discontent. These two dimensions of alienation, though they are known to have a similar negative effect on political attitudes, appear to have unique effects on political behaviors.

The tendency for alienation to produce a sense of negativism is insightful in its own right, but it is especially relevant when we consider the role of alienation in elections. This is because the negativism that characterizes alienation may influence how one chooses to vote. One possibility explored in the literature is that alienation can increase the chances of casting "negative" or "protest" votes, which are votes cast with the intention of signaling one's discontent. For instance, several early studies of political alienation examined the effects of alienation in the context of local referenda where, unlike typical elections for office,

[2]Both Thompson and Horton (1960) and Citrin et al. (1975) use indexes of alienation that tap into both input- and output-based alienation, but neither set of authors explore the bi-dimensionality of alienation when assessing it's role in promoting negativism.

voters are given the option to explicitly vote against a particular measure (Mc Dill and Ridley 1962; Horton and Thompson 1962; Thompson and Horton 1960). These studies were consistent in their finding that the politically alienated were disproportionately more likely to vote against the referendum. In the more traditional election setting, scholars such as Aberbach (1969) and Southwell and Everest (1998) have argued that the politically alienated cast protest votes for the insurgent candidacies of Barry Goldwater in 1964 and Ross Perot in 1992 (respectively), though neither of these works provides evidence to indicate that these candidates' insurgent status was a conscious consideration of the politically alienated when deciding who to vote for. More recently, alienation was suspected as a possible explanation for the success of the Brexit movement in the United Kingdom, though Fox (2020) found that political alienation had only a weak relationship with support for the movement.

What remains unclear from the literature is an indication of *how* alienation might produce a sense of negativism in the context of U.S. national elections. How can we be certain that a vote cast for an outsider candidate is meant as a sign of protest without first exploring the considerations motivating the vote? In the next section, I will argue that the candidacies of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in the 2016 election provided a unique opportunity to explore the mechanism behind protest voting in U.S. national elections.

3 Alienation and Outsiders in the 2016 Election

As Templeton (1966) noted long ago, most typical presidential elections feature establishment-type candidates from either party, and the debates tend to center around prominent political issues of the day. In these elections, feelings of alienation are likely to play only a minor role: input-based alienation may dampen participation in the electoral process as it's known to do in other political contexts, while feelings of output-based alienation may take a backseat to partisan or ideological considerations (Finifter 1970). However, the 2016 election deviated from this pattern as both major parties' primary elections featured so-called political

outsiders. Donald Trump, a New York businessman with no prior office-holding experience, infiltrated the ranks of the Republican Party and would go on to win the presidency over the Democratic candidate, Hillary Clinton. Bernie Sanders, as one of only a handful of independents to ever hold a seat in the U.S. Senate, put up a serious fight in the 2016 Democratic primary. What role did political alienation play in elevating these candidates to national prominence?

I argue that the politically alienated were attracted to Trump and Sanders in the 2016 election due to their "political outsider" personas, thus paving the way for these candidates to capture protest votes. Throughout the campaign, both candidates made explicit appeals to those feeling disaffected from the political system. Consider the following statement from Trump who is tapping into the feelings of output-based alienation when speaking at a campaign rally in Sioux City, Iowa (Jackson 2016):

> At the heart of this election is a simple question: will our country be governed by the people or will it be governed by the corrupt political class?

This rhetoric sounds very much the same as the rhetoric of Bernie Sanders, who said the following at the Brookings Institution the same day he announced his intention to seek the Democratic nomination (Dews 2015):

> There is a lot of sentiment that enough is enough, that we need fundamental changes, that the establishment – whether it is the economic establishment, the political establishment, or the media establishment – is failing the American people.

The sort of "negativism" embodied in these statements—that the political system is corrupted and failing—should resonate most with those that feel alienated. For this reason we should expect political alienation—be it input- or output-based—to be related to the belief that Trump and Sanders are preferable due to their outsider status.

Political alienation may shape attitudes towards certain presidential candidates, but was it also a driver of vote choice? I argue that political alienation can motivate individuals to cast protest votes for political outsiders, but that this process occurs primarily through feelings of output-based alienation. The specific type of protest vote that I am considering

here is referred to by Alvarez, Kiewiet, and Núñez (2018) as an "insurgency party protest voting" and it describes the act of voting for fringe, or "insurgent," parties or candidates as a means of signaling disaffection with other aspects of the political system (e.g., mainstream political parties). In the 2016 election, Trump and Sanders were clearly the insurgent candidates in the race and the quotes provided above indicate that these candidates clearly saw themselves as opponents of the political establishment. If I can show that feelings of alienation shaped how people viewed Trump and Sanders (i.e., seeing them as political outsiders), and also show that alienation predicts the Trump and Sanders vote, this would be highly indicative of a protest vote.

Why might input- and output-based alienation have different effects on the likelihood of protest voting? I begin by considering the potential role of input-based alienation. As noted earlier, there is evidence to suggest that input-based alienation can discourage participation in the political process (e.g., Aberbach 1969). The relationship here is straightforward—one is not likely to participate if they feel distant from the input mechanisms. In the case of the 2016 election, then, this might suggest that the presence of outsiders in the race would be insufficient for those with input-based alienation to set aside their lack of faith in the political system's input mechanism in order to cast a protest vote. However, it is also possible that the unique circumstances of the 2016 election reshaped the relationship between participation and input-based alienation. As Southwell and Everest (1998) note, U.S. national elections rarely give people the chance to vote for a candidate that represents an opposition to the political system. Perot's third-party bid in the 1992 presidential election is the closest example in recent decades, at least until Trump and Sanders emerged in 2016. The prospect of voting for a political outsider, especially those that have infiltrated the ranks of major parties, may have provided to needed incentive for those with input-based alienation to cast a protest vote.

Compared to input-based alienation, alienation from the political system's outputs is more readily expressed through one's political behaviors. The relationship here is also

straightforward—if one disapproves of what the system produces, the remedy is to try to adjust the system to provide more favorable outcomes. In the context of national elections, this may entail voting for candidates that appear likely to disrupt the current political order if elected (Aberbach 1969; Southwell and Everest 1998), though again there is no available evidence to suggest that the politically alienated consciously consider a candidate's outsider status before casting their vote. As the quotes above appear to indicate, however, the candidacies of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in 2016 were centered on the idea that they would serve as that disruptive force by taking on the "corrupt political class" or the failing "political establishment," positioning both candidates to benefit from protest votes. This should lead us to expect those with output-based alienation in 2016 to be motivated to turnout and vote for either Trump or Sanders.

4 Data and Methods

To examine the effects of political alienation in the context of the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election, I primarily rely upon data from the American National Election Studies (ANES). The ANES data are particularly well-suited for my purposes as they contain items that capture several dimensions of political alienation (Mason, House, and Martin 1985), as well as information on vote choice, party affiliation, attitudes on topics like immigration and race, and various demographics. The ANES data also include open-ended responses about the things that respondents 'like' about the two major parties' nominees for president, allowing me to examine whether feelings of alienation shaped individual's stated reasons for liking Trump (specifically, that he is an outsider). Unfortunately, the ANES does not include open-ended questions about the candidates in the primary elections, but such questions were asked in the January 2016 wave of the Institute for the Study of Citizens and Politics (ISCAP) panel study.[3] Therefore, I use the ISCAP data to examine how alienation may have also

[3]The Institute for the Study of Citizens and Politics (linked here) is located at the University of Pennsylvania and has been conducting a panel study of American adults since 2012. The data used in this analysis come from wave 10 (January 2016) of this population-based online panel.

shaped perceptions of Bernie Sanders as a political outsider (and thus a potential vector for a protest vote). The remainder of this section will focus on describing these data in greater detail, along with my approach to model them.

4.1 Measures of Alienation

From the ANES data, I operationalize input-based and output-based alienation using measures of *electoral inefficacy* and *cynicism*, respectively. The first, *electoral inefficacy*, is a measure of input-based alienation and it comes from a single item that asks, "How much do you feel that having elections makes the government pay attention to what people think?" to which individuals may respond (0) "A good deal," (1) "Some," or (2) "Not much." This question captures alienation from the inputs to the political system specifically as it relates to elections. While others have used more general measures of political efficacy when operationalizing output alienation (e.g., Aberbach 1969), the *electoral inefficacy* item is appropriately focused on the context in which I expect alienation to have an effect (i.e., elections).[4] I have rescaled this variable to range between 0 (electorally empowered) and 1 (electorally inefficacious).

The second variable, *cynicism*, is a measure of output-based alienation and is derived from the 'No Trust' and 'Big Interests' items that are part of the ANES 'Cynicism' index (Mason, House, and Martin 1985). The 'No Trust' item asks, "How often can you trust the federal government in Washington to do what is right?" and the 'Big Interests' item asks, "Would you say the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all people?" Answers to these questions are

[4]Unfortunately, the traditional 'internal' and 'external' efficacy items used by others to measure output alienation (e.g., Fox 2020; Southwell and Everest 1998) were measured post-election, where as the 'cynicism' and 'electoral inefficacy' items that I employ were measured pre-election. I choose to rely solely upon pre-election measures of alienation to avoid issues of time-dependency (i.e., levels of alienation being affected by the outcome of the election).

combined to form a scale that ranges from 0 (not at all cynical) to 1 (completely cynical).[5] From their analysis of the various measures of political alienation contained in the ANES, Mason, House, and Martin (1985) conclude that the two items I am using here form "a single latent construct reflecting a lack of trust in the ability of the federal government to act in ways that people regard as right and fair." (p. 145). From this definition, it is clear that this measure of *cynicism* reflects alienation from the outputs of the political system.

Although the ISCAP panel is somewhat limited in the number of measures of alienation it contains, there are two measures that I will use when analyzing the relationship between alienation and perceptions of Sanders as an outsider, including *electoral inefficacy* and *political system illegitimacy*. The first, electoral inefficacy, is the same as the ANES measure of electoral inefficacy described above. The second, political system illegitimacy, taps into feelings of diffuse support for our current governing system. This measure asks respondents to state how much they agree or disagree with the four following statements:

1. I would rather live under our system of government than any other that I can think of.
2. Our system of government is in need of some serious changes.
3. Whatever its faults may be, our form of government is best for representing the interest of the country's citizens.
4. At present I feel very critical of our political system.

While this measure clearly captures alienation from the political system, it is not immediately clear if it is tapping into alienation from the inputs or the outputs. For example, agreeing that the political system needs serious changes (Statement 2) does not make clear if it is the system's inputs, outputs, or both that need changing. I operate under the assumption that these statements tap into both dimensions and use principal components analysis to

[5]Possible answers to the 'No Trust' item include: (1) "Always," (2) "Most of the time," (3) "About half the time," (4) "*Some of the time*," or (5) "*Never*." Answers to the 'Big Interests' item include: (0) "For the benefit of all people" or (1) "*Run by a few big interests*." To form the *cynicism* scale, respondents are given a point for each cynical answer (italicized) that they provide, creating an initial measure that ranges from 0 (No cynical answers) to 2 (All cynical answers), which I then rescale to range between 0 and 1.

create a single index that ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values representing stronger beliefs that the political system is illegitimate.[6]

4.2 Hypotheses

My argument regarding the effects of political alienation in national elections leads naturally to several expectations. First, I expect that both input-based and output-based measures of alienation will increase the likelihood that a respondent likes Trump or Sanders for their outsider qualities. From the ANES responses about Trump, this implies that both *electoral inefficacy* (an input-based measure) and *cynicism* (an output-based measure) should be positively related to the view of Trump as an outsider (Hypothesis 1). From the ISCAP responses about Sanders, both *electoral inefficacy* (an input-based measure) and *political system illegitimacy* (a measure of both dimensions of alienation) should be positively related to the view of Sanders as an outsider (Hypothesis 2).

Hypothesis 1: *Both Electoral Inefficacy and Cynicism should increase the likelihood of liking Trump because he is an outsider*

Hypothesis 2: *Both Electoral Inefficacy and Political System Illegitimacy should increase the likelihood of liking Sanders because he is an outsider*

Next, I consider the effect of input-based measures of alienation on voting behavior. On one hand, I might expect input-based measures—specifically *electoral inefficacy* from the ANES data—to promote abstention in the 2016 election (Hypothesis 3a), as those that feel alienated from the inputs to the political system may avoid using those mechanisms (e.g., elections) to signal their discontent, even in the presence of political outsider candidates. So although input-alienation may lead to a stated preference for outsiders, that preference may not manifest in vote choice. On the other hand, it may be the case that those with input-based alienation (i.e., the electorally inefficacious) are particularly inclined to turn out

[6]More information on this index can be found in Appendix A.1.

and vote for the outsiders Trump and Sanders (Hypothesis 3b), as these individuals have the most to gain from seeing outsiders win and follow through on their promises to upend the political system. Such a finding would clearly be at odds with previous literature showing that input-based alienation depresses political participation, but would provide valuable insight into the mechanism behind the protest vote. From this, I am led to propose two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3a: *Electoral Inefficacy increases the likelihood of abstention in the 2016 primary and general elections*

Hypothesis 3b: *Electoral Inefficacy increases the likelihood of turning out to vote for Sanders and Trump*

Finally, I expect that output-based measures of alienation—specifically *cynicism* from the ANES data—will increase the likelihood that individuals turn out to vote for Sanders in the Democratic primary and for Trump in the Republican primary and general election (Hypothesis 4). As scholars have noted, the two major parties' candidates for presidents are typically establishment figures (Templeton 1966; Cohen et al. 2009), but with Trump and Sanders in the race, those that were unsatisfied with the outputs of our political system were given a rare opportunity to use the national election process to signal their disaffection. If those with feelings of output-based alienation are indeed capitalizing on this opportunity, I expect this form of alienation to be directly related to voting behavior in terms of turnout and vote choice. This leads to my final hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: *Cynicism increases the likelihood of turning out and voting for Sanders in the Democratic primary and for Trump in the Republican primary and general election*

4.3 Open-Ended Responses and the Structural Topic Model

To understand whether the politically alienated were more likely to state a preference for Trump or Sanders due to their outsider statuses (Hypotheses 1 and 2), I rely on open-ended

responses about these two candidates from the ANES pre-election survey taken during the general election campaign and the ISCAP panel study.[7] The open-ended question from the ANES that I am interested in asked all respondents, "Is there anything in particular about Donald Trump that might make you want to vote for him?" If respondents provide a first thought, the interview follows up by asking "anything else?" until the respondent provides up to five mentions or says "no."[8] Of the 4,270 respondents in the 2016 sample, approximately 1,850 respondents (43%) provided a response to this question, and of those, 1,117 (or 26%) respondents had complete co-variate data. Unfortunately, open-ended responses about Bernie Sanders are unavailable from the ANES as the open-ended questions were only asked about candidates in the general election (i.e., Trump and Clinton).

Open-ended responses about Bernie Sanders, then, come from the January 2016 wave of the ISCAP panel study. In the survey, respondents that identified as either Democrat or Republican were asked which candidate they prefer in their party's primary election.[9] The question that I am interested in specifically asks "Let's say a friend asked you why you were supporting [Democrat/Republican candidate] in the primary election. In one sentence, what would you say?" Here I am limited to analyzing only Democratic respondents (including leaners) that initially stated a preference for Bernie Sanders in the Democratic primary. Of the 1,520 respondents in this wave, 771 (51%) identified as Democrat and roughly a third of those Democrats preferred Sanders. After removing observations with incomplete covariate data, I am left with 227 respondents.

The open-ended responses were provided from either source as raw text and had not been coded into discrete categories based on their content (as the ANES has done in the

[7]The redacted ANES open-ended responses used in this analysis are publicly available from the organization's web page (https://electionstudies.org).

[8]For each respondent, their initial response and all follow-ups to the interviewers prime are contained in a single document (or cell) per respondent. There is no unique identifier to separate each respondents 'likes' into different cells, so all mentions from a respondent must be analyzed together. Respondents that provided no 'likes' about Trump are coded as Not Applicable (NA), so their data cannot be used in the estimation of the Structural Topic Model.

[9]Respondents were not asked about candidates from the out-party's primary election.

past).[10] Fortunately, several forms of (semi-) automated content analysis have emerged to assist researchers in categorizing large bodies of text (Grimmer and Stewart 2013). I use one such approach, the Structural Topic Model (Roberts, Stewart, and Tingley 2019), to assist me in categorizing these open-ended responses about Trump and Sanders. Roberts et al. (2014) has previously shown that the topics that emerge from a Structural Topic Model performed on open-ended responses are coherent and often mimic the categories assigned by human coders (e.g., the ANES 'Most Important Problem in Washington' question). As my results show, the STM also performs quite well with the open-ended responses about Trump and Sanders.

The intuition behind the Structural Topic Model is simple: identify clusters of words that tend to co-occur (i.e., topics). This is the same basic intuition underlying more common forms of topic models such as LDA (Blei, Ng, and Jordan 2003), but the STM is unique in the sense that it allows researchers to include covariates that they suspect will affect 1) the use of certain topics (*prevalence*), or 2) the use of specific words within a topic (*content*) (Roberts et al. 2014). My expectation is that feelings of political alienation will increase the frequency with which respondents use the "political outsider" topic to describe Trump or Sanders, so I choose to specify cynicism and electoral inefficacy as prevalence covariates for the ANES responses about Trump, and specify political system illegitimacy and electoral inefficacy as prevalence covariates for the ISCAP responses about Sanders.[11]

One advantage of the Structural Topic Model is that the researcher need not provide a set of 'training' documents from which each topic should be built. Instead, the STM takes a 'bottom-up' approach, allowing the machine to generate topics from the data. However, the STM does still require a small amount of supervision, as the researcher must decide the number of topics (K) that are to be found. Roberts, Stewart, and Tingley (2019) note that there isn't necessarily a universally correct number of topics for a given set of documents,

[10] Information on pre-processing these texts is given in Appendix C.1.

[11] Partisanship is also included as a prevalence co-variate in the Trump model given the crucial role it plays in shaping many political behaviors, but is not specified as a prevalence co-variate in the Sanders model since only Democrats had the potential to give a response about Sanders.

and advise researchers to rely on substantive knowledge of the data and, if necessary, explore models that range in their number of topics and select the model that demonstrates favorable properties (e.g., high semantic coherence and exclusivity). Appendix C.2 contains a more thorough discussion of the process that I used select the number of topics, which led me to estimate a model with 26 topics for the responses about Trump and a model with 19 topics for the responses about Sanders.

4.4 Models of Voting Behavior

My examination of the effects of alienation on voting behavior in the 2016 election centers largely on the results of two models, both of which use ANES data. I begin by using a multinomial logit to model the effects of electoral inefficacy and cynicism in the 2016 primary elections. Here, I restrict my sample to respondents from states that hosted open primaries on Super Tuesday in 2016 and use vote choice as the dependent variable with the options being "Sanders, "Trump," "Other," and "Did Not Vote."[12,13] Restricting my sample in this way allows me to avoid the possibility of unobserved time-dependencies that could arise from pooling respondents that voted at different points in the election cycle. Additionally, focusing on open primaries allows me to include both Democrats and Republicans in the same model, while also allowing for the possibility that some individuals voted for candidates of the out-party. This model includes electoral inefficacy and cynicism as the primary predictors alongside a range of co-variates that are known to influence support for Trump and Sanders such as: attitudes towards Democratically-aligned social groups including Blacks, Muslims, Hispanics, and LGBT (Mason, Wronski, and Kane 2021; Hopkins 2021); indicators of status threat such as opposition to free-trade and beliefs about the military threat posed by China (Mutz 2018); authoritarian tendencies (Knuckey and Hassan 2020), racial and partisan identification (Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2018); anti-immigrant attitudes (Sides, Tesler, and

[12] "Other" includes all candidates other than Trump or Sanders—regardless of partisanship—that ran in the 2016 primary elections.

[13] States hosting open primaries on Super Tuesday in 2016 include: Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Minnesota, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, and Virginia.

Vavreck 2018; Hooghe and Dassonneville 2018); and a host of more common demographics such as political interest, ideology, income, education, sex (female), and age.[14,15]

Next, I estimate a multinomial logit for the general election, where the dependent variable is once again vote choice, with the options being "Clinton," "Trump," "Other," and "Did Not Vote." This model includes the same primary predictors (electoral inefficacy and cynicism) and co-variates (listed above) as the model of the primary election. Unlike the model of the primary election, however, the sample for the general election is not limited to particular states.

5 Results

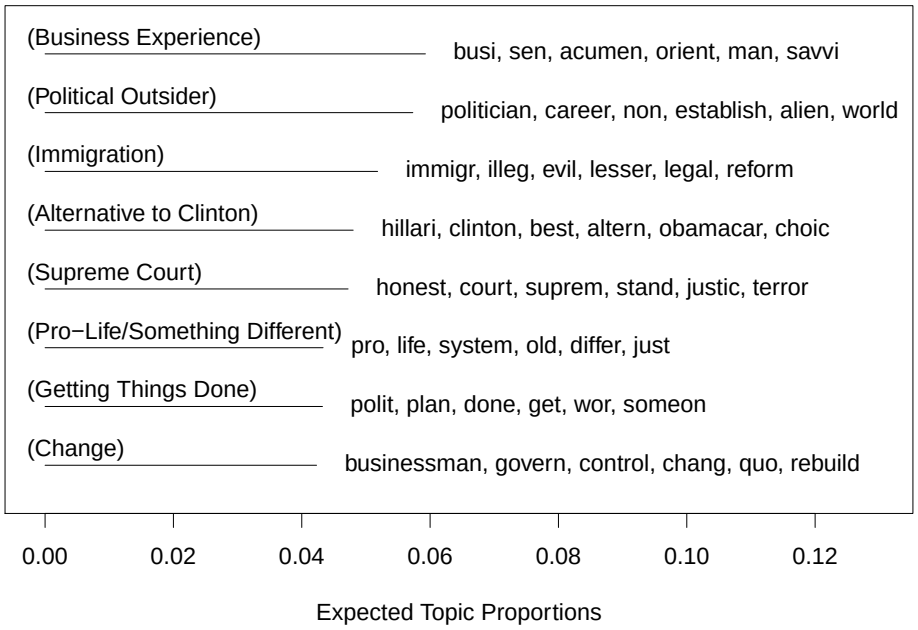
I begin by exploring the results of the Structural Topic Models. Figures 1a and 1b present the top 8 topics from the Trump and Sanders models, respectively, along with their expected topic proportions.[16] I have assigned a label (shown in parentheses) to each topic based on the words that are most closely associated with each topic, and also through an examination of documents that contain a high proportion of a particular topic. The topics that arise are both coherent and insightful—for instance, Trump's positions on immigration and the Supreme Court were commonly mentioned by ANES respondents, while ISCAP respondents often voiced a preference for Sanders due to his emphasis on the middle class and his stances on progressive issues such as healthcare and the environment. Clearly the STMs performed quite well at identifying the various themes that underlie Trump's and Sanders' support.

In this analysis, the topics that are of particular interest are those labeled "political outsider." The words associated with these topics in Figure 1 indicate that part of Trump's and Sanders' appeal was due to their perceived disassociation from politics and the political

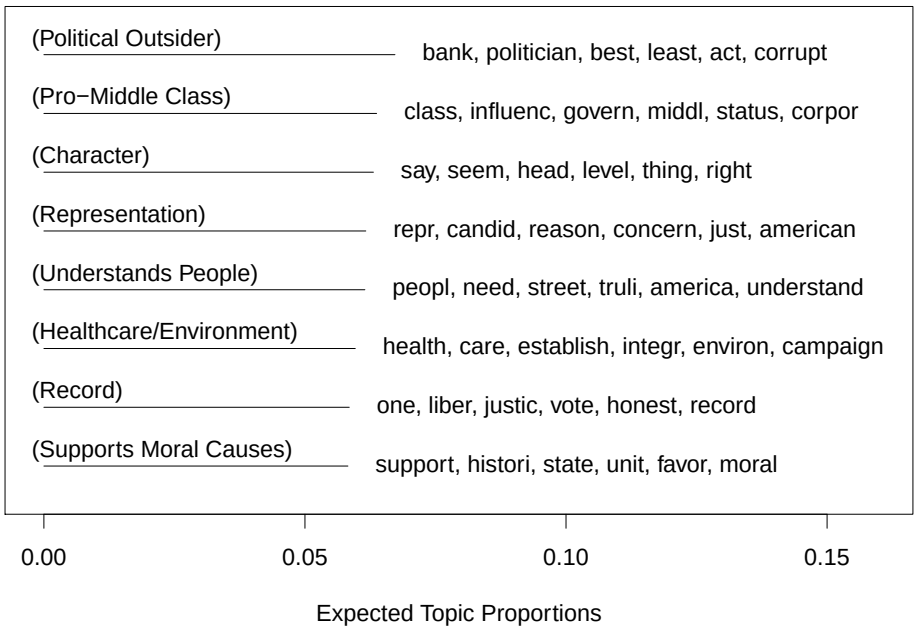
[14] All variables rescaled to range between 0 and 1. See Appendix B for more information about the variables used in these analyses.

[15] Some of the co-variates included in these models were recorded after the general election, raising additional concerns about unobserved time dependencies. I present the primary and general election models with pre-election variables only in Tables 7 and 8 of Appendix D. These models show little to no change from the fully specified models in the main text.

[16] Figures 11a and 11b in Appendix C.3 show the expected topic proportions for all topics.



(a) Trump

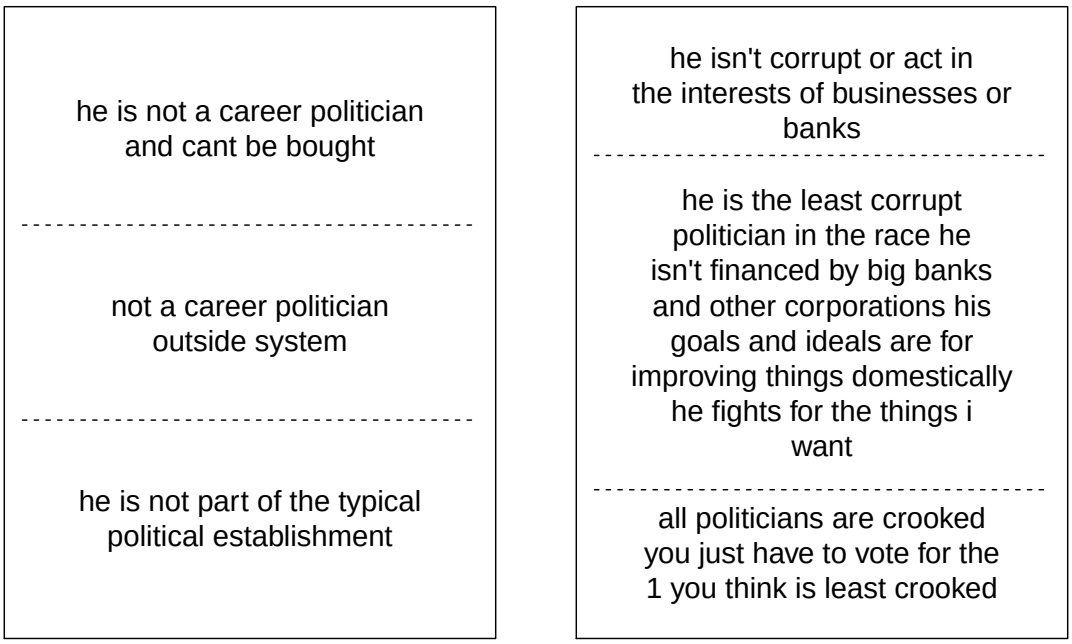


(b) Sanders

Figure 1: Expected Topic Proportion for Top 8 Topics with FREX Words

Note: Researcher designated labels given in parentheses, FREX words are those that are both frequent and exclusive to a topic

system. For Trump, the political outsider topic is characterized by such words as "politician," "career," and "establish." For Sanders, words such as "corrupt," "politician," and "bank"

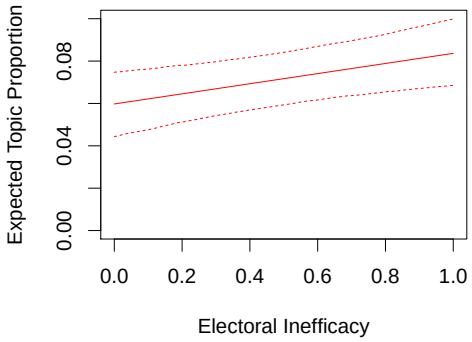


(a) Trump - Political Outsider Topic (b) Sanders - Political Outsider Topic

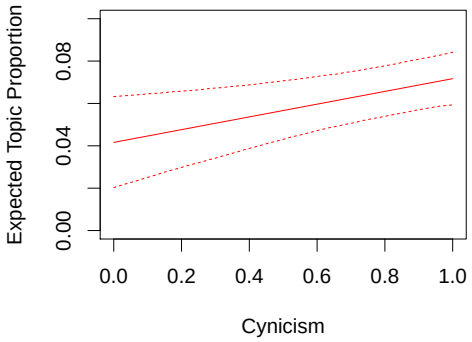
Figure 2: Exemplary Texts from Political Outsider Topics

are used often in this topic. And while the words associated with these outsiders topics are no doubt suggestive, they are not fully revealing. Therefore, I have also provided several verbatim responses in Figures 2a and 2b that, according to the models, have dedicated a large proportion of their content to the outsider topic.

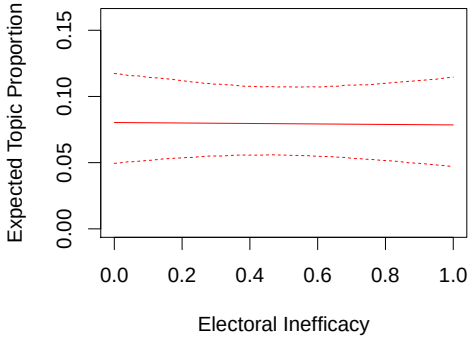
Looking first at Figure 2a, the responses indicate that Trump was liked specifically because he lacked political experience. Some respondents saw it as a positive that Trump was "not a career politician" and was disconnected from the "political establishment" or "system." The responses about Sanders in Figure 2b convey a similar negative orientation toward political structures, but use somewhat different language. Here, respondents liked that Sanders "isn't corrupt," or perhaps that he is the "least corrupt politician," and that he doesn't appear influenced by the institutions that are often perceived as having undue leverage in Washington, such as "businesses," "banks," and "corporations." It is interesting to note that these differing descriptions of Trump and Sanders as political outsiders align



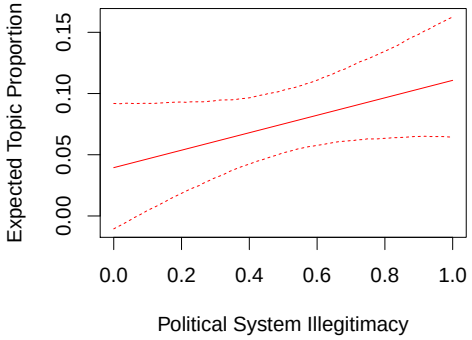
(a) Trump - Electoral Inefficacy



(b) Trump - Cynicism



(c) Sanders - Electoral Inefficacy



(d) Sanders - Political System Illegitimacy

Figure 3: Effects of Alienation on Expected Proportion of Document Given to Political Outsider Topic (with 90% Confidence Intervals)

Note: Estimates simulated from regression results in Tables 2 and 3 in Appendix C.3

quite well with with left-wing versus right-wing populist typology identified by Lacatus (2021). Left-wing populists—a title often ascribed to Sanders—are known to take stances against corporations and the wealthy while right-wing populists—a label often attributed to Trump—espouse producerist and anti-political elite rhetoric. That these models detect these intricacies in language should be taken as an indication of the models' utility and validity.

Were the politically alienated particularly inclined to view Trump and Sanders as political outsiders (Hypothesis 1 and 2)? I answer this question by regressing the proportion of a document dedicated to the outsider topic on measures of alienation (conducted separately for Trump and Sanders), while controlling for a range of factors that may influence support for either candidate. In the Trump model, the measures of alienation include electoral

inefficacy and cynicism, and I control for such factors as anti-immigrant sentiments (Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2018; Hooghe and Dassonneville 2018), attitudes toward Democratic-aligned social groups (Mason, Wronski, and Kane 2021; Hopkins 2021), status threat (Mutz 2018), evangelical identification (Margolis 2020), and authoritarian tendencies (Knuckey and Hassan 2020).[17] In the Sanders model, the measures of alienation include electoral inefficacy and political system illegitimacy, and I control for such factors as ideology (Dyck, Pearson-Merkowitz, and Coates 2018), status threat (Mutz 2018), partisan strength, racial identity (black, white), and age (Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2018).[18,19] I focus on the effects of the alienation measures on use of the outsider topic as shown in Figure 3, but the full model results can be found in Tables 2 and 3 of Appendix C.3.

Looking first at Figures 3a and 3b, we see that both electoral inefficacy and cynicism have the expected positive effect on the use of the outsider topic to describe Trump. Moving from the lowest (0) to the highest (1) value of electoral inefficacy produces a 2% increase ($p < 0.05$; one-tailed) in the proportion of a document dedicated to the outsider topic, while a similar sized move across the cynicism scale produces a 3% increase ($p < 0.05$; one-tailed). This effect size is roughly the same as those found in previous applications of the Structural Topic Model to ANES open-ended responses (e.g., Roberts et al. 2014).[20] Additionally, because documents in mixed-membership models (such as the STM) are comprised of multiple topics, it is rare that a document will dedicate all of its content to a single topic. The document with the highest observed use of the 'outsider' topic, for instance, only dedicated about 60% of its content to that topic. Therefore, it is safe to say that a ≈3% increase in the use of the 'outsider' topic as a result of changes in feelings of electoral inefficacy or cynicism

[17] In addition to the co-variates listed, I also include co-variates for partisanship, ideology, political interest, income, education, race (white), sex (female), and age.

[18] While Mutz (2018) is interested in the effect of status threat on Trump support (measured with the social dominance orientation index), I choose to include it in the Sanders model as it is possible that an affinity for outsiders is a reflection of a preference for social hierarchy, more broadly. As we will see, the results do not support this possibility.

[19] The Sanders model also includes education and income as co-variates.

[20] In Figure 18 on page 1080, Roberts et al. (2014) show that, among Republicans, an increase from 13 (high school) to 17 (college) years of education produces a ≈3% reduction in the use of the 'war' topic from the ANES Most Important Problem open-ended responses.

represents a meaningful effect, providing clear support for Hypothesis 1.

In Figures 3c and 3d, we see that political system illegitimacy—which taps both input- and output-focused alienation—has a similarly positive effect on the use of the outsider topic to describe Sanders, with a move across the range of this measure producing a 7% ($p < 0.10$; one-tailed) increase in the proportion of the document dedicated to this topic. The same cannot be said of electoral inefficacy, as the relationship between this measure and use of the outsider topic is essentially non-existent. A possible reason for this null effect is the selection process for providing open-ended responses in the ISCAP panel. Only those that stated a preference for Sanders in the Democratic primary were asked to justify their preferences, whereas those that said they likely wouldn't vote in the primary were not asked for their justifications.[21] Figure 1a in Appendix A.2 reveals that individuals that stated they were unlikely to vote in the primary were far more electorally inefficacious compared to supporters of any other candidates, including Sanders supporters, so while these non-voters may have indicated an affinity for Sanders due to his outsider status if asked, the data do not allow me to investigate this possibility. These results with respect to political system illegitimacy provide suggestive, but not definitive, evidence in favor of Hypothesis 2.

My next task is to examine the effects of input-based and output-based alienation on voting behaviors in the 2016 presidential election. As noted above, I estimate separate multinomial logit models of vote choice for the primaries and for the general election. Interpretation of the coefficients from a multinomial logit is notoriously tricky, however, as the coefficients represent the change in the log-odds of selecting a particular outcome *over some baseline category* as the result of a one-unit increase in the predictor. Instead of assessing statistical significance from the regression table, researchers are encouraged to calculate and interpret more substantively meaningful quantities of interest (King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2000; Paolino 2020). Therefore, for both models, I simulate the predicted probability of selecting each outcome (along with 90% confidence intervals) as electoral inefficacy and

[21] This issue does not apply to the ANES data, as all respondents where asked what (if anything) they liked about Trump, regardless of their partisanship or candidate preference in the primary elections.

cynicism move from their lowest (0) to their highest (1) values using the observed values approach (Hanmer and Ozan Kalkan 2013).

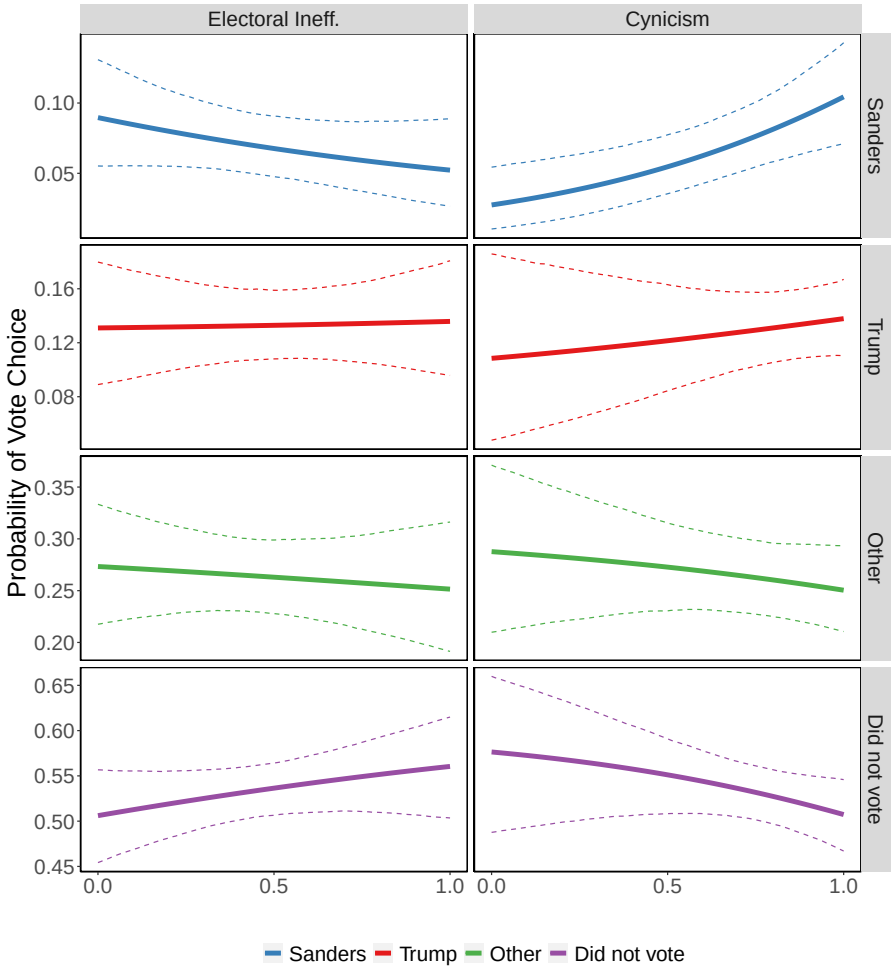


Figure 4: Predicted Probabilities - Vote Choice in 2016 Primary Election

Note: Estimates come from Multinomial Logit in Table 5 of Appendix D

I begin by examining the effects of alienation in the open primary elections held on Super Tuesday in 2016. The model's output is presented in Table 5 of Appendix D and the predicted probabilities of vote choice are presented in Figure 4. Looking at the plots in the left column of Figure 4, we see that electoral inefficacy had no meaningful effect on the Trump vote, and a negative but statistically insignificant effect on the Sanders vote (-0.038, 90% CI[-0.091,0.018]). This indicates that output-based alienation—at least in this particular election—does not motivate people to vote for outsiders in the way that was anticipated

by Hypothesis 3b. If anything, output-based alienation appears to promote abstention as indicated by the positive (0.055, 90% CI[-0.035,0.143]), but statistically insignificant, relationship between electoral inefficacy and the decision to not vote in the bottom-left plot of Figure 4. These results are more supportive of Hypothesis 3a, but should not be considered conclusive.

In the right column of Figure 4 we see that the effects of cynicism on vote choice in the primaries are more favorable to Trump and Sanders. Moving from the lowest to highest values of cynicism increase the probability of voting for Sanders by 7.7% (90% CI[0.032,0.122]) and for Trump by 3.3% (90% CI[-0.054,0.098]), though the latter effect does not quite reach statistical significance. Interestingly, we also see increases in cynicism reducing abstention by 6.9% (90% CI[-0.175,0.039]). Firm conclusions should not be drawn here as this effect does not reach statistical significance, but given that alienation was predictive of liking Sanders for his outsider qualities, and that output-alienation was related to the Sanders vote, these results are consistent with protest voting. I conclude that Hypothesis 4 has mixed support with respect to Sanders in the primary elections.

Now I turn to examining the effects of input- and output-based alienation in the general election. Table 6 of Appendix D shows the output from the multinomial logit and Figure 5 shows the predicted probability of voting for Clinton, Trump, some other candidate, or not voting at all as cynicism and electoral inefficacy vary from their minimum to their maximum values. In the left column of Figure 5, we see that electoral inefficacy did not encourage the Trump vote, demonstrating an unexpected, but insignificant, negative effect (-0.020, 90% CI[-0.060,0.018]). While there is a slight positive relationship between electoral inefficacy and voting for a third-party, this relationship is similarly insignificant. There is essential no effect of electoral inefficacy on the Clinton vote or abstention. These results appear to support neither Hypothesis 3a nor 3b—input-based alienation did not boost turnout for Trump, nor did it discourage participation on election day.

Turning now to the right column of Figure 5, it is clear that cynicism played a larger

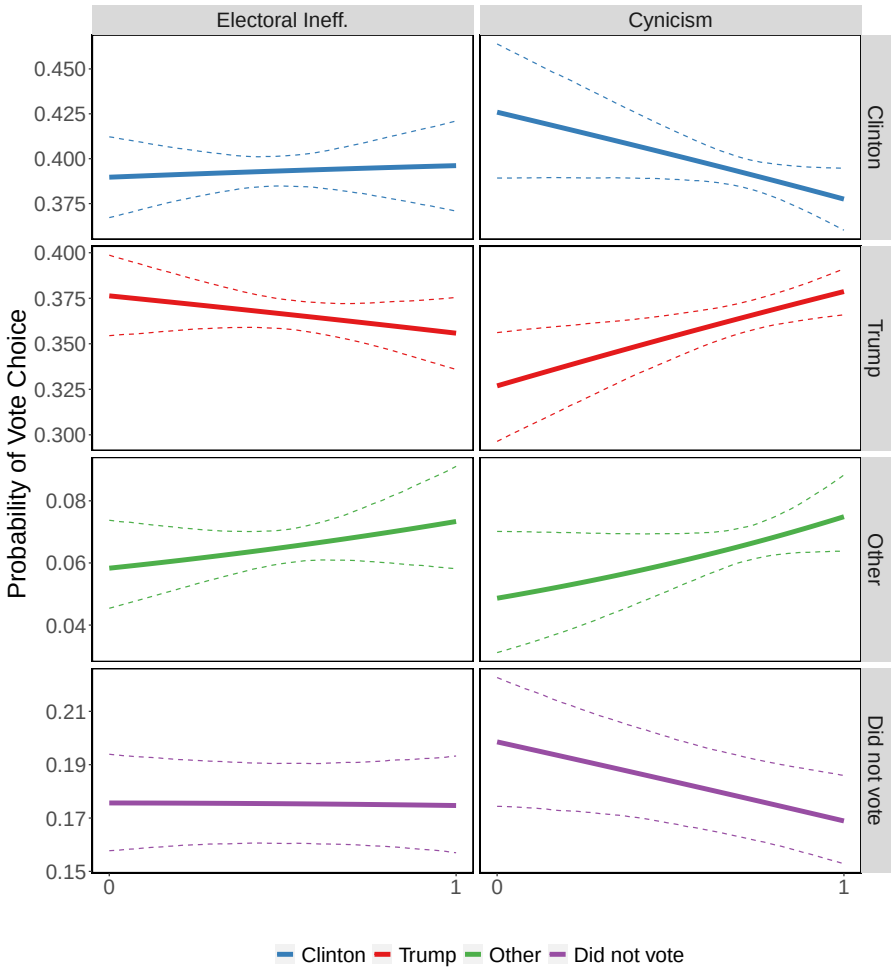


Figure 5: Predicted Probabilities - Vote Choice in 2016 General Election

Note: Estimates come from Multinomial Logit in Table 6 in Appendix D

role than electoral inefficacy in determining vote choice. Moving from the lowest to highest values of cynicism significantly reduces the probability of abstention by 3% (90% CI[-0.055,-0.004]) while simultaneously increasing the probability of voting for Trump by 5.2% (90% CI[0.013,0.091]). This is precisely what we would expect if output-based alienation inspired protest votes in favor of Trump. Equally interesting is the fact that cynicism appears to reduce the probability of voting for the political insider in the race, Hillary Clinton (-0.048, 90% CI[-0.100,0.001]), and increase the probability of voting third-party (0.027, 90% CI[-0.004,0.055]).[22] In total, it appears that cynicism played a key role in generating protest

[22]The effects of cynicism on the Clinton and third-party vote is significant at $\alpha = 0.10$ using a one-tailed $(100(1-2\alpha) = 80\%)$ confidence intervals (Steiger 2004, 174).

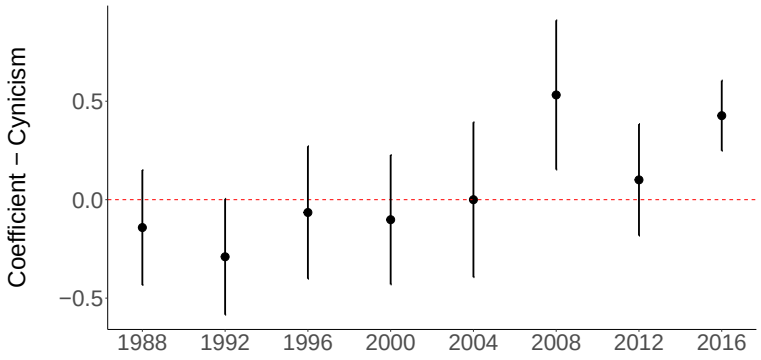


Figure 6: 'Cynicism' Coefficient

votes in Trump's favor—and to Clinton's detriment—consistent with Hypothesis 4.

A possible objection to my argument that Trump's outsider candidacy is responsible for uniquely boosting turnout in this election is that cynicism may be related to turnout even in elections with more traditional or establishment-type candidates. To alleviate this concern, I estimate models of voter turnout for each of the last eight elections and then compare the coefficients on cynicism with the results presented in Figure 6. What we observe is that cynicism is rarely related to turnout—the coefficient only appears positive and statistically significant in 2008 (Obama's first presidential run) and in 2016. One might speculate that the Obama campaign's more positive message of "hope and change" inspired the politically alienated to support him at the polls, but further analysis suggests that cynical voters supported Obama and McCain at similar rates in that election (see Table 9 of Appendix D). The ability of the political outsider, Trump, to motivate the politically alienated to support him at the ballot box is a phenomenon that appears unique to 2016.

6 Conclusion

Political alienation describes a feeling of estrangement from the inputs and outputs to the political system, and is often accompanied by a sense of negativism towards political processes and structures (Horton and Thompson 1962). For those with input-based alienation,

political participation is not seen as a useful mechanism for signaling discontent, and for those with output-based alienation, opportunities to translate one's negative attitudes into action are rarely available. However, I have argued and demonstrated that the 2016 U.S. presidential election cycle was an opportunity for the politically alienated to cast protest votes at the national level due to the presence of two outsider candidates: Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders. In my analysis, I showed that the politically alienated—be it input- or output-based—were more likely to say they liked Trump and Sanders specifically because they stood opposed to the political system. Then, I showed that protest votes largely occurred through output-based alienation, increasing the likelihood of voting for Sanders in the primary and Trump in the general election, while at the same time increasing turnout (more so in the general election). It is important to note the the relationships I uncovered between alienation and both candidate evaluations and vote choice are robust to the inclusion of multiple factors that are known to influence Trump or Sanders support, such as status threat, social identities, and racial resentment (Mutz 2018; Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2018; Hooghe and Dassonneville 2018; Hopkins 2021). Finally, I showed that the effect of output-based alienation on turnout in 2016 was largely unique to that election cycle—in the last seven general elections (excluding 2016), cynicism only boosted turnout in 2008 and it appears to have favored the Democrat and Republican candidates equally in that election.

This analysis has contributed to the public opinion and voting behavior literature in two clear ways. First, I have unpacked the mechanism underlying the protest vote in U.S. presidential elections. While Southwell and Everest (1998) suggested that output-based alienation promoted protest votes in favor of Perot in the 1992 election, the motivations underlying these votes had yet to be uncovered. My examination of the open-ended responses about Trump and Sanders reveals that their status as political outsiders was an important consideration for the politically alienated, and at least for those with output-based alienation, those feelings of alienation translated into a vote. Second, I have helped to round-out our understanding of how two non-traditional candidates could achieve such success in a

presidential election. The role identity in supporting the rise of Trump and Sanders is well established (e.g., Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2018; Mason, Wronski, and Kane 2021), but my results suggest that a full understanding of their success requires consideration of the role played by anti-establishment sentiment. Even when the role of identity was taken into account, political alienation still drove candidate evaluations and vote choice in various ways.

An important implication of my findings to consider is that there are apparent limits on candidates' ability to generate electoral support through criticism of the political system. Input-based alienation, for instance, did not appear to increase the likelihood of voting for either Trump or Sanders in my analysis. If anything, there was some suggestive evidence from the primaries that input-based alienation reduced turnout. It is not hard to imagine, then, how a candidate's attacks on the political system could unexpectedly backfire. Consider the 2021 Georgia Senate run-off election: following his loss to Joe Biden, Donald Trump repeatedly questioned the legitimacy of 2020 U.S. presidential election, including the results from the (largely GOP-controlled) state of Georgia. Initial accounts suggest that these attacks on the electoral process contributed to a decline in GOP voter turnout in the Senate run-offs (Niesse and Peebles 2021), tipping the election to the two Democratic candidates. It would appear that guiding the politically alienated to channel their frustrations for the political system through their vote is a delicate and dangerous needle to thread.

As a final consideration, it is important to note that I have remained agnostic about the specific sources of peoples' feelings of political alienation. As I have defined it, true feelings of alienation should have pre-existed the emergence of Trump and Sanders, and should not have developed due solely to the rhetoric of these two political outsiders. Indeed, Figure 8 shows that the ANES measure of electoral inefficacy increased only slightly between 2012 and 2012, while cynicism remained consistent during this same time period (with Democrats even showing a slight decrease). Given that our political system typically changes at a rather glacial pace, it makes sense that feelings of alienation would be slow-developing, as well. This is not to say, however, that feelings of political alienation that lie dormant cannot

become politically relevant. In fact, I believe that this was likely the case in 2016—Trump and Sanders both used their platforms to help voters make the connection between their candidacies and voters' feelings of political alienation, which some have appeared to use motivation for their vote choice. Identifying the specific source of such attitudes remain beyond the scope of this project, but provide fertile ground for future research.

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Alie(n)ation: Political Outsiders in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election

Appendix

Maxwell B. Allamong

Appendix A ISCAP Data

A.1 Political System Legitimacy

The first principal component in these items explains 46% of the variance in the outcome.

Table 1: Political System Legitimacy - PCA Loadings

Survey Item	PC1 Loading
Would rather live under our system of gov. than any other	0.510
System of gov. needs serious changes	0.443
Our form of gov. is best for representing citizen's interests	0.537
Feel very critical of our political system	0.505

A.2 Descriptive Statistics

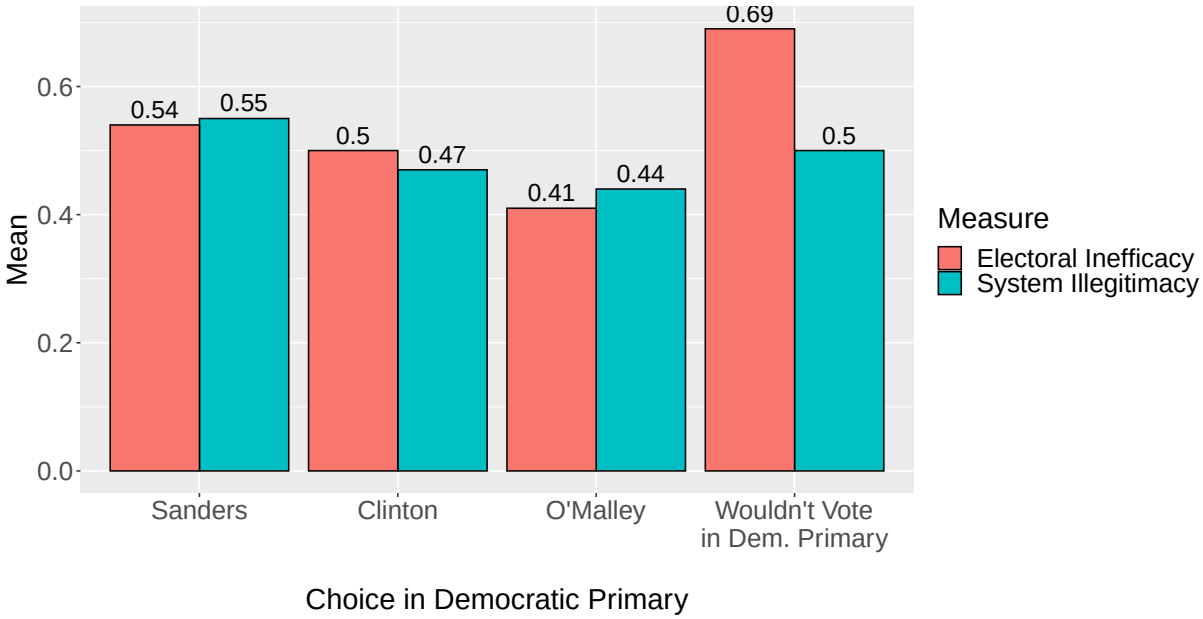


Figure 7: Mean of ISCAP Alienation Measures by Candidate Preference in Democratic Primary

Note: Sample limited to Democrats only as Republicans were not asked about their candidate preference in the Democratic primary

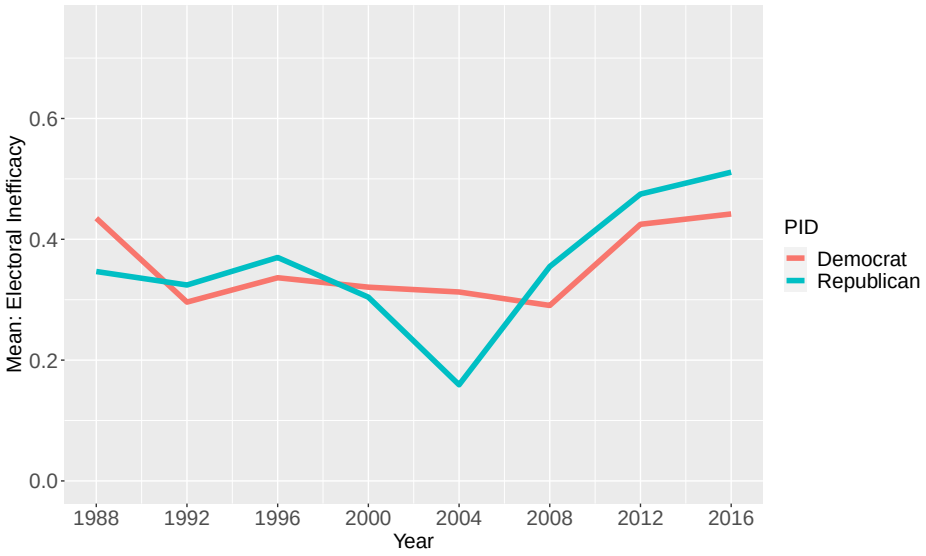
A.3 Co-variates

Original coding schemes provided below. All variables were rescaled to range between 0 and 1 for all analyses. Question wording is provided were necessary.

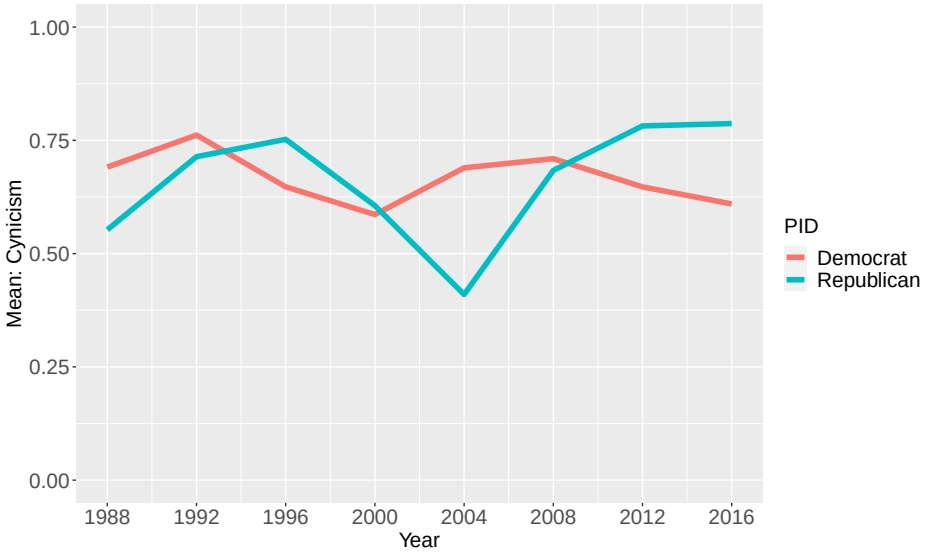
- Age
  - Coding: in years
- Black -
  - Coding: (1) Yes, (0) No
- Education
  - Coding: (1) Less than high school, (2) High school diploma, (3) Some college, no bachelors degree, (4) Bachelors or above
- Income
  - Coding: in quintiles
- Ideology
  - Coding: (1) Extremely liberal, (2) Liberal, (3) Slightly liberal, (4) Moderate, middle of the road, (5) Slightly conservative, (6) Conservative, (7) Extremely conservative
- Partisan Strength
  - Coding: (1) Independent, (2) Leaning partisan, (3) Partisan, (4) Strong partisan
- Social Dominance Orientation
  - Created by averaging responses to the four statements below. Each item re-coded so that higher values = strong social dominance orientation before the four are combined
    - Item 1: "In setting priorities, we must consider all groups."
    - Item 2: "We should not push for group equality."
    - Item 3: "Group equality should be our ideal."
    - Item 4: "Superior groups should dominate inferior groups."
    - Coding: (1) Extremely oppose to (10) Extremely favor
- White
  - Coding: (1) Yes, (0) No

Appendix B ANES Data

B.1 Descriptive Statistics



(a) Electoral Inefficacy



(b) Cynicism

Figure 8: Mean of ANES Measures of Electoral Inefficacy and Cynicism, 1988-2016

B.2 Co-variates

Original coding schemes provided below. All variables were rescaled to range between 0 and 1 for all analyses. Question wording is provided were necessary.

- Age
  - Coding: in years
- Anti-Immigrant Attitudes
  - Created by averaging responses to the three question below. Each item re-coded so that higher values = more anti-immigrant sentiment before the three are combined
  - Birthright citizenship
    - Question Wording: "Some people have proposed that the U.S. Constitution should be changed so that the children of unauthorized immigrants do not automatically get citizenship if they are born in this country. Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose this proposal?"
    - If R favors or opposes this change, strength of attitude is probed
    - Coding: (1) Favor a great deal, (2) Favor a moderate amount, (3) Favor a little, (4) Neither favor nor oppose, (5) Oppose a little, (6) Oppose a moderate amount, (7) Oppose a great deal
  - Childhood arrivals
    - Question Wording: "What should happen to immigrants who were brought to the U.S. illegally as children and have lived here for at least 10 years and graduated high school here? Should they be sent back where they came from, or should they be allowed to live and work in the United States?"
    - Upon answering the above prompt, strength of attitude if probed
    - Coding: (1) Should send back - favor a great deal, (2) Should send back - favor a moderate amount, (3) Should send back - favor a little, (4) Should allow to stay - favor a little, (5) Should allow to stay - favor a moderate amount, (6) Should allow to stay - favor a great deal
  - Build wall with Mexico
    - Question Wording: "Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose building a wall on the U.S. border with Mexico?
    - If R favors or opposes this change, strength of attitude is probed
    - Coding: (1) Favor a great deal, (2) Favor a moderate amount, (3) Favor a little, (4) Neither favor nor oppose, (5) Oppose a little, (6) Oppose a moderate amount, (7) Oppose a great deal
- Anti-Trade Attitudes
  - Question Wording: "Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose the U.S. making free trade agreements with other countries?"

  - If R favors or opposes, strength of attitude is probed
  - Coding: (1) Favor a great deal, (2) Favor moderately, (3) Favor a little, (4) Neither favor nor oppose, (5) Oppose a little, (6) Oppose moderately, (7) Oppose a great deal

- Child-Rearing Authoritarianism
  - Created by averaging responses to the following four statements. Authoritarian traits are indicated in italics.
  - Question Wording: "Please tell me which one you think is more important for a child to have..."
    - Item 1: Independence or *Respect for elders*
    - Item 2: Curiosity or *Good manners*
    - Item 3: *Obedience* or Self-reliance
    - Item 4: Being considerate or *Well-behaved*
  - Coding: (1) Non-authoritarian trait, (2) Both, (3) Authoritarian trait

- China as Threat
  - Re-coded so that higher values = strong beliefs that China's military is a threat
  - Question Wording: "Do you think China's military is a major threat to the security of the United States, a minor threat, or not a threat?
  - Coding: (1) Major threat, (2) Minor threat, (3) Not a threat

- Democratic-Aligned Group Thermometers
  - Created by averaging responses to the feeling thermometers for the following four Democratic-aligned groups: Blacks, Muslims, LGBT, and Hispanics
  - Coding: (0) Least favorable attitudes, (100) Most favorable attitudes

- Education
  - Coding: (1) Less than high school, (2) High school diploma, (3) Some college, no bachelors degree, (4) Bachelors or above

- Evangelical
  - Coding: (1) Yes, (0) No

- Female
  - Coding: (1) Yes, (0) No

- Ideology

  - Coding: (1) Extremely liberal, (2) Liberal, (3) Slightly liberal, (4) Moderate, middle of the road, (5) Slightly conservative, (6) Conservative, (7) Extremely conservative

- Income
  - Coding: in quintiles
- Independent
  - Pure independents only
  - Coding: (1) Yes, (0) No
- Political Interest
  - Coding: (1) Not much interested, (2) Somewhat interested, (3) Very much interested
- Republican
  - Leaners included
  - Coding: (1) Yes, (0) No
- White
  - Coding: (1) Yes, (0) No

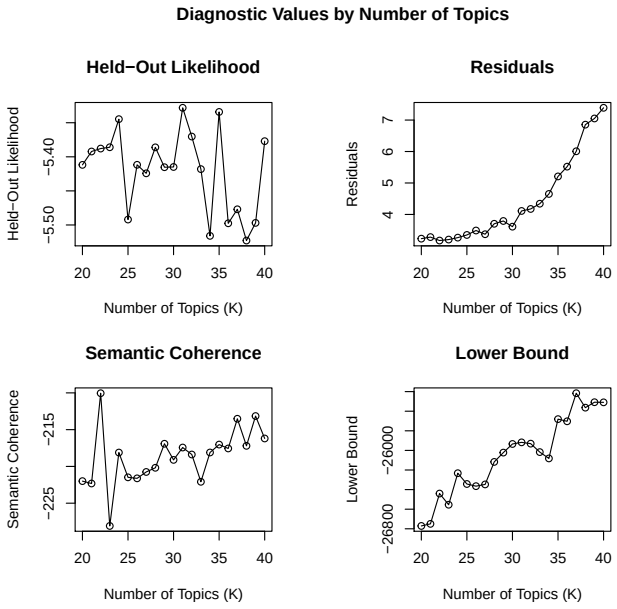
Appendix C Structural Topic Model

C.1 Pre-Processing

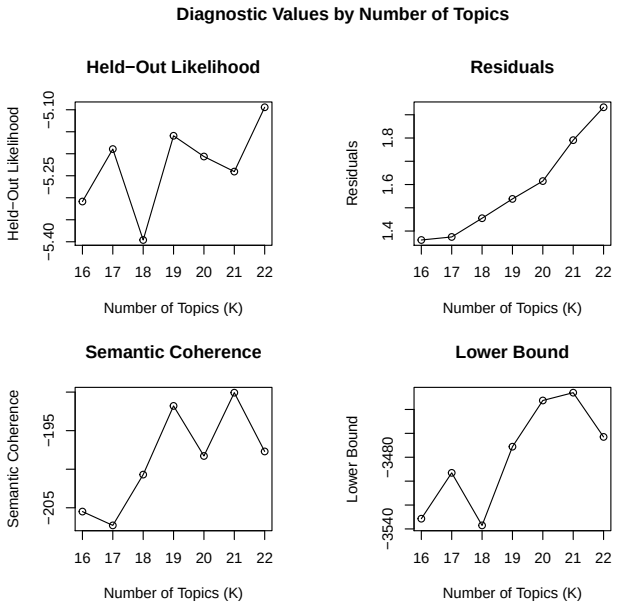
Before estimating Structural Topic Models on the open-ended responses about Trump and Sanders, I started by pre-processing the texts which includes removing unnecessary punctuation, numbers, and stop words (e.g., "it," "what," "is"), converting all characters to lowercase, and correcting spelling. I also chose to remove terms that appear in no more than one document. Following these pre-processing steps, I was left with 1,117 documents and 557 terms in the corpus of texts about Trump, and 227 documents and 174 terms in the corpus of texts about Sanders.

C.2 Model Selection

Roberts et al. (2014) note that there is not necessarily a correct number of topics for any given corpus, so they recommend that researchers make this selection based on substantive knowledge that they many have about the content of the texts, and that they consider the purpose for which the texts will be used. Additionally, Roberts, Stewart, and Tingley (2019) provide the `searchK` function in their `stm` package to allow researchers a more empirically-driven method of selecting of the number of topics. Following this advice, I note that the 2008 ANES Likes/Dislikes about Candidates were manually coded by ANES staff into roughly 30 topics, so I expect roughly the same number of topics to be found in the 2016 responses about Trump. Unfortunately, I cannot rely on previous iterations of the ISCAP panel to guide me on the number of topics in the Sanders texts in a similar way. However, given that ISCAP respondents were asked to provide a one-sentence justification for preferring a particular primary candidate—whereas ANES respondents can provide up to 5 mentions—I suspect that the number of topics in the Sanders texts will be nearly the same or perhaps less than the number of topics in the Trump texts. With this in mind, I then proceed by using the `searchK` function to generate models that range in the number of topics—for the

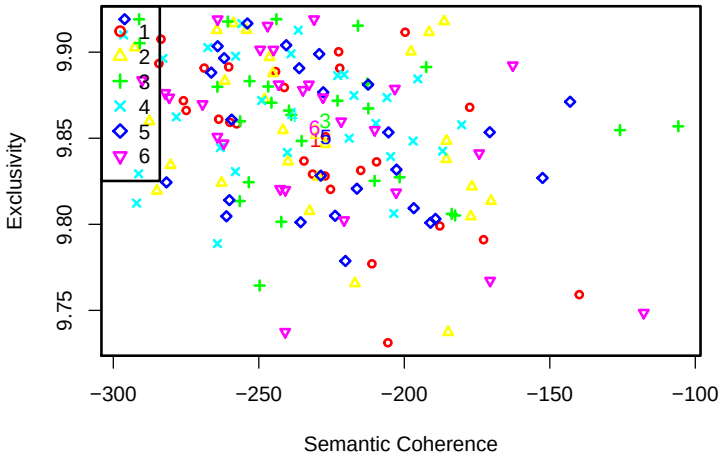


(a) Trump

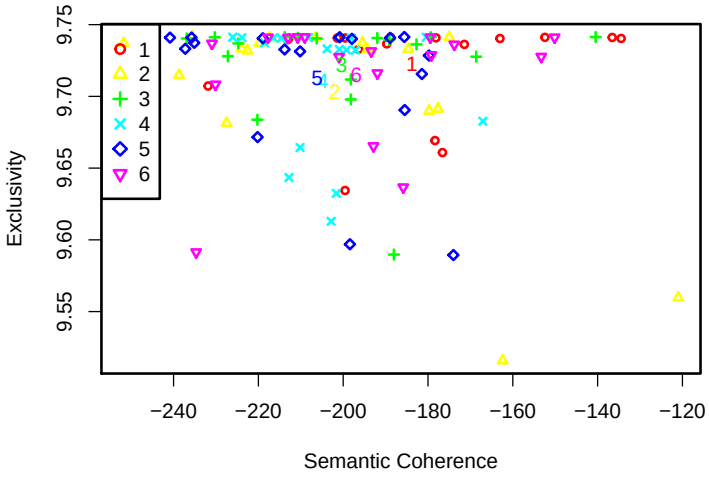


(b) Sanders

Figure 9: Determining the Number of Topics to Model, Diagnostics



(a) Trump



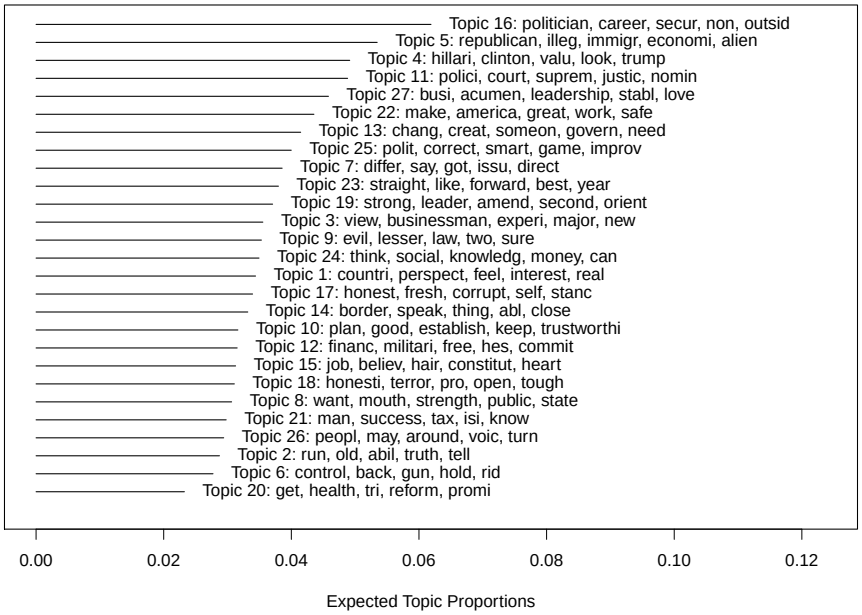
(b) Sanders

Figure 10: Comparing Semantic Coherence and Exclusivity of Models with Various Initializations

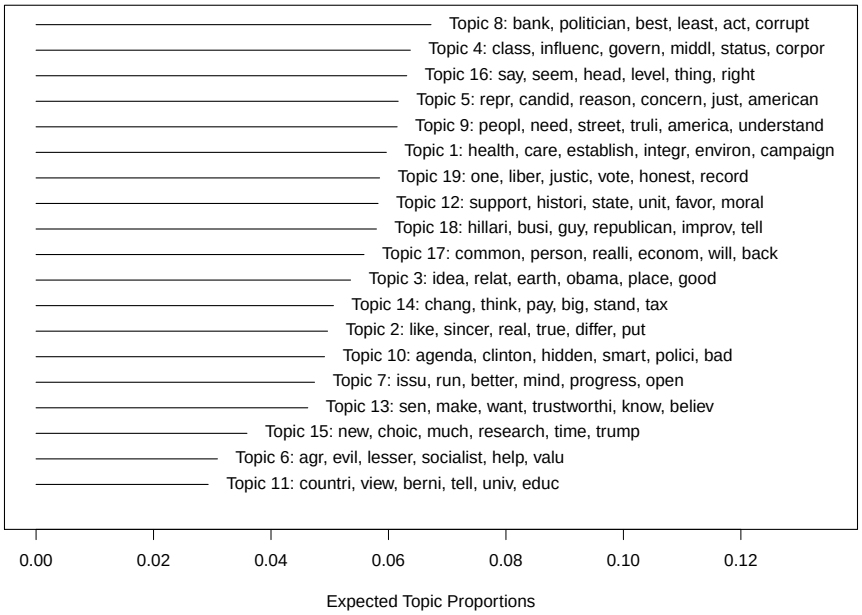
Trump texts I generate models ranging from 20 to 40 topics, and for the Sanders texts, I generate models that range from 8 to 34 topics. I generate performance diagnostics from these models such as held-out likelihood, residuals, semantic coherence, and lower bound and plot them in Figures 9a and 9b.

In selecting the number of topics, we are looking for the held-out likelihood and semantic coherence to be high while the residuals should be low. For the Trump texts, models with $\sim$25 topics seem to fit this pattern quite well, while $\sim$20 topics seems more appropriate for the Sanders text. After estimating models in this more narrow range, I ultimately settle on a model with 26 topics for the Trump texts and 19 topics for the Sanders texts. Because the results of the STM are sensitive to initialization, the last step before finalizing the model is to use the `selectModel` function to generate several models on either set of texts. From each of the model runs, I plot the semantic coherence and exclusivity, shown in Figure 10. Notice that models 1 through 6 all show roughly the same values of semantic coherence and exclusivity. Because the models performed so similarly, I manually inspected the topic content from several of the models, and selected the model where the FREX (Frequent-Exclusive) words logically went together and a common theme could be discerned from exemplar texts.

C.3 Model Results



(a) Trump



(b) Sanders

Figure 11: Expected Topic Proportion for All Topics

Table 2: Effects of Electoral Inefficacy and Cynicism on Use of Trump Outsider Topic

	Political Outsider (1)
Electoral Inefficacy	0.022**
	(0.011)
Cynicism	0.033***
	(0.014)
Independent	-0.014
	(0.018)
Republican	-0.004
	(0.011)
Anti-Immigrant Attitudes	0.000
	(0.015)
Democratic-Aligned Group Therm.	0.011
	(0.024)
Child-Rearing Authoritarianism	0.003
	(0.014)
China as Threat	0.007
	(0.012)
Anti-Trade Attitudes	-0.002
	(0.014)
Ideology	-0.024
	(0.025)
Political Interest	-0.004
	(0.014)
Income	0.000
	(0.014)
Education	0.011
	(0.014)
Evangelical	0.001
	(0.014)
White	0.011
	(0.010)
Female	-0.011*
	(0.008)
Age	0.016
	(0.017)
Constant	0.010
	(0.033)
Observations	1,117

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01; one-tailed tests
Standard errors in parentheses
All variables scaled to range between 0 and 1
Leaners are included as partisans.

Table 3: Effects of Electoral Inefficacy and Political System Illegitimacy on Use of Sanders Outsider Topic

	Political Outsider (1)
Electoral Inefficacy	-0.002
	(0.027)
Pol. System Illegitimacy	0.071*
	(0.053)
Partisan Strength	-0.004
	(0.022)
Ideology	-0.014
	(0.050)
Social Dominance Orientation	0.006
	(0.006)
Age	0.052
	(0.051)
Education	0.022
	(0.034)
Income	0.017
	(0.038)
Black	0.011
	(0.028)
White	0.022
	(0.023)
Constant	-0.042
	(0.076)
Observations	227

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01; one-tailed tests
Standard errors in parentheses
All variables scaled to range between 0 and 1

Appendix D Models of Voting Behavior

Table 4: Turnout in the 1988-2016 U.S. Presidential Elections

	Dependent variable:							
	1988	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Electoral Ineff.	-0.502^{***}	-0.379^{**}	-0.589^{***}	-0.875^{***}	-0.662^{**}	-1.258^{***}	-0.460^{***}	-0.185^{**}
	(0.188)	(0.178)	(0.211)	(0.219)	(0.295)	(0.258)	(0.174)	(0.103)
Cynicism	-0.142	-0.290^{*}	-0.065	-0.102	-0.0001	0.532^{**}	0.101	0.427^{***}
	(0.178)	(0.179)	(0.205)	(0.200)	(0.239)	(0.230)	(0.172)	(0.108)
Independent	-0.746^{***}	-0.995^{***}	-0.983^{***}	-1.086^{***}	-1.040^{***}	-1.063^{***}	-1.108^{***}	-0.952^{***}
	(0.214)	(0.180)	(0.235)	(0.220)	(0.283)	(0.250)	(0.163)	(0.109)
Republican	0.044	-0.351^{***}	0.265^{*}	0.107	0.168	0.273	0.110	-0.118^{*}
	(0.147)	(0.140)	(0.165)	(0.172)	(0.221)	(0.226)	(0.140)	(0.082)
Education	2.612^{***}	2.596^{***}	2.277^{***}	2.156^{***}	1.901^{***}	2.205^{***}	1.648^{***}	1.244^{***}
	(0.268)	(0.259)	(0.293)	(0.294)	(0.372)	(0.379)	(0.195)	(0.126)
Income	1.925^{***}	1.826^{***}	1.638^{***}	1.419^{***}	1.194^{***}	0.860^{***}	0.800^{***}	0.389^{***}
	(0.260)	(0.237)	(0.288)	(0.299)	(0.339)	(0.352)	(0.186)	(0.111)
White	-0.361^{**}	0.480^{***}	0.003	0.356^{*}	0.659^{***}	0.076	0.322^{**}	0.324^{***}
	(0.213)	(0.187)	(0.224)	(0.220)	(0.251)	(0.214)	(0.189)	(0.093)
Black	-0.160	0.466^{**}	0.238	0.808^{***}	0.718^{**}	0.866^{***}	1.171^{***}	0.562^{***}
	(0.259)	(0.237)	(0.293)	(0.312)	(0.322)	(0.259)	(0.238)	(0.143)
Age	3.364^{***}	2.748^{***}	3.047^{***}	2.507^{***}	1.437^{***}	2.354^{***}	2.906^{***}	1.221^{***}
	(0.343)	(0.311)	(0.377)	(0.393)	(0.444)	(0.446)	(0.263)	(0.149)
Constant	-1.656^{***}	-1.563^{***}	-1.598^{***}	-1.432^{***}	-1.054^{***}	-1.116^{***}	-1.127^{***}	-1.217^{***}
	(0.283)	(0.266)	(0.327)	(0.337)	(0.378)	(0.351)	(0.252)	(0.145)
Observations	1,485	1,913	1,329	1,231	890	915	2,387	3,909
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,485.362	1,717.451	1,240.631	1,131.849	781.861	827.741	1,920.155	4,668.053

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01; one-tailed tests

These regression estimates used to produce Figure 6.

Table 5: Effect of Cynicism and Election Unresponsiveness on Vote Choice in 2016 Primary Election, Multinomial Logit

	Sanders	Trump	Did Not Vote
Electoral Ineff.	−0.903	−0.069	−0.238
	(0.720)	(0.509)	(0.366)
Cynicism	1.939**	0.460	0.005
	(0.775)	(0.672)	(0.402)
Republican	−1.712*	15.217***	0.442
	(0.901)	(0.572)	(0.402)
Independent	−0.425	14.393***	−0.357
	(0.768)	(0.637)	(0.540)
Political Interest	1.564*	1.506**	1.014**
	(0.808)	(0.632)	(0.426)
Ideology	−1.214	0.520	0.435
	(1.245)	(1.087)	(0.689)
Anti-Immigrant	0.586	1.517*	0.591
	(1.074)	(0.775)	(0.562)
Democrat-Aligned	0.146	−2.857**	0.821
	(1.556)	(1.197)	(0.841)
Child-Rearing	−2.242**	−0.650	−1.134**
	(0.938)	(0.660)	(0.474)
China as Threat	−0.477	−0.218	0.456
	(0.656)	(0.583)	(0.394)
Oppose Trade	0.427	−0.195	−1.221***
	(0.898)	(0.585)	(0.467)
Income	0.373	0.250	0.685*
	(0.684)	(0.528)	(0.386)
Education	1.259	2.515***	1.146**
	(1.001)	(0.766)	(0.498)
Evangelical	−25.479***	0.136	0.795*
	(0.000)	(0.537)	(0.438)
White	0.188	0.350	0.132
	(0.655)	(0.520)	(0.349)
Black	1.655**	−12.557***	1.621***
	(0.822)	(0.00000)	(0.531)
Female	−0.358	0.408	0.428*
	(0.463)	(0.358)	(0.252)
Age	−1.162	3.227***	2.639***
	(1.139)	(0.828)	(0.585)
Constant	−3.501*	−20.725***	−4.702***
	(1.914)	(1.040)	(1.017)
Akaike Inf. Crit.	927.988	927.988	927.988
Observations =	493	493	493

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01; one-tailed tests

All predictors range between 0 and 1

Reference category for dependent variables is 'Any candidate other than Trump or Clinton'

Analysis limited to Super Tuesday states with open primaries

Table 6: Effect of Cynicism and Election Unresponsiveness on Vote Choice in 2016 General Election, Multinomial Logit

	Clinton	Trump	Other
Electoral Ineff.	0.079	−0.141	0.236
	(0.212)	(0.219)	(0.287)
Cynicism	−0.155	0.593***	0.663**
	(0.220)	(0.241)	(0.317)
Republican	−1.794***	1.761***	0.393*
	(0.219)	(0.227)	(0.279)
Independent	−1.635***	0.318	−0.062
	(0.219)	(0.265)	(0.296)
Political Interest	1.316***	1.294***	0.879***
	(0.220)	(0.230)	(0.296)
Ideology	−0.525*	2.676***	0.941*
	(0.401)	(0.442)	(0.567)
Anti-Immigrant	−1.856***	1.513***	−1.172***
	(0.334)	(0.335)	(0.457)
Democrat-Aligned	1.223***	0.191	0.931*
	(0.482)	(0.499)	(0.651)
Child-Rearing	−0.974***	−0.108	−0.883***
	(0.260)	(0.275)	(0.358)
China as Threat	0.247	0.129	−0.361
	(0.220)	(0.239)	(0.301)
Oppose Trade	−0.335	1.030***	0.207
	(0.280)	(0.288)	(0.381)
Income	0.980***	0.547**	0.555**
	(0.230)	(0.239)	(0.312)
Education	1.030***	0.976***	0.989***
	(0.272)	(0.283)	(0.388)
Evangelical	0.565*	0.492*	0.641*
	(0.349)	(0.306)	(0.396)
White	0.148	0.894***	0.520**
	(0.180)	(0.213)	(0.267)
Black	1.374***	0.274	1.019**
	(0.296)	(0.509)	(0.467)
Female	0.157	0.350**	0.203
	(0.148)	(0.154)	(0.202)
Age	2.048***	2.083***	0.104
	(0.333)	(0.340)	(0.463)
Constant	−1.394***	−7.493***	−3.966***
	(0.559)	(0.638)	(0.784)
Akaike Inf. Crit.	3,613.304	3,613.304	3,613.304
Observations =	2,470	2,470	2,470

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01; one-tailed tests

All predictors range between 0 and 1

Reference category for the dependent variables is 'Any candidate other than Trump or Clinton'

Table 7: Effect of Cynicism and Election Unresponsiveness on Vote Choice in 2016 Primary Election, Pre-election Variables Only, Multinomial Logit

	Sanders	Trump	Did Not Vote
Electoral Ineff.	−0.653	−0.229	−0.173
	(0.619)	(0.448)	(0.323)
Cynicism	2.084***	0.750	−0.092
	(0.733)	(0.622)	(0.354)
Republican	−1.761**	15.675***	0.327
	(0.798)	(0.466)	(0.348)
Independent	−0.484	14.964***	−0.444
	(0.717)	(0.501)	(0.467)
Political Interest	1.266*	1.492**	0.962***
	(0.690)	(0.588)	(0.364)
Ideology	−1.637	0.205	0.103
	(1.086)	(0.986)	(0.592)
Anti-Immigrant	−0.160	1.954***	−0.067
	(0.969)	(0.673)	(0.486)
Income	0.287	0.106	1.071***
	(0.613)	(0.481)	(0.357)
Education	1.085	2.547***	1.033**
	(0.873)	(0.668)	(0.435)
Evangelical	−30.408***	0.301	1.029***
	(0.000)	(0.490)	(0.383)
White	0.660	0.351	0.327
	(0.566)	(0.465)	(0.302)
Black	1.250*	−13.344***	1.520***
	(0.751)	(0.00000)	(0.466)
Female	−0.606	0.040	0.470**
	(0.430)	(0.308)	(0.222)
Age	−1.551	3.176***	2.423***
	(1.036)	(0.760)	(0.516)
Constant	−3.980***	−23.367***	−4.630***
	(1.191)	(0.795)	(0.611)
Akaike Inf. Crit.	927.988	927.988	927.988
Observations =	591	591	591

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01; one-tailed tests

All predictors range between 0 and 1

Reference category for dependent variables is 'Any candidate other than Trump or Clinton'

Analysis limited to Super Tuesday states with open primaries

Table 8: Effect of Cynicism and Election Unresponsiveness on Vote Choice in 2016 General Election, Pre-election Variables Only, Multinomial Logit

	Clinton	Trump	Other
Electoral Ineff.	0.042	−0.083	0.189
	(0.168)	(0.168)	(0.258)
Cynicism	−0.089	0.409**	0.611**
	(0.173)	(0.193)	(0.287)
Republican	−1.741***	1.798***	0.398*
	(0.181)	(0.194)	(0.255)
Independent	−1.371***	0.570***	0.112
	(0.180)	(0.229)	(0.272)
Political Interest	1.018***	0.772***	0.461**
	(0.179)	(0.181)	(0.264)
Ideology	−1.271***	1.570***	0.182
	(0.306)	(0.341)	(0.492)
Anti-Immigrant	−1.816***	1.531***	−1.492***
	(0.257)	(0.248)	(0.398)
Income	0.585***	0.132	0.266
	(0.179)	(0.182)	(0.276)
Education	1.102***	0.737***	1.013***
	(0.216)	(0.216)	(0.346)
Evangelical	0.230	0.170	0.223
	(0.262)	(0.206)	(0.335)
White	0.220*	0.829***	0.497**
	(0.144)	(0.169)	(0.238)
Black	1.060***	0.077	0.594*
	(0.226)	(0.443)	(0.428)
Female	0.114	0.139	0.097
	(0.115)	(0.117)	(0.177)
Age	0.999***	1.248***	−0.957**
	(0.252)	(0.260)	(0.409)
Constant	−0.674**	−5.640***	−3.172***
	(0.283)	(0.354)	(0.466)
Akaike Inf. Crit.	3,613.304	3,613.304	3,613.304
Observations =	2,945	2,945	2,945

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01; one-tailed tests

All predictors range between 0 and 1

Reference category for the dependent variables is 'Any candidate other than Trump or Clinton'

Table 9: Effects of Electoral Inefficacy and Cynicism on 2008 Two-Party Vote, Logit

	Obama Vote
	(1)
Electoral Ineff.	0.608*
	(0.465)
Cynicism	−0.095
	(0.385)
Independent	−2.979***
	(0.433)
Republican	−4.240***
	(0.330)
Education	0.150
	(0.548)
Income	−0.688
	(0.570)
White	−1.229***
	(0.334)
Black	3.302***
	(1.067)
Age	−1.791***
	(0.725)
Constant	3.929***
	(0.653)
Observations	227
Akaike Inf. Crit.	365.961

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01; one-tailed tests
Standard errors in parentheses
Reference category for the dependent variable is 'McCain Vote'
Sample limited to those that voted for either Obama or McCain in the 2008 election
All variables scaled to range between 0 and 1

References

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