MARGINALIZING PROGRESSIVES? NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF BERNIE SANDERS in the ‘INVISIBLE PRIMARY’: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The present thesis uses methods of Critical Discourse Analysis to examine 16 front-page newspaper articles, from *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, covering progressive presidential candidate Bernie Sanders during the 2015 “invisible primary”. In particular, this thesis investigates how Sanders and his supporters were represented, linguistically and visually, and whether these representations – formulated as “interpretive frames” – appear more legitimizing or delegitimizing. In the crucial pre-voting period of the invisible primary, the media largely have the power to construct the identity of relatively unknown candidates, such as Sanders, in the minds of the national public. The 2015/16 election season occurred against the backdrop of extreme levels of economic inequality and related societal ills, which have arguably arisen from four decades of neoliberal policies implemented by successive American presidents from both major political parties.

The findings of the analysis appear to confirm a concerning pattern of largely *delegitimizing* US media coverage (or omission) of progressive political candidates and social movements going back several decades. In the articles analysed, Sanders was represented using interpretive frames casting him as an extreme leftist, angry and impersonal, or marginal and old. Only one major interpretive frame – representing him as a skilful, pragmatic politician – appeared legitimizing. Similarly, Sanders’ supporters were largely framed as activists, excitable fans, or divided into narrow identity categories (e.g. “white liberals”) that appear delegitimizing when considered opposite the shared economic struggles that many of them likely face. Given the liberal reputation of *The New York Times* and moderate image of *The Washington Post*, the results raise further doubts about the ideological diversity of the mainstream American public sphere.
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1. Introduction

_Everybody knows the fight was fixed_
_The poor stay poor, the rich get rich_
_That's how it goes_
_Everybody knows_

– Leonhard Cohen (1988)

There was something about the period leading up to the 2016 American presidential election – something hard to articulate precisely, but undeniably in the air. It appeared as though difficult truths were finally being unmistakably revealed: truths about power and ideology, truths about the injustice of America’s economy, truths about the dysfunction of the two-party political system, truths about the failure of much of the media – TV especially – to act as a deliberative public sphere and serve democracy in a meaningful way. It appeared as though, after four decades, the wheels were coming off of the cart of neoliberalism. Leonhard Cohen may have sung “Everybody knows” decades ago, but somehow this election cycle suggested there is a difference between knowing and _knowing_ – having power and manipulations laid bare that are typically kept hidden or at least better disguised. When leaked emails finally exposed efforts by Democratic National Committee officials to influence the primary in a biased way (Martin and Rappeport 2016), it only seemed to confirm what had been obvious for months. Much remains unclear, however, including how the media itself might have influenced the course of an election that ultimately gave the US presidency to possibly the least-qualified right-wing candidate of all time.

The present thesis focuses on the summer and fall of 2015, the crucial months before the Democratic Primary, in order to examine how influential US newspapers represented the “non-mainstream” progressive presidential candidate Bernie Sanders in this important period of his introduction on the national stage. Known by political scientists as the “invisible primary”, this pre-voting phase is pivotal for candidates. Studies show that candidates’ performance in the invisible primary – measured by media attention and fundraising – is a very strong predictor of who wins (Patterson 2016). It is also in this period that journalists construct “metanarratives”, i.e. dominant storylines and representations of presidential candidates, which tend to stick in the minds of voters.
So this early media coverage of previously unknown candidates like Sanders can largely determine their political fate.

Before discussing Sanders, however, I wish to emphasize that he was not the only alternative progressive candidate to enter the presidential race in this period. This context appears important for its wider media implications. Firstly, Harvard law professor and constitutional expert Lawrence Lessig also launched a run for president as a Democrat in the summer of 2015, on a platform devoted to one issue: stopping the corrupting influence of money in US politics (TYT 2015). Secondly, physician and prior presidential candidate Jill Stein ran again for the Green Party, on a platform dedicated to economic justice, addressing the crisis of climate change, and ending the expansion of US military aggression abroad (DN 2015).

The treatment of Lessig and Stein by the media showed a concerning pattern: both were virtually blacked out by mainstream TV outlets – CNN, MSNBC, Fox, etc. – for all of 2015. However, perhaps more concerning was how Lessig and Stein were handled by the “serious” institutions of print journalism. Major newspapers only found space for a few dismissive articles on candidate Lessig in 2015 (e.g. The Washington Post: “Why You Should Not Support Larry Lessig for President”). Candidate Stein, for her part, received virtually no mainstream print coverage that year. When the Democratic National
Committee ultimately barred Lessig from the Democratic debates in the autumn of 2015 – claiming he was not “polling” well despite raising over a million dollars in a few weeks (Jarding 2015) – it was as if the whole mainstream media agreed that excluding him was the prudent thing to do. Meanwhile, on the “conservative” side of the political spectrum, the Republican debates were already well underway and space had been found on the media agenda for no fewer than seventeen Republican presidential candidates (Wikipedia 2017) – including a certain billionaire with unusual hair.

Lessig terminated his candidacy after being banned from the TV debates by the Democratic Party (Jarding 2015). Stein, for her part, was excluded from the debates by default as a Green Party candidate, and was excluded from the wider media agenda, apparently, by custom. Thus, only five candidates were left to campaign and discuss issues from an ostensibly left-leaning political viewpoint within the media spotlight: Hillary Clinton, Jim Webb, Lincoln Chafee, Martin O’Malley, and Bernie Sanders.

When he announced his candidacy for president on 30 April 2015, Bernie Sanders was virtually unknown among American voters nationally, despite having served in Congress for 25 years. Polls of voters at the time put him 60 percentage points behind Hillary Clinton (Patterson 2016). What Sanders had, however, was a clear message about the economic hardships faced by low- and middle-income working Americans of all backgrounds, and a message about the policies needed to address their plight. He proposed increasing the minimum wage to a living wage, eradicating childhood poverty, making public colleges free, fighting tax avoidance by corporations and the ultra rich, reforming campaign financing, taxing Wall Street financial trades, introducing single-payer healthcare, rebuilding crumbling infrastructure – especially to create jobs – not to mention addressing climate change (FBS 2015, Rothchild 2015). As noted by many, one would likely have to go back more than a half century to Franklin D. Roosevelt to find the closest historical match to the rhetoric and policies proposed by Sanders from the start of his campaign (Hoel 2016). Notably, Sanders’ view of society remained primarily class-based, by his own admission (Cohn 2015), despite the passage of several decades in which Americans have seemingly been discouraged from thinking about class as a salient
category anymore, at least in an economic (as opposed to cultural) sense (Murdock 2000, Reed 2005). At the same time, Sanders’ unique political discourse had received a notable infusion of new language – “percentage talk” as dubbed by one researcher (Hoel 2016) – thanks to the Occupy Wall Street movement launched against financial-sector greed in 2011.

In his more recent, updated introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA), Norman Fairclough (2013) recommends that researchers wishing to apply its methods begin by identifying a perceived wrong with “semiotic” aspects that can be productively studied with a view to challenging the wrong. In the present thesis, the wrong that I seek to investigate is the possible systematic marginalization of progressive political candidates by the American news media. Specifically, I seek to examine how leading US newspapers – i.e. The New York Times and The Washington Post – represented Sanders on their front pages during the invisible primary. Notably, rather than focussing on news outlets that explicitly promote right-wing ideology (e.g. Fox or The Wall Street Journal), I have chosen to examine a highly influential self-declared “liberal” newspaper (Okrent 2004) and a key political newspaper that ostensibly caters to more “moderate” (e.g. centre-left, centre-right) audiences. This suits the strengths of CDA, which typically aims to expose relatively “hidden” ideology or power relations (Wodak and Meyer 2016).

Using selected methods from the toolkit of CDA, I will investigate the following main question and sub-questions:

**Main question:**

How was Bernie Sanders represented on the front pages of the New York Times and the Washington Post during the 2015 “invisible primary”? In particular, was the front-page coverage more delegitimizing or legitimizing of Sanders and his progressive political movement?
Sub-questions:

How was Bernie Sanders linguistically represented? What sorts of interpretive frames were used to construct his identity?

How were Sanders’ supporters linguistically represented? What sorts of interpretive frames were used to construct their identity?

How was Sanders visually represented in the accompanying front-page photos?

2. Context

To understand why progressive politics and progressive political candidates are arguably so important in today’s America – and worthy of serious policy-focussed media attention – it is worth reviewing some basic facts about inequality that indicate a country in trouble.

Since the 1970s, when American politicians abandoned Keynesianism and the policy goal of full employment, “destabilizing, inegalitarian forces” have been increasingly winning out in the US (Piketty 2014, p. 21). In 1980, a typical person in the top 1 per cent earned about 27 times more than the average income earner in the bottom half (Piketty et al. 2016); by 2014, the typical person in the top 1 per cent was earning 81 times as much as an average bottom-half income earner (op. cit.). Notably, the average income of earners in the bottom half stagnated at a mere $16,000 annually (inflation-adjust 2014 dollars) over that period (see Figure 3).

A few details are crucial to appreciate the fundamental injustice of these growing inequality dynamics: first, while bottom-half workers’ wages have stagnated, the productivity of the US economy has risen steadily since the 1970s. In other words, millions of US workers have been producing more economic value yet seeing no real gain in their incomes. Second, relative costs in key life areas (e.g. housing, healthcare, education) have grown – even exploded – while welfare programmes have been cut,
causing untold suffering among lower earners.\(^1\) Third, since at least the late 1990s, the incredible wealth gains at the top have largely not been driven by added productivity on the part of economic elites, but rather by rising income from equity and bonds (Piketty et al. 2016). For example, owners of real estate and stocks have seen the value of their assets soar. Economist and historian Michael Hudson (2017, p. 198) describes this as the return of the rentier class – wealthy elites who get richer virtually in their sleep due to rent extraction, interest, asset inflation, and so on, without making any contribution to the “real economy” of production and consumption.

![Real average pre-tax income, adjusted for inflation](image)

**Figure 3.** Comparison of average incomes in the top 1 per cent and the bottom half of the US income distribution from 1980 to 2014 (Source: Piketty et al. 2016).

The sharply rising inequality described above is arguably the result of the ideology and policies of neoliberalism. Embraced by both major US political parties since the late 1970s, neoliberalism calls for gradual privatization and “market” control of most sectors critical to life – whether food, health, education, or media and communications systems – while simultaneously eliminating democratically accountable state protections and public

\(^1\) Acute societal issues ranging from the mass incarceration of African Americans (Wakefield et al. 2013) and rising mortality among middle-aged whites (Xu et al. 2016) to the ongoing opioid epidemic (King et al. 2014) and record levels of student debt (Fry 2017) may all be considered related to inequality dynamics and poverty in the US (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009).
support programmes (e.g. welfare). As an ideology – i.e. a system of widely shared beliefs about reality and how societies and especially economies should be organized – neoliberalism has proven remarkably successful. According to David Harvey (2004, p. 3)

Neoliberalism has ... become hegemonic as a mode of discourse. It has pervasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world.

Eventually, however, the “truth-claims” of an ideology – e.g. that “market” control is always best – may simply diverge too far from people’s material experience. Indeed, neoliberalism has returned America to grotesque inequality levels not seen since the “Gilded Age” of the late nineteenth century. Crucially, however, that long-ago era of extreme inequality gave rise to a political and social counter movement, or ideology in its own right, known as Progressivism. Those behind the original Progressive movement shared at least one core conviction: that a “public interest” or “common good” really exists and should be defended (Nugent 2009, p. 3). On that belief, they pushed through reforms such as anti-monopoly laws, progressive taxation, and women’s suffrage. It is precisely that tradition that Americans seemingly need restored today, and that a small number political leaders and candidates – including Sanders – have been fighting for. The question, however, is what happens when such socially minded political figures come up against today’s “neoliberalized” public sphere, represented by corporate TV and, possibly, major newspapers.

3. Theoretical Framework

In this section, I will begin by outlining the broader knowledge paradigms and research traditions informing my research topic and approach. Second, I will introduce some key theoretical aspects of CDA itself. Finally, I will conclude by outlining several narrower media-related theories key to my topic.
3.1. Constrained Idealism and Social Constructionism

Because of its focus on linguistic and visual representations, the present thesis fits within the ontology of *idealism*. However, I situate it more precisely in the ontology of *constrained idealism*. In contrast to “pure” idealism, constrained idealism explicitly recognizes the existence of an external, material world that shapes and limits human experience (Blaikie 2007, p. 16). Nevertheless, like all forms of idealism, it attaches great importance to how different individuals and groups perceive and make sense of the external world (*op. cit.*, p. 17).

Epistemologically, this thesis is strongly influenced by *social constructionism*, but adds an explicit normative dimension (see “Critical Theory” below) and, again, expressly acknowledges the constraints imposed by material conditions. At its most basic, social constructionism holds that individuals interacting with each other and the world around them create social reality and shape material reality.² It emphasizes the collective generation and sharing of *meaning* and *knowledge* by social actors (*op. cit.*, p. 22–23).

3.2. Research Paradigms of Interpretivism and Critical Theory

The ontology and epistemology described above are closely linked to two research paradigms informing this thesis: namely, the “classical paradigm” of *Interpretivism* and the more recent paradigm of *Critical Theory*. *Interpretivism* emphasizes that what we experience as “reality” results from “the interplay between a conscious, meaning-making subject and the objects that present themselves to our perception” (Collins 2010, p. 38 ff.). Crucially for social scientists, it stresses that “social worlds [have already been] interpreted before researchers arrive” (Blaikie 2007, p. 124).

*Critical Theory* shares the Interpretivist emphasis on *meaning-making* by human subjects, but it introduces a strong critique of exploitative capitalist relations and makes an explicit appeal for social science to contribute to “human emancipation” (Blaikie 2007, p. 134 ff.).

² Far from being abstract, the implications of *social constructionism* are profound when one considers that everything from money to political-economic systems owe their existence to social conventions/agreements. Regarding the functioning of national economies and dynamics of inequality, Piketty (2015) stresses that they ultimately depend on people’s “belief systems”. In other words, inequality does not follow from natural laws, but rather from societal values and corresponding systems/rules put in place.
Established by the Frankfurt School in the 1930s and later refined by Jürgen Habermas, Critical Theory thus introduces an overtly normative research orientation directed towards effecting emancipatory change. The founders of this research paradigm viewed reason as the highest human potentiality, and criticized what they saw as capitalism’s fundamental irrationality, including how it fails to satisfy existing needs while creating “false wants” (op. cit.). In contrast to pure Interpretivism, Critical Theory holds out more hope for the existence of truth or truths. Indeed, to support his call for “emancipatory science”, Habermas developed a “consensus theory of truth” (op. cit., p. 137). According to this ideal theory, truths could be arrived at by means of reasoned communication between human beings free of relations of domination.

3.3. Language as Representation and Social Practice

How, then, do the broad knowledge theories described above relate to the topic of the present thesis, i.e. journalistic representations of progressive politicians and politics? Language provides the key. Use of language is probably the most important way in which human beings – modern print journalists, especially – make meaning and represent or even construct social reality. Indeed, early in the twentieth century, American linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf posited that language structures our very cognitions – how we process, categorize, and conceptually map objects in the world around us – such that users of different languages and vocabularies might inhabit different (perceptual) worlds based on their varying linguistic resources (Machin and Mayr 2012, p. 16 ff.).

Crucially, however, these differing linguistic worlds are shared by different groups. For even if we assume that individuals may have subtly unique ways of “seeing” things around them and varying internal “mental concepts”, each of us must nonetheless render our intended meanings using established “rules, codes and conventions of language” in order to express them to others and be understood (Hall 2013 [1997], p. 175). In this way, human beings must, firstly, use systems of predetermined signs (e.g. words, images) to represent, encode, or “signify”, their thoughts and then, secondly, socially exchange them with others through verbal, written, and other forms of symbolic (e.g. iconographic)
communication. Naturally, those we communicate with must, in turn, interpret or decode our meanings rendered in words and texts, such that we are continually engaged in circular or dialectical processes of meaning negotiation and renegotiation. As a result, according to Hall (2013 [1997], p. 176), “there is no absolute or final fixing of meaning. Social and linguistic conventions…change over time”.

Developed by the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, scholar Roland Barthes, and others (e.g. Sapir and Whorf), the representational or semiotic constructionist approach (op. cit., p. 171) to language outlined above was further enhanced by other theorists who noted one critical element they felt it downplayed or omitted: power. While Saussure and his intellectual heirs made the crucial observation that linguistic representation is a social practice, they focussed more on describing the formal structural aspects of language use and perhaps overlooked how language may be used by different groups to exert power and control over others (op. cit., p. 182). This is where scholars such as Michel Foucault and notions of discourse finally enter the picture, beginning in the 1960s especially.

3.4. Theories of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

There is no single, unified theory or school of discourse analysis or even, more specifically, CDA. Even the core term discourse is variously interpreted. According to Barker (2008, p. 152), the field of discourse analysis remains a “motley domain” of scholars using different terms and definitions. However, adds Barker (op. cit.), what unites these scholars is a shared focus on questions of “the nature and role of language and other meaning-systems in the operation of social relations, and in particular the power of such systems to shape identities, social practices, relations between individuals, communities, and all kinds of authority”. On the one hand, then, most discourse analysts share a focus on the general power of language “as a means of social construction” that “both shapes and is shaped by society” (Machin and Mayr (2012, p.4). On the other, CDA analysts in particular focus on the use – or abuse – of language in the service of

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3 Two main concepts of discourse may be distinguished (Richardson 2007, pp. 22–24): First, the formalist or structuralist approach defines discourse as a unit of meaning above the sentence level. Second, the functionalist approach defines discourse as language in use.
power. Regarding the latter, Fairclough and Wodak (1997, p. 258) take the role of CDA researchers a step further by stating “CDA sees itself not as dispassionate and objective social science, but as engaged and committed.” Echoing the human emancipation call of Habermas, CDA scholars typically desire not only to reveal how language serves structures of domination, but also to challenge and counter the negative effects of this on society.

According to Machin and Mayr (2012, p. 2), CDA evolved most directly out of “critical linguistics”, a field pioneered in the 1970s by linguists like Roger Fowler and Gunter Kress. These linguists once again stressed that language is a form of social practice, and argued that close analysis of texts – e.g. textbooks, newspaper articles – could reveal their ideological function, namely, how they serve to (re)produce unequal power relations, for example, related to capitalistic exploitation or racism. An important contrast to Foucault and other early discourse scholars, I think, is that critical linguists afforded even more importance to the detailed study of language – i.e. the microstructures of grammar – to reveal hidden power relations. While continuing in this tradition of focussed linguistic analysis, those working in the evolving field of CDA have sought to expand it with wider theories and methods capable of capturing broader interrelationships between language, power, and ideology (op. cit.).

Norman Fairclough has made an indispensable theoretical contribution to CDA with his three-dimensional model of discourse. It enables a holistic view of discourse, especially useful for media studies. For Fairclough (1995, p. 58 ff.), every discursive or “communicative” event comprises three dimensions that overlap and mutually influence one another. These dimensions are text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice (see Figure 4). Fairclough’s model highlights how each text – for example, a newspaper article on a given political candidate – is involved in a wider dialectical and circular process of text production and consumption (discourse practice), which, in turn, shapes and is shaped by the broader society in which it is embedded (sociocultural practice). Richardson (2007, p. 37) concisely encapsulates the model as it relates to my thesis topic
when he states: "newspapers are the product of specific people working in specific circumstances", and the news these people produce, in turn, “can have social effects”.

**Figure 4.** Norman Fairclough’s (1995) theoretical framework for CDA of a “communicative event”: The three dimensions are sociocultural practice (i.e. the broader social context), discourse practice (i.e. production and consumption), and text (i.e. the product).

Crucially, this holistic, three-dimensional conceptual model opens the door wide to the questions of power and ideology (Fairclough 2013, pp. 59-60) that concern CDA researchers. Regarding neoliberalism, for example, we might consider how neoliberal deregulatory policies (e.g. US 1996 Telecommunications Act) have altered media at the institutional level (sociocultural practice), enabling greater oligopolistic corporate ownership through vertical/horizontal integration. At the level of journalists’ discursive practices, neoliberalism could cause journalists to obey “news values” (Patterson 2016) that mainly follow economic motives (e.g. treating audiences as “consumers” to be sold entertainment). In political coverage, neoliberal ideology could manifest as downplaying complicated (e.g. economic/systemic) policy issues and focussing more on politicians’ personality (Fairclough 1994), sensationalistic details (Richardson 2007), conflict or “horse race” coverage (Kirch 2008), or even ignoring certain candidates to save journalistic resources, etc. Finally, it might result in delegitimizing or blacking out from coverage those politicians or movements perceived as threatening to “common sense”
neoliberal assumptions or the financial interests of media conglomerates. These, then, should leave traces in resulting texts, even if only as textual omissions/absences.

This concludes my initial theoretical discussion of CDA. I will further address specific methodological aspects and theories of CDA – especially regarding the text dimension – in the methods and analysis section. However, with Fairclough’s broader holistic model of discourse in mind, let us now turn to a handful of media-specific theories, which aid understanding of how media texts may reflect and reproduce dominant societal power structures and ideologies.

3.5. Theories of Media Power: The Public Sphere, Media Hegemony, Gatekeeping, Agenda-Setting, and Framing

To grasp the central role of the media in modern democracy and US politics, it is useful to consider the idealized concept of the “public sphere”. As first conceptualized by Jürgen Habermas, the public sphere is “that realm of social life where the exchange of information and views on questions of common concern can take place so that public opinion can be formed” (Dahlgren 2013, p. 527). At the birth of US democracy, the public sphere comprised concrete places (e.g. coffeehouses, public assemblies) and new printed media (e.g. pamphlets, newspapers) in which citizens exchanged factual information, formed opinions, and rationally deliberated about important affairs – including, of course, candidates for political office (op. cit., p. 528). Today, however, the public sphere is overwhelmingly comprised by the mass media – TV news, major newspapers, various online news outlets, etc. This gives the media incredible power over democratic life, people’s views of current events and, of course, their views of political candidates. The media’s images and linguistic representations become our basis for forming opinions about political reality. In this way, both the public sphere and politics have become mediatized (Block 2013).

“Media hegemony” is a concept used to describe the power of representation and shaping of public opinion possessed by today’s media (op. cit.). Antonio Gramsci originally introduced the core theory of hegemony to help explain how and why dominated social groups – such as today’s working classes in America – accept their
unequal conditions vis-à-vis economic and political elites (Freeden 2010, p. 20). According to the theory, at least in relatively democratic societies, the socioeconomic struggles that capitalism engenders are overwhelmingly resolved ideologically (Hall 2013, p. 527). In other words, powerful ideas and representations of reality (e.g. that an “invisible hand” guides market relations) are promoted by elites to persuade – not force – others that a given way of organizing society is the best, the most natural, or possibly the only way to do so. According to the media hegemony thesis, then, it is today’s mass media – e.g. via the discourse practices of journalists and media personalities – who overwhelmingly promote the ruling (e.g. neoliberal) ideology and persuade people to embrace, or at least consent to, continuation of the economic and political status quo (Herman and Chomsky 2010).

Three key theories have been used to account for how media hegemony operates, especially in politics: gatekeeping, agenda-setting, and framing. First, the theory of gatekeeping generally describes the power of the mass media to decide what we see, hear, or read based on their ownership and control of the means of news production and dissemination (Schudson 1989, p. 264 ff.). Indeed, even in our age of Web-2.0 many-to-many digital communication (Löwgrenand Reimer 2013, p. 5), the public must still largely rely on major TV networks and newspapers for coverage of current events, national politics and politicians, etc. (Mitchell et al. 2016).

Second, the theory of agenda-setting takes the concept of political control a step further, stressing the importance of not only whether the media covers an event, issue, or person, but how often, with what emphasis, and what effect this has on audiences. In their seminal study of the 1968 US presidential election, McCombs and Shaw (1972) showed that the media largely sets the “public agenda”, influencing what issues voters consider salient based on the frequency, amount, and emphasis of media coverage.

Third and finally, the theory of framing is also highly useful for conceptualizing how the media encourage audiences to interpret political issues, events, and people that have successfully made it onto the media agenda. Gregory Bateson first introduced the concept
of a “frame” as a mental construct that defines “what is going on” (Klandermans and Staggenborg, 2002, p. 63). Erving Goffman (op. cit.) and others further developed the concept for application in sociology and media/communications research. According to Gitlin (1980, p. 7) media frames are “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse”. In this way, framing may be thought of as part of the discursive practices of journalists. It concerns the process of presentation (De Vreese, 2005, p. 53), namely, what aspects of events, issues, or people journalists choose to direct attention towards or away from (Klandermans and Staggenborg, 2002, p. 63) in their effort to tell a story about an unfolding phenomenon, such as a presidential election. The question of whether journalists’ chosen interpretive frames reflect wider ideologies or discourses in society may then be considered separately.

4. Literature Review of Previous Research

Several strands of literature are relevant to my central thesis questions about media representations – whether legitimizing or delegitimizing – of political movements such as that of Bernie Sanders in 2015/16. It is particularly useful to review studies that have investigated media coverage of social (protest) movements and, of course, non-mainstream political parties or candidates. While there are only a few studies focussed specifically on media coverage of non-mainstream political candidates, there are several studies on media representation of social movements that appear relevant. Indeed, at least one researcher has posited that dominant media may utilize a “protest paradigm” when covering political candidates who challenge the status quo (Pankiewicz 2010). Thus, I will begin by reviewing several studies of how the media represent social movements, before concluding with discussion of studies focussed on alternative political parties and candidates.

4.1. Media Coverage of Social Movements

Beginning particularly with Todd Gitlin’s seminal book Whole World Watching (1980), a rich strand of communications research has developed that looks at media portrayals of social movements. In his analysis of media coverage of Vietnam War protests, Gitlin first
described how journalists used recurring frames to represent the social actors involved in the anti-war movement.

Continuing in Gitlin’s analytical tradition, Hackett and Zhao (1994) conducted a study examining newspaper coverage of US anti-war protests during the Gulf War. Their study focused on interpretive frames used by the media, press treatment of different “voices” within the peace movement, and finally how journalists’ framings relate to “culturally embedded ideological assumptions” about war (op. cit., pp. 509–510). Importantly, their study sample – covering the first two weeks of the war – comprised hundreds of articles from small- and medium-sized US newspapers, not the national press used by most studies to represent “the media”. The authors conclude that the press created and selected between three broad interpretive frames to represent the Gulf War protests: Enemy Within, Marginal Oddity, or Legitimate Controversy. The Enemy Within frame, often already identifiable in the headlines (19.7%) of their sample, represented the protests as a threat to “law and order” (op. cit., p. 522). The Marginal Oddity frame, by contrast, conceded protestors’ right to dissent, but cast them as outside the mainstream, “ill-informed”, irrational, etc. (op. cit., p. 518). Notably, young protestors who could easily be portrayed as “emotional”, “immature”, and “naïve” were particularly emphasized in the newspaper coverage. Finally, in contrast to these two delegitimizing frames, the authors identified a Legitimate Controversy frame (visible in 26.6% of headlines) utilized by journalists, which represented protest as a legitimate component of democratic society, despite any disagreement over anti-war aims.

Jumping forward to more current events, namely Occupy Wall Street, a recent study by Deluca et al. (2012) found that the “traditional mass media” (e.g. dominant print news and TV outlets) employed two strategies in an effort to marginalize the Occupy Wall Street protests against inequality and the financial sector in New York in 2011. Examining several major US newspapers and TV stations, the authors argue that dominant media, firstly, sought to ignore the protest by giving it little or no coverage. Secondly, once the event (especially on social media) became too big to ignore, the dominant media sought to frame the protest negatively by portraying the participating
activists as “hippies and flakes and [their] movement as frivolous and aimless” (DeLuca et al. 2012, p. 491) – much like the “Marginal Oddity” frame described by Hackett and Zhao. Elsewhere in the study, DeLuca et al. refer to the two main strategies of delegitimization as that of enforced media “invisibility”, on the one hand, or “frivolous framing”, on the other (op. cit.).

Contrasting to these negative portrayals of left-leaning social movements are the findings of a notable study by Guardino and Snyder (2012), which looked at media representations of the right-leaning Tea Party movement. The authors suggest that the “corporate news media” – specifically Fox News and CNN – sought not to marginalize, but rather to mainstream the rightist Tea Party as a social movement because its rhetoric and discourses (e.g. “personal freedom”, anti-government) could be used to support the neoliberal agenda (e.g. tax cuts, deregulation) that disproportionately benefits corporations. Guardino and Snyder’s study is relevant to my own research topic, as the authors found that even a so-called moderate news outlet like CNN showed bias in favour of a right-wing political movement (even in comparison to Fox News). This raises important questions about the differences between “conservative”, “moderate”, and “liberal” media in today’s dominant media landscape.

4.2. Media Coverage of Alternative Political Parties

Also relevant to this thesis, several studies have examined press coverage of alternative political parties, such as the left-leaning Green Party. These studies also draw on theories of media hegemony, framing, and the ideological role of the news media.

Firstly, in his monograph, Carragee (1991, p. 5) analysed coverage of the West German Green Party in The New York Times from 1979 to 1986, in effort to examine whether the “symbolic world” created by the newspaper texts reflected dominant US interests and ideology. His nuanced conclusion is that “hegemonic framing” becomes most evident when a political party or movement (in this case foreign) directly challenges US interests (e.g. military), while at other times the journalistic framing may appear more ideologically open. However, the author also notes that the Green Party’s political
positions were typically only *superficially* described, with the *Times* journalists opting to emphasize the “strategic and tactical dimensions of politics” rather than substantive ideas, policy differences, and the arguments for or against them (op. cit., p. 22). In other words, the newspaper coverage typically focussed on the “horse race” of campaigns, interparty power struggles, conflicts between leading politicians, etc. instead of actual issues – a common finding in studies of media coverage of politics, especially in the US, but also elsewhere (e.g. Meyrowitz 1994; Kellner 2006; Rinke et al. 2013).

Secondly, returning the focus to US politics, a recent doctoral dissertation by Kirch (2008) examined (regional and national) newspaper coverage of third-party gubernatorial candidates in 2002. Primarily using methods of content analysis, the author found that third-party candidates were given less newspaper coverage, and were featured less prominently when covered at all. Referring to “news frames”, he found that these typically adhered to the two-party perspective. Though he does not use the term, the author also illuminates the *discursive practices* of campaign journalists in several ways. He describes how journalists frequently quote major party officials and seek their advice. He also observes that journalists tend to view elections as a “contest” and have an “economic incentive” to narrow the field so it becomes more manageable to cover. Further, based on direct interviews with reporters, he found that they assessed candidates based on a handful of criteria, namely: the perceived “degree of public support” of candidates, whether their issues “resonated with voters”, their level of “name recognition”, if they ran a “serious campaign”, and levels of money raised. While these assessment criteria might sound reasonable from a public sphere perspective, the author (op. cit., p. 2 ff.) concludes that, overall, “reporters accept the hegemony of the two-party system …[and] act as barriers to American political discourse, excluding marginalized voices from the discussion and failing to challenge the dominant narratives established by political elites.”

Thirdly, a recent thesis by Pankiewicz (2010) examined media coverage of third-party congressional candidates (e.g. senate races). As mentioned earlier, the author posits that the media may utilize a “protest paradigm” (McLeod and Hertog 1999) – including
strategies of “marginalization”, “delegitimization”, and “demonization” – in their coverage of alternative party (e.g. Green) candidates for US Congress. She found that alternative candidates were, indeed, frequently “marginalized” by being omitted from newspaper coverage – less than half of the eligible candidates (10 of 23) she followed received any media coverage. However, the author found that when the candidates did receive coverage, they were seldom “delegitimized” or “demonized” according to the narrow criteria defined in her study.

4.3. Media Coverage of Non-Mainstream Candidates for President

Zeroing in closer to the topic of the present thesis, there are a couple of notable studies that have specifically examined media coverage of non-mainstream presidential candidates. They focus, in particular, on progressive candidates attempting to run for president within the Democratic Party – similar to Bernie Sanders in 2015/16.

A key study by Meyrowitz (1994) examined media coverage – or non-coverage – of the Democratic presidential candidate Larry Agran, who ran against Bill Clinton and five other higher-profile candidates in the 1992 Democratic primary. Despite leading another major candidate in national polls, candidate Agran – who called for cutting the US military budget and using the savings to rebuild poverty-stricken US cities – was largely ignored in articles by the national press and was excluded from participating in the televised Democratic debates. In one case, Agran was even cropped out of a widely circulated Associated Press photo of a CNN event, which had originally pictured him greeting Bill Clinton and other candidates (Figure 5). In this way, the candidate was kept virtually “invisible” in the national press. Ruling out press “conspiracy”, Meyrowitz posits several factors for Agran’s exclusion, including the desire among journalists (and their employers) to save resources by covering fewer candidates as well as their reliance on high-ranking (i.e. Democratic) party officials to tell them which candidates are “viable” and worth reporting on. Notably, the author makes an important distinction between what he calls competing “national journalistic logic” and “public logic”. The former, shaping journalists’ discursive practices, leads them to cover only those candidates considered
(largely by political insiders) to have the best chances of winning, not necessarily the “best ideas” or any other criteria. The latter, “public logic” (echoing notions of the public sphere), refers to ordinary US citizens’ desire – expressed in interviews with the author – to have a chance to see and hear from all presidential candidates so as to compare and evaluate their ideas and policy positions. Meyrowitz notes that voter discontent was high after four years of George Bush, Sr., and that people were open for “new ideas”. However, in conclusion, Meyrowitz writes (op. cit., p. 162) that his case study “suggests that we currently have a relatively closed national news media system that is only slightly sensitive to high degrees of public dissatisfaction with the current functioning of our political system and with so-called major candidates.”

**Figure 5.** Progressive Democratic presidential candidate Larry Agran, pictured to right of Bill Clinton in this CNN image, was cropped out of a key photo of the same 1992 campaign-trail encounter circulated by the national media (Meyrowitz 1992).
Moving forward again in time to the election following the last term of George W. Bush (Jr.), a recent book by Soha (2008) meticulously details how mainstream TV outlets side-lined the 2008 presidential campaigns of lesser-known Democratic candidates Mike Gravel and Dennis Kucinich, and Republican candidate Ron Paul. Common to all three candidates was their congressional record of opposition to US military intervention abroad, including Vietnam and Iraq. In particular, Soha documents how progressive Democratic candidates Gravel and Kucinich were systematically offered fewer questions and given much less time to speak by the moderators of the TV debates. The author also describes how these non-mainstream candidates were visually reinforced as outsiders on TV by positioning them on either end of the televised debate stage, literally at the margins of the field of six other candidates. Further, Soha (op. cit., p. 10) suggests that the few questions posed to Gravel and Kucinich “were often meant to frame them as non-serious candidates or to provoke a sensational, entertaining conflict between one of them and the mainstream candidates”. Additionally, he notes that neither candidate was ever given a chance to explain their core domestic policy aims, for example, single-payer healthcare (Kucinich) or direct democracy (Gravel). Importantly, he describes how Gravel, after being provoked repeatedly with war-related questions, was quickly framed by the press as the “angry uncle”, while Kucinich was framed as “crazy” based on his response to an off-topic question about a “UFO” sighting he was associated with decades before (op. cit., p. 70 ff.).

Perhaps most importantly, Soha (2008) documents how the progressive candidates were finally barred from participating in the most-important debates, just before the Democratic primary voting process was about to begin in Iowa and New Hampshire, based on seemingly arbitrary, shifting criteria (e.g. amount of money raised) apparently determined by TV debate hosts CNN and MSNBC. The author concludes that the exclusion of progressive candidates Gravel and Kucinich worked to effectively narrow the “ideological diversity” of the Democratic field – leaving only Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and John Edwards to debate after other candidates quit the race. At the same time, the author notes, the sponsoring media organizations continued to allow a larger field of candidates to debate on the Republican side, including right-wing candidates with
openly “xenophobic” attitudes and other views outside the political mainstream (*op. cit.*, p. 57 ff.).

### 5. Methodology and Data

As the literature review above suggests, the American media have arguably been delegitimizing progressive political candidates and social movements in various ways for several decades. Against this backdrop, let us now turn to the main question for analysis in the present thesis: How were the person and the progressive movement of Bernie Sanders represented – whether legitimizing or delegitimizing⁴ – by influential US newspapers during the 2015 invisible primary? Below, I will first outline the methods from the CDA toolkit that I selected and implemented to investigate this main question and related sub-questions. Second, I will describe the data I selected and how. Afterwards, in Section 6, I will present my actual analysis and results based on the methods used.

#### 5.1. Methodological Tools of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

According to Teun van Dijk (2013), CDA is “not a method of critical discourse analysis”. His point is that CDA does not correspond to a single specific analytical method, but rather encompasses a variety of methods ranging from grammatical to semantic or rhetorical analysis, using techniques such as text analysis, interviewing, ethnography, and so on (*op. cit.*). Indeed, one look at Fairclough’s three-dimensional concept of discourse (see Section 3.4) suggests that a truly holistic analysis of discourse could deploy all manner of methods known in the social sciences. Instead, Van Dijk emphasizes two things: First, for researchers, it is the “critical” (*op. cit.*) in CDA that is of the utmost importance, i.e. adoption of a “state of mind” or “rebellious attitude of dissent against the symbolic power elites that dominate public discourse, especially in politics, the media and education”. Second, as Van Dijk states clearly (*op. cit.*), “[a] good method is a method that is able to give a satisfactory (reliable, relevant, etc.) answer to the questions of a research project.”

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⁴ *Legitimization and Delegitimization* is one of four key “strategic functions” that a politically relevant text/discourse may serve, according to Chilton and Schäffner (1997, p. 212 ff.). Analysts may use this function interpretively (as a hypothesis) in their consideration of what a text/discourse is doing.
With this in mind, I chose a custom mix of methods or “tools” from the CDA toolkit, based on their apparent strengths in answering questions, such as mine, regarding how social actors and movements are represented in texts. In other words, the methods I selected appear particularly useful for revealing how journalists construct the identity of the social actors they write about, and frame what is most of interest. Specifically, I selected and implemented the following core methods to investigate the main sample (detailed in 5.2) of 16 newspaper articles from The New York Times and The Washington Post:

First, beginning at a more macro textual level, I conducted a brief analysis of global coherence to identify the main themes of the articles in the sample and to orient the analysis. This entailed investigation of headlines and within-text “macropropositions” or core statements.

Second, moving to the micro textual level and the bulk of my linguistic analysis, I examined how Sanders and his supporters were named and referenced, and assigned particular qualities based on lexical categorization and other linguistic representational strategies (e.g. predication). Put simply, I examined what words (e.g. nouns, adjectives, modifying phrases, and predicates) were chosen by journalists to construct the identity of Sanders and his supporters across the sample of texts. I colour-coded all of these words and word strings (e.g. red for Sanders; blue for supporters), collected them on other documents, and then ranked them by frequency of occurrence, initially keeping the results from either newspaper separate to enable basic comparison. This step provided the basis for the core of my linguistic analysis: inductive identification of broader interpretive frames used to represent Sanders and his supporters. To identify the interpretive frames, I clustered the collected linguistic representational strategies according to shared meanings, combining the results from both newspapers. For example, I clustered the collected lexical categorizations labelling Sanders as a “socialist” together

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5 In my understanding and usage, interpretive frames are a narrower unit of meaning than discourses (structuralist definition), but may reflect them. For example, an interpretive frame emphasizing someone’s old age may reflect a broader “ageist” discourse in society that associates weakness (rather than wisdom) with the elderly.
with others naming him a “lonely leftist” or as having “risen from the leftist fringe”. Finally, when identifying the frames, I also considered *collocated* words found in the original text that might reinforce a given frame (e.g. the word “socialist” applied to others, not Sanders, but still appearing in the text). After identifying the frames, I considered how they might be legitimizing or delegitimizing of Sanders and his supporters, based on my own subjective interpretation, sociocultural knowledge as an American, and reading of the literature.

Thirdly and finally, returning to the macro level, I carried out an *image analysis* to examine how Sanders was visually represented in the main photos accompanying the articles. In particular, I examined gaze, angle, and depth of field, with a view to how these might work together to portray Sanders’ identity in a legitimizing or delegitimizing way, for example, by representing him as a friendly person or not.

In keeping with a “critical” mind set throughout the analysis, I particularly focussed on key *lexical choices* (words/phrases used where others might have been more appropriate), *absences* (what could/should have been said, but was omitted), unusual *patterns* (e.g. overuse of certain words), *visual choices*, etc. I especially looked for choices/absences/patterns that could be ideologically relevant. Finally, I occasionally conducted rudimentary corpus-analytical comparisons to other articles/samples, to test the validity of my observations.

### 5.2. Sample: Front-Page Articles on Bernie Sanders from *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*

Data collection was begun in March 2017 as part of a pilot test of CDA methods (Lannen unpublished). My aim was to select newspaper articles that have meaningful weight – e.g. could have impacted public opinion – and might possess a degree of representativeness. Based on these criteria, I chose to analyse front-page articles focussed on Sanders from broadsheet newspapers *The New York Times* (henceforth *NYT*) and *The Washington Post* (henceforth *WP*) in 2015, encompassing the period when Sanders initially
announced his presidential campaign until just before the first votes were cast in the Democratic Primary (i.e. May to December 2015).

Firstly, I believe these articles have meaningful weight because _NYT_ is the main print source of political news among so-called liberals in the US (Mitchell et al. 2014), while _WP_ is a key national newspaper originating in Washington DC, the country’s political capital. Secondly, because Sanders was virtually unknown to the national public prior to his campaign announcement, the chosen period coincides with his introduction to national audiences by the media in their role as _gatekeepers_ and _agenda-setters_. The media were constructing the _identity_ of Sanders and his campaign in the minds of Americans during this pre-voting period. Sanders also received very little national TV coverage (TR 2016), which further increases the importance of the newspaper coverage he _did_ receive in terms of shaping public opinion. Thirdly and finally, the initial search for newspaper articles showed that _NYT_ and _WP_ each published _eight_ front-page articles focussed mainly on Sanders over this period, such that the resulting sample of 16 articles is arguably somewhat representative. Thus, this relatively manageable selection of articles highlights what the editors and journalists at _NYT_ and _WP_ apparently deemed most (front-page) newsworthy about Sanders during the invisible primary.

Crucially, I did not choose articles solely by pre-screening them and selecting only those that fit my “pre-given purpose and position”, a common weakness in CDA that Barker (2008, p. 150) refers to as the “convenience sample”. Concretely, I selected the sample by searching the newspaper database _LexisNexis Academic_ using the keyword “Bernie Sanders” and filtering the results for _NYT_ and _WP_ to show only those articles that appeared on the front page of either newspaper for the year 2015 (listed chronologically). This produced 60 initial results for _NYT_ and 79 initial results for _WP_.

Next, I individually examined all of the initial results to identify only those articles _focussed mainly on Sanders_. For example, I excluded articles covering the first Democratic debate and articles that covered Sanders and Trump together as examples of a “populist” phenomenon sweeping the country. This step enabled me to narrow the
results to the final sample of 16 articles, split evenly between the two newspapers. While this last screening step was undoubtedly subjective, others may transparently review the original, full-length front-page search results at this link http://tinyurl.com/kc4nt52 for the NYT and at this link http://tinyurl.com/lgfb2wu for the WP. (The articles selected for analysis are highlighted in yellow in the linked documents.) In addition, I also filtered and listed the LexisNexis search results by relevance (i.e. by in-text frequency of the keyword “Bernie Sanders”) for each newspaper, which showed that the selected articles were within the top (e.g. 10–20) results sorted this way as well (see Figures 6 and 7, below).

6. Analysis and Results

6.1. Major Themes of Front-Page Articles on Bernie Sanders: Cursory Analysis of Global Coherence

Newspaper articles or “news discourses” comprise various micro-level (e.g. words) and macro-level (e.g. headlines) semantic structures that create local and global meaning or coherence (Van Dijk 1995). News texts typically feature an identifiable hierarchal organization in terms of their major theme and subthemes, usually found in common journalistic text elements such as the headline and lead (Fairclough 1995). If we wish to identify the main overall theme of a newspaper article – or its global coherence (Van Dijk 1995, p. 282 ff.) – we can often find it summarized in the headline. Further, if we wish to identify its subthemes, we can often discern them as a handful of core statements – or macropropositions (op. cit.) – contained in the lead or sprinkled throughout the text. The headlines of the 16 articles in the sample are listed below in Table 1.

Figure 7. LexisNexis search results for front-page articles on “Bernie Sanders” in 2015, sorted by “Relevance”, for The Washington Post.
Cursory analysis of the headlines and core statements in the sample of 16 texts reveals several overall thematic focuses (see Appendix A for full articles). First, there is a particular emphasis on Sanders as someone outside the mainstream, possibly even riskily at the political–cultural edge. At least three NYT articles reflect this theme ([2], [3], [4]), as do two WP articles ([9], [12], [16]). Second, there is distinct emphasis on events from Sanders’ biography that lie significantly in the past, especially the period when he first lived in Burlington, Vermont, beginning in the 1960s, and then the period of his tenure as mayor there in the 1980s, including his first run for Congress in 1990. Two articles from the NYT fit into this category ([2], [8]), as do two articles from the WP ([10], [12]). Third, several articles appear to be examples of “horse race” campaign coverage,
focussing especially on the numerous people attending Sanders’ speeches and funding his campaign. Two articles from the NYT fit into this thematic category ([5], [6]), as do two articles from the WP ([11], [13]). Fourth, at least two articles in the NYT focus on aspects of Sanders’ personal identity, particularly his age and alleged temperament ([1], [7]), the latter in an overtly unflattering way. Fifth and finally, only one article ([4]) – appearing in the WP – focuses explicitly on Sanders’ policy proposals. It does so in a way that is strongly delegitimizing, bordering on the tone of an opinion-editorial – not a genre traditionally found on the front page. Sanders’ policies are occasionally touched on in other articles, but usually only superficially.

Finally, basic content analysis revealed most texts to involve three or four sets of social actors: Bernie Sanders; his supporters/undecided voters; and people invited to comment on Sanders/his campaign (e.g. other politicians, various specialists, campaign staff, old friends/associates) – the “voice” of the journalist could also be considered here. In the next section, the core of my linguistic analysis, I examine the representation of Sanders and his supporters.

6.2. Linguistic Representation of Bernie Sanders and His Supporters: Analysis of Lexical Categorizations and Interpretive Frames

As stated by Machin and Mayr (2012, p. 77), “in any language there exists no neutral way to represent a person…all choices will serve to draw attention to certain aspects of identity that will be associated with certain kinds of discourses.” The choices writers have at their disposal are largely a matter of vocabulary, or lexicon. In this way, journalists must decide what words will best convey their view of those they write about, or what should be foregrounded about them – possibly at the expense of backgrounding other important information. Vocabulary choices also correspond with diverse “sets of preconstructed categories” of meaning (Fairclough 1995, p. 109), which can produce highly divergent representations of the identity or position of social actors vis-à-vis broader societal issues. For example, the simple choice between representing a low-income population group as “poor”, or, instead, as “oppressed” is linked to choices about whether to categorize people based on their living conditions or in terms of relationships
of exploitation (*op. cit.* p. 113). Implicitly or explicitly, these choices may also reflect the ideological position of the writer vis-à-vis the social actors written about.

In this section, I will examine the top words – e.g. nouns, adjectives – chosen by *NYT* and *WP* journalists to *name* and *reference* (Richardson 2007, p. 52) or *lexically categorize* Sanders and his supporters⁶. Further, I will analyse some of the longer strings of words, or *predicational strategies* – e.g. modifying words/phrases, predicates – used to represent the values, qualities, and position of these social actors. The results of this latter step will be presented as *interpretive frames* identified by semantically clustering the different *representational strategies*.

### 6.2.1. Lexical categorization of Sanders

Table 2 below lists the top 10 most-frequently used individual words and word pairs to *name* and *reference* Sanders across the eight *NYT* articles (left) and eight *WP* articles (right) in the sample. (See Appendix C, for the full list of main lexical categorizations of Sanders.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>candidate</td>
<td>socialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mayor</td>
<td>mayor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>senator</td>
<td>candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seventy[-three, -four, -five]</td>
<td>senator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>socialist</td>
<td>independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>independent</td>
<td>politician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liberal</td>
<td>seventy[-three, -four, -five]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outsider</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ideologue</td>
<td>ex-hippie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deal maker</td>
<td>left[-ist]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Top ten lexical categorizations of Sanders (name / no. of refs.; ranked by frequency, then alphabetically)

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⁶ N.B.: All word/term counts should be taken as best estimates, and merely indicative of potentially meaningful patterns (e.g. based on frequency of reference). Creating and tallying lexical categorizations, etc. is not an exact science. It requires interpretation that may differ between analysts. For example, where social actors were referred to variously as “older people”, “older voters”, “older supporters”, I interpreted the core meaning to reside in “older”, and built a lexical category based on that interpretation.
Several things are interesting about the words most frequently used to label Sanders in 2015. Beginning with the *WP*, what immediately stands out is the remarkable incidence of the term “socialist”, used a total of 20 times to describe Sanders – more than any other term. By comparison, “socialist” is used six times by *NYT* reporters. This appears to be significant case of *overlexicalization*, 7 which is possibly the most ideologically controlled dimension of discourse (Van Dijk 1995, p. 259). Another way of thinking about it is to consider whether another lexical term could have been used to name Sanders that might point in a similar political (e.g. left-leaning) direction, but would have fewer fraught associations in the American political-historical context. One obvious choice would be “liberal”, and indeed we find this term used once by *WP* and three times by the *NYT*. However, likely much more appropriate would be use of the term “progressive” to describe Sanders. Indeed, in multiple interviews in 2015 and in the past, Sanders stated explicitly and emphatically that he viewed himself as a “progressive”, not as a “liberal” (Cohn 2015, C-SPAN 2 2003). Remarkably, the term “progressive” is not used once to denote Sanders in any of the sampled front-page *WP* or *NYT* articles. Similarly, it might have made more sense to label Sanders an “Independent”, as that has been his official party/political designation in the US Congress since 1990. Despite this, both newspapers use “Independent” only three times each – far less often than “socialist”, especially in the case of the *WP*.

Also notable is the frequent use of “*mayor***” to refer to Sanders (nine times by the *WP*; eight times by *NYT*). This appears significant, frankly, because Sanders ceased to be the mayor of Vermont in 1990. He has been a member of Congress for decades, first as a House representative and then, beginning in 2007, as a senator. Yet the *WP* and the *NYT* only refer to him as a “senator” (his current office) five times and eight times each, respectively. This begs the question as to why they would be discussing Sanders so frequently in terms of an office he last held around 25 years ago. Viewed critically, it suggests that – once again – focussing on his time as mayor provided more opportunities

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7 *Overlexicalization* (Machin and Mayr 2012, p. 222): “This is where we find a word or its synonyms ‘over-present’ in a text (i.e. the word or its synonyms are used more than we would normally expect). This is normally evidence of some kind of moral [or ideological] awkwardness or attempt to over-persuade.” Bracketed term added by the present author.
to discuss him in connection with the ideologically loaded word “socialist”. Indeed, the eight years that Sanders served as mayor coincided with the last eight years of the Cold War, such that media coverage of Sanders at the time focussed on casting him as the “socialist mayor” in a sensationalistic way (Sanders et al. 2015, p. 67). Writing about “mayor” Sanders thus provided a chance to dredge up this Cold War-era media discourse.

Further of interest are the frequent references to Sanders’ age. The NYT, in particular, references Sanders’ age (e.g. “73”) on seven occasions alone in these eight front-page articles; indeed, it is the fourth-most frequent referential strategy used by the NYT in terms of a one- or two-word lexical choice. To test if this was significant, however, and not merely standard journalistic practice, I made a quick corpus-analytical comparison to front-page NYT articles mentioning Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump over the same period. I found that out of 85 front-page NYT articles mentioning “Hillary Clinton” in 2015 (see full sample here: http://tinyurl.com/lrq7s6c), there were only four references to her age (“67”). Further, out of 85 front-page NYT articles mentioning “Donald Trump” in 2015 (see full sample here: http://tinyurl.com/kxkq8qr), there were only two references to his age (“69”). This comparison suggests that the repeated indication of Sanders’ age was a unique, deliberate lexical decision on the part of NYT journalists. Finally, the WP also referenced Sanders’ age on three occasions in the sample of eight WP articles, prominently naming him a “septuagenarian” in the very first line of the first article [9] covering his campaign announcement, in fact.

Several of the other top words used to name Sanders in either newspaper appear relatively unbiased statements of fact – such as “candidate” or “politician”. Others, such as “outsider” (mentioned twice in the NYT) or “ex-hippie” (mentioned twice in the WP), are more clearly evaluative or ideologically relevant. Indeed, there are several other individually mentioned “naming” words that may be linked to delegitimizing or legitimizing representations. To reveal potentially significant patterns, however, it becomes necessary to cluster and analyse the various words by similarity of meaning (e.g. synonyms). Further, it is necessary to widen the analysis to longer word strings, in
particular modifying or attributive words, phrases, and predicates that “bear the imprint of value judgements” (Richardson 2007, p. 52).

6.2.2. Interpretive frames of Sanders

By expanding the analysis and clustering various linguistic representational strategies – or predication\(^8\) – according to shared meanings, a number of interpretive frames used to portray Sanders emerge. This step of inductively inferring frame categories is subjective. However, others may review my working coding and semantic clustering of text elements at this link for the NYT [http://tinyurl.com/n8bly2t](http://tinyurl.com/n8bly2t) and this link for the WP [http://tinyurl.com/y7cjtow4](http://tinyurl.com/y7cjtow4). The frames are listed below according to perceived weight, based on overall frequency of mention across the text sample.

**Extreme Leftist.** The weightiest frame to emerge across all 16 texts suggests that Sanders is on the hard left of the political spectrum. This frame has clear ideological relevance, and is most evident in the eight WP articles, but also in the eight NYT texts. Besides repeated use of the word “socialist” in direct application to Sanders, the word “socialist” is heavily collocated\(^9\) with his name throughout the texts by applying it to other social actors, policies, etc. referenced in association with Sanders. Altogether, the term “socialist” appears a remarkable 65 times (of those, 50 in the WP texts), contributing to a distinct overall “lexical field” (Fowler 1991, ref. in Machin and Mayr, p. 31) symbolizing far-left politics across the full sample. In the WP, for example, Sanders is said to have “risen from the leftist fringe”, to have been a “far-left independent” as mayor, and currently to be a “lonely leftist” and the “purist socialist” in the Senate. In the NYT, he is said to have “[come] up in radical left politics”, to have been a “socialist mayor”, to have “a sweepingly macro, if not entirely Marxist, critique of America“, and to be considered by his Senate colleagues as “a compromise-allergic ideologue”. Additionally, the frequently used term “liberal” (see above) is sometimes qualified with modifiers like

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\(^8\) **Predication:** “The discursive qualification of social actors, objects, events, processes and actions by semiotic means of ascription and attribution such as adjectives, prepositional phrases, relative clauses, conjunctural clauses, infinitive clauses and participial clauses or groups” (Wodak and Meyer 2016, p. 235).

\(^9\) **Collocation:** “Lexical items are said to collocate with one another if they habitually co-occur. The phenomenon is referred to as collocation, and items that are typically found near the so-called node word (i.e., the word you have searched for) are its collocates” (Wodak and Meyer 2016, p. 234).
“most” to give it an extreme connotation. References are also repeatedly made to Sanders’ call for “revolution”, placing the term in scare quotes. Finally, historical anecdotes from the 1970s and 1980s are taken as opportunities to collocate words like “Cuba”, “Nicaragua”, “Sandinistas”, and “Soviet Union” – all clearly linked to Cold War discourses about threatening left-wing politics.

**Skilled, Pragmatic Politician.** One relatively legitimizing frame that emerges within both the *NYT* and *WP* texts portrays Sanders as a skilful and pragmatic politician. On occasion, however, it veers towards a less-flattering representation – especially in the *WP* – of Sanders as calculating and compromising his “ideology” to gain power. In the *NYT*, he is described as a “pragmatist”, “deal maker”, “hard bargainer”, “horse trader”, and “incrementalist”. He is portrayed as skilled in the way he has “mobilized voters” and “amassed a million online donations” in mere months, especially with his “populist” appeals. In an interesting case of *intertextuality*\(^\text{10}\) between the *NYT* ([8]) and *WP* ([12]), a decades-old story allegedly showing Sander’s pragmatism as mayor apparently serves the dual purpose of justifying the US military-industrial complex: Sanders is said to have approved the arrest of “leftists” who were blocking union workers from entering a Vermont General Electric plant where they manufactured weapons. Similarly, one entire *WP* article ([10]) represents Sanders as having made a “tacit ally out of the [National Rifle Association]” in order to win his first election to Congress in 1990. Finally, the *WP* also uses the term “pragmatic politician” to describe Sanders, prints quotes from others calling him a “master politician” and a “skilled and savvy politician”, credits his “grass-roots campaign”, and cites his “populist message” that notably even appeals to “coal miners” and “white guy[s]” from Vermont to West Virginia and other Southern or Midwestern states.

**Marginal Oddity.** Another frame that is strongly present in the *WP* texts, but also in the *NYT* texts to a lesser extent, appears designed to portray Sanders as personally deviant, 

\(^{10}\) *Intertextuality* “means that texts are linked to other texts, in both the past and the present. Such connections are established in different ways: through explicit reference to a topic or main actor; through references to the same events; by allusions or evocations; by the transfer of main arguments from one text to the next, and so forth” (Wodak and Meyer 2016, p. 28).
odd, or outside the mainstream. In this way, the *WP* twice refers to Sanders explicitly as an “ex-hippie”. It describes him as wearing a “rumpled suit” and “rumpled clothes”, having a “frizzy pile of white hair” and “wild hair”. Interestingly, the *WP* also repeatedly mentions Sanders’ Brooklyn roots and Polish descent (e.g. “son of a paint salesman who immigrated from Poland”). Further, in one remarkable passage, a *WP* writer openly teases Sanders’ Brooklyn accent by transcribing his pronunciation phonetically (“lahwge” [large], “work-uhs” [workers]). Among other things, these references to Brooklyn and Poland could be meant to call attention to Sanders’ Jewish heritage, though it is hard to know; the delegitimizing effect of belittling his accent seems clear, however. Even occasional small textual details in the *WP* sample appear arbitrary unless intended to represent Sanders as somehow odd, such as description of how “the microphone signaled slight feedback” during his campaign-launch announcement. As for the *NYT*, its front-page articles also represent Sanders as unusual in several ways, most conspicuously by repeatedly calling attention to his advanced age, as noted earlier. Sanders is described physically as having “white hair and [a] hunched posture“ or as “tieless, his white hair askew, his shoulders stooped”. One *NYT* journalist emphasizes that if Sanders “were to win the election, he would be 75 when he took office, becoming the oldest person to assume the presidency”. Finally, in another revealing case of intertextuality, both the *NYT* ([2]) and the *WP* ([12]) choose to emphasize a handful of writings by Sanders, originally published in a counter-culture newspaper the *Vermont Freeman* in the early 1970s, and republished by *Mother Jones* magazine in 2015 (Murphy T). These text passages especially function to represent Sanders as unusual – even deviant – as a young man decades ago.

**Angry, Impersonal.** Interestingly, considering the eight *NYT* articles alone, the strongest frame to emerge from analysis is one that represents Sanders as a particularly angry and/or impersonal human being. This is notable because this frame is not apparent in the main lexical categorizations described earlier. However, it quickly becomes apparent when one semantically clusters the modifiers and predicates attributed to Sanders. He is referred to as an “outraged outsider”, a “stern family uncle”, as having a “grumpy demeanor”, prone to “display irritation” and to show “disdain for the things he views as
unimportant”, and so on. His campaign is said to offer “mad-as-hell supporters” a chance to “vent their anger”. Further, one of the most marked signifiers of this frame in the NYT texts are quoting verbs, especially metapropositional and metalinguistic verbs (Machin and Mayr 2012, p. 57 ff.), that is, verbs describing Sanders’ speech that reflect the interpretation of the journalist. In this way, verbs such as “shout”, “bellow”, “berate”, and even “snarl” are used repeatedly to represent Sanders’ speech. Similarly, a variety of verbs used to portray his actions or intentions suggest aggression or coldness. He is said to “ignore” people, “barrel” by them, or to have “[vowed to]…smash the political establishment”.

A couple other emerging interpretive frames are evident across the 16 texts in the sample, but they do not have quite as much combined weight as those described above. In particular, one incipient frame might be called Futile Candidate, representing Sanders’ campaign as doomed from the start. Notably, this frame is especially reinforced with statements about Sanders attributed to other US congressmen – Democrats especially – as well as various political insiders and pundits. Ten out of 13 such quotes about Sanders I counted in the NYT were negative (e.g. “There is almost a pervasive sense of, he is never going to be president”, Joe Trippi, a Democratic consultant). Five of 10 such quotes in the WP were negative (e.g. "Look, I wish this country were further left than it is, but I live in reality", former congressman Barney Frank, a Massachusetts Democrat). Finally, another emergent frame might be called Truth Teller, owing especially to a handful of positive quotes about Sanders attributed to voters (e.g. NYT: “He is telling the truth, and not giving political speeches”, [WOMAN], 67, a retired insurance manager; WP: He's just a likable fellow, trustworthy”, [MAN], 62, a coal miner).

6.2.3. Lexical categorization of supporters

Table 3 below lists the top 10 most-frequently used individual words and word pairs (e.g. nouns, adjectives) to name and reference the supporters of Sanders across all eight NYT articles (left column) and all eight WP articles (right column) in the sample. (See Appendix C for the full list of main lexical categorizations of Sanders’ supporters.)
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<tr>
<td>crowd</td>
<td>hundreds / thousands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>older [people / voters]</td>
<td>activists</td>
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<tr>
<td>hundreds / thousands</td>
<td>crowd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liberal</td>
<td>crowd</td>
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<td>white</td>
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<td>activists</td>
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<td>circle of believers</td>
<td>Progressive Democrats</td>
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<tr>
<td>disaffected Democrats</td>
<td>professional left</td>
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Table 3. Top ten lexical categorizations of supporters (name / no. of refs.; ranked by frequency, then alphabetically)

Probably the most obvious trend in these concise lexical choices is how the supporters of Sanders are named using broad, faceless terms. The NYT refers to his supporters 13 times as a “crowd”, whereas the WP uses “crowd” seven times. Similarly, the top way (12 times) that the WP describes Sanders’ supporters is as aggregated numbers (e.g. “thousands”) of “people”; this representational strategy is mirrored by the NYT in five instances. A cursory review of these lexical choices might deem them legitimizing of the Sanders movement – after all, they indicate notable levels of support very early in the campaign. On the other hand, however, these anonymous “collectivizing” (Machin and Mayr 2012, p. 80) lexical choices might also be thought of as precluding any potential sense of personal identification or connection with these social actors on the part of newspaper readers. Use of generic terms like “crowd” and “people” also deemphasizes the political agency of Sanders’ supporters. Indeed, this sort of passive implication is cast in even sharper relief by use of the word “audience” in four instances by the WP. It rather explicitly characterizes Sanders’ supporters as spectators, not participants, in democracy.

However, another high-ranking lexical choice might appear to contradict this passive representation: namely, that of naming Sander’s supporters as “activists” – done 10 times in the WP and once in the NYT. Indeed, this word “functionalizes” these social actors, however, it still keeps them anonymous and, more importantly, assigns them a very particular role with very ideologically loaded connotations (op. cit., p. 81). Indeed, labelling Sanders’ supporters as “activists” could be seen as an early attempt to
pigeonhole them in the “protest paradigm” (Pankiewicz 2010). Other more unique lexical choices, drawing from one WP article in particular, reinforce this representation, including naming the supporters “Occupy Wall Street veterans” and “Occupy-colored People for Bernie”.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the word “liberal” also features prominently on the list of terms used by the NYT (four times) and the WP (five times) to name Sanders’ supporters. Indeed, the binary sorting of Americans into the two categories of “liberal” and “conservative” – typically automatically linked to the Democratic Party and the Republican Party, respectively – goes back decades (Freeden 2015, p. 118 ff.). In current American politics, “liberal” generally carries connotations of social openness (e.g. appreciation for multiculturalism) and protection of individual rights, particularly those that might offend others on religious grounds (e.g. abortion rights). At the same time, especially since the 1980s under Reagan, the word “liberal” has been under continual assault from right-wing political and media actors, seeking to turn it into a pejorative (op. cit.). Over the years, its usage has become closely tied to a variety of intentionally delegitimizing discourses about domestic policy (e.g. “tax-and-spend liberal”) and foreign policy (e.g. “weak liberal”) ascribed to mainstream Democrats.

Also notable among the most-used collectivizing names is “older”, applied a total of eight times by the NYT to describe Sanders’ supporters. By contrast, other than one reference to “greying hippies”, collectivizing lexical choices representing Sanders’ supporters as old are relatively absent from the WP articles. In fact, despite the NYT emphasis, most polls showed Sanders to be struggling for support among seniors around the time these articles were written (Sanders 2016). Viewed benignly, the NYT may have focussed on elderly supporters simply to create a story based on an easy media frame. However, it may also have been an intentional device to call attention to Sanders himself as someone too old for the presidency. Additionally, I believe it further highlights how journalists tend to divide up the American electorate according to “identity” categories, while backgrounding or omitting important categories that cut across them (e.g. income-based).
Lastly, analysing the instances where Sanders’ supporters are described *individually* reveals a couple of remarkable patterns (see full list in Appendix C). Most interesting, perhaps: *individually profiled supporters are almost never mentioned in connection with any ordinary job*, professional occupation, source of income, etc. Out of 12 instances I counted in the NYT sample where individual Sanders supporters are named personally (and often quoted), only one supporter is described in terms of current gainful employment (“physical therapist”). Two are identified as “retired” or as a “retiree”, while one is mentioned as a “student” and one is portrayed as an “activist”. The remainder are referenced solely in terms of their *family name, age, and/or place of origin* (e.g. “from Columbus”). This absence seems significant: first, omitting people’s jobs may prevent newspaper readers from identifying with such social actors based on shared occupations. Second, it may prevent them from thinking about broader economic or class-based linkages, not to mention struggles that span identity categories like “old”, “white”, “black”, “women”, and so on. Third, it may subtly reinforce stereotypes that pit “lazy”, “fringe”, or “elite” people on the left side of the American political spectrum against “hard-working” people on the right.

Indeed, this noticeable pattern of omitting reference to people’s jobs is repeated in the WP sample, with the added twist that many Sanders’ supporters are named individually as an “activist” due to the one WP article ([11]) focussed on that theme. Out of 18 instances where individual Sanders supporters are described personally in the entire WP sample, only once is a supporter named in terms of a relatively ordinary job (“coal miner”). Instead, we find mentions of remote-sounding occupations like “rapper”, “comedian”, and “artist”. Again, the most common label applied to individual Sanders’ supporters is “activist”: four are named individually as an “activist”, while two others are referenced with occupations that could be interpreted as activism (i.e. “national digital organizer for People for Bernie” and “leader of the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles”). Again, this absence may prevent readers from seeing themselves reflected in the individuals described. One need only imagine the difference if a supporter of Sanders were instead named as a “local elementary school teacher”, a “nurse”, or a “fire fighter” – even in combination with the label “activist”. Instead, they
are reduced to the “activist” category and arguably othered as a result. This may even reinforce stereotypes of the “professional left” – people who have nothing better to do than protest – which is ironically mentioned twice in one of the WP articles.

Also noticeably absent are other humanizing lexical choices, such as names related to family ties. The exception proves the rule: in just one case I found across all 16 articles, a supporter is personally named as a “single mother” – the type of “individualization” that might trigger empathy in readers (Machin and Mayr 2012, p. 80). Overall, the effect of such sweeping omissions may be to prevent audience identification with these tens of thousands of people motivated to support an “outsider” with an economic justice message.

### 6.2.4. Interpretive frames of supporters

By once again expanding the analysis to include longer word strings and clustering various linguistic representational strategies according to shared meanings, several main interpretive frames used to portray Sanders’ supporters become evident. My working analyses of semantic clusters involving supporters are available at this link for the NYT [http://tinyurl.com/kny47og](http://tinyurl.com/kny47og) and at this link for the WP [http://tinyurl.com/n4wjedm](http://tinyurl.com/n4wjedm). Again, the frames are listed below in order of perceived weight across and within the 16 sampled texts.

**Disaffected Activists.** As suggested earlier regarding lexical categorization, the weightiest frame to emerge from the full sample is that of Sanders’ supporters as dissatisfied activists. Combining the WP and NYT texts results in over 35 linguistic-semantic references to this frame. Again, merely representing these social actors as activists while omitting mention of gainful employment may already serve to delegitimize them, or at least separate them from “ordinary” Americans. However, the sampled newspaper articles appear to undermine these social actors in other subtle ways as well. The NYT, for example, repeatedly emphasizes their anger (e.g. “mad-as-hell supporters”, “disaffected Democrats…vent their anger”), while omitting mention of statistics on poverty, unemployment, student debt, healthcare costs, etc. that might make such emotions appear rational and fact-based. Instead, the worries and critiques of these social actors are largely
cast as their own personal assertions, appearing between quotation marks, or paraphrased using verbs like “believe” that leave room for doubt (e.g. “national ills they believe are caused by big business and its conservative allies …”). Further, in the WP, descriptions of these social actors wearing “T-shirts with red hammers and sickles” and listening to “songs by Willie Nelson, Tracy Chapman and Neil Young” evoke broader discourses of US political and cultural division. Finally, the WP raises the prospect that the true intent of these supporters is merely to force other presidential candidates to the left, not actually to elect Sanders (“a gambit, by liberals”).

**Excitable Fans.** Another strongly present frame across both the NYT and WP articles portrays Sanders’ supporters as a mass of excited followers. While this sort of frame could appear positive at first glance – also suggesting impressive support – it may also subtly function to make these social actors appear overly enthusiastic, bordering on irrationality, as well as immature and lacking meaningful political agency. In this way, the NYT journalists describe Sanders’ supporters as “fans”, “fervent crowds”, “impassioned followers”, and even once as a cultish-sounding “circle of believers”, while the WP writes of “large and frenzied audiences”, “boisterous audiences”, and “overflow crowds”. Representations of the behavior of these social actors also serve to reinforce this frame: They are described in the NYT as displaying “wild enthusiasm”, “nodd[ing] passionately”, “roar[ing]”, “cheering”, “chant[ing]…’Bernie, Bernie, Bernie’”, and making “gushing comparisons [of Sanders] to Franklin Delano Roosevelt”. The WP similarly describes supporters “sprint[ing] to get as close as possible to the stage”, “roar[ing]”, and “shout[ing]”. Also included in this frame are multiple references to younger supporters. The NYT refers to “curious students”, while the WP notes “young hipsters” at rallies. “I wanted to tell him how much I loved him”, says one 18-year-old female college student quoted in the NYT. “Bernie is the one”, a male college freshman curious about “socialism” is quoted as saying in the WP. As Hackett and Zhao (1994) highlight in their study of anti-war protests, news frames that emphasize the role of younger people in social movements may delegitimize them by making them appear naïve or emotionally driven. This is also evidenced in NYT statements such as “[Sanders’] message…appeals to idealistic young Americans who do not pay much in taxes”.

Notably absent from an observation like this, cast in the objective voice of the reporter, are facts and context that would make younger people’s support for Sanders’ economic message appear eminently rational. For example, a recent census study revealed that *one in five young adults now live in poverty in the US* (Kasperkevic 2014).

**Faceless Mass.** As described earlier with respect to basic lexical categorization, there are also numerous generic references across the full *NYT* and *WP* text sample to “crowds”, “audiences”, “throngs”, “rally attendees”, and “scores” or “tens of thousands” of “people” showing up at Sanders’ campaign events in the summer of 2015. However, they are generally only described using modifiers that estimate their numerical size (e.g. “28,000”, “10,000”, “600”) and otherwise remain anonymous and stripped of agency. It is left to other interpretive frames, described above and below, to give readers any real idea who lies behind these impressive numbers.

Last of all, there are a handful of smaller, nascent frames that begin to take shape across the full sample of 16 texts. These emerging frames can be discussed together, however, because they appear to share a common denominator, i.e. they implicitly or explicitly suggest that Americans vote as “blocs” based especially on aspects of personal identity such as age or race. First, as mentioned regarding lexical categorization, one *NYT* article ([[1]]) particularly emphasizes *Elderly Voters* as comprising a “sizable minority of the crowds” at Sanders’ campaign events. One interesting statement written in the reporter’s voice reads as follows: “if young people and African-Americans identified with Barack Obama during his presidential run in 2008, older Americans said that Mr. Sanders had struck a deeply personal chord with them”. This proposition, attributed to no individual in particular, has the effect of naturalizing voting mainly on the basis of one’s age or race, again downplaying the importance of more broadly shared economic interests. Similarly, two other frames that begin to emerge across the texts are that of *Liberal Whites* and *Low-Income Whites*. In the *NYT*, Sanders is described as receiving support from a “predominantly white coalition of older voters…young people, liberals and working-class families” and as drawing crowds that are “overwhelmingly white, for the most part liberal activists”. In the *WP*, the leaders of another campaign are said to wonder whether Sanders’
“support could grow beyond white liberals.” Lastly, one WP article ([15]) in particular describes Sanders’ appeal to “white guy[s]”, “white, working-class voters” and those living in “white, rural state[s]”.

6.3. Visual Representation of Bernie Sanders: Analysis of Front-Page Photos

Of course, newspapers are not limited to representing social actors only with language. The visual dimension also frequently plays a role, especially with front-page articles that typically feature prominent photographs. Crucially, images have different “affordances” than language (Machin and Mayr 2012, p. 30). In other words, images are capable of communicating meanings, ideas, and identities in unique ways (op. cit., p. 80) – sometimes more directly and other times more subtly or abstractly. Importantly, images can also be used to reinforce or draw out certain frames or discourses encoded in the texts they accompany.

In this final analytical section, I will investigate the main (e.g. top-most) front-page photos accompanying each of the 16 texts in the sample. In particular, I will examine how they represent Sanders via choices such as distance, angle, gaze, and pose. Notably, the photos analysed are those featured with the online versions of the texts; however, the same photos are typically reproduced in the print edition. For reference, links to the full sample of online photos (listed by newspaper/date) may be found in Appendix B.
Photographic images of human beings can be very semiotically and semantically powerful. On the one hand, they clearly denote the concrete person or people they picture – conveying to the beholder a sense of immediacy or truth. On the other hand, they can connote all sorts of ideas and values about the individuals pictured, based on a range of visual aspects (op. cit., p. 48 ff) – many of which, importantly, were conscious decisions on the part of the “symbol-handlers” (Gitlin 1980) involved in capturing, selecting, and laying out the image. Yet these visual features may go unrecognized by newspaper audiences as strategic representations constructed by news professionals.

Beginning at a more macro level, one of the first observations about the sampled photos of Sanders relates to basic composition and distance: in most cases (nine of 15 relevant images) he is pictured alone in the frame, typically in a medium close-up or close-up shot, but occasionally in a medium-wide to wide shot (see Figure 8). Sometimes this is combined with a shallow depth of field (i.e. defocussed background), against which Sanders is cast in sharp – even harsh – focus. The obvious effect is to individualize (op.
cit.) and isolate Sanders as a subject, possibly connoting a lack of connection – or ability to connect – with other people or his environment. The other clear outcome is that it invites viewers of the image to focus on examining Sanders, as there is little else to view.

Figure 9. Photo accompanying front-page WP article titled “Sanders Taking Aim at ‘Billionaire Class’“, May 1, 2015. (Source: Alex Wong / Getty Images)

Figure 10. Photo accompanying front-page NYT article titled “As a Mayor, Sanders Favored Pragmatism Over His Idealism”, November 26, 2015. (Source: Donna Light / Associated Press)

Moving on to analyse Sanders himself in the photos, another crucial element becomes apparent involving gaze: he is virtually never (14 of 15 images) shown looking at the camera, or, hence, at us as viewers (see Figures 9 and 10, above). The only exception is a reproduction of an old campaign image, which depicts Sanders as any political candidate would likely prefer to be depicted: gazing confidently at the camera and smiling. The potential significance of this otherwise systematic representation of Sanders with an averted gaze is difficult to overstate. It repeatedly gives rise to what Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, ref. in Machin and Mayr 2012, p. 80) describe as an “offer image” – an image of a person that makes no “demand” on the viewer, in other words, does not communicate interest or engagement with the beholder. Instead, the viewer is simply invited to inspect and scrutinize Sanders as an object (op. cit.) – as a physical specimen, as it were – an effect that is further reinforced by his frequently being pictured in isolation.
This implicit invitation to examine Sanders without feeling engaged personally, in turn, may lead us as viewers to study his pose and countenance more intensely. We are encouraged to examine his *pose*, including his expression or implied movements, in an effort to try and discern what sort of person he is. According to Barthes (1996, ref. in Machin and Mayr 2012, p. 80), people’s poses in images are frequently used to signify their identity. Here, too, several patterns of depiction in the front-page photos are especially noteworthy: Sanders is portrayed as *unsmiling* in all but two of the 15 relevant images. Occasionally this is accomplished by picturing him in the middle of an utterance, freezing his mouth in an awkward, unbecoming expression. In at least four images (two *NYT* and two *WP*), he looks visibly *angry* – sometimes appearing to point in rage or gesticulate wildly. Further, in two of the *NYT* images, this impression of anger – irrationality even – is heightened by setting the frame at a *Dutch angle*, a well-known photographic technique used to provoke feelings of unease in viewers (see Figures 11 and 12, below).

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*Figure 11. Photo accompanying front-page NYT article titled “Sanders Lures a Certain Age of Voters: His”, May 29, 2015. (Source: Nathaniel Brooks / New York Times)*
Overall, the front-page photos from both the *WP* and the *NYT* are remarkably consistent in the unflattering image they present of Sanders. When not depicted in an angry-looking pose, he is frequently shown looking somehow cold or unfeeling – again, the averted gaze contributes to the latter effect. The explicit theme of one *NYT* article ([7]) in particular – Sanders’ allegedly impersonal one-on-one interactions with voters – is clearly intentionally reinforced with a photo that makes it appear as though he is shrugging off the hug of a supporter (see Figure 13, below).
7. Discussion

7.1. Findings

*Delegitimizing representation of Bernie Sanders and the movement behind him*

The results of the present thesis suggest that, on balance, the front-page NYT and WP articles that focused on Sanders in 2015 represented him in a way that served to delegitimize him and his progressive political movement in the crucial months of the invisible primary. Considered solely at a macro textual level, certain individual articles in the present sample might appear relatively unbiased. However, when all 16 articles are taken together, the linguistic and visual representational strategies used to *construct the identity* of Sanders combine in a way that arguably functions strongly to *other* him and marginalize him by invoking wider discourses of “radical” left politics, the Cold War, cultural divide (e.g. “hippies” vs. “hard-working Americans”), and even old age. Similar patterns hold true for the representations of his supporters. Comparison with the results of earlier studies on “non-mainstream” progressive US political candidates is complicated.
by the fact that few such candidates have ever succeeded in attracting national media attention like Sanders. Meyrowitz (1994) study on anti-poverty Democratic presidential candidate Agran, for example, showed how he was delegitimized by being kept off the national media agenda. The results of this thesis most closely resemble the findings of Soha (2008), who found that the media delegitimized progressive Democratic candidates by representing them as “non-serious”, “angry”, and even “crazy” as well as by employing subtle visual representational techniques, such as framing them on the margins of a TV debate stage.

**Interpretive frames used to represent Sanders**

Analysis and semantic clustering of linguistic representational strategies revealed several interpretive frames used to construct Sanders’ identity within and across the newspaper texts. All but one of the frames appeared to be delegitimizing of him or his candidacy. The most prominent frame to emerge was that of Sanders as an **Extreme Leftist**, clearly reflecting ideological tension with the status quo ideology of neoliberalism. This frame was most evident in the *WP*, which repeatedly labelled Sanders a “socialist” and otherwise found ways to collocate this ideologically fraught term with his name. The one relatively legitimizing frame to emerge was that of Sanders as a **Skilled, Pragmatic Politician**. Especially in the case of the *WP*, however, this “pragmatist” label occasionally served to make Sanders appear calculating, even supportive of the military-industrial complex and gun rights to maintain or gain power. Similar to the findings of Hackett and Zhao (1994), Sanders was also frequently framed as a **Marginal Oddity** by labelling him as an “ex-hippie”, calling attention to his “rumpled” appearance, unusual Brooklyn accent, and particularly his advanced age. Finally, the *NYT* especially framed Sanders as **Angry, Impersonal** across several articles, reinforcing this linguistic representation with photographs of him looking enraged or unfriendly. Other nascent frames such as **Futile Candidate** and **Truth Teller** were only lightly present.

**Interpretive frames used to represent Sanders’ supporters**

Analysis of linguistic representational strategies also revealed several interpretive frames of Sanders’ supporters. These were also delegitimizing, on balance, especially when
considered vis-à-vis the economic struggles many likely face. In particular, Sanders’ supporters were framed as *Disaffected Activists*, by explicitly labelling them “activists” and by calling attention to their “anger”, while omitting mention of their actual jobs (e.g. nurse, teacher) or familial roles/ties (e.g. single mother) that might humanize them. This simplified “activist” framing supports Pankewicz (2010) hypothesis that the media may apply a “protest paradigm” to non-mainstream political movements. Sanders’ supporters were also frequently framed as *Excitable Fans*, creating an appearance of almost irrational zeal but also lack of true political agency. This frame also included emphasis on the youth of many supporters. As Hackett and Zhao (1994) note in their study of anti-war protests, news frames highlighting younger people in social movements may delegitimize them by making them appear naïve or emotionally driven. Further, Sanders’ supporters were also frequently cast in terms portraying them as a *Faceless Mass* (e.g. anonymous crowds of thousands). This could also preclude newspaper readers from identifying with such a movement. Finally, several emerging interpretive frames represented Sanders’ supporters as divided voting blocs based on identity categories like *Elderly Voters*, *Liberal Whites*, and *Low-Income Whites*. Remarkably, in my view, virtually nowhere in the sample were these various categories of voters explicitly discussed *together* in terms of wider economic struggles that might unite them, such as concerns about oligopolistic private healthcare costs or private debt burdens.

**Visual representation of Sanders in front-page photos**

The findings regarding the visual representation of Sanders were also striking. Overall, the 15 relevant front-page images overwhelmingly appeared designed to reinforce some of the more *delegitimizing* frames found in the article texts, particularly the *Angry*, *Impersonal* frame, the *Marginal Oddity* frame, and the *Extreme Leftist* frame. Sanders was pictured alone in most photos, and in all but one he was shown with an averted gaze. This simultaneously symbolizes a lack of engagement and invites viewers of the image to study Sanders as an object. In all but two images, Sanders was pictured unsmiling, often in a particularly unflattering way (mid-speech). Finally, he was often depicted in poses of apparent anger or coldness. Overall, the images paint an overwhelmingly delegitimizing
portrait of Sanders personally, drawing out some of the more negative frames encoded in the accompanying texts.

7.2. Social Relevance

Societally, this thesis casts further doubt on the health of the American public sphere, especially regarding its functioning on behalf of democracy and deliberative debate over serious issues like inequality (McChesney 2015). The results appear to confirm a worrying pattern of mainstream US media coverage that delegitimizes left-leaning progressive political candidates who take a strong stance on issues of economic justice, poverty, environmental protection, or US militarism (e.g. Meyrowitz 1994, Soha 2008). This is especially concerning because I looked at the most-read supposedly “liberal” newspaper NYT and the ostensibly moderate WP. Similar to the findings of Guardino and Snyder (2012) on CNN coverage of Occupy Wall Street, these findings raise concerns about the ideological diversity present within even self-identified liberal US media institutions.\footnote{One possibility is that the term liberal has had its meaning shifted in multiple ways, and, in one manifestation, is worn almost as a mask (Freeden 2015) by institutions and individual professionals whose ideology is now simply better distinguished as neoliberal. Evidence of this might include the original liberal ideal of rationality being reduced to that of individuals “rationally” maximizing personal financial gain, while doing away with other original liberal ideals such as human sociability (op. cit.).} The NYT and WP may provide space for serious discussion of issues like inequality elsewhere in their pages, but these findings suggest that, early on, they were averse to giving a fair hearing to a presidential candidate taking a strong stance on such issues on their front pages in 2015. This conclusion is reinforced by the fact that progressive candidates Lessig and Stein were barely covered at all by these newspapers or the rest of the media. Interestingly, however, Patterson’s (2016) study of the invisible primary found that Sanders received media coverage (based on eight news outlets) that was more favourable in tone (though quantitatively much less) compared with other leading Democratic and Republican candidates. This raises the unusual prospect that the WP and NYT were uniquely biased against Sanders early on. Finally, there is the glaring fact that candidate Trump, arguably less qualified than other candidates (including Stein and Lessig), was given excessive coverage by virtually all media outlets in the invisible primary (op. cit.).
The present analyses also further highlight the overall agenda-setting power of the media. This is probably evidenced most by what is not in the analysed texts. The word “poverty” never occurred once in the *WP* articles and appeared only three times in the *NYT* articles. Even references to “poor” people could be counted on one hand. Core parts of Sanders’ platform, such as fighting climate change, were barely mentioned. Actual statistics on societal ills were virtually absent. Only one article of 16 was focused explicitly on policy: a strongly ideological *WP* article ([14]) that labelled Sanders a “big-spending liberal” whose agenda for free public higher education and single-payer healthcare was about government “control”. Also noticeably omitted was discussion of Sanders’ history of engagement for civil rights. Instead, in a very clever turn of phrase, we find numerous superficial references to Sanders’ history as a “self-declared socialist”, ignoring that he uses the less-negatively connoted term “progressive” far more often in his own public speech and books (Sanders 2016, Sanders et al. 2015). Finally, both the *WP* and *NYT* intertextually reference a *Mother Jones* article on Sanders (Murphy 2015), opting to single out details like an old piece of Sanders’ writing containing sexual content, while omitting enlightening details such as that his “socialist” beliefs were first inspired by none other than Albert Einstein (2009 [1949]).

Several narrower questions and issues that arose in my research could provide the basis for future studies. One is the apparent disappearance of “class” from journalistic discourse, especially when used in the sense of broad, inclusive groups of lower-income workers with shared economic interests, such as the bottom 50% of income earners in today’s America. In the sample, the terms “class” and “working-class”, rarely occurred, and were exclusively applied to “whites”, especially white men. This appears to be an ideologically significant linguistic distortion of reality that is worthy of further exploration. Also, meriting research, in my view, would be *audience* reactions to the (pre-)election coverage. This could be studied by examining the reader comments on the online versions of texts like those in this sample. Other provocative questions pertain to

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12 Consciously acknowledged or not, the relevance of *class* has not lost any (material) significance in American society simply because classic divisions between “factory owners” and “laborers” have declined locally. Meaningful divisions remain, for example, between those who do or do not own capital, or those who give orders and those who take orders. Updated understandings of economic class divisions in the US, such as that of Wodtke (2016), may represent an important step towards addressing rampant inequality.
the discursive practices of “elite” journalists: in several cases, individual journalists wrote two or more of the front-page pieces in the sample, and mixed among them were strongly delegitimizing articles about Sanders. This raises questions about front-page standards for “news” versus “opinion” pieces, journalists writing both, and the power afforded to individual journalists in shaping public opinion, especially in light of the consolidation of the press into a few powerful newspapers with sprawling online presences. Another related issue involves the ideological diversity of journalists themselves. Many writers and editors at top newspapers, including those in the sample, are educated at elite schools like Harvard – among peers from families with median incomes in the top 2% (Piketty 2014, p. 485) – and they go straight into their media profession from college: can they be expected to cover political movements for economic justice in an unbiased manner? Whether “neoliberal common sense” prevails among such journalists could be a subject of study. Finally, further research could examine how the corporate ownership structure of papers like the NYT and WP (the latter, for example, belonging to the founder of Amazon.com) might affect their coverage of progressive politics (e.g. tax issues).

7.3. Limitations and Ethical Considerations

This thesis has several key weaknesses. First, and above all, this was my first time attempting an in-depth CDA – a fact impacting all aspects. The “motley” nature of the field – e.g. variation in core theories of discourse and ideology (Barker 2008) – makes it challenging for the inexperienced analyst. Also, the apparent dearth of North American CDA studies led me to combine theories/methods from CDA with those of frame analysis – a combination for which I could find no “official” guidance. Second, my qualitative analysis is inescapably subjective, arguably seen through my own “progressive ideological” lens: I can only fall back on the social constructionist observation that value-free knowledge is impossible (Blaikie 2007), and invite others to consult the original sample and working (coding/clustering) documents, transparently available in the Appendices. Third, the analyses focused on the “text” dimension, neglecting, for example, the discursive practices of audiences and journalists – a common problem in CDA despite its holistic ambitions (op. cit.). As such, I cannot know other readers’ interpretations or
the text authors’ true intentions (Machin and Mayr 2012, p. 211). Fourth, despite my best efforts to pick a meaningful sample, 16 texts remains small and deciding which front-page NYT and WP texts to exclude/include among those mentioning “Bernie Sanders” was subjective. Also, the texts covered different events and dates, and so are not strictly comparable. Fifth, coding and sorting all instances of lexical categorization and predication of Sanders and his supporters across 16 texts was demanding/subjective, such that the quantitative counts should only be considered best estimates. Similarly, clustering these text elements by meaning to inductively identify frames was a matter of personal interpretation. Ultimately, the results of the analysis are solely my own interpretations based on application of the methods as described.

Ethically, no human subjects requiring informed consent were involved in this study and all texts used were in the public domain (Collins 2010). Some may object to the relatively “overt moral and political position” of the analyses taken in line with CDA (Richardson 2007, p. 2). It might be seen as clashing with scientific norms of objectivity. However, again, the epistemology of social constructionism holds that researchers’ observations and resulting knowledge are always informed by their own social experience (Blaikie 2007). Further, the “critical stance” of CDA necessitates transparency about relevant personal values (Wodak and Meyer 2016). I am concerned about issues like inequality, the suffering it causes, and the possible systematic delegitimization by powerful media institutions of social actors with the courage to stand up for human dignity. Sharing a commitment to emancipatory ideals does not preclude rigorous research.

8. Conclusion

The present thesis used CDA tools to critically examine front-page newspaper (NYT, WP) coverage of the progressive presidential candidate Bernie Sanders during the 2015 invisible primary. During this pre-voting period, the media largely have the power to construct the identity of unknown candidates, such as Sanders, in the minds of the national public. This (pre-)election season occurred against the backdrop of extreme levels of economic inequality and related societal ills, which have arguably arisen from
four decades of neoliberal policies implemented by successive presidents from both parties.

The results appear to confirm a concerning pattern of largely delegitimizing US media coverage (or omission) of progressive political candidates and social movements going back several decades. Analysis revealed interpretive media frames casting Sanders as an extreme leftist, angry and impersonal, or marginal and old. Only one shared interpretive frame – representing him as a skilful, pragmatic politician – appeared legitimizing. Similarly, Sanders’ supporters were largely cast as activists, excitable fans, or divided into narrow identity categories (e.g. “white liberals”) that appear delegitimizing when considered opposite the shared economic struggles that many of them likely face. These results are especially troubling given the liberal reputation of the *NYT* and the moderate image of the *WP*, and their potential power to set the agenda of other media institutions.

These analyses only cover a snapshot of time in 2015, however, and history marches on. At the time of writing, Donald Trump, who received the most media coverage of any candidate in the invisible primary, is now the least-popular and *oldest* first-year president in US history (Perkins 2017). The *WP* journalist whose front-page article attacked Sanders’ policies has received the Pulitzer Prize for separate reporting on Trump in 2016 (Babür 2017). The circulation of the *NYT* has surpassed a milestone three million paid subscribers (Ember 2017). And Bernie Sanders – according to several national polls – is now the most popular politician in the country (Toppa 2017). Speaking recently at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, renowned linguist and political dissident Noam Chomsky pointed to Sanders’ people-powered near win in the Democratic primary as one of the most promising signs of “resistance” to neoliberalism to emerge to date (UMassEconomics 2017).
9. Literature and References


10. Appendix A: Links to Full Sample of Texts Used for Linguistic Analysis (LexisNexis)

The original, full-length front-page LexisNexis search results for *The New York Times* are available at this link: [http://tinyurl.com/kc4nt52](http://tinyurl.com/kc4nt52)

The original, full-length front-page LexisNexis search results for *The Washington Post* are available at this link: [http://tinyurl.com/lgfb2wu](http://tinyurl.com/lgfb2wu)

The 16 articles (eight from each newspaper) that were finally selected and used for all linguistic analyses are highlighted in yellow within either linked document.

11. Appendix B: Links to Front-Page Photos and Online Versions of Articles


May 29, 2015

BYLINE: PATRICK HEALY

**Sanders Lures a Certain Age of Voters: His** [Bernie Sanders’s Message Resonates With a Certain Age Group: His Own]


July 4, 2015

BYLINE: SARAH LYALL

**Outsider Went Mainstream, but Message Changed Little** [Bernie Sanders’s Revolutionary Roots Were Nurtured in ’60s Vermont]

[https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/04/us/politics/bernie-sanderss-revolutionary-roots-were-nurtured-in-60s-vermont.html?_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/04/us/politics/bernie-sanderss-revolutionary-roots-were-nurtured-in-60s-vermont.html?_r=0)

August 10, 2015

BYLINE: ADAM NAGOURNEY
Sanders Resembles, to a Point, a Vermont Firebrand in 2004 [Similarities Aside, Bernie Sanders Isn’t Rerunning Howard Dean’s 2004 Race]


August 15, 2015

BYLINE: JASON HOROWITZ

Sanders Fights Portrait of Him on the Fringes [Bernie Sanders, an Outlier? The Senator Begs to Differ]


August 21, 2015

Sanders Draws Big Crowds to His 'Revolution' [Bernie Sanders Draws Big Crowds to His ‘Political Revolution’]

BYLINE: JASON HOROWITZ

https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/21/us/politics/bernie-sanders-evokes-obama-of-08-but-with-less-hope.html?_r=0

October 2, 2015

Well Funded, Sanders Takes a Longer View [Bernie Sanders’s Campaign, Hitting Fund-Raising Milestone, Broadens Focus]

BYLINE: PATRICK HEALY

https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/02/us/politics/bernie-sanders-election-campaign.html?_r=0

November 1, 2015
BYLINE: PATRICK HEALY

**Bernie Sanders Won't Kiss Your Baby. That a Problem?** [Bernie Sanders Doesn’t Kiss Babies. That a Problem?]


November 26, 2015

BYLINE: KATHARINE Q. SEELYE

**As a Mayor, Sanders Favored Pragmatism Over His Idealism** [As Mayor, Bernie Sanders Was More Pragmatist Than Socialist]

[https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/26/us/politics/as-mayor-bernie-sanders-was-more-pragmatic-than-socialist.html?_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/26/us/politics/as-mayor-bernie-sanders-was-more-pragmatic-than-socialist.html?_r=0)

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**11.2. The Washington Post**

May 1, 2015

BYLINE: PAUL KANE; PHILIP RUCKER

**Sanders taking aim at ’billionaire class’** [An unlikely contender, Sanders takes on ‘billionaire class’ in 2016 bid]


July 20, 2015

BYLINE: DAVID A. FAHRENTHOLD

**NRA's support helped put Sanders in Congress** [How the National Rifle Association helped get Bernie Sanders elected]
July 21, 2015

BYLINE: DAVID WEIGEL

Sanders fires up activists on left feeling burned by Obama [Liberal activists see Bernie Sanders as champion for causes failed by Obama]

https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/liberal-activists-see-bernie-sanders-as-champion-for-causes-failed-by-obama/2015/07/19/8b5fc752-2e09-11e5-8353-1215475949f4_story.html?utm_term=.bf87b9b2c02f

July 26, 2015

BYLINE: DAVID A. FAHRENTHOLD

Sanders is in with the enemy, some old allies say [Bernie Sanders is in with the enemy, some old allies say]


August 12, 2015

BYLINE: ED O'KEEFE; JOHN WAGNER

How is Bernie Sanders doing it? [100,000 people have come to recent Bernie Sanders rallies. How does he do it?]


October 2, 2015
Sanders's vision would boost federal largesse - and control [How Bernie Sanders would transform the nation]


October 6, 2015

BYLINE: DAVID WEIGEL

Bernie Sanders's red-state appeal [In rural America, a startling prospect: Voters Obama lost look to Sanders]


October 18, 2015

BYLINE: DAVID WEIGEL; DAVID A. FAHRENTHOLD

Sanders the socialist embraces his moment [What is a democratic socialist? Bernie Sanders tries to redefine the name.]


12. Appendix C: Full List of Main Lexical Categorizations

12.1. Main Lexical Categorizations of Sanders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>candidate</td>
<td>socialist</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>mayor</td>
<td>mayor</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>senator</td>
<td>candidate</td>
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<tr>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>seventy[-three, -four, -five]</td>
<td>senator</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>count</td>
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<td>-------------------------------</td>
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<td>socialist</td>
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<tr>
<td>independent</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>liberal</td>
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<tr>
<td>outsider</td>
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</tr>
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<td>ideologue</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>deal maker</td>
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<tr>
<td>fulminator</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>hard bargainer</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>horse trader</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>incrementalist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liberty Union [ref. to Vt. socialist party]</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>mainstream man</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>New York native</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>outlier</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>people person</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>political animal</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>political organizer</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>politician</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>populist</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>pragmatist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ranking member [Senate Budget Committee]</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>revolutionary</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>stern uncle</td>
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12.2. Main Lexical Categorizations of Supporters

Named collectively/anonymously

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<th>count</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>count</th>
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<td>hundreds / thousands</td>
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<tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td>activists</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>hundreds / thousands</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>crowd</td>
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<td>audience</td>
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<td>allies</td>
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<td>supporters</td>
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<td>white</td>
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<tr>
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<td>miner</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Progressive Democrats</td>
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<td>professional left</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>donors</td>
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<td>local group lobbying for a</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15-per-hour minimum wage</td>
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<td>fans 1</td>
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<td>graying hippies 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>impassioned followers 1</td>
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<td>Occupy Wall Street veterans 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>progressive coalition 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Occupy-colored People for Bernie 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>voters 1</td>
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<td>piece of the electorate 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>working-class families 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>pro-Sanders Ready to Fight 1</td>
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<td>progressives 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>rally attendees 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>readers of the Daily Kos group blog 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>throngs 1</td>
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<td>volunteers 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>young hipsters 1</td>
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**Named as individuals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[MAN], 69, a retiree</td>
<td>[MAN], 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[MAN], 89</td>
<td>[MAN], 62-year-old activist 1</td>
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<td>[MAN], from Columbus</td>
<td>[MAN], 62, a coal miner 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>[WOMAN]</td>
<td>[MAN], 66</td>
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<td>[WOMAN], 18, Student</td>
<td>[MAN], 69</td>
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<td>[WOMAN], 50</td>
<td>[MAN], a Drake University student 1</td>
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<td>[WOMAN], 54, a single mother and physical therapist</td>
<td>[MAN], a rapper [Immortal Technique] 1</td>
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<td>[WOMAN], 65, of Keokuk</td>
<td>[MAN], an activist 1</td>
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<td>[WOMAN], 67, a retired insurance manager</td>
<td>[MAN], climate-change activist 1</td>
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<td>[WOMAN], 71</td>
<td>[WOMAN], 31-year-old leader of the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles 1</td>
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<td>[WOMAN], 75-year-old Democrat from Massachusetts</td>
<td>[WOMAN], 33, national digital organizer for People for Bernie 1</td>
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<td>[WOMAN], 86, a self-described Democratic activist</td>
<td>[WOMAN], 36, an artist 1</td>
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<td>[WOMAN], 67, an Arizona activist</td>
<td>[WOMAN], 67, an Arizona activist 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[WOMAN], 69, a retiree from Green Valley, Ariz</td>
<td>[WOMAN], 69, a retiree from Green Valley, Ariz 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[WOMAN], a [student] freshman at Drake</td>
<td>[WOMAN], a [student] freshman at Drake 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOMAN, comedian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOMAN, from Eagle Rock, Calif</td>
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</table>