

The Electoral Consequences of Alienation: Nonvoting and Protest Voting in the 1992 Presidential Race

PRISCILLA LEWIS SOUTHWELL*

University of Oregon

MARCY JEAN EVEREST

Weber State University

This article focuses on the context of the 1992 national elections in order to determine why certain alienated individuals chose to stay home on election day while others responded by voting for a third party Presidential candidate. Two dimensions of alienation, internal and external political inefficacy, are linked to lower levels of voting, as is consistent with previous research on voting behavior. In addition, we find that, among those who voted, those individuals who expressed political cynicism or external inefficacy were more likely to vote for Ross Perot. We conclude that, while many alienated individuals do not vote, the Perot candidacy in 1992 led certain alienated individuals to engage in "protest" voting by casting their vote for an unlikely winner in the presidential race.

When an individual is faced with an external situation that is perceived as undesirable, he is presented with two options: (1) take remedial action, or; (2) exit the scene. In an electoral context, the individual who has become disenchanted with the political system either votes or abstains. The internal or self-perceived capabilities of the individual involved may influence whether one participates or withdraws. An individual who feels politically inefficacious is less likely to become involved in politics even if

*Direct all correspondence to: Priscilla Southwell, Department of Political Science, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon 97403. Telephone: (541) 346-4074.

one believes that the current political situation is in need of remedy. External evaluations of the political system, such as the responsiveness of political parties or the effectiveness of the electoral process, also affect one's decision on whether to participate. In rational choice terms, such attitudes, both internal and external, fall into an expanded conception of the category of the "D," or, as Downs (1957) conceived it, the value of seeing democracy continue.¹ A broader conception of D includes the "expressive" components of the vote, such as how much individuals care which party wins the election. These long-term attitudes have been shown to be deep-seated and persistent (Aldrich, 1993; Craig and Deaton, 1977; Fiorina, 1976; Hinich, 1981; Riker and Ordeshook, 1968).

Contextual considerations, such as the nature of the political choices offered in any one election year, also influence the voting decision. Here the "B," or difference in benefits derived if one candidate wins over another, comes into play. Aldrich (1993) argues that models of voting behavior need to relate the long-term attitudes of D to this B term; that is, the linkage between general orientations and election-specific forces must be better established. As an example, Aldrich (1993) suggests that low levels of efficacy lead to lesser benefits from electing any particular candidate to office. This linkage lends support to the hypothesis that alienated individuals were more likely to abstain from voting than their more allegiant counterparts; a conclusion consistent with recent studies of voting behavior (Gilmour and Lamb, 1975; Southwell, 1985; Zipp, 1985).

As a complementary hypothesis, we argue that the context of the 1992 election was such that many alienated individuals were provided with alternative outlets for expressing their frustration at the political system. Specifically, such individuals could protest the current state of political affairs by voting for a third party presidential candidate. This "protest voter" hypothesis represents an extension of the rejection voting model, where voters displeased with a certain policy or personality within their party defect to another party, because it also applies to the dynamics of voter turnout and the appeal of third parties (Fiorina, 1981; Kernell, 1977; Key, 1966). We suggest that the context of the 1992 election, specifically, the nature of the Perot candidacy, transformed certain alienated individuals, (with small D terms) from likely nonvoter into voter.

The "protest voter" hypothesis differs from the strategic or "tactical" model in which individual preferences are often overridden by assessments of the competitive situation. As well-established in rational choice literature, this model assumes that an individual will vote for his second preference in a situation in which his first preference is unlikely to win, therefore avoiding a "wasted" vote (Black, 1978; Cain, 1978; Downs, 1957; Duverger, 1967; Palfrey, 1989). In contrast, the protest voter may behave in an opposite manner to the strategic voter.² He or she may gravitate toward a third party candidate because that candidate has less chance of victory. Bowler and Lanque describe the protest voter as one "who may vote for a third party not so much to unseat the incumbent as to reduce the majority status of that incumbent and so send a message of dissatisfaction" (1992, p. 489). Their research found that protest voting was more likely to occur in those districts in which third party strength was weakest. Alienated individuals, per se, may not regard a vote for an unlikely winner as "wasted," but as a statement of dissatisfaction. We therefore suggest that, among

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات