

The Constituents Will Eat it Up: How Food Affected Political Identity in the 2016
Presidential Election

Lauren Hince
Ripon College

From taco bowls to eating pizza with a fork, food has remained a topic of conversation surrounding political campaigns. The 2016 presidential election cycle was no exception. Faced with two candidates who defied the presidential mold, both campaigns had to find unique ways to connect with voters. Food, when used correctly, can be a powerful identification tool that shapes politician's image. Always seen eating fast-food, Trump's food choices gave him the nickname "the blue-collar billionaire." By comparison, the Clinton campaign used fresh and local foods to soften her image. Both decisions reflect the rhetorical significance food can play on our political system. Through my analysis, I will attempt to answer the question: "How was food used by campaigns to alter candidates' image?" I analyze the food choices made by Clinton and Trump campaign, and examine how these decisions affected the campaigns' overall strategy; leading to the outcome of the 2016 election.

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In 1755, George Washington lost his first election to the House of Burgesses candidate. The reason for the defeat was not lack of skill or merit, but based on who provided the most alcohol.¹ The next election cycle Washington ensured he would not make the same mistakes. On election day he provided 391 voters with 160 gallons of alcohol including 28 gallons of rum, 50 gallons of rum punch, 34 gallons of wine, 46 gallons of beer, and 2 gallons of cider royal.² He won the election with a landslide victory of 271 to 120 votes.

Although alcohol was not provided at the polls in the 2016 election, food remained a valuable campaign tool. How a politician eats a slice a pizza, or his or her drink of choice, are carefully calculated images intended to connect with voters. The food candidates choose to eat are used to craft a particular appearance, and can establish a connection with demographics that would not otherwise be obvious: socioeconomic class, geographic preferences, ethnicity, health, and gender. Simply put, food matters and is influential in our political system.

The 2016 election featured two candidates who defied the typical image of a presidential candidate: Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. Typically thought to be white, wealthy, educated, and male; Hillary Clinton was the first woman to be placed at the top of a major party's ticket. Donald Trump, despite meeting the mold of a presidential candidate, was an outsider; a billionaire businessman with no previous political experience. For the first time since Ronald Reagan's campaign,³ voters had outsider candidates to choose from. Because of this campaign teams needed to tweak the image of their candidate to appeal to new and unexpected demographics; and food was one of the tools employed.

Through my analysis, I will attempt to answer the question: "How was food used by campaigns to alter the candidates' image?" In addition, I will examine the implications of these decisions through the question: "How did the media portray instances of the candidates in relation to food?"

I will analyze the campaign choices of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump during the 2016 election cycle. To do so, I will examine how a candidate's demographics are affected by food; and how food can be used to tweak a candidate's image. The Clinton campaign's strategy to avoid targeting white working-class voters is one of the reasons noted for costing her the election. Her campaign's food strategy coincides with this decision and is reflected in the outcome of the 2016 presidential race. I examine how Clinton's food choices only appealed to her current base, those already most likely to vote for her, instead of expanding it; whereas Trump's campaign strategy connected with the working-class demographic and may have helped him win the election. Now, I am not suggesting that food is the sole reason a voter would choose a candidate,

however, I do suggest that food factors into the larger image of a candidate and in this case harmed the image of Hillary Clinton.

Olive the Existing Literature:

The literature on this topic is sparse. Most mentions of this topic are in podcasts, social media, or news articles. I first discovered this topic through an NPR podcast called, "Food politics."⁴ The podcast discussed the various candidates who have had their campaigns influenced by food. While informative, the podcast offered little analysis and instead provided an overview of several campaign's experiences with food. The podcast did not delve deeply into a systematic analysis, nor did it discuss the most recent election since the episode aired before the primaries.

There are two themes that emerge in the current body of literature. First, I look at the literature directly related to the topic of food and political campaigns. Second, I examine the literature surrounding image and politics. This second topic is a broader area of literature that encompasses my current topic.

Allison Perelman, then a doctoral candidate at the University of Pennsylvania, wrote her communication dissertation on food as it relates to American politics. The dissertation titled, "Political Appetites: Food as Rhetoric in American Politics"⁵ asked two research questions: "How, and to what end are consumer tastes and behaviors mobilized (primarily by candidates and their campaigns, but also by policy advocates) as a form of political communication; and what role do the media play in the framing of political figures and policy issues according to tastes in food and positions on food regulations?"⁶ Her research also looks at how foods appeals to race, class, gender, and

more specifically the emergence of food categories tailored to the “working-class.” One of Perelman’s chapters focused on a healthy diet’s implications on a candidate’s image, looking specifically at Barack Obama’s race. Perelman argues that healthy food choices are perceived as elitist and harmful to a candidate’s image. She writes, “...the majority of Americans were not healthy eaters, and for that reason, healthy eating could be framed as a source of estrangement from them.”⁷ This argument is especially true in the 2016 election. I agree with Perelman’s argument that healthy eating can be alienating for candidates, and I argue this was one of the mistakes the Clinton campaign made in relation to her food choices.

Perelman’s dissertation was published in 2013, before the most recent presidential election. In this paper, I will continue Perelman’s research and apply her claims to the most recent election cycle. There are two additional claims I investigate in this paper. The first claim is about female candidates. Perelman argues that female candidates will have to choose more masculine food while campaigning to relate to voters. Perelman defines masculine food as higher fat food likes burgers and steak; whereas feminine foods would be healthy choices like salads or brown rice and chicken breast. This creates a bind for female candidates because as explained earlier, eating healthy is seen as elitist and disconnected from everyday voters. I hope to fill the gap in Perelman’s research with my analysis of the Clinton campaign’s food choices.

The second claim I analyze is about the importance of food. Perelman argues that polarization in our country makes it even more important to find a way to connect with voters. Candidates need to appear relatable to their voters in order to consider them electable.⁸ I want to apply this claim to the Trump and Clinton campaigns since

both candidates received criticism for supposedly being out of touch with citizens: one, an establishment politician who is part of the problem, and the other a political outsider with billions in the bank.

The second concept in the body of literature I explore pertains to research investigating image and political campaigns. Shawn Rosenberg, Shulamite Kahn, Thuy Tran, and Minh-Thu Le conducted a quantitative study on image in 2017. Their work tried to identify what attributes do we look for in female politicians. They found several physical components that contribute to U.S. voters trusting a female candidate's ability to govern: "(1) eyes which have an almond shape or where more of the curvature is on the top rather than on the bottom, (2) a hairline which comes to a slight widow's peak, (3) hair which is combed back or with a side part, (4) hair which is cut short, and (5) an overall face which is broad or round. More generally, women who appeared to be older were evaluated more positively."⁹ In the second part of their study, the authors manipulated images to reflect these ideals and presented the images to participants. The scholars found their findings in the first part of their study were correct and that there are certain physical attributes that factor into the perception and image of a female candidate. This research is important in understanding what can be manipulated to change the perception of a candidate. While this paper does not directly impact my research, it reinforces my argument that there are small tweaks campaigns can make to drastically alter the image of their politician.

Politics and Communication in America: Campaigns, Media and Governing in the United States,¹⁰ by Robert Denton Jr. explores this same concept. Denton writes, "Some scholars argue that candidate image is that set of attributes given to a politician

by the electorate; others argue that candidate image is created by a candidate. Regardless, a key factor in determining a candidate's standing in the polls is image, and designing a viable one is the chief most controversial task of the political consultant."¹¹ Denton furthers that image is critical to making a candidate likeable, and likability is what gets candidates elected. I agree with Denton's argument because it illustrates the importance of studying image. My research is a continuation on Denton's argument because it explores how food factors into image and likeability of a candidate.

I believe my research fills a gap in the field's knowledge because it builds on established assertion and expands our understanding of gender, geographic, and socioeconomic influences and limitations. My research is also timely, focusing on an event that happened just over a year ago. The 2016 election was unprecedented, and with that brought new challenges to study and evaluate.

Milking the Moment: Trump and Clinton's Strategies for 2016

After losing the 2008 primary, Clinton's campaign knew they needed to do something different. The campaign was already fighting a negative perception of its candidate, who had been in the public eye for decades. During the 2008 race, Clinton acknowledged that she did not make healthy choices for herself and because of it gained unwanted weight. At the time, this weight gain was seen favorable, as many Americans could relate to such a situation. When asked what Clinton prayed to God for she said, "Sometimes, I say, 'Oh Lord, why can't you help me lose weight?'"¹² This response received a chuckle from her audience and created a positive image for a candidate who was reflecting on a real-life struggle; but by 2016 the campaign decided

to pivot their image. Focusing on healthy and sustainable food choices, the Clinton campaign wanted the voters to know that Clinton had made a major life change with her diet and because of this was ready to win in 2016. While on the campaign trail, Clinton acknowledged that she always kept some form of peppers or hot sauce in her bag, because she liked to use as a form of healthy and natural energy.¹³ Carrying hot sauce in her bag was one of the many healthy lifestyle changes the campaign promoted.

By contrast, Donald Trump was a political newcomer whose love of fast food became evident on the campaign trail. Only being seen digging into a KFC bucket of original recipe, or endorsing his own line of steaks, the Trump campaign reflected an antithesis to the Clinton food strategy. When asked on, "The Tonight Show with Fallon" why he preferred a diet of fast food Trump explained, "Because they have a big name to preserve, whether it's McDonald's or Wendy's, at least you know what you're getting."¹⁴ Mentioning his germaphobia in the interview, Trump explained that if he were to order a burger at a normal restaurant he would not know what has been done to it, at least fast food is a safe bet. Before Trump's fast food preferences became evident, he was dubbed, "America's blue-collar billionaire"¹⁵ by Jerry Falwell Jr. at the Republican National Convention. Falwell, President of Liberty University, sparked a term of identification that would later define Trump's eating habits.

Understanding the electoral strategy to win the Presidency is crucial to comprehending both campaign's food tactics. The Clinton campaign strategy for targeting voters was to turnout Democrats to the polls. The strategy of the campaign was to reach millennial and minority voters, and assumed other demographics were a guaranteed vote.¹⁶ Critics post-election argued that the campaign's failure to target

white working-class and rural voters is what cost Clinton the election.¹⁷ The electoral map from the 2016 election is found in image 1 of the appendices. What is important to note from this image is the Midwest region of the United States. Large populations of white working-class, or blue-collar, voters lived in this region, and the Clinton campaign expected these voters would automatically vote for Clinton. Experts point to a growing white non-college educated population in states like Wisconsin and Pennsylvania as reason for a change in voting behavior. In both states Clinton lost by a small margin.

The Clinton campaign strategy for 2016 helped her turn-out voters and states that had historically voted Democrat. Focusing on typically blue states, the campaign failed to divert resources towards tipping states, such as Wisconsin, argued to be the most critical state for Trump's victory.¹⁸ Evidenced by the lack of campaign stops in Wisconsin during the general election.¹⁹ While this paper is not intended to be an analysis of field strategy, it is important to understand the Clinton and Trump campaign's electoral tactics because it is reflected in their food choices. Image 2 showcases the demographic breakdown of the 2016 election. This is important to understand when analyzing the food choices made by each campaign.

The Trump campaign won over male, white, older, and rural voters. In regard to income level, both candidates were fairly split. Clinton's campaign overwhelmingly turned out black and other minority voters, but was split with Trump for the women's vote. Clinton also had an advantage with urban voters, but failed to attract the attention of rural voters. These demographics make up each Party's base. For Clinton's campaign these decisions reflected a turnout that has historically voted Democrat, meaning Clinton's campaign failed to expand the voting base. Image 2 and 3 showcase voting

trends for both parties from 1992 to 2016. In the analysis section I explore how each of these demographics factors into food choices made by the campaigns.

2016 left a lot of people asking, “what happened?” While ordering a salad over a bucket of KFC did not hand the election to Trump, Clinton’s failure to expand the base through food and identification was a factor in her loss.

How the Sausage is Made: Methodology

For this paper, I approach my research with a Burkean lens. In *Rhetoric of Motives* Burke defines a concept he titles, “identification.”²⁰ Identification can be used for influence to help an audience member connect with a speaker. Burke calls this consubstantial identification. It is the idea that to identify with an interest, you become “one of the same substance” with the person. Burke also asserts to have identification the audience must have division so that there is a reason to metaphorically conjoin with the speaker.²¹

Another aspect of Burke’s theory is what he calls, “Ingenuous and Cunning Identifications.”²² He argues that rhetoric can be purposefully deceiving, and can be used to give deceptive identification. Burke explains, “This aspect of identification, whereby one can protect an interest merely by using terms not incisive enough to criticize it properly, often brings rhetoric to the edge of cunning. A misanthropic politician who deals in mankind-loving imagery could still think of himself as rhetorically honest, if he is meant to do well by his constituents yet thought that he could get their votes only by such display.”²³ I argue that politicians always employ deceptive identification, at least on the level of presidential election. Candidates must appeal to a wide scope of interests, and tweaking image to create identification is one way politicians can appeal

to voters. For this paper I will not determine whether Trump's and Clinton's actions were deceptive identification due to low probability of proving the concept.

Identification theory suggests agreement. To identify with someone is to concur with their decisions and, in some cases, execute an action, such as cast a vote for a candidate. A voter who identifies with a candidate because of his or her food choices is not being persuaded by the food, but influenced because they have a consubstantial identification with that politician. In the analysis portion of my research I analyzed the food choices made by the Trump and Clinton campaign to determine with what audience the campaign was trying to identify, and if that was consistent with the electoral strategies outlined in the context section.

For cases in my research, I selected images from social media that were campaign-created. I pulled posts from the official *Instagram* and *Facebook* accounts of each candidate because I wanted to ensure I only analyzed items that were purposefully created and not accidental moments that can sometimes occur on the trail. I was unable to analyze *Twitter* because its limited capabilities would not allow me to check tweet history far enough back; so I could not view tweets from over a year ago. I acknowledge that this is a limitation of my research because of how popular *Twitter* was during the election, especially for Trump. The images I did select represent an appeal to a particular demographic that the campaigns believed they needed to target. Class, gender, geography, wellness, and age are the four main demographics that were present in the campaign's identification strategy.

A Burkean lens provides the best analysis because there is a precedent in the political community of critiquing image. Campaigns spend millions of dollars researching

and collecting data to find ways to relate to voters. I believe a Burkean framework provides the best theoretical backing for analyzing food and candidates and to evaluate the campaign's rhetorical strategies.

Starting a Food Fight: Trump and Clinton's Food Choices During the General Election

Dean Debnam, President of Public Policy Polling, commented "Even food polarizes Americans along party lines these days."²⁴ Reflecting on a study his organization conducted of 500 registered voters about their food preferences, Debnam continues, "Democrats and Republicans disagree on donuts and bagels, KFC and Chick Fil A, and even the merits of Olive Garden as quality authentic ethnic food."²⁵ It is polarization like this that sets the stage for the 2016 election. Through an analysis of seven images I explore how each campaign used food to identify with voters. To complete my analysis there is a certain level of stereotyping, or assumptions based on demographic preferences I have to employ. This is not because stereotypes are always correct, but unfortunately, it is what campaigns often use to generate strategy.

Donald Trump

While taking a ride on his private jet, in image 4, Trump was seen carving into a piece of chicken from Kentucky Fried Chicken after a campaign stop in Ohio and Pennsylvania. Published on August 1, 2016, the image was uploaded to Trump's Instagram with the caption, "Great afternoon in #Ohio & a great evening in #Pennsylvania- departing now. See you tomorrow #Virginia."²⁶ This image appeals to

two diametrically opposed groups of people, and yet Trump can identify with both groups. In the corner of this image are copies of the *Wall Street Journal*, known as the newspaper for those in the business and finance sectors. A report by Scott Mayerowitz of ABC news found that three-fourths of *Wall Street Journal* readers have college degrees, and that their average income is above \$200,000.²⁷ Showcasing this elitist publication identifies Trump with the upper-middle class and reminds viewers of his ties to the business world. By contrast, Trump is also enjoying a bucket of chicken and side of mashed potatoes. While most people admit to enjoying fast food, the lower and middle class are known to be the biggest consumers of this cuisine.²⁸ Being seen on a private jet with Kentucky Fried Chicken is what helped earn Trump his nickname, “the blue-collar billionaire.” Being known as this serves as identification to the voters. Seeing a presidential candidate who also enjoys a bucket of chicken makes Trump seem relatable and in-touch with working-class voters’ needs.

Published to *Instagram* on Cinco De Mayo, Trump is featured in this image enjoying a taco bowl from his own restaurant. His caption reads, “Happy #CicoDeMayo! The best taco bowls are made in Trump Tower Grill. I love Hispanics!” This image serves two purposes for Trump’s identification. The first is to remind the public of his business. Trump has been a successful businessman, and he wants to remind Americans of that success. Showcasing a Trump brand food product, reminds voters that Trump knows how to lead and thus identifies with upper-class voters who may also be businessmen that want to see a candidate like them in the White House. The second reason for this image is to appeal to white voters. At first glance it may seem like Trump is pandering to the Hispanic community, especially since Cinco De Mayo is a Mexican

holiday. I argue that the taco bowl is meant to identify with white voters and the reasons are similar to Trump's fast food choices. Taco bowls are not a traditional Hispanic dish; they were invented in 1955 by an American.²⁹ Trump's post is an example of an attempt to foster consubstantial identification because he uses a hyperbolic statement to divide his audience, and through that division unifies his target demographic. The largest subset of the population to vote for Trump was white voters without a college degree. Through a Burkeian analysis voters may be influenced by this image because they see a candidate who is humorous with his food choices and similar to themselves.

The blue-collar billionaire's use of fast food and his own "Trump branded" products helped him identify with large voting blocs the Clinton campaign seemed to miss. Trump's food choices reflected the everyday man; eating food from restaurants that are easily identifiable nationwide, and located in the towns of Trump's supporters. The food strategy employed by this campaign coincided with Trump's strategy to turnout rural voters, who would be turned-off by Clinton's healthy choices, and white working-class voters who identify with a fast food based diet. These demographics are what helped hand Trump the election. Eating a diet rich in meat, fat, and oils is not the only reason voters chose Trump as their candidate. These foods did not directly cause people to vote Trump, but did help his identification. A fast-food rich diet helped make Trump relatable and likeable.

Hillary Clinton

Clinton set out to live a healthy lifestyle during her 2016 campaign cycle. Referencing healthy staples and a consistent workout plan, Clinton's campaign made a

shift in image compared to the 2008 cycle. Was this change for the better, or did it harm Clinton's identification? Knowing the outcome of the 2016 election, I argue Clinton's strategy to focus almost exclusively on mobilizing only her existing supporters instead of attempting to expand her voter base is one reason she lost the election. This mistake also can be seen in her campaign's food choices. I am not arguing that choosing a salad over a chicken wing is what cost her election; I do argue that the campaign's food choices harmed Clinton's identification which impacted the voting bases and cost her the election.

Perelman speculated that a female candidate would have to consume masculine food in order identify with constituents.³⁰ In Jeffery Sobal's work he defines masculine and feminine food: "Meat, especially red meat, is an archetypical masculine food. Men often emphasize meat, and women often minimize meat, in displaying gender as individuals."³¹ Sobal also argues that meat being the main component of a dish especially in American cuisine, represents a dominant masculine culture. For Perelman's analysis to be correct, the Clinton campaign would need to consume masculine food, such as steaks or burgers. We see this diet reflected in Trump's food choices, but not in Clinton's.

In the early stages of the campaign Clinton published two images of her logo made-up of food. The first image, comprised of eggs and bacon, represented a traditional American breakfast. The other two logos outlined in fruits and vegetables, reflected the changing strategy and image for Clinton (see image 6 and 7). These images, despite being shared on the same platform, identify with two entirely different demographics but fail to bridge the divide.

Image 6, the typical American breakfast, has a caption that reads “Happy brunching.” The photo contains bacon, a masculine food, which is being used to identify Clinton as more masculine. By contrast, image 7, counteracts the messaging of the first post. The second image is made up entirely of vegetables. The caption reads, “Ways to prepare for the 2016 election: eat your vegetables, join team Hillary.” These images were published less than a month apart, and could have created a confusing attempt at identification for viewers. Vegetables and healthy diets, seen as feminine negate the image of the first breakfast post. While this may seem like a small mistake, decisions such as these reflect

To reach millennials, Clinton’s campaign focused their attention on “Instagramable” moments. Noticed for her thoughtful posts, Clinton’s campaign received praise for being millennial-friendly.³² One of the millennial friendly choices the campaign made was to feature Clinton shopping at farmers’ markets, buying local, and eating fresh, healthy food. In image 8 Clinton was seen buying fresh produce at an Iowa farmers’ market. The caption of the photo reads, “On the campaign trail in the Hawkeye State, you can meet lowans on campuses and in farmers’ markets, listen to stories in town hall meetings, and snap a few selfies.” This image works to identify Clinton with younger voters, but likely did not resonate with middle-aged or elderly voters. The Nielson Global Health and Wellness survey found that 81% of millennials (age 21-34) are willing to pay more for food that provides tangible health benefits.³³ This number is large in comparison to baby boomers (age 50-64) at 67% and the silent generation (age 65+) at 56%.³⁴ Young voters may appreciate a candidate who strives to eat local, but as

explained earlier, millennials already vote Democrat. Clinton's food choice at the farmers markets identifies her with a base that already votes Democrat.

The Clinton's campaign decision to feature healthy, and feminine, food reflects a lack of expansion in the base. Young voters have historically turned out for Democrats.³⁵ Choosing to identify only with a demographic who is already likely to vote for her may have been a poor decision by the Clinton campaign because it could have alienated older age groups. Older generations do not place as much emphasis on living a healthy and sustainable lifestyle. By aligning herself with healthy food Clinton created two issues for herself. Perelman articulated this earlier: healthy food is considered elitist and out of touch.³⁶ Second, healthy food is overtly feminine. This would be fine, except as Perelman asserted, in order for a female candidate to win she would likely have to adopt a masculine diet. Clinton's food choices create the wrong identification to the wrong audience, resulting in poor voter turnout in key demographics.

Post 2016 election, critics pointed to Clinton's lack of visits to key states like Wisconsin as a major campaign pitfall. During the primaries Clinton did make a small stop in Milwaukee and La Crosse, Wisconsin; but it was here that her campaign failed to identify Clinton with the needed demographic. On March 29, 2016 Clinton stopped by the Pearl Street Brewery for a taste of the local beer. Captioning her image (image 9), "When in Wisconsin." Clinton's campaign probably believed they were appealing to the average Wisconsin resident simply by drinking beer, any beer. In this image, however, Clinton is seen drinking a craft beer. Craft beer has two key consumer demographics: millennials and upper-middle class people. The Mintel craft beer survey found that 26% of craft beer drinkers have an income of \$100,000 to \$150,000,³⁷ representing the

largest percentage of drinkers. The survey also found that millennials have a rising interest in the craft beer industry, and that 60% of drinkers are suburban, not rural.³⁸

Clinton's choice to feature a local craft beer created identification with millennial, suburban, and upper-middle class voters. This reflects another example of a failed attempt to expand the Democratic base. By choosing a craft beer over a Miller Lite or another less expensive "macro-brew" beer, Clinton is potentially alienating working-class voters, some of whom may think of craft beers as being for "elitists" and "beer snobs." A different beer choice in a rural instead of suburban setting, would have changed the identification and image of Clinton. I am not arguing that if Clinton had ordered a Miller Lite in Wisconsin she would have won Wisconsin's electoral votes. I am arguing that Clinton's food strategy may well reflect a misunderstanding of the working-class.

The last image reflects the final missing demographic from the Clinton campaign: the rural vote. On April 9, 2016 Clinton made a stop at a New York famous restaurant. Her post read, "Wouldn't be a Brooklyn campaign stop without a visit to @juniorscheesecake." Later in the campaign, the Clinton campaign released a list of the best restaurants to visit in New York City.³⁹ This action of the campaign was an attempt to show Clinton's pride for the city and state she used to represent in the Senate. The list released by the campaign featured fancy restaurants and fine dining. In addition to this list, the Clinton campaign started a hashtag on twitter called, "#ChefsforHillary" where chefs could submit photos of their Clinton inspired dishes. These choices by the campaign identify strongly with urban, upper-middle class voters, but not with rural voters. According to the bureau of labor statistics, "Urban households spent about \$200

less than rural households on food at home, but spent about \$600 more on food away from home.”⁴⁰ The Clinton campaign’s connection to fine dining and high-end chefs could have damaged Clinton’s identification with working-class voters who can’t afford fancy New York restaurants, and rural voters who may not have the money nor the time to eat outside the home. Instead these choices identified Clinton with upper-middle class, urban, and millennial voters.

Both the Clinton and Trump campaign used food to alter their candidate’s image. Through Burke’s identification theory, I analyzed which demographic groups were most likely to identify with a candidate’s strategy. Trump’s campaign was successful; identifying as the “blue-collar billionaire” helped turn out voters and expand the Republican base. By contrast, the Clinton campaign was unsuccessful. The food strategy employed by the campaign identified with voters who were likely already encompassed within the Democratic base.

How the Cookie Crumbles: Media Reaction and Implications

The Clinton and Trump campaigns had vastly different strategies with food when it came to the 2016 presidential race. While the Clinton campaign focused on healthy foods and connecting with voters through local, yet largely more upscale cuisine, the Trump campaign enjoyed frequent fast food stops and trips to Trump tower. In this section I will discuss how the media perceived these campaign choices and then explore the question: “How did the media portray instances of the candidates in relation to food?”

After being in the public eye for decades, Clinton knew the criticism she might receive from the press. While on the campaign trail Clinton refused to be seen eating.⁴¹ If she was, it was only a couple bites and it was usually something healthy. When asked why this was Clinton replied, ““I learned early on not to eat in front of all of you.”⁴² As a female candidate Clinton recognized the sexism that would bias the media coverage in her food choices and eating habits. Having previously been asked in 2008 about the calorie content of her ice cream, a question no male political candidate ever would have been asked, Clinton recognized the media’s bias and tried her best to avoid its potential damaging effects. She did this through healthy foods. While unhealthy food is easy to criticize, it is not common for the media to critique someone enjoying a nice fresh salad. Coupled with Trump’s decision to enjoy only fast food, the media spent more time focused on Trump’s diet than Clinton’s.

Trump’s frequent fast food trips had the media questioning his health and diet. Many reporters were calling for a release of health records, prompting Trump to discuss his health on the Dr. Oz show. Trump’s frequent self-promotion of his line of food also lead to media attention. *Buzzfeed* released a video on January 20, 2017 having their staff taste test Trump Grill,⁴³ ultimately declaring it inedible. One of the staff members commented, “This is his restaurant. This is what he eats all the time. No wonder he is so unhappy and bitter all the time.”⁴⁴ To which another replied, “if you are going to be President of the United States of America you need to learn how to make a decent burger. We make a lot of burgers.”⁴⁵ A majority of the backlash for Trump’s food choice came from people outside his targeted demographics. The people in the *BuzzFeed*

video making fun of Trump's restaurant where urban millennials; not a group of people Trump is trying to identify with.

From the 2016 election there are two implications. First, healthy food creates a dilemma for female candidates who wish to remain feminine. Making healthy decisions can identify a candidate as elitist and disconnected. For women this creates a conundrum: to be elitist but feminine, or masculine but relatable. The second implication is from Perelman who argued that a female candidate would have to consume masculine food in order to win the presidential election. Based on my analysis of the Clinton campaign, I argue that Perelman's assertions are still correct, but not conclusive. Clinton lost the campaign for many reasons, and it is not possible to blame her loss solely on her choice to consume feminine food. More research needs to be done on this topic; hopefully in 2018.

Room for Dessert: Final Thoughts and Reflection

The 2016 presidential campaign was unprecedented, featuring two candidates who broke traditional expectations. With that came new challenges to identify with voters. Both the Trump and Clinton campaign utilized food as a rhetorical device to connect with constituents.

The Trump campaign was accurate with their use of identification. With their focus on fast food and masculine foods, the campaign expanded the Republican base. Nicknamed the, "Blue-collar billionaire" Trump managed to identify with middle-class voters through his food choices. By selecting food that anyone could recognize, Trump

was perceived as relatable. This helped him turnout voters in areas such as the Midwest.

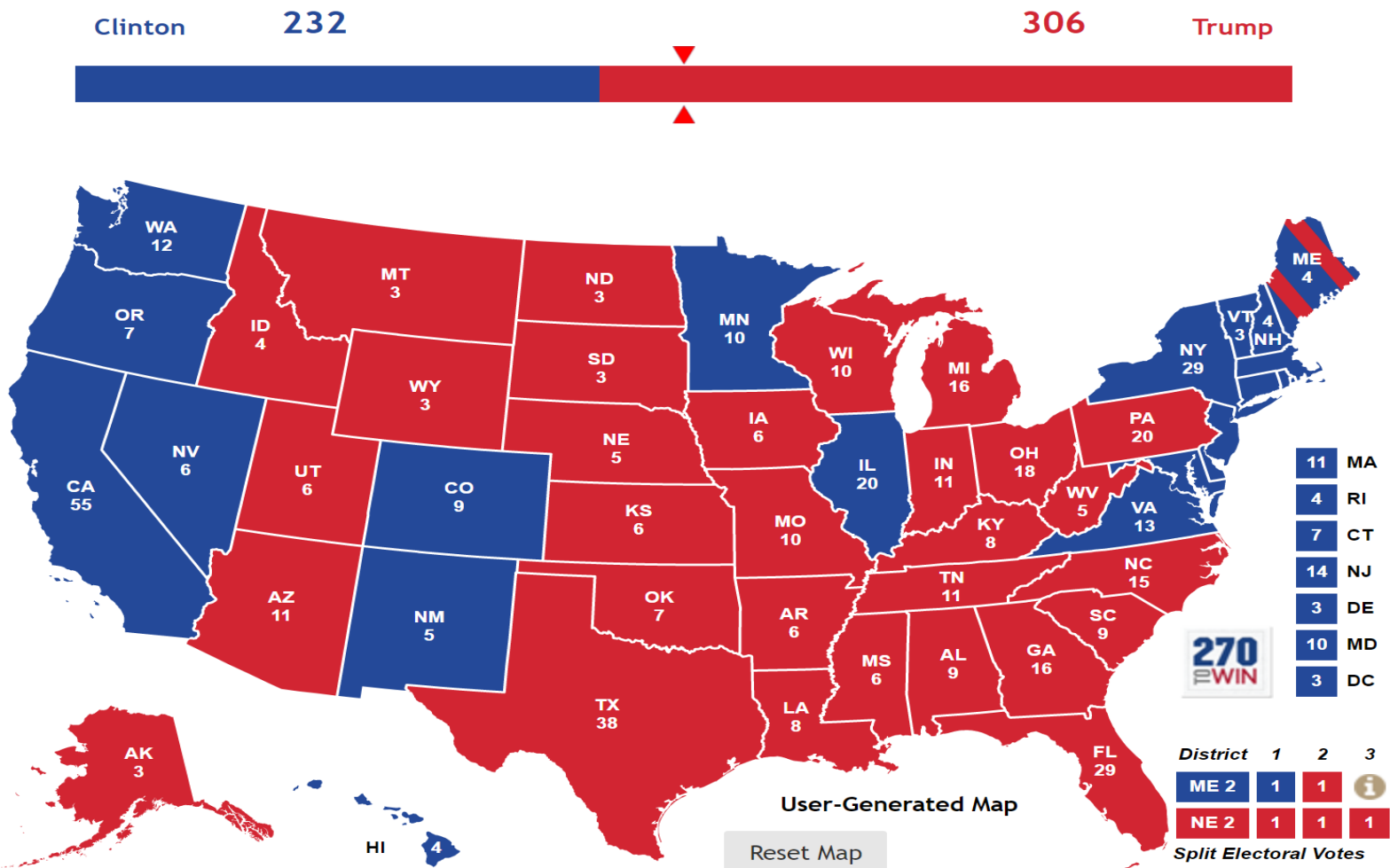
Missing the mark, the Clinton campaign failed to expand the base and targeted demographics that consistently have voted Democrat. Selecting fresh, healthy, and local foods the Clinton campaign crafted an image that could be perceived as elitist and unrelatable. The campaign failed to identify with the necessary voting block that could have handed them the election, and food was one way that this happened.

I believe food will continue to play a pivotal role in the image of politicians. The growing importance of identifying with voters proves just how important food can be on the image of a campaign. Now what is left is to see what happens in 2018.

Appendices

Below are image references throughout the text. All images are cited in the endnote section of this paper. The first three pages contain graphical data. The remaining images are sourced from the candidate's social media pages.

Image 1.⁴⁶



Map Updated Jul 20, 2017 2:15PM

Image 2.⁴⁷

Hillary Clinton
DEMOCRAT

Donald J. Trump
REPUBLICAN

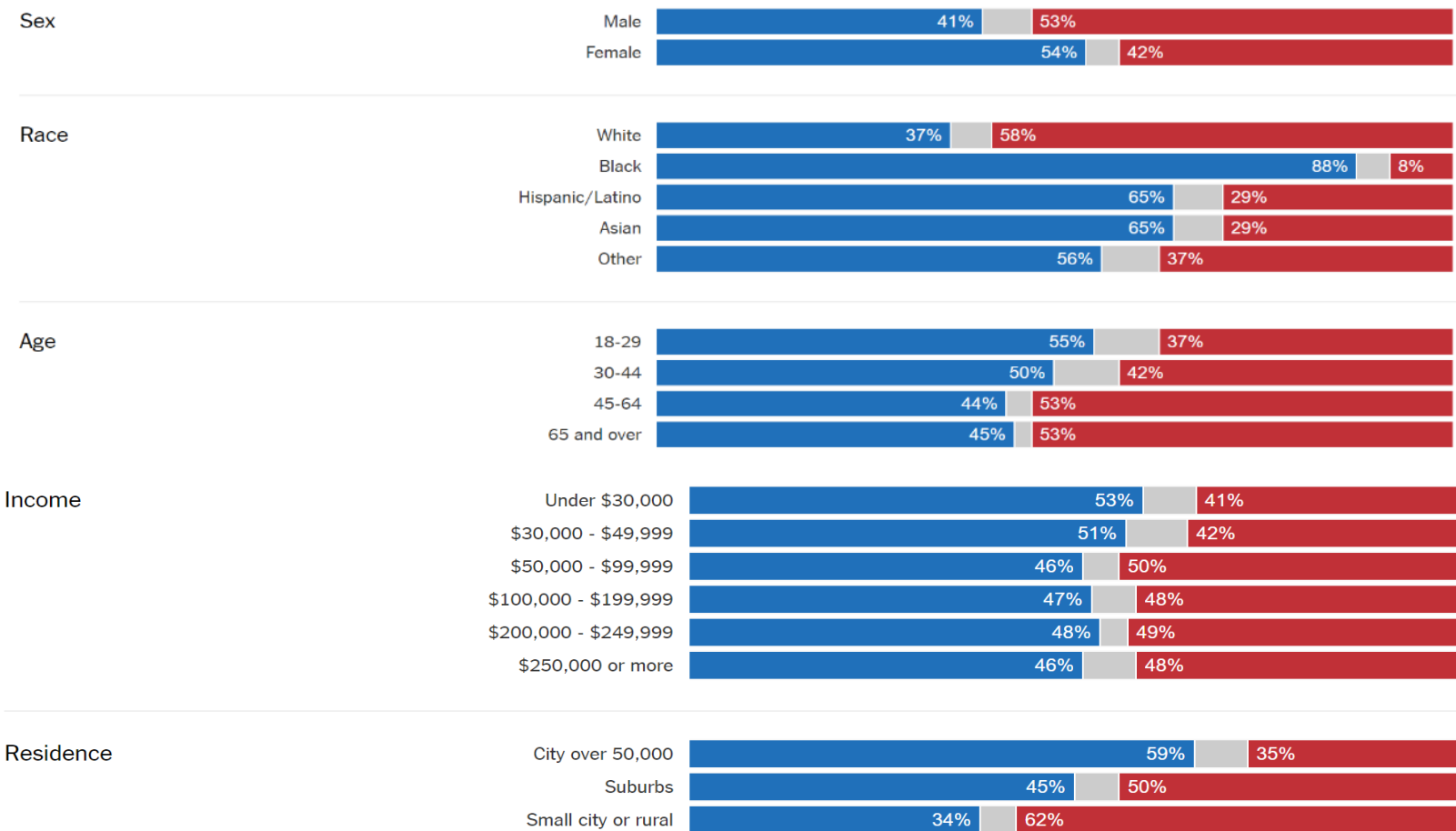
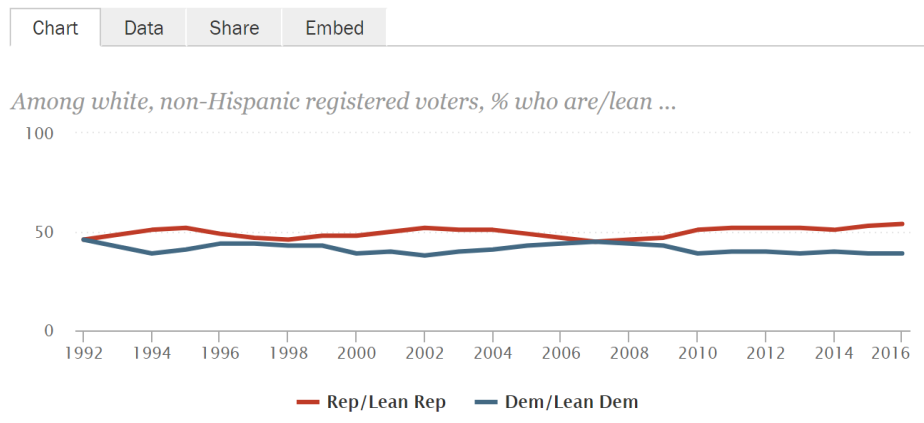
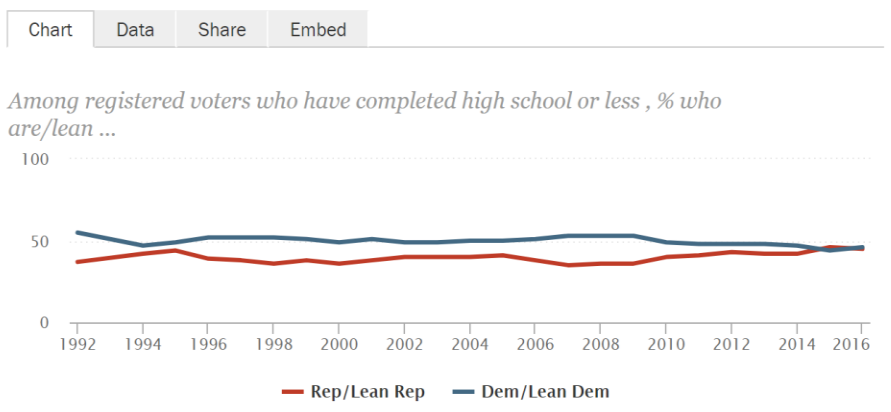


Image 3.⁴⁸

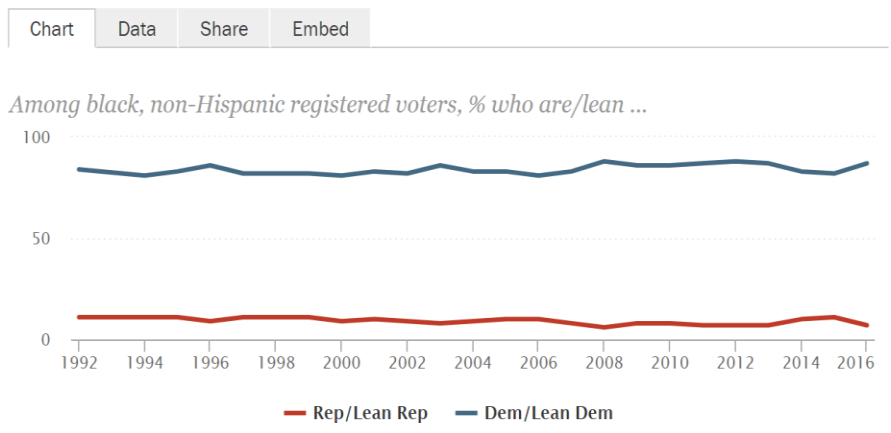
White, non-Hispanic – Party ID



High school degree or less – Party ID



Black, non-Hispanic – Party ID



Millennial – Party ID

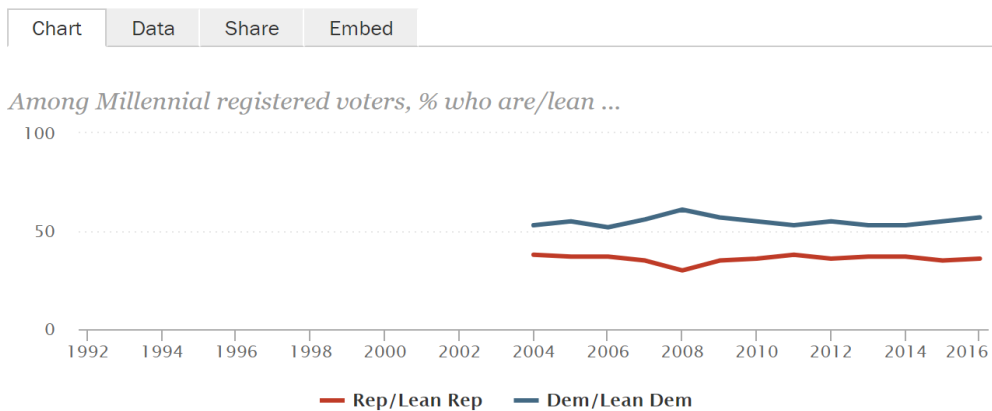


Image 4.⁴⁹



Image 5.⁵⁰

 A screenshot of an Instagram post. On the left is a photo of Donald Trump sitting at a desk in his office, eating a large taco bowl. He is wearing a dark suit and a red tie, and is smiling. The office background includes a window with a view of a city, a desk with trophies, and a newspaper. On the right is the Instagram post interface.

realdonaldtrump
Trump Tower New York

Follow

realdonaldtrump Happy #CincoDeMayo! The best taco bowls are made in Trump Tower Grill. I love Hispanics!

Load more comments

k_dix @katenicknig this caption is funny as hell! 😂😂😂

katenicknig @k_dix you're just now seeing this pic lmao

mollypattie 🇲🇪🇲🇪🇲🇪🇲🇪🇲🇪🇲🇪🇲🇪🇲🇪

leonardo.92.mx His mexican food has a wall 🇲🇪🇲🇪

fat1p Translation: "I hate wetbacks!"

lord_xmxx 🤔👍❤️❤️❤️

annie_hirshman @ava_webster

lilhill26 @dr3wsef scrolled REALLY far back for this #MAGA #overweightconservatives #MAGA

126,087 likes

MAY 5, 2016

Log in to like or comment.

Image 6.⁵¹



Image 7.⁵²



Image 8.⁵³



Image 9.⁵⁴



Image 10.⁵⁵



 **hillaryclinton** ✓
Junior's Follow

hillaryclinton Wouldn't be a Brooklyn campaign stop without a visit to @juniorscheesecake.

Load more comments

xogreciawolf Spicy boy for cheesecake
davidbvogelzang Spicceeeee boy
whowhatwherewhenhow_ spicy boiiii
ana.v.e Spicyyyyyyyy booi
mmikaylax Spicy BOI love cheese cake
mmikaylax Spicy BOI wants to stop with you
realgregreals Spicy cheesecake
aar0n_smith Spicy boi look like a lenon
dockaboo811 Rip
skippaaando Triple spice?
im_so_gil That turtle neck is spicy boi

 
30,780 likes
APRIL 9, 2016

Log in to like or comment. ...

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