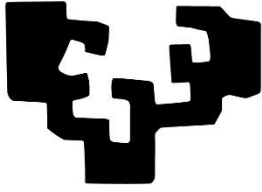


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English Studies

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**The 2016 Presidential Candidates and Their  
Discourse: A Reflection of a XXI Century  
Cultural and Ideological Conflict in The  
United States**

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## **0. Abstract**

The recent result of the 2016 presidential election in the United States of America has left many of the nation's experts at a loss for words, immediately following the announcement of the results, professionals from various fields attempted to calculate the economic and political significance of Trump's victory. Few, however, have studied the cultural importance of this election. America's growing diversity would lead one to believe governmental institutions would adapt to accommodate the changing population yet this was not the case. Trump's election was a very clear symbol of strength from the traditional conservative part of the country that in a way, imposed its power on the rest of the population. Thus, it will be the aim of this paper to discuss the cultural implications of the election by analysing four of the most significant candidates' speeches and how said speeches reflect the different cultural and ideological identities currently present within the American population but what is more, that those identities radically oppose one another. Each candidate's speech will be closely studied, detailing the cultural and ideological references made and their importance in the construction of American identity to support the hypothesis that President Trump does not in fact represent the entirety of America's cultural values, but that each candidate is illustrative of different tendency making this the election of most cultural significance in recent history.

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# **1. Introduction**

The 2016 United States presidential campaign was met with worldwide shock, a man with absolutely no experience in public office, won the most important political position in the country, and perhaps the world. All throughout the campaign, both during the primary season and the presidential election, experts were amazed at the success of Donald J Trump who, despite his brash rhetoric, swept the Republican primary. Although many questions arose after his win, one thing remained clear, the nation was divided.

This ideological clash between Democrat and Republican, while not new, appeared to be reaching new heights, not only within the voters, but also with regards to the candidates. One of the many reasons the outcome of the election shocked the world was because The United States has been steadily diversifying both with regards to race and religion and political views. Why then did a conservative win an election in a country of immigrants? The answer to this question lies within the diversity of the country, the result of the election was merely one group showing its power but it is in no way a reflection of the reality of American population. As Campbell and Kean put it:

America is a place where different identities mix and collide, an assemblage, a multiplicity constantly producing and reproducing new selves and transforming old ones and, therefore, cannot claim to possess a single closed identity with a specific set of values. (20)

Neil Campbell and Alasdair Kean wrote this about America in 1997 and never has it been truer. According to PEW Research Centre, 2008 saw the most racially diverse electorate in the history of American democracy. At first, this was thought to be due to Barack Obama's campaign as the first African American to ever run for president but this trend continued steadily and the 2016 election was not an exception. In fact, *The Washington Post* published a piece in which they further studied the polls done by Pew and data from the census bureau and found that

Overall, the number of eligible voters will grow by about 5 percent but the number of eligible white voters will grow only 2 percent, compared to a 6

percent jump in the number of black eligible voters and a 17 percent jump in the number of eligible Hispanic voters. (February 2016)

Given that statistics show the country is in fact more diverse than ever, one would expect The President stand for issues that represent this diverse population but Trump did precisely the opposite. Accused of being racist, his anti-immigration policy proposals appealed to a large part of the population. His candidacy served to evidence exactly to what extent the American population had become polarized. The 2016 presidential election became a fight between two cultures and two ideologies; the traditional Christian conservative America and the multicultural progressive America that had been developing in urban centres and college campuses. As Payne wrote, culture and sense of self are inherently linked to a nation's ideology.

The concept of ideology is closely related to the forms through which we express ourselves, understand others and determine what is real. In this sense ideology is connected to the concept of worldview. A worldview is composed of various beliefs about the nature of reality and the world. Thus, a people's' ideology cannot usually be separated from its nation's purpose, goals and its expectations of itself and others. (19)

If we accept this to be true, then there is no denying that the 2016 campaign may be the most significant one in recent history. Which ideology represents the nation's true view? Which is the real America? Even more worrying is that this clear clash of ideology and subsequent clash of culture was not limited to the general election, even during both parties' primaries the ideological rift was clear. Evidencing, very clearly, a crisis in American identity as a collective, particularly as it pertains to political views. It will therefore, be the aim of this paper to analyse two major candidates from each party, more specifically their speeches and how they represent different ideological and cultural values present in modern day America. The speeches from the candidates' announcement rallies will be examined, detailing closely the specific aspects of their policies that attract the different ideological sectors of the nation. Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton will be the Democratic candidates analysed whereas Donald Trump and Ted Cruz will represent the Republican Party.

## **1.1 The 2016 Election**

To fully comprehend the impact of the election it is first necessary to clarify some concepts and to have a basic understanding of how the election developed over time. For that reason, an overview of the election will be provided, beginning with the democratic primary, followed by the Republican election and lastly, of course, the General Election.

### **1.1.1 The Democratic Primary**

Although initially six candidates entered the race, three failed to qualify for the first debate as they did not receive the required number of votes and the fourth; Governor Martin O'Malley of Maryland withdrew his candidacy after the first caucus in Iowa, leaving two very different candidates; Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Senator Hillary Clinton of New York. Whereas Senator Sanders was perceived as a much more progressive left wing candidate, Clinton was presented as a moderate Democrat with vast experience. Although Clinton seemed to be the clear favourite among both the media and the party officials, Sanders' popularity with students and blue collar workers allowed him to come out of the Iowa caucus in second place behind Clinton in what was the closest margin in the state's history.

Very quickly a trend emerged in the voters; Sanders was backed by working class, low income families, students, new voters and independents whilst Clinton was popular among the older experienced and loyal democratic voters. Sanders, a self-proclaimed democratic socialist, received votes from the more progressive wing of the party. Clinton, with her vast experience both in public office, and more specifically the White House, appealed to the more conservative democrats.

From the very beginning of the campaign there seemed to be a perceived favourable treatment of Clinton which only served to further alienate Sanders' supporters as it was in their eyes, a clear attempt to undermine the Democratic process.

*The Washington Post*, for example, wrote about Sander's 57-43 win over Clinton in the Wisconsin primary and titled the article "Sanders wins in Wisconsin, keeping alive his improbable bid for the nomination" (April 5<sup>th</sup> 2016) when only two weeks later Clinton won the New York primary 58-42 it was referred to by the same paper as a "crushing win" in an article titled "Bernie Sanders on the brink" (April 20<sup>th</sup> 2016)

The connotations in the language used by *The Washington Post* are undeniable but what is more worrying is that this seemed to be the trend. After the first primary debate, media outlets like Forbes and CNN agreed that Clinton had won the debate with CNN even writing “Hillary Clinton proved without a doubt Tuesday night why she is the Democratic Party's presidential front-runner” (October 2015) but both TIME magazine and Google carried out independent polls and came to the same conclusion, in the public's eyes, Sanders was the clear winner of the night.

In an interview he gave with an online news group in March of 2016 Bernie Sanders referred to the media as “an arm of the ruling class of this country.” It is his belief, and the belief of many of his supporters, that it is impossible for media corporations to be objective when these are owned by companies with such big interests in the election

Sander's momentum carried on throughout the entire campaign and he took very important states but in the end, Clinton's overwhelming wins in states like Texas, California and New York, alongside the super delegates that had already pledged to vote for her, meant that she became the official nominee for the Democratic Party.

Many experts point to the Democratic division as one of the most important factors in Trump's victory, this is, many believe that had the democratic party chosen a less polarizing candidate, a candidate that would do better amongst those who rejected the established order, perhaps more voters would have participated in the election, but this will be further developed later.

### **1.1.2 The Republican Primary**

The Republican party primary was more complicated as, at its highest point, a total of seventeen candidates entered the race; Ted Cruz, Ben Carson, Chris Christie, Jim Gilmore, Rick Perry, Lindsay Graham, Mike Huckabee, Bobby Jindal, Jeb Bush, John Kasich, George Pataki, Rand Paul, Marco Rubio, Rick Santorum, Carly Fiorina and, of course, Donald Trump. Although Bush was thought to be one of the favourites before the race officially commenced, Trump very quickly began to lead the pack, followed by unexpected rivals like Carson or Fiorina.

Having spoken publicly many times in the past about running for president and failing to do so, Trump's announcement in June was seen in great part as non-threatening and although his controversial policy proposals were widely criticized, many outlets

underestimated his popularity and it was not until the primary began that he was seen as a legitimate contender for the nomination.

Similarly to the Democratic race, the Republican primary voters very quickly dived into those who backed the familiar candidate and those who backed the outsider. Rubio quickly gained the support of most of the republican “establishment,” the same can be said for candidates like Kasich and Bush who were endorsed by important leaders within the party. Trump and Cruz on the other hand were supported by the outskirts of the party with Cruz even being supported formally by the Tea Party.

This perceived institutional support of Rubio, Bush and others only served to further alienate the bases of the party giving rise to new faces like Fiorina and Carson. Many pundits speculated that it was indeed the surprising popularity of Trump that surged support for other outsiders. The same rejection of institutional politics present in the Democratic Party emerged within Republican voters and those who rejected Trump's impetuous mannerisms gravitated to other newcomers who, while not being a part of the established political hierarchy, possessed some of the polished characteristics of career politicians and more moderate discourses.

The first candidates to abandon the race were Perry and Walker who failed to garner the support necessary to qualify for the election. Within two months, Jindal, Graham and Pataky had also dropped out of the race. The other candidates managed to maintain momentum going into the election year but February saw no less than seven candidates bow out of the race. Huckabee, Fiorina, Bush, Paul, Santorum, Gilmore and Christie all withdrew from the nomination within one month.

Huckabee, Bush, Santorum and Gilmore were seen as very much a part of the establishment, having all held public office before. Fiorina on the other hand was the first of the “non-politicians” to drop out. Chris Christie and Rand Paul had unique profiles and in many ways, were amongst the most significant candidates. Christie, albeit a career politician, shared Trump's disregard for political correctness and was favoured by many who thought he could bring both change and experience to the white house. Rand Paul was also an experienced candidate but his age and stance on some issues, particularly the war on drugs, separated him from the pack.

When Christie and Paul abandoned the race, all hopes were lost of the outskirts of the party backing an established candidate and when Carson abandoned the race shortly after it seemed clear that although there remained four candidates, it would be a fight between the establishment and Trump.



Trump's brazen opinions and unapologetic tone won him the support of the working classes but also alienated other sectors of the party who gravitated towards the other remaining candidates; Kasich, Cruz and Rubio. Cruz was supported by the Tea Party and garnered the support of the conservatives that rejected Trump's brash discourse. Rubio and Kasich, on the other hand, were supported by more moderate sectors, as they were thought to have a wider appeal nationally. Rubio was the first to drop out, after losing his home state of Florida and was quickly followed by Cruz and Kasich, making Trump the official nominee.

Although technically Governor John Kasich remained in the race one day longer than Cruz, he won only one election and it can therefore be concluded that it was Cruz who counted with more support within the Republican voters. For this reason, Cruz, will be analysed as he likely represents a bigger sector of the party.

### **1.1.3 The General Election**

The feeling of resentment towards the established order in politics carried through to the general election. The disdain for Clinton in the Republican Party only intensified after she became the official nominee and Trump wasted no opportunity to exacerbate the problems. He attacked her on several occasions about the pending investigations into her administration and continued to criticise her husband's presidency. Clinton on her part, concentrated on the negative stories that had plagued the Trump campaign since its beginning, be it the racist undertones of many of his speeches, his inconsistency on issues or of course, the many allegations of sexual assault that had been brought against him.

Definitively, there were many centre discussion points during the debates that had little or nothing to with policy. Both camps ran negative campaign advertisements against their adversary and both began to drop in approval rating polls. As a matter a matter of fact *The Washington Post* reported that never in American history had there ever been two candidates with such low favourability ratings; they became the most disliked candidates in history.

As controversial as the race was, the real controversy began when the results showed that despite losing the popular vote, Trump would become the forty fifth President of the United States. To understand how this is possible, an understanding of how the American Electoral College functions is crucial.

#### **1.1.3.1 The Electoral College**

The American presidential election is not decided by popular vote, nor is it disputed, like in many countries, in parliament. The presidential election is decided by the Electoral College. Each state is assigned a certain number of electors depending on the population of said state. The citizens vote, the votes are counted and the electors of every state precede to vote in accordance with how the population has voted

The controversy lies in how the votes are distributed. According to the 2015 census, California has a population of 39,250,017 meaning that each electoral vote represents roughly 713,637 popular votes. Virginia on the other hand, has a population of 8,411,808 meaning that each electoral vote represents 647,062 popular votes. As can be seen, the weight of one's vote can vary greatly depending on the state in which it is cast. In short, the votes in some states are worth more than those in others.

There are big interests in maintaining this system as, of the five most populated states in the union, three have consistently voted since 1990 for the Democrats, whilst only one, Texas, is considered to be a red state. By maintaining the Electoral College, the votes of California, Illinois and New York are lessened and thus, the Democrats lose an advantage.

Twice in the twentieth century has the Electoral College contradicted the popular vote and both times the results were met with outrage. Similar to the 2000 election, in which George W Bush won the election despite Al Gore having more votes, Trump's victory was criticized by many as the states that are not favoured by the election system are also the states which contain the most minority communities. Worsening the already tense relations between races, the outrage at the Electoral College once again points to an indisputable rift among two opposing positions within the population something that only became all the more clear in the days immediately following Trump's election.

As soon as the results were announced hundreds of thousands of politicians, activists and everyday citizens flooded the streets with chants of "Not my president!" and "love Trumps hate!" They were of course, met with protests in support of the president elect, further proving that the clash of ideology was very much a reality.

## **2. Candidate and Speech Analysis**

The candidates' early speeches are clear indications of their intentions and why said intentions resonated more with particular parts of the population. In this section, the

speeches from each candidate's announcement will be carefully analysed to fully understand the different parts of society that they represented, their cultures and ideologies and most importantly, why they often conflict with one another. While examining the consequences of each candidate's discourse, their voters will also be defined, this is, the demographics of each sector will be studied as race, religion, age, gender and other elements factor heavily in the construction of ideology. The first candidate to be analysed will be Senator Bernie Sanders of the state of Vermont.

## **2.1 Bernie Sanders**

### **2.1.1 Political history**

The son of a working-class polish immigrant and born in Brooklyn, Sanders found his way to politics at a very young age. His career as an activist began when he was a student at the university of Chicago where he lead many organizations in a protest for the desegregation of off campus housing, in 1963 he even participated in The March on Washington, where Martin Luther King delivered his famous “I have a dream” speech.

Although he began running in elections in the 1970's it was not until 1981 when he won his first election to public office as the mayor of Burlington Vermont, a position he held for almost ten years until 1990 he stepped down in order to run for congress. He was elected to the house of representatives, and re-elected eight times during which time he voted on historic legislation. For example, he voted against the Gulf War and the Defence of Marriage Act which denied same sex couples the right to marry. He also voted against both the PATRIOT ACT, which gave the government unprecedented access to private information of American citizens, and the War in Iraq. In 2006 he ran and won the election for one of Vermont's senatorial seats where he continued his labour as a public servant even helping to write and pass The Affordable Care Act, more commonly known as Obama Care. In May of 2015 in Burlington Vermont Senator Sanders, as the longest serving independent in American history, announced his bid for the 2016 nomination.

### **2.1.2 Speech**

Sanders began is speech by using strong language like “political revolution” to demonstrate to his supporters that he was very much serious in his goal of deeply changing the American Political System. He continued this pattern and insisted that the

changes he planned to make would have a profound effect on the lives of the millions of working class Americans.

Today, we stand here and say loudly and clearly that; Enough is enough. This great nation and its government belong to all of the people, and not to a handful of billionaires, their Super-PACs and their lobbyists. Brothers and sisters: Now is not the time for thinking small. Now is not the time for the same old – same old establishment politics and stale inside-the-beltway ideas. (Sanders 2015)

This is a very direct message to those he knows will vote for him, a message to those for whom he plans to fight; the disillusioned, frustrated and silenced. After the initial celebration of Barack Obama's election as the first African American to the White House, disappointment in "Washington" began spreading amongst the population. They found their hopes that the Obama administration would radically change things where lost. It is those voters that would back Sanders and Trump and both candidates very intelligently tapped into this anti-establishment feeling, as exemplified in the aforementioned quote by Sanders.

In many ways by using expressions like "brothers and sisters" or "all of the people" he acknowledged one of America's core values, as President Lincoln once famously put it, the government is "of the people, by the people and for the people." He was also making it an intentional effort to include women thus addressing the historically disenfranchised.

He referenced one of the most controversial Supreme Court decisions of recent times; Super PACs. Super PACs or Political Action committees are independent organizations that can legally raise unlimited funds for any political campaign. This ruling by the Supreme Court, referred to as Citizens United, was described by Sanders on his social media platforms as "One of the most disastrous Supreme Court decisions in my lifetime. In essence, this ruling handed millionaires and billionaires – who have already rigged our economy – unlimited influence in our elections."

Sanders was the only candidate to run an election without the support of a super PAC and thus freely criticized them, but the other candidates were not so candid about their opinions on the matter. In fact, Forbes ran an article that hinted at some of the fears about super PACs.

The most recent two-year summary from the Federal Election Committee (FEC) reports that Clinton's super PAC, Priorities USA Action, has raised \$75.9 million in this election cycle (Jan.1 2015-April 30,2016). Of that total, nearly 80% came from 20 donors. (May 2016)

The organization went on to explain that Clinton received ten million dollars in this campaign alone from Haim and Cheryl Saban, long-time Clinton supporters who have even donated to the Clinton Foundation. The fear being that politicians may be unable to act in the interests of their constituents as their allegiance inherently lies with the multi million dollar corporations that fund their careers.

Although this issue was made particularly popular during the election by Sanders, he was by no means the first person to address the problem of money in politics. Indeed many of those who were his supporters and even staffers had been fighting for less money in campaigns for years. The same people that in 2011 fled to the street in protest and created what would become one of the most famous activist movements of the twenty first century, Occupy Wall Street.

The Occupy Wall Street movement evidenced a break in the population and the way in which they interpreted injustice. It was, in its majority, millennials who had suffered the consequences of the economy crash and frustrated with the student debt they now found themselves chained by, marched the streets in protest of the government's inaction with regards to the abuses of corporations.

An advocate for the movement since its beginning, it is no surprise that Sanders would find support amongst Occupy activists as *CNN* put it:

In Sanders and in his campaign, the more mainstream elements of Occupy Wall Street have found an ideological ally. The Vermont senator's laser focus on economic issues are a big draw, local organizers said, but they also delight in his affection for the shoe-leather activism of past generations. (April 2016)

Several of the movement's most recognizable faces, not only endorsed Sanders, but also found positions within his team. In fact, Charles Lenchner, a notable member of

Occupy Wall Street, gave an interview to *The Guardian* in which he suggested that Sanders success was due to his support in the Occupy movement

Sanders' rise in this election season is inconceivable without Occupy Wall Street having elevated the conversation around inequality and the way that the 1% are ravaging this country. You just can't imagine one without the other. (September 2015)

In his announcement speech Sanders went on to promise that he would bring the campaign door to door, to the people. He is deliberately addressing the grassroots of the democratic party as there lies the ideology and activist culture that he shares. He speaks of his campaign not as a campaign in such, not as a matter of one person, but as a movement.

Let's be clear. This campaign is not about Bernie Sanders. It is not about Hillary Clinton. It is not about Jeb Bush or anyone else. This campaign is about the needs of the American people, and the ideas and proposals that effectively address those needs. (Sanders 2015)

He addressd income inequality, climate change, college tuition and all the other issues that most affect the working class low income families as it is there he found support. Interesting is that he did not have in depth discussions as to racial tensions or immigration. Although he did do so during the campaign, these points are absent from his announcement speech because his campaign focused on what he believed to be the cause of most of the problems; money in politics.

Sanders' support came from white working class families and minorities but more so young minorities; this is not to say that he did not fight for social issues as his past activism clearly demonstrates that he did. The democratic party, for the most part, had a clearly defined line with regards to social issues like race, gender equality etc. Sanders and Clinton's supporters and subsequently their respective ideologies and cultures were divided much more so by economic issues, by class.

Now is the time for millions of working families to come together, to revitalize American democracy, to end the collapse of the American

middle class and to make certain that our children and grandchildren are able to enjoy a quality of life that brings them health, prosperity, security and joy – and that once again makes the United States the leader in the world in the fight for economic and social justice, for environmental sanity and for a world of peace. (Sanders 2015)

This quote from the beginning of the senator's announcement speech, in many ways, sums up the type of person he plans to fight for but it also highly resembles Obama's first inauguration speech.

Let it be said by our children's children that when we were tested we refused to let this journey end, that we did not turn back nor did we falter; and with eyes fixed on the horizon and God's grace upon us, we carried forth that great gift of freedom and delivered it safely to future generations. (Obama 2012)

Sanders is, in a way, tried to reignite the hope the Obama campaign generated in 2008, they both tried to inspire their respective audiences to fight for the future of the country and their loved ones.

"Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" these are the rights guaranteed in *The Declaration of Independence*, Sanders choice of "health, prosperity, security and joy" are no coincidence. He echoed these iconic words in American culture but adapting them to better reflect the need for economic equality. He presented himself as a working-class champion, presented his values, and those of his supporters, as the equality between all men and women, regardless of income, to right to the pursuit of happiness. He denounced the idea of the idea of the American Dream as every man for himself and in doing so is radically separating himself from the ideology of the other candidates.

## **2.2 Hillary Clinton**

### **2.2.1 Political History**

Hillary Clinton's experience was a little different than Sanders'. She was born to a middle-class family in Illinois, attended Wesley College and then moved on to Yale Law School, one of the most prestigious universities in the world. After graduating, she took

a job with the Children's Defence Fund and continued her work in Law. She made history in Arkansas where she founded one of the state's first child advocacy groups. Her first experiences with politics were through her husband first as first lady of the state of Arkansas, then as first Lady of the United States. She met great opposition during her time as First Lady as she became very active in political life, particularly Health Care Reform. It wasn't until 2000 that she herself entered the political sphere as a candidate and made history as the first woman to ever represent New York in the senate where she remained until 2009. In 2008 she announced her first bid for the presidential nomination and although ultimately she was unsuccessful, the newly elected President Barack Obama asked her to join his cabinet as the Secretary of State. Her administration as secretary of state was unfortunately full of controversies. Despite playing a role in historic negotiations, such as the talks between Hamas and the Israeli state, the opposition pointed to some grave errors of judgement on her part as evidence to suggest that she was not fit for presidency.

One of the biggest controversies of her administration was the attack on Benghazi, attacks on an American Embassy in Libya and a nearby CIA building that resulted in multiple deaths. As the *Chicago Tribune* put it:

The crux of it is that during and well after the chaos of the attacks on the State Department's outpost and nearby CIA annex in Benghazi, Clinton and the Obama administration promoted a false narrative for public consumption: that the violence came from a spontaneous outburst of mob anger. (July 2016)

After the initial attack, the government's stance was clear; this was not an organized attack but rather the result of violent protest. This however, was not the case, as was pointed out by many reports after the event.

Another scandal that plagued her career was her emails, a report on Benghazi found that Clinton had been using her private server to handle classified information. Many suggested that by doing so, Clinton risked national security and all throughout the campaign The Republican Party carried out what many saw as a personal attack on Clinton as they used this mistake to investigate every aspect of her administration.

Despite this, her long past in the party and credibility lead most Democratic officials to through their support behind her nomination, believing that it was time for a



female president and Clinton was the perfect candidate. Her established credibility allowed her to gain the support not only of party officials, but of elder voters. This is, voters familiar with her vast years as a public servant, particularly her role as secretary of state, were confident that her experience made her the perfect choice for president.

While Sanders gained the confidence of students and low income families, Clinton did better amongst Democrats from wealthier backgrounds..

### **2.2.2 Speech**

On June the 13<sup>th</sup> of 2015 Hilary Clinton gave a speech in New York announcing her candidacy for the 2016 democratic nomination in which she began by clearly reinforcing the audience's knowledge of her experience and mentioning her participation in such important institutions as the senate or the UN, she did this to highlight how prepared she was for the position. As Sanders did, she made several references to social equality and its importance throughout history though the language appears not be as aggressive. She spoke to middle class families, voters that managed to better their socio-economic standing, even referencing that she herself comes from a middle-class family.

Unlike her adversary, who continuously criticised the failures of past democratic administrations, Clinton defended the past presidents, knowing that otherwise she would likely offend an important sector of the party.

When President Clinton honored the bargain, we had the longest peacetime expansion in history, a balanced budget, and the first time in decades we all grew together, with the bottom 20 percent of workers increasing their incomes by the same percentage as the top 5 percent.

When President Obama honored the bargain, we pulled back from the brink of Depression, saved the auto industry, provided health care to 16 million working people, and replaced the jobs we lost faster than after a financial crash. (Clinton 2015)

As an important part of both administrations, Clinton could not allow space for criticism. Instead she played to those who were happy with President Clinton and President Obama; wealthier members of the party, who enjoyed and celebrated the social

and environmental advances made but suffered less harshly the consequences of the economy crash.

You see corporations making record profits, with CEOs making record pay, but your pay checks have barely budged.

While many of you are working multiple jobs to make ends meet, you see the top 25 hedge fund managers making more than all of America's kindergarten teachers combined. And, often paying a lower tax rate. (Clinton 2015)

She mentioned the frustrations of the poor, yet chose a profession that does not reflect the poorest parts of the country. When speaking of a wage gap more so than the corruption of corporations, Clinton targeted the middle class who were much more concerned with their tax bracket and disposable income than problems related to debt and mortgages as the others might be. Unlike Sanders, she didn't recognize the feelings of betrayal many felt after having gone into debt under false pretences, this is because her audience is older and thus less likely to have student debt or a mortgage. They were not under the same suffocating debt as other members of the party and thus, felt no need to support the more extreme policies Sanders proposes.

She also spoke of governmental dysfunction. Not unlike most American, her supporters too feel the government has failed the people. This may be due to the conservative congress blocking many of Obama's initiatives.

Our political system is so paralyzed by gridlock and dysfunction that most Americans have lost confidence that anything can actually get done. And they've lost trust in the ability of both government and Big Business to change course. (Clinton 2015)

She acknowledged the failures of government but did not diagnose a reason for said failure. This is, she could not speak of the problems created by the vast amounts of money donated to political candidates as she herself accepted donations. She spoke only of repealing Citizen's United "if necessary". Instead she focused on the opposition as the sole source of governmental failure.

Rather than talk about the primary race, which would be contested to a great degree, she focused on the republican opposition as she likely believed, as many of her

supporters did, that she would, without doubt, be the nominee. This disregard for the outskirts of the party became a big problem during the election as many of Sanders supporters, feeling Clinton ignored their needs, did not vote in the general election, or turned to third party candidates. Young voters turned to different candidates, while older working class voters, rejecting a perceived elitism in Clinton's campaign, turned to Donald Trump. In fact, *The New York Times* studied the voting trends in the election and concluded "Bluntly put, much of the white working class decided that Mr. Trump could be a jerk. Absent any other champion, they supported the jerk they thought was more on their side — that is, on the issues that most concerned them." (December 2016)

Again, a clash of cultures can be perceived, the Democratic vote split between those who sacrificed their values for much needed change and those who could afford not to. In her speech, Clinton went on to insist on the importance of health care, women's rights and many other issues fundamental to progressive values but her lack of passion and refusal to directly deal with the poorest of society created rejection within the party.

She presented herself as a champion of liberals and the working class, but the language she chose appears to be less assertive than Sanders. She insisted on policies to protect children and allow affordable child care because she targeted families yet, as it pertains to students she did not insist as fiercely. "Let's make college affordable and available to all ...and lift the crushing burden of student debt" (Clinton 2015) She vaguely mentioned broadening access to university rather than insisting, as Sanders did, on making all public institutions of learning tuition free.

And it is way past time to end the outrage of so many women still earning less than men on the job -- and women of color often making even less. This isn't a women's issue. It's a family issue. Just like raising the minimum wage is a family issue. Expanding childcare is a family issue. Declining marriage rates is a family issue. The unequal rates of incarceration is a family issue. Helping more people with an addiction or a mental health problem get help is a family issue. (Clinton 2015)

Rather than addressing what many believe to be the root of the issues and speaking of drastic change. Clinton spoke of concrete issues in an attempt to reach the different parts of society they most affect. The incarceration rate, for

example, effects African American and other minorities disproportionately, the minimum wage is an issue with a bigger effect on youth and so on.

Another interesting choice made by Clinton was to speak about national defence, while other candidates mentioned and criticised the actions of past administrations in Iraq and Afghanistan, Clinton opted instead to reference and attack on America, once again proving her allegiance to the Democratic Party and the progress it has achieved. “As your President, I’ll do whatever it takes to keep Americans safe. And if you look over my left shoulder you can see the new World Trade Center soaring skyward.” (Clinton 2015) This of course could be a tactic to divert attention from the fact that as a senator, Clinton, unlike Sanders, voted in favour of the war, a decision she was heavily criticised for during the election. She went on to talk about her dedication to the military:

As a Senator from New York, I dedicated myself to getting our city and state the help we needed to recover. And as a member of the Armed Services Committee, I worked to maintain the best-trained, best-equipped, strongest military, ready for today’s threats and tomorrow’s. (Clinton 2015)

Taking such a strong and aggressive stance on an issue like the military or national security she was, in a way, catering to the more conservative sectors as this is traditionally a republican issue. Another traditionally conservative tactic she used through the speech were religious references. Albeit subtly, she made several references to Christian doctrine, when talking about her past in the Methodist church, or jokingly thanking the lord, she was in fact reminding Christians, the largest religious group in America, that she is one of them.

In conclusion, Clinton, whilst maintaining the social policy positions that most Democrats share, opted for a more conservative stance focussing more on concrete issues rather than radical change. This is important as it shows the fundamental break within society of those who desperately calling for revolutionary change, and those who are comfortable with the way things are. Clinton represents an older more economically conservative population. Middle class liberals who want to continue the fight for LGBTQ+ rights, women’s rights, health care and so many other issues, but are comfortable in their living conditions. This is a radical opposite to Sanders’ supporters,

who coming from less privileged backgrounds called for immediate and profound changes.

Her ideology and that of her supporters is clearly seen in her language. Whilst Sanders chose strong aggressive language, Clinton's discourse is much more moderate and her tone calm. She speaks with composed confidence as her voters were looking for a candidate similar to Obama and she knew she would likely earn the support of those happy with the current system. She was not angry because her voters were not angry.

### **2.2.3 Ted Cruz**

#### **2.2.3.1 Political History**

Ted Cruz was born in Calgary, Canada to an American mother and a Cuban father who, after studying at the University of Texas, was granted political asylum in The United States. Although born in Canada, his family moved back to The United States, more specifically Texas, where Cruz was raised. He attended private schools during childhood and moved on to Princeton for university, one of the most highly regarded universities in the world. At Princeton, he had great success on debate teams and after graduating he would continue this success at Harvard Law School where he would eventually become the primary editor of *The Harvard Law Review*.

Before entering elected office, Cruz held positions in private practices. His first experience in politics came during the 2000 George W Bush campaign in which he served as an advisor. His experience with the Bush administration allowed him access to governmental jobs and he was appointed Solicitor General of Texas during which time he fought and won issues concerning the constitutionality of the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance and the redistricting of Texas' congressional districts among others. In 2012, he ran with the Tea Party (the more conservative part of the Republican Party) in the election for the US Senate and became one of Texas' representatives. While The Senate he consistently voted conservatively, even disobeying party decisions when he felt it was needed. As *The New York Times* put it:

That means he's been against John Kerry's confirmation as secretary of state, against suspending the debt ceiling for three months, and against

modest changes to the Senate's filibuster rules. He even voted against aid to victims of Hurricane Sandy. (2013)

He ran his campaign promising to stop the changes being made by the Obama administration and to cut down on government spending. Such was his commitment to the cause that he led several Republican senators in 2013 in their attempt to shut down the government. Although they did manage to halt government action, the Democrats refused to give in to their demands creating great tensions within the Republican Party. Per *The Washington Post*;

To those supporters, the shutdown signalled the depth of Cruz's commitment to rein in government.

But for many Republicans in Congress, this was the episode that soured them on Cruz. Many suspect that he always knew his plan would fail but went ahead with it anyway — expecting that he would personally benefit from the exposure, even if his party lost a damaging fight. (February 2013)

Regardless of how some party members thought one thing was clear; Cruz had the support of the grass roots voters, the voters that would likely decide the election. Not free from controversy but with clear support from a large sector of the voters, on March 23<sup>rd</sup> of 2015, Senator Ted Cruz gave a speech at Liberty University in which he announced that he would be running for president.

### **2.2.3.2 Speech**

Cruz began his speech, given at Liberty University Virginia in March of 2015, by remarking what would be one of the central points of his campaign, Christianity. He celebrated the fact that he chose a Christian university to give his speech and in doing so he is targeted the largest religious group in the United States. He identifies himself as a man of faith and thus tries to relate to the voters. He went on to tell the story of how his life changed after his father found religion:

And God transformed his heart. And he drove to the airport, he bought a plane ticket, and he flew back to be with my mother and me.

There are people who wonder if faith is real. I can tell you, in my family there's not a second of doubt, because were it not for the transformative

love of Jesus Christ, I would have been saved and I would have been raised by a single mom without my father in the household. (Cruz 2015)

He painted a flattering picture of Christianity and made very clear that, as a Christian, he would defend Christian values in the White House despite the fact that the United States is a secular country, this is, the separation of Church and State is protected by the constitution. Cruz as a civil servant, heavily referenced the rights of the Christian religion, ignoring all other doctrines. This is of enormous importance as the message among the main stream Republican Party over the past years has been that there has been an institutionalized attack on religious values with the Passing of Same Sex Marriage, anti-discrimination legislation for the protection of trans people and continuing legality of voluntary pregnancy termination. *The Declaration of Independence* states:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

These words are fundamental pillars of American culture and democracy and Cruz very intelligently challenged the familiar quote during his speech. However, he made on very clear distinction. While the signatures of The Declaration of Independence refer only to a creator, without specifying who or what it may be, Cruz opted instead to state outright:

What is the promise of America? The idea that -- the revolutionary idea that this country was founded upon, which is that our rights don't come from man. They come from God Almighty. (Cruz 2015)

He omitted the ambiguity of the original text to further his cause. Although it is popularly believed that the signatures were indeed Christian, there is substantial evidence to suggest that this may not be the case. Cruz ignored this as he was aware that his likely voters were deeply religious.

The idea of the promise of America is also a recurring theme throughout his speech. The speech itself reads almost as a narrative of his life, he detailed the lives and backgrounds of his parents and wife to demonstrate the diversity of America and

the traditional idea of America as a nation of immigrants. However once again he omitted information to portray himself in a more favourable manner. Whilst talking about his father's participation in the Cuban Revolution he described it only as an uprising.

He joins a revolution against Batista, he begins fighting with other teenagers to free Cuba from the dictator. This boy at age 17 finds himself thrown in prison, finds himself tortured, beaten. And then at age 18, he flees Cuba, he comes to America. (Cruz 2015)

By describing it in this manner, he achieved two important things; the description of America as a safe haven and, more importantly, the omission of the fact that his father fought for Fidel Castro. This is likely a tactic to avoid offending his right-wing voters. The language he used was highly controlled and in a way, highly deceptive. In both the aforementioned quotes, Cruz used language in a specific manner as a means to highlight what he saw fit. He continued to do this throughout the speech, speaking of paying off student loans but failing to mention his private school education is merely one of countless examples.

Instead of a federal government that wages an assault on our religious liberty, that goes after Hobby Lobby, that goes after the Little Sisters of the Poor, that goes after Liberty University, imagine a federal government that stands for the First Amendment rights of every American. (Cruz 2015)

This quote is yet another example of his manipulative language. He mentioned the government attacking the first amendment rights, insinuating that his administration would defend the rights of Liberty University, a religious university, but it is precisely the first amendment that protects the separation of church of state. As a constitutional lawyer, Cruz was well aware of the contents of the first amendment and yet spoke only of the right to freedom of expression and religious practice.

In his speech, he went on to address several of the core issues The Republican Party fights for, for example; the right to bear arms, reducing federal tax, freedom of schools to dictate their curriculum, securing the borders, and, of course, national security.



Instead of a president who seeks to go to the United Nations to end-run Congress and the American people, imagine a president who says I will honor the Constitution and under no circumstances will Iran be allowed to acquire a nuclear weapon.

Imagine a president who says we will stand up and defeat radical Islamic terrorism, and we will call it by its name. We will defend the United States of America. (Cruz 2015)

Interesting is that he simultaneously talked of the changes he planned to make and fiercely attacked previous administrations. He used a structure of comparison: Imagine A instead of B. In doing so he is very clearly positioned himself as alternative whilst igniting hope in the audience by repeatedly using words like “Image”. By using a comparison, he placed himself on the same level as past presidents, thus the audience would also begin to see him on as an equal. Cruz’s closing remarks are clearly indicative of the core values of his campaign and its intents;

This is our fight. The answer will not come from Washington. It will come only from the men and women across this country, from men and women, from people of faith, from lovers of liberty, to protect the Constitution, it will only come as it has come at every other time of challenge in this country, when the American people stand together and say we will get back to the principles that have made this country great. We will get back and restore that shining city on a hill that is the United States of America.

Thank you and God bless you. (Cruz 2015)

In a very effective conclusion, he addressed his core supporters, Christians, and used language to subliminally convey his values. When he stated that Washington does not hold the answers, he was, in fact, reflecting the anti-establishment sensitivity so widely spread among American citizens. He also subtly addressed the disconnection between parts of society calling for unity to get back the principals he believes have made America great. This is fundamental because he did not elaborate what those

principals are, but given his deep religious beliefs and discourse, it can be assumed that he is calling for a return to old societal norms and idea that is further proven by his farewell statement of “God Bless you”.

In short, in this speech, Cruz was very clearly addressing the more traditional and conservative parts of the country. He declared a fight for the old values still very present in society. This speech stands in stark contrast to those of his democratic counter parts, they are very much so, representatives of conflicting ideologies and factions of society. While Sanders and Clinton differed essentially on economic issues, Cruz holds entirely different moral and social values. His speech is illustrative of the old American values and the desperation with which some are clinging to them. It is, in essence, demonstrative of the deep cultural and ideological rift between the old and the new. Sanders’ language was aggressive and Clinton’s calm, Cruz while remaining positive is using language to convey nostalgia.

## **2.2.4 Donald Trump**

### **2.2.4.1 History**

Donald Trump, the son of two second generation immigrants, was born into a wealthy New York family in 1946. Although his mother’s family was rather poor, his paternal grandfather had started a business upon his arrival to the United States and found great success. Having lived in a high class comfortable family home, it was quite a shock when at age thirteen he was enrolled in a military academy which he would not leave until graduating High School and moving on to Fordham College. With a loan of one million dollars from his father, he entered the business world, more specifically, real estate.

His name started to become well known despite his limited success and he began participating in television shows along with other types of media exposure. In fact biographer Michael D’Antonio, in an interview with CNN, stated:

This guy just throws out ideas and sparks like nobody's business and gets attention, and in a place like New York, which was the media center of the

world and still probably is, he was perfectly positioned to not only establish himself locally, but eventually as a national figure. (2016)

This fondness of the spotlight did not go unnoticed during the campaign with many commentators even believing that Trump merely entered the race to gain publicity for his other endeavours. Furthermore, when the media have criticised him he has notoriously lashed back by banning networks from press rooms of using his infamous phrase “Fake news.” Indeed, before the election he did not seem so hostile towards the media as it was precisely the media that allowed him to create the Trump brand. He hosted reality shows, published several books, endorsed product after product. For all intents and purposes, he was enjoying the celebrity lifestyle.

As an astute businessman, Trump contributed to many political campaigns over time and occasionally criticised the government, threatening to run for president but never seriously perusing the position. However, it wasn't until the Obama administration that Trump began to continuously criticise a president. Such was his disdain for President Obama that he maintained for years that Obama was not an American Citizen. Though many debate whether this was simply a political tactic, as D'Antonio explains: “there had been a time somewhere between 2008 and 2011 when Donald saw that it was to his advantage to become an Obama critic.”

So, it was that he entered the presidential race in 2015 under the slogan “Make America Great Again.” He positioned himself as an anti-establishment outsider but his status as a celebrity allowed him unprecedented media attention as well as access to potential voters.

Immediately after he announced his campaign, both the media and the public began to deeply scrutinize his very controversial positions. The controversies only grew as the campaign went on, be it the numerous allegations of sexual harassment brought against him or the investigations into his taxes and financial situation but this will be developed more during the speech analysis.

#### **2.2.4.1 Speech**

It was on June 16<sup>th</sup> of the election year that Donald Trump announced his candidacy and immediately after doing so his speech created great controversies. His choice of language

is very interesting, it is very direct, this is, it lacks the polished political correctness of an experienced politician. Early in the speech he began to address the other candidates and the state of the nation, he presented his speculations as fact without giving any information whatsoever as support. A statement as simple as “The US has become a dumping ground for everybody else’s problems” is very effective. He channelled a widespread feeling that appeared to be fact but was, in reality, unsubstantiated. This is a tactic that Trump would go on to use extensively creating great controversy as he received grave criticism for doing so. As the guardian put it in a recent article:

It should be clear by now that Trump doesn’t subscribe to a conventional notion of truth, related to verifiable facts and an independently existing reality. For Trump, truth is subordinate to attitude, an attitude that can be modified at will. (Feb 2017)

His supporters however, did not seem as troubled by the candidate’s use of, as Kellyanne Conway, Trump’s advisor, once famously put it during a press conference, “alternative facts.” There exists a clear possibility that this is due to language he uses, even his tone and mannerisms suggest he is telling the truth. It is his self-conviction that prompts the audience to believe him.

This is inherently related to another important aspect of his behaviour which can also be clearly seen in his language. “When was the last time anybody saw us beating, let's say, China in a trade deal? They kill us. I beat China all the time. All the time.” Apart from the statement being undoubtedly subjective, it presents another Trump characteristic; hubris. Trump uses the word “I” an astonishing 172 times in his 40-minute speech, this of course is symptomatic of egotism but his continually referring to hypothetical victories reinforces in his voters the image of Trump as a strong negotiator. This quote illustrates the way he uses pronouns to reinforce a strong image of himself, he uses “us” to refer to the nation and its possible failures but only uses “I” in positive circumstances.

It's coming from more than Mexico. It's coming from all over South and Latin America, and it's coming probably— probably— from the Middle East. But we don't know. Because we have no protection and we have no

competence, we don't know what's happening. And it's got to stop and it's got to stop fast.

Islamic terrorism is eating up large portions of the Middle East. They've become rich. I'm in competition with them. (Trump 2015)

When referencing alleged dangers, he uses the plural pronoun to plant the idea of a common enemy; he like them is in danger. When speaking of fighting said dangerous however, he subtly changes to the singular pronoun thus positioning himself as the sole defender of America.

Despite coming from a much more privileged than the majority of the people to whom he is speaking, Trump presents himself as an ally. One of the most effective ways he does this is by speaking in a manner that appears to be unrehearsed. “And it only makes common sense. “It only makes common sense. They're sending us not the right people.” In this quote Trump appears to be speaking without a filter, this is, it appears to be spontaneous unlike most establishment politicians. What is more, this quote contains more than one grammatical error. He separates the argument “the right people” from its verb, something every native speaker subconsciously knows is not possible in the English language. By doing this he further portrays himself as unprepared but also disguises that he is a highly educated man thus once again putting himself on the same level as the audience and distancing himself from “the establishment”.

Well, you need somebody, because politicians are all talk, no action. Nothing's gonna get done. They will not bring us— believe me— to the promised land. They will not. (Trump 2015)

This quote is particularly important because Trump very clearly addresses what experts believe to be the core reason he won the election, rejection of the establishment, but he also subtly addresses something that would surprisingly not be central to the Republican candidate's campaign; religion. One of the biggest criticisms of Trump from the party was that he was not Christian enough. Religion and the defence of Christian values has historically been one of the biggest catalysts in voter turnout which was one of the reasons Trump's victory came as a shock. He rarely spoke of religion but the abovementioned quote is one of the biblical references he made, “The promise land” a biblical concept fundamental to American culture.

The promise land is mentioned several times in The Genesis alone but American culture adopted the symbol as a metaphor for the American Dream, the iconic image of travelling west to find prosperity. Trump is using this image to introduce the idea around which his campaign would revolve “make America Great again” but he is also subtly addressing most Republican voters; Christians. By using this image, he is being nostalgic and patriotic but that this is indeed a Christian concept should not be forgotten.

Interesting is that while other candidates like Clinton or Cruz tried to disguise their connections to the establishment, Trump recognizes his part in the system, and it is precisely this that will make him a good candidate. “Yes, they control them. Hey, I have lobbyists. I have to tell you. I have lobbyists that can produce anything for me.” He fully acknowledges his position and uses it to denounce the establishment, thus further engaging marginalized voters.

Trump goes on to talk about his policies but even while doing so he continues to introduce the idea of a common enemy but furthermore he mentions his personal triumphs:

I would build a great wall, and nobody builds walls better than me, believe me, and I'll build them very inexpensively, I will build a great, great wall on our southern border. And I will have Mexico pay for that wall. (Trump 2015)

Those personal triumphs however, may or may not be true, this quote contains another recurring phrase from the speech “believe me” and believe is exactly what the audience is doing because the reality is that there is absolutely no evidence to support this statement. Trump has simply chosen a scapegoat because he knows the American public is looking for someone to blame for the economic hardship the country has seen this last decade. In essence he is using Mexico as a villain and presenting himself as the hero.

Trump goes on to address several of The Republican Party’s core issues albeit with a less religious and institutional perspective, the language that he uses to do so however, is fundamental to the construction of his public personality. He relies heavily on his condition as famous successful businessman, his arguments are almost entirely anecdotal and do little to ensure the public of his qualifications to lead. Instead he speaks of vague policy ideas without discussing their practical details and stories of his many entrepreneurial conquests. It is, therefore, unsurprising that people quickly became

worried that his ego centric personality would be a problem where he to win. In fact 35 mental health experts wrote an open letter to *The New York Times* in which they expressed similar fears:

Mr. Trump's speech and actions demonstrate an inability to tolerate views different from his own, leading to rage reactions.

In a powerful leader, these attacks are likely to increase, as his personal myth of greatness appears to be confirmed. We believe that the grave emotional instability indicated by Mr. Trump's speech and actions makes him incapable of serving safely as president. (February 2017)

This speech is a clear indication of Trump's inflated self-worth, the way he speaks about himself is almost myth like: "Nobody can do that like me. Believe me" "We've got Social Security that's going to be destroyed if somebody like me doesn't bring money into the country" "I will be the greatest jobs president that God ever created" he speaks about himself in terms of grandeur as if to create a god like image.

In summation, Trump's announcement, unlike his fellow candidates', contains few details with regards to the practical implications of his policy proposals. Instead he uses his speech to create a strong image of himself. While other candidates back up their bid with policy ideas, Trump speaks of himself believing that creating an image of himself as a strong capable candidate will be enough. Others focus more on their political experience, Trump, perhaps because of the growing anti-establishment feelings in the country, focuses on his success as a businessman insisting that it his corporate expertise what qualifies him to lead the nation.

Once again a clear break in voter interests becomes clear. In the past, Republican voters gravitated strongly to candidates with strong religious beliefs like Bush, Reagan or Ted Cruz. Donald trump however managed to attract conservatives despite appearing not to be a man of strong faith. The Republican party was not spared from the strong division the rest of the country was suffering, while some remained faithful to the more religious candidate, others opted instead for a candidate they believed represented other core values in America.

### **3. Conclusion**

Many would ask why it is necessary to study the candidates to understand the cultural impact of the election and the answer lies in their understanding of the American Dream. The candidates, and their supporters, have a very different idea of the modern American Dream and thus, represent very different cultural values. The only real question is which are the values that will inevitably resist the others. In other words, who represents the future America.

Sanders discusses the idea of the American Dream as something that needs to change, he invoked *The Declaration of Independence* but slightly modified the idea. He represents a much more progressive part of the country that feel the American Dream has failed them. Clinton on the other hand, seems to be calling for a slight change in the path history has taken, in other words, the problem is not the bases of the American dream, the problem is that somewhere along the way it was manipulated. Cruz's stance is radically different than this. Like Sanders, he calls for radical change but not for progress, instead he believes that a recovery of old values is necessary. He cites the iconic "give me liberty or give me death" quote using it to criticise government intervention and religious restriction. The opposite of The Democrats that wish to continue the fight for social equality and progress, Cruz stands for the old American values, the old American Dream as he sees it. Trump, on the other hand, found vast support among The Republican bases despite foregoing some of its core issues such as Religion. Instead he centred his campaign on patriotism; he positioned himself as a strong business man and America as a strong business. Instead of focussing on Religion, Trump focusses on America's economic and military strength. He uses patriotism to address the frustrations of the working class and channel them to recover, not old social values of America, but the old economic strength.

While the Democratic candidates appear to differ more so on their economic policy rather than social issues, the opposite is true of The Republicans. Cruz and Trump share the same typical republican stances on border security, the free market and health care and yet Trump won the nomination despite not being overtly religious.

The clash of old and new is something as old as civilization itself, however in this case even old blocks now have subdivisions and this has never been so clear as in 2016 General Election.



As can be seen in the previously developed analysis, each candidate reflects a very different part of America with its own cultural and ideological values and this can clearly be seen in the language they use. This is not to say, however, that they forego all the traditional values and topics of American politics. Even the candidates perceived as outsiders, Sanders and Trump, relied on patriotism and historical references to reach their audience.

Sanders used much more aggressive language and seemed to be speaking of a movement more so than a campaign. He addressed the grass roots of the party with one clear message: the American Dream needed to change. Clinton on the other hand, spoke with the confidence of an incredibly experienced woman in an, although less passionate, more composed tone. Whilst Sanders overtly uses words like “revolution” to directly convey his message, Clinton uses more subtle techniques to reach her audience.

Cruz opted for an entirely different style; he omits certain parts of his past but reiterates his religion and loyalty to the Christians of the country. He is ambiguous as to the finer details of his plan, but direct in his fundamental message and intent. He uses a comparison to very clearly position himself on the same level as The President. He uses language to present himself as an apt defender of old values capable of ending the Obama era. Trump, on the other hand, goes past this and uses a series of anecdotes in his speech, along with other things, to portray himself as superior to every politician. He creates a myth like figure to position himself beyond any other contender, he believes he alone can “Make America Great Again”

One thing seems clear, there is a strong anti-government feeling in the country that spans across ideological barriers the only question that remains is whether it will be Trump leading a conservative movement and holding the brush to paint the picture of what is the new America, or Sanders and the socially progressive.

The failures of both Clinton and Cruz are indicative of the loss of traditional customs and to a certain extent cultural values. Regarding Cruz, Republican voters renounced one of their biggest issues, religion, in favour of a new patriotic but anti-establishment candidate. Clinton on the other hand, won the nomination but lost the general election because she did not have the necessary support within her party. Those who backed Sanders or a third-party candidate were unwilling to look past Clinton’s corruption despite her vast experience. Simply put, there was a clear shift to the left in The Democratic Party. Both The Democratic and The Republican parties have undergone

changes caused by a growing sense of rejection and frustration among the population but it was the Republicans that knew how to fully benefit from it.

It is not strange that the parties would alternate in the Whitehouse nor is it strange that the presidency would go from a progressive to a conservative but not since the election of President Nixon has the United States seen such social regression in public office, nor has there been in recent history such a contested primary election. The election was very close, proving that presently no ideology nor culture is entirely dominant, but will one ever be? Despite an important part of the country fighting to maintain the old values and traditions of the country, the reality is that America is diversifying and thus a change in the American identity is inevitable.

“I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness” that is the first line in Allen Ginsberg’s poem “Howl” which is one of the most highly regarded representations of 1950’s American counter culture. Although this may appear to be irrelevant, nothing could be further from the truth. Ginsberg and his generation expressed through art their defiance against a culture they felt to be oppressive. It is the same phenomena currently developing in America. Protest art has already started to appear all over the country and it is only a matter of time before protest also appears in literature. Be it anti or pro Trump this ideological and culture discord is inherently going to change the concept of “America” and how it is understood by its citizens.

America is almost synonymous with the American Dream but with four candidates that represent such different definitions of the American Dream one cannot help but question what the true definition is. Although time will only tell how and at what speed American identity changes, one thing is, in my opinion, clear; this is a decisive moment unlike any other in American Culture.

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