The Hunger Games

An Examination of How Hunger Affects Judgments of Political Figures

Government 1372
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Section: Th 7pm

Past Research

**People judge others based on
thin slices, specifically faces.**

- Information about resource scarcity predicts preference
in potential partners *(Nelson & Morrison, 2008)*

- Babyfaced individuals are often seen as more honest
and naive *(Zebrowitze & Monteparte, 1992)*

- Individuals will use information from faces and thin
slices to judge political figures in an election *(Todorov et al.,
2005)*

Research Question

- Does a person's level of hunger, which makes the level of resources salient, affect their political preferences for candidates based on the candidates' perceived weight?

- Specifically for this study, will hungrier people rate a political candidate with higher level of confidence when shown a picture with a larger face?

- Hypothesis: Participants who are coming into the dining hall before eating will **rate a larger candidate with higher confidence** than individuals who are exiting the dining hall after eating

Research Design

Leaner Candidate

Larger Candidate

Research Design

Candidate Blurb

The candidate above is a candidate for a seat for his state's House of Representatives. He completed his undergraduate degree at a small university within his state and has served on his city council for the last ten years. Apart from the city council, he has worked as a sales partner at a local company selling standard home appliances. The candidate is excited for the opportunity to continue addressing his constituents' concerns on the House of Representatives.

Research Design

1. On the following scale, please rate your confidence in this potential candidate's ability to represent your district:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Low			Neutral			High

2. On the following scale, please rate what you believe the socio-economic status of this candidate is:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Low			Average			High

3. On the following scale, please rate the attractiveness of this candidate:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Low			Average			High

Research Design

	Before Eating	After Eating
Larger Candidate	Condition 1	Condition 3
Leaner Candidate	Condition 2	Condition 4

Sample

$n = 89$ Harvard undergrads

Political affiliation:

46 Democrats, 13 Republicans, 29 Independents
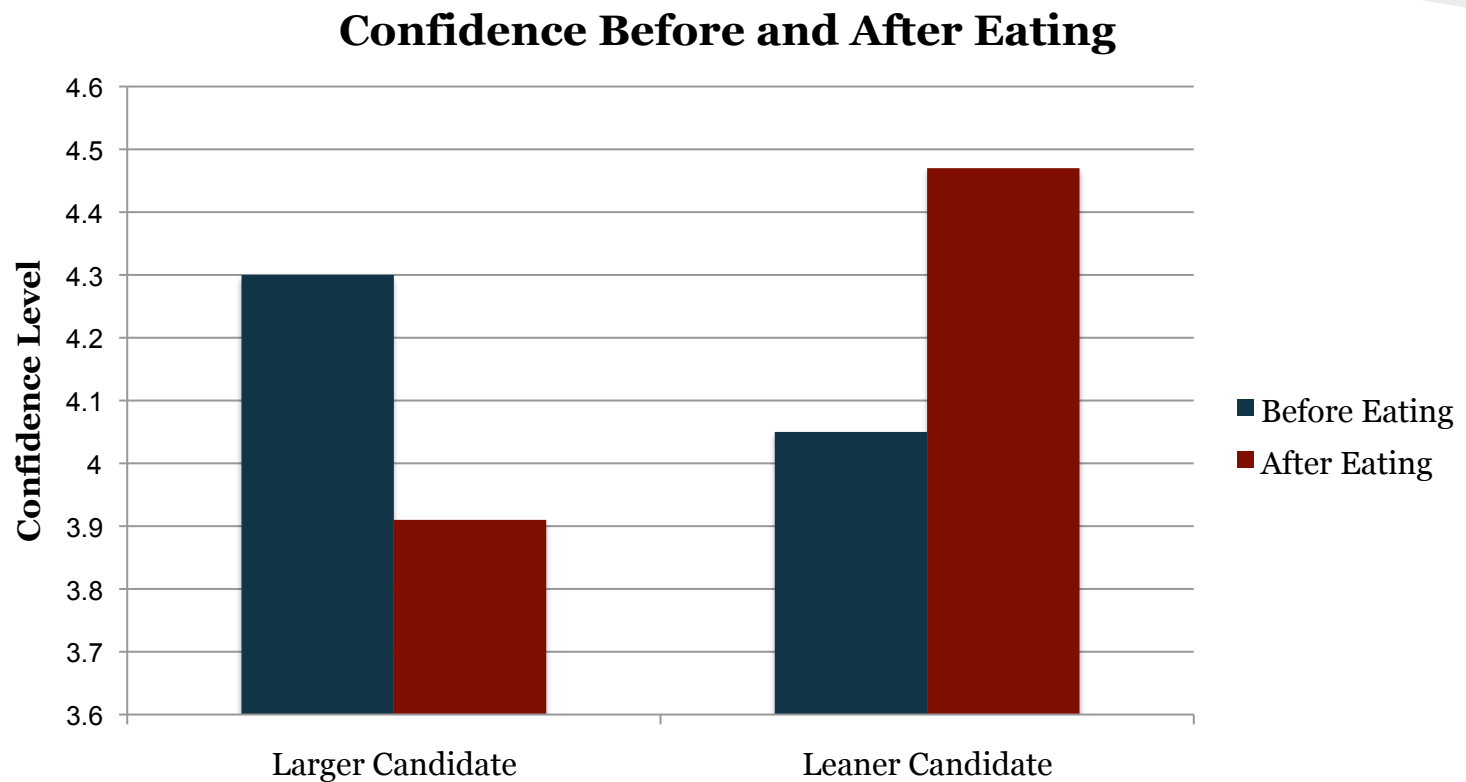
Gender:

41 Male, 48 Female

Ethnicity:

37 White, 5 Hispanic, 3 African American, 38 Asian American, 7 Other, 1 Opted Out
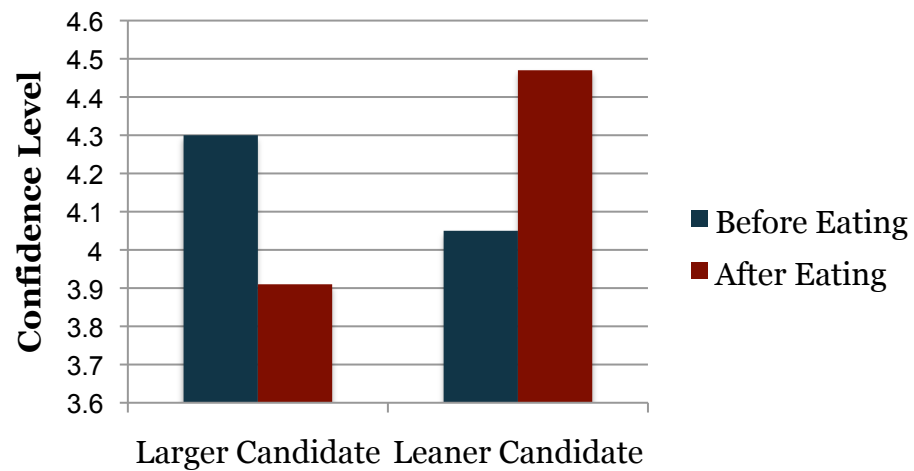
Mean age:

20.5 years old

Data

Data

Trending towards our hypothesis

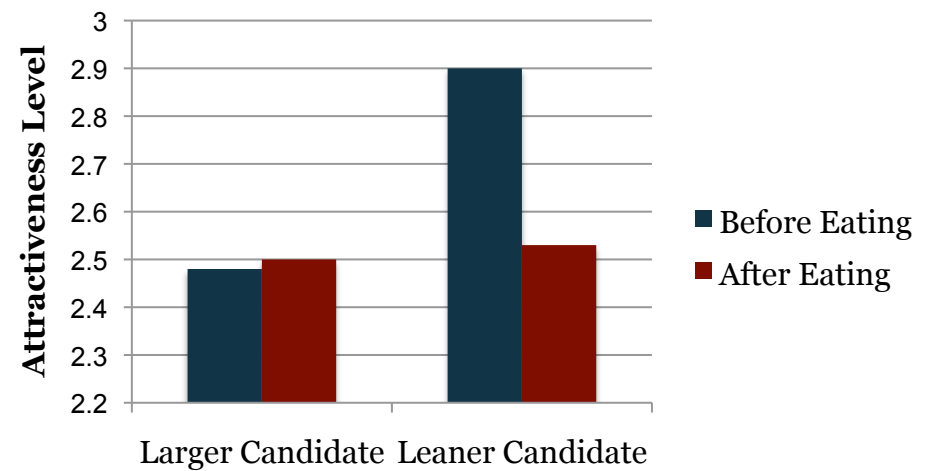|	Larger Candidate	Leaner Candidate	P-Value
Before Eating	4.30	4.05	p = 0.26
After Eating	3.91	4.47	p = 0.09
P-Value	p = 0.19	p = 0.11	

(on a scale 1-7 of confidence in the candidate's ability to represent your district)

Data

Confidence Before and After Eating

Attractiveness Before and After Eating

Data

Ratings of Socioeconomic Status (1-7)

Larger Candidate	5.02
Leaner Candidate	4.85

p = 0.21 (not significant)

Discussion

- The observed trend supports the hypothesis:
  - Before Eating: 0.25 higher confidence for Larger Candidate
  - After Eating: 0.56 higher confidence for Smaller Candidate

- We also found:
  - Smaller Candidate: 0.42 higher confidence after eating
  - Larger Candidate: 0.39 higher confidence before eating

- It appears that confidence may have an effect separate from attractiveness

Discussion

- Potential Implications

  o To rally greater confidence, larger candidates may wish to schedule events prior to meals while leaner candidates may wish to host events after

  o Level of hunger may affect job approval rating, candidate preference, and even voting outcomes

Limitations

- Our sample is not representative of the entire population

- Students who were in a rush sometimes refused to take the survey

- The effect of social desirability bias

- The students did not represent a great range of hunger

Future Directions

- The trend is worth exploring further to see if differences are significant

- Controlling for political ideology and other factors that may affect this trend

- Examining beyond political confidence to questions such as support of policy given support from a leaner or larger candidate