

Washington University in St. Louis

Washington University Open Scholarship

Spring 2017

Washington University
Senior Honors Thesis Abstracts

Spring 2017

Go Big or Go Home: Unpacking th Hierarchical Political Rhetoric of Donald Trump

Jacob Metz

Washington University in St. Louis

Follow this and additional works at: https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/wushta_spr2017

Recommended Citation

Metz, Jacob, "Go Big or Go Home: Unpacking th Hierarchical Political Rhetoric of Donald Trump" (2017). *Spring 2017*. 78.

https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/wushta_spr2017/78

This Abstract for College of Arts & Sciences is brought to you for free and open access by the Washington University

Senior Honors Thesis Abstracts at Washington University Open Scholarship. It has been accepted for inclusion in Spring 2017 by an authorized administrator of Washington University Open Scholarship. For more information, please contact digital@wumail.wustl.edu.

GO BIG OR GO HOME: UNPACKING THE HIERARCHICAL POLITICAL RHETORIC OF DONALD TRUMP

Jacob Metz

Mentor: Sunita Parikh

Though presidential candidates have always contextualized contemporary issues and themselves within a broader narrative to show why they alone can handle the presidency, one future president relied almost exclusively on his biography to stress why he possessed the skills needed to be successful in the position: Donald Trump. Unlike any other major party nominee or president in American presidential history, Trump relied on status-based rhetoric to present himself as personally and professionally superior to others, from celebrities to other presidential candidates. By utilizing his Twitter account as a platform and performing at his campaign rallies in a manner akin to that of a stand-up comic, Trump presented himself as an appealing and plausible presidential candidate by employing the same rhetorical strategies he used as a reality television star.

To address this phenomenon, I rhetorically analyze different Trump tweets and moments during his campaign rallies to present a holistic view of his political rhetoric. These tweets allow for a more extensive portrait of how Trump uses insults to position himself as an individual who possesses more skills and is inherently superior to others. I ultimately argue that Trump uses hierarchical rhetoric to assert his own status over others, making every single political argument about his own status, meaning status is the ultimate metric of what it takes to be the President of the United States. Ultimately, I chose this topic because of my interest in political rhetoric and my curiosity about why certain political messages resonate in contemporary American political culture over others. Though I initially set out to understand how Barack Obama, Black Lives Matter, the Tea Party, and Donald Trump were impacting American politics, I settled on dissecting how Trump currently impacts modern American political culture and shapes our contemporary political moment.