

Key findings of 2016 Presidential Election cycle speeches – inspiring a movement

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***Abstract—* The 2016 presidential election was anything but normal. Two candidates, primarily perceived as unloved by their likely voters went head to head in a bitter and ugly election cycle that, according to mainstream media, was a complete shock. This paper sets up additional research to better understand Donald Trump’s messaging between July and November 2016 in order to make inference about successful messaging derived directly from Trump speeches. How President Trump’s speech was able to inspire many to vote will be examined via previous research and leveraging NLTK**

***Keywords—*2016 Election, Trump, Clinton, NLTK**

I. INTRODUCTION

In 2016, Donald Trump was nominated as President of the United States. For some individuals, the 2016 Donald Trump presidential victory was a complete shock no one could have predicted. However, enough of the nation believed Mr. (now President) Trump would restore the country to a previous greatness lost between 2016 and sometime prior. How was this Presidential message delivered in such a way that once President Trump won, half of the nation was dumbfounded and Mainstream Media was suddenly no longer trusted all while an entirely different populous finally believe they found their voice in politics? While there are many different theories, and the end-result is most likely derived from a combination of theory, it remains true that President Trump’s language in 2016 resonated with enough to earn the Presidential nomination.

II. Research Question

This research intends to address the following questions, labeled Question 1 and Question 2. Question 2 is contingent upon the results of Question 1 and will require additional work and additional text resources to properly address the question. Question 1 will lay the foundations for additional work in which statistical analysis of the corpus is required.

Question 1: What kind of language or message did President Trump’s speeches inspire or convey so many to elect him in the primaries and ultimately to the White House?

Question 2: What kind of messaging resonated with the key battleground states, combined with other political strategies leading to a victory roughly half the country never even imagined?

III. TOOLSET TO ADDRESS RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to address these questions, the toolset listed below will be used:

Python Libraries:

- NLTK
- NumPy
- Pandas
- Matplotlib

Excel

IV. Corpus

The current corpus is a collection of Trump and Clinton speeches from July 2016 through November 2016. Additional text sources such as collections of local and mainstream news sources from key battleground areas could be added to further

capture additional information regarding the messaging around 2016.

V. Approach – Converting Research Question into Measurable

Question 1

Using NLTK will conduct analysis of key terms throughout the corpus. This will include:

- Word frequency per speech
- Bigrams of speeches
- Preliminary work of sentiment analysis

Question 2

Leveraging findings above, a study of available text surrounding the time of the speech is conducted to see what echo's the messaging of the speech. Additionally, these areas may have historical context that provide better understandings of the resonating message. At a minimum, question two will be answered with generic socioeconomics of particular key battlegrounds.

VI. Lit Review

Each presidential cycle includes significant work to understand every possible component of why and how the outcomes were derived. This is becoming more important given that over the last five decades, political parties have increasingly moved further away from each other ideologically [7]. For example, Yourish [8] presents that the 2016 US election was characterized by two individuals unloved by the majority of Americans. In order to energize a following, Trump ignored every political norm, saying exactly what he thought and appeared sincere in doing so [8]. Trump went further, leveraging repetition of simple messages, regardless of truth, in order to persuade the population to vote for him [5].

Understanding the political landscape, we can look at research in psychological implications of speeches. Chapp and Brader [3] build off of previous publications (2012, 2006 respectively) to present findings that skillful politicians can rally voters to the polls when the politician is able to leverage language to cause powerful changes in the emotions of large audiences. This call to mobilization is demonstrated in related work [7] which suggest that a fundamental function of emotion is to prioritize some actions over others in order to respond and adapt to current challenges. Furthermore, additional research put forth suggests that anger played a significant role in the 2016 election. Therefore, Trump appealed to an audience's outrage out how the current state of politics were done [4].

Lastly, homophily must also be discussed to better understand an audience. Homophily is defined as 'the tendency of individuals to have characteristics and behavior similar to their

peers' [1]. Homophily is proven in social media to limit voter exposure to information. In social media particularly, homophily has been linked to producing asymmetry in exposure to information and that social media directly affects political and civic behavior (Arab spring, global BLM marches) [2].

VII. Contribution

Contributions center on word frequency and evolution of speeches throughout the course of the election cycle. See below:

A. Word Frequency

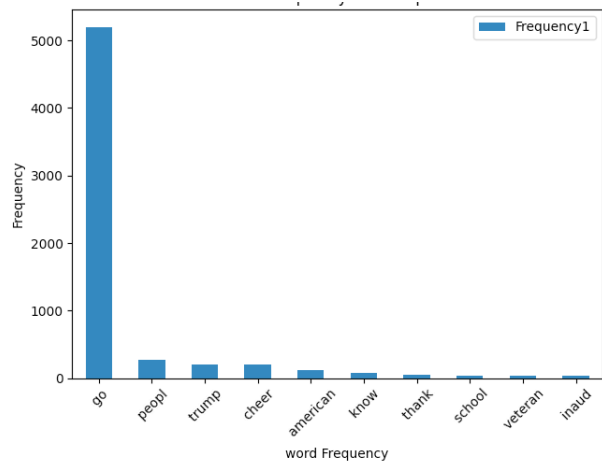


Figure 1. Total Word Frequency, 7/2016 - 11/2016

Word1	Frequency1
go	5202.0
peopl	264.0
trump	204.0
cheer	195.0
american	112.0
know	73.0
thank	54.0
school	39.0
veteran	32.0
inaud	29.0

Figure 2. Total Word Frequencies

B. Bigram Frequency

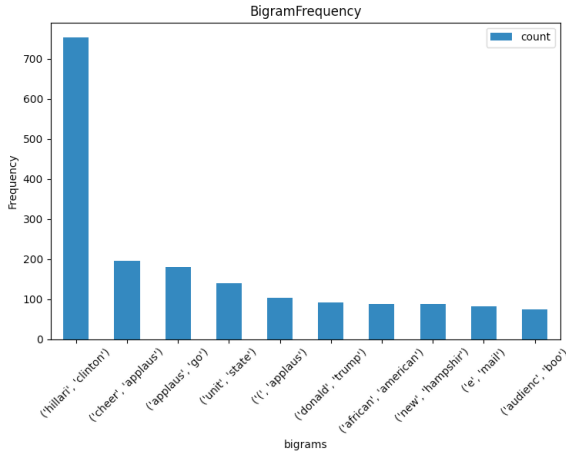


Figure 3. Total Top Bigram Frequency

Appearance	
('hillari', 'clinton')	753.0
('cheer', 'applaus')	195.0
('applaus', 'go')	181.0
('unit', 'state')	140.0
('(', 'applaus')	103.0
('donald', 'trump')	91.0
('african', 'american')	87.0
('new', 'hampshir')	87.0
('e', 'mail')	82.0
('audienc', 'boo')	75.0

Figure 4. Raw Count of Bigrams

VIII. CONCLUSION

As demonstrated, the results leveraging the Trump July – Nov. 2016 speech corpus produce fascinating results and demonstrate evolution of the text. Through the preliminary research, it becomes apparent that President Trump used derivatives of ‘Go’ (e.g. going) disproportionately when compared to other words within the speeches. When reviewing bigrams of speeches, ‘Hillary Clinton’ appears together disproportionately when compared to other bigrams. While it is too early in research to draw meaningful inferences from this analysis, it is clear President Trump used the action verb ‘go’

in some format far more than any other word. Additionally, the Trump speeches between July and November demonstrate a considerable amount of focus on the opponent – Hillary Clinton.

Next steps are to demonstrate homophily in the news sources of key battleground states, and juxtapose the content to Trump speeches. The process would initially include sentiment analysis of each speech and comparing how this speech is discussed in paper as another dimension demonstrating President Trump’s ability to win votes. While there is some credence to Trump invoking anger within a population, there is significantly more to politicking than simply invoking the anger of a population.

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