

Trump's Victory is Consistent with 84 Years of Personality Matchups



By Merrick Rosenberg, Author of [The Chameleon](#)

For months, political experts predicted that Hillary Clinton would defeat [Donald Trump](#) in the presidential election. Trump's victory stunned the nation – but it shouldn't have.

Over the past 25 years, I have led training programs using the DISC personality assessment for more than 25,000 people and have worked with more than half of the Fortune 100. Drawing on my experience with personality styles, I have identified a pattern in presidential politics that is so consistent **it has now held true for 84 years in 22 straight elections.**

First, some background: I classify the styles into four categories: Direct and result-driven Eagles (Donald Trump and Chris Christie), charismatic and enthusiastic Parrots (Gary Johnson and Joe Biden), soft-spoken and harmonious Doves (Tim Kaine and Ben Carson), and logical and analytical Owls (Hillary Clinton and Mike Pence).

The outgoing, big personalities of Eagles and Parrots have beaten the more reserved and soft-spoken Doves and Owls in every election since 1928. In fact, Doves and Owls have only won in matchups against other Doves and Owls.

Prior to the dawn of radio and television, these personality

predictors were less reliable. The electorate judged candidates based on their platforms more than their personalities. Mass [media](#) has changed everything. Ever since the first televised debate, in which an awkward Richard Nixon squared off against a charismatic John F. Kennedy, personality has played an increasingly outsized role in presidential politics.

As a nation, we apparently prefer assertive, dominant, and enthusiastic presidents over thoughtful, quiet, and harmonious leaders. This pattern holds true regardless of whether a candidate is new or an incumbent, whether the economy is thriving or flailing, and whether the United States is at war or at peace. For 84 years, personality has trumped platform.

Simply put, Eagles and Parrots beat Doves and Owls...every time.

Eagle George W. Bush beat Owls John Kerry and Al Gore. Parrot Bill Clinton beat Owl Bob Dole. Before that, Lyndon Johnson Eagle's style beat Barry Goldwater's Owl personality and Franklin D. Roosevelt's Eagle-Parrot style topped Herbert Hoover's Owl approach.

However, when Eagles and Parrots go up against other Eagles and Parrots, it's a toss-up.

It's also a toss-up when Owls and Doves battle other Owls and Doves. Owl George H.W. Bush won the job of president against fellow Owl Michael Dukakis but lost by a wide margin to Parrot Bill Clinton. Likewise, Dove Jimmy Carter beat fellow Dove Gerald Ford but came up short against Parrot Ronald Reagan.

So what did this all mean for the 2016 presidential election?

Given that Donald Trump is unmistakably an Eagle, the pattern predicted that he would defeat Hillary Clinton, an archetypal Owl. The results are reminiscent of the 2008 primaries in which Hillary's Owl style succumbed to Obama's Eagle-Dove. This time around, Clinton tried to accentuate the more relaxed

tendencies of the Dove and the enthusiasm of the Parrot. That shift (and, perhaps, the Democratic National Convention) helped her to defeat Bernie Sanders in the primaries. Nonetheless, Clinton's Owl ways came roaring back in the general election.

Donald Trump's full-force Eagle mode swayed voters his way. His abrasive comments couldn't change the underlying personality dynamics of this election. That said, Donald Trump's personality may not serve him in the White House. When we overuse our strengths, they become our weaknesses. Too much Eagle energy can undermine collaboration and thoughtful policymaking.

Could Hillary have broken the pattern?

Maybe Clinton could have tipped the balance by playing more of an Eagle. Somehow, Clinton needed to add Eagle energy to her campaign, yet she selected Tim Kaine, a Dove, as her running mate. Perhaps the Clinton campaign thought that Trump would defeat himself. Instead, they needed to show that Clinton could be just as dominant and passionate as her rival.

What does Trump's victory mean for future elections?

People make decisions based on emotion and rationalize them based on logic. Clinton was trying to appeal to logic, while Trump was stirring emotion. Eagle emotion beats Owl logic in an election.

Clinton supporters may feel that the media failed Americans by focusing on the likability and personality of the candidates. In truth, the media became a mirror for the electorate's priorities. The campaigns were complicit in making personality the central issue of the 2016 election. Democrats attacked Trump for his temperament, not his policies. Likewise, Republicans questioned Clinton's integrity, not her strategy for leading America.

For 84 years and 22 elections, Americans have put style over substance, personality before platform. Political strategists haven't yet adapted to this reality, but they will. Personality has played and will continue to play a major role in presidential politics.

About the Author: Merrick Rosenberg is a keynote speaker, entrepreneur and thought leader on the personality styles. He co-founded Team Builders Plus in 1991 and Take Flight Learning in 2012. Merrick is the author The Chameleon and co-author of Taking Flight!. As CEO of Take Flight Learning, he has led his organization to be selected by the Philadelphia Business Journal as one of the Fastest Growing Companies and Best Places to Work in the Philadelphia region. Under his leadership, Team Builders Plus was selected as the New Jersey Business of the Year by NJ Biz magazine.