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The Situation Lab

The Personality of Donald Trump

What the science of personality can tell us about the Republican frontrunner.

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The fate of any organization is largely a function of that [organization's leadership](#). The "organization" of the United States is no exception to this rule. While he leads in the polls for the Republican party candidacy, it seems only appropriate that we understand and think about the type of leader [Donald Trump](#) would be for the United States.

I do not know Mr. Trump personally and I have never had the opportunity to assess his [personality](#) professionally (though I'd be happy to do so if he were willing). Thus, my views are based purely on watching his behavior.¹ His personality is captured by his reputation, which is the sum of his behavior, and organized by a standard set of themes as follows.

We can look at both sides of Mr. Trump's personality. The **Bright Side** (how he typically behaves when he's at his best) and the **Dark Side** (how he typically behaves when he lets down his guard).

Beginning with the **Bright Side** we can expect Mr.

Trump to be:

- Highly **Adjusted**. Mr. Trump seems not at all anxious or nervous. He will appear calm under pressure, won't take criticism personally, and is quite pleased with himself as a person. The downside is that he will be reluctant to listen to feedback — especially negative feedback — from others.
- Highly **Ambitious**. Mr. Trump seems competitive, wants to win, and wants to be in charge. He will be concerned about results and getting things done. On the downside, he may tend to compete with those who are actually on his [team](#) and potentially alienate his staff if he does.
- Highly **Sociable**. Mr. Trump likes to entertain, to be the center of attention, and to talk...a lot. The obvious downside is that he can be unwilling to listen, overbearing, and shoot off at the mouth without thinking.

- Low on **Prudence**. Mr. Trump doesn't care much for rules and tends to avoid them. He is independent minded and seems unconcerned with details. The positive side is that he will be quick to make decisions and to make things happen.
- Highly **Inquisitive**. Mr. Trump has a lot of ideas and a big imagination. He'll have all sorts of ideas for solving problems, but he may have problems implementing them and can be a bit unpredictable.

On the **Dark Side** we can expect Mr Trump to be:

- Highly **Bold**. This is Mr. Trump's most defining characteristic. He seems unusually self-confident, and shows feelings of grandiosity and entitlement. These individuals tend to make a good first impression, but are difficult to work with because they feel entitled to special treatment, ignore their critics, and intimidate others. He'll tend to overestimate his capabilities.
- Highly **Mischievous**. Mr. Trump seems charming, interesting, and daring. He enjoys taking risks, pushing the limits, and seems to thrive on excitement. Such people are hard to work with because they are impulsive, downplay their mistakes, take ill-advised risks, and have no regrets.
- Highly **Colorful**. Mr. Trump seems quick, fun, and socially skilled. He loves making use of his celebrity and having his accomplishments recognized. He's very good at calling attention to himself. Such people are hard to work with because they are self-promoting, overcommitted, and easily angered.
- Low on **Diligence**. See Prudence above, but multiply everything by two.
- Low on **Dutifulness**. Mr. Trump likes to defy the status quo, doesn't care about pleasing others, and is quick to make decisions. He won't take orders (or advice) from many people (if anyone).

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In summary, what we can expect from Mr. Trump is what we have already seen and know about his reputation.² What does this mean for the United States? People tend to vote for leaders in their own image. Thus, the personality of Mr. Trump also highlights the characteristics of those who will likely support and vote for him. As such, Mr. Trump's popularity in the polls also serves as an indicator of our current American culture.

Postscript (3/9/2016) - If you liked this article, you might also my discussion of [Donald's Trump's Values](#).

¹ Which is the same method everyone else uses, though I do have the advantage of being a trained personality psychologist with experience assessing lots of personalities.

² It should be noted that the above assessment is comparing Mr. Trump to the population in general, and not the other Presidential candidates (some of whom may be very similar to Mr. Trump on a number of these characteristics).

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