

Trump's political success was a triumph of style over substance: research

November 8 2016



Credit: University of British Columbia

Style, not substance, accounts for Donald Trump's U.S. Republican presidential nomination, according to a psychological analysis from the University of British Columbia.

Psychology researchers at the university compared Trump's speech style and Twitter usage to that of the other top nine Republican contenders. The real-estate mogul and reality star consistently ranked highest in ratings of grandiosity, "I"-statements, informal language, vocal pitch

variation, and use of Twitter.

"Trump's outrageous statements over the course of the campaign led many political pundits to underestimate his chances of success," said supervising author Delroy L. Paulhus, a personality psychology researcher and professor at UBC. "Contrary to what might be expected, grandiosity, simplistic language and rampant Twitter activity were statistical predictors of success in the Republican primaries. Although Trump's bombastic communication style was shocking—even detestable to many viewers—our research suggests that this [style](#) helped him win the Republican nomination."

Speech segments from Trump, Ted Cruz, John Kasich, Ben Carson, Jeb Bush, Marco Rubio, Rick Perry, Lindsey Graham and Mike Huckabee were transcribed and analyzed using a computerized text analysis software. The transcriptions were also coded for grandiosity by trained raters, after all personal information and references to the candidate's party were removed. The researchers also conducted an acoustical analysis of the speeches, to determine pitch variability, which tends to promote an image of energy and dynamism. Finally, the researchers examined each candidate's Tweet count in the three months before they announced their candidacy.

"Even in everyday life, the difficulty of fact-checking everything people tell us forces us to rely on how they say it—and we've shown that this holds true even in political elections," said Paulhus. "This phenomenon not only helps explain Donald Trump's political rise, but how questionable political leaders might gain power—even in democracies."

"Explaining Trump via Communication Style: Grandiosity, Informality, and Dynamism" appears today in *Personality and Individual Differences*. Co-authors are Sara Ahmadian and Sara Azarshahi.

Provided by University of British Columbia

Citation: Trump's political success was a triumph of style over substance: research (2016, November 8) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-11-trump-political-success-triumph-style.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.