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"Humans' main motivation in life is to avoid danger. They are affected by the sound and emotion of things."

By Kandi Carper



Presidential campaigns are a tough game. Candidates may say and do whatever is necessary to get elected. One thing they don't have any control over is their last name and the influence it may have on undecided voters. Grant W. Smith, English professor and coordinator of Humanities at Eastern, has developed a research-based formula that accurately predicts presidential election outcomes 84 percent of the time.

Smith tells the story of the 1990 race for a seat on the Washington State Supreme Court. Charles W. Johnson ran against the state's Supreme Court Chief Justice Keith Callow. Johnson, a political nobody from Gig Harbor, had a one-man law office in Tacoma, had never been a judge, never run for office, didn't campaign and shunned bar

association evaluations of candidates. In an upset that shocked the legal community, Johnson beat Callow, a judge with 21 years of experience, by a 2:1 margin.

Like many judicial elections, voters probably didn't know much about the candidate other than Johnson's pleasant, familiar-sounding name and Callow's vaguely unpleasant-sounding name.

Shortly after the election, Smith was discussing the upset with a group of colleagues. He said that Johnson won the race because of the "poetry of the name." He was challenged to come up with a way to prove his statement. "I thought maybe there could be a set of criteria that could be worked out," says Smith. And he set out to do just that.

Smith developed a formula based on the sound of a candidate's last name and studied past elections to verify the formula while collecting a large amount of data. But Smith says that looking back and fitting past information into a formula isn't as valid as using the formula to actually predict future elections, which he began to do.

"In the presidential election of 1992, I had the outlandishness to suggest that Bill Clinton would beat Paul Tsongas for the Democratic nomination," says Smith. His prediction was correct, and in 1996 he came out publicly with his formula and predicted correctly that Pat Buchanan would win the Republican primary in New Hampshire. This is when he began getting national attention. Smith continued to test the formula in upcoming national congressional races and ended up with

a 68 percent accuracy rate in the 2006 elections.

His ability to dissect the monikers of various political candidates has made Smith a sought-after interview and speaker. As the 2008 presidential election simmered in the early months of 2007, Smith was a hot ticket, doing interviews with *The Washington Post* and *The Dallas Morning News* as pundits weighed in on how the candidates' names might influence the race. Smith has been busy in 2008 as well, doing radio and television interviews across the country.

"Humans' main motivation in life is to avoid danger. They are affected by the sound and emotion of things," says Smith. "They are looking for something comfortable, with a sense of identity and a lack of abrasiveness. They want the most predictable, safe and reassuring person with a name that has a certain resonance, sounds of music; soft at the end of the name." Names like Reagan, Truman and Clinton.

As for this year's upcoming election, Smith thinks Hillary Clinton should have campaigned as Clinton rather than Hillary, based on the sound. "I understand she's trying to build an identity with women. She's noble in trying to enlist more women in the public arena, but I believe it isn't the best affect on sound," says Smith. Clinton scores a 6.5 in the formula and Hillary only a 2.5.

And what about political opponents emphasizing Barack Obama's middle name Hussein? Smith says campaign officials running negative ads try to use fear in the minds of voters to get them to vote for their particular candidate.

The Analytical Model

"Hussein doesn't score well, but my statistics show that voters focus on family names, not middle names," Smith says. "The name Hitler scores well in sound, but because of the negative associated with the name, it's not likely to win any elections. Obama scores 4.5. People are becoming more comfortable with the name. It's growing on them."

For sound purposes, Smith considers (John) McCain a one-syllable name with a score of 2.0. Mike Huckabee scores a 3.0; Mitt Romney a 4.5. But the formula doesn't apply in primary races, says Smith, where there are fewer voters who are more focused on issues alone. Ralph Nader, who announced his third-party candidacy in late winter, scores a 4.0.

Not all elections are the same. Smith says if the fundamental need changes, people may go the opposite direction. One example is when James Polk won over Henry Clay. "When the populace supported the Mexican-American War and Manifest Destiny, they were actually looking for someone who could be aggressive and lead the country to war," Smith says. Ulysses S. Grant, a winning general, and William Howard Taft's names played well to a tougher crowd.

As for the name Bush – "Bush doesn't score well (-3.0), but it did better than Dukakis (George H.W. Bush vs. Michael Dukakis, 1988)," says Smith. "The name (Al) Gore scores better than Bush, but remember he did win the popular vote."

John Kerry had a positive score but lost to Bush, the first time the formula hasn't worked since the 1936 election of Franklin D. Roosevelt vs. Alf Landon. And William Jennings Bryan, a three-time loser, also messed up the formula in 1896, 1900 and 1908. **E**

A. Rhythm			
1.	two syllables	=	+ 1.5
2.	more than two syllables	=	+ 0.5
3.	monosyllabic	=	- 0.5
4.	initial stress	=	+ 1.5
5.	medial stress	=	- 0.5
B. Vowels			
1.	stressed vowel is middle vowel	=	+ 1.0
2.	stressed high vowel	=	- 1.5
3.	vowel sequence is higher to lower/front to back	=	+ 0.5
4.	terminal /iy/ following a stop	=	+ 1.0
5.	schwa before terminal nasal consonant	=	+ 0.5
6.	high vowel before terminal fricative/affricate	=	- 1.0
C. Consonants			
1.	terminal nasal (especially n, possible nd)	=	+ 1.5
2.	/l/ or /r/ following initial stop	=	+ 1.0
3.	initial /l/ or /r/	=	+ 0.5
4.	initial fricative	=	- 1.0
5.	ending fricative/affricate	=	- 1.5
6.	more than one medial stop	=	- 1.0
7.	more than one fricative glide	=	- 1.5
8.	special harshness	=	- 1.0
9.	tie-breaker (e.g., voicing, clusters)	=	- 0.5

Presidential Elections

Year	Winner	Score	Vote (thousands)	% (popular vote)	Name 2	Score	Vote (thousands)	% (popular vote)	others (3rd-party candidates)
*1824	Adams	2.0	105	30.5	Jackson	5.5	155	43.9	93
1828	Jackson	5.5	647	56.0	Adams	2.0	509	44.0	
1832	Jackson	5.5	688	55.0	Clay	3.0	530	37.0	
1836	Van Buren	-1.0	763	50.9	Harrison	4.0	548	36.6	188
1840	Harrison	4.0	1,275	52.8	Van Buren	-1.0	1,129	46.8	
1844	Polk	2.0	1,337	49.6	Clay	3.0	1,299	48.1	
1848	Taylor	4.5	1,380	47.4	Cass	-1.5	1,221	42.5	
1852	Pierce	-0.5	1,601	50.9	Scott	-1.0	1,387	44.1	
1856	Buchanan	2.5	1,928	45.3	Fremont	1.0	1,392	33.1	936
1860	Lincoln	4.5	1,866	39.8	Douglas	1.5	1,375	29.5	1,435
1864	Lincoln	4.5	2,216	55.0	McClellan	2.5	1,809	45.0	
1868	Grant	3.5	3,015	52.7	Seymour	1.0	2,710	47.3	
1872	Grant	3.5	3,597	55.6	Greeley	2.5	2,834	43.9	
*1876	Hayes	-0.5	4,034	48.0	Tilden	5.5	4,285	51.0	
1880	Garfield	4.0	4,449	48.5	Hancock	3.5	4,442	48.1	
1884	Cleveland	6.5	4,911	48.5	Blaine	4.5	4,848	48.2	
*1888	Harrison	4.0	5,444	47.9	Cleveland	6.5	5,540	48.6	
1892	Cleveland	6.5	5,554	46.1	Harrison	4.0	5,191	43.0	1,027
1896	McKinley	1.5	7,036	51.1	Bryan	6.5	6,468	47.7	
1900	McKinley	1.5	7,220	51.7	Bryan	6.5	6,358	45.5	
1904	Roosevelt	3.5	7,629	56.4	Parker	3.0	5,084	37.6	
1908	Taft	1.0	7,679	51.6	Bryan	6.5	6,409	43.1	
1912	Wilson	4.0	6,286	41.9	Roosevelt	3.5	4,216	27.4	3,484
1916	Wilson	4.0	9,130	49.4	Hughes	-3.0	8,538	46.2	
1920	Harding	5.5	16,152	60.4	Cox	-0.5	9,147	34.2	
1924	Coolidge	1.5	15,725	54.0	Davis	1.0	8,385	28.8	4,823
1928	Hoover	2.0	21,392	58.2	Smith	-4.0	15,016	40.9	
1932	Roosevelt	3.5	22,822	57.4	Hoover	2.0	15,762	39.7	885
1936	Roosevelt	3.5	27,752	60.8	Landon	6.0	16,680	36.5	
1940	Roosevelt	3.5	27,243	54.8	Wilkie	3.0	22,305	44.8	
1944	Roosevelt	3.5	25,603	53.5	Dewey	3.0	22,006	46.0	
1948	Truman	5.0	24,106	49.5	Dewey	3.0	21,970	45.0	2,346
1952	Eisenhower	2.5	33,936	55.1	Stevenson	2.0	27,315	44.4	
1956	Eisenhower	2.5	35,585	57.6	Stevenson	2.0	26,031	42.1	
1960	Kennedy	4.5	34,227	49.9	Nixon	4.0	34,109	49.6	
1964	Johnson	5.5	43,127	61.1	Goldwater	0.0	27,177	38.5	
1968	Nixon	4.0	31,785	43.4	Humphrey	3.5	31,275	42.7	9,906
1972	Nixon	4.0	47,165	60.6	McGovern	1.5	29,171	37.5	
1976	Carter	3.0	40,829	50.1	Ford	1.0	39,149	47.9	
1980	Reagan	7.0	43,899	50.9	Carter	3.0	35,481	41.2	5,719
1984	Reagan	7.0	54,282	59.0	Mondale	3.0	37,457	41.0	
1988	Bush	-3.0	48,881	53.4	Dukakis	-3.5	41,805	45.6	
1992	Clinton	6.5	44,906	43.0	Bush	-3.0	39,102	37.0	19,741
1996	Clinton	6.5	47,401	50.1	Dole	1.0	39,197	41.1	8,085
*2000	Bush	-3.0	50,459	48.4	Gore	0.5	51,004	48.9	2,834
2004	Bush	-3.0	62,041	50.7	Kerry	4.0	59,028	48.3	1,198

Bold lettering shows when the formula didn't predict winner. * = 4 times the Electoral College overturned the popular vote.

The Spoiler



William Jennings Bryan