

Summary of Barber's typology of Presidential character

From Presidential Character 1985

It could be argued that the type of Presidency is comprised of five concepts—

- character
- world view
- style
- power situation
- climate of expectations

However, this can be further distilled in an activity/affect dichotomy.

Barber describes The Activity baseline (Active-Passive) refers to what one does

Whereas, the Affect baseline (Positive-Negative) refers to how one feels about what he does.

- This then can be a combination of high activity/positive outlook, low activity/negative outlook, high activity/negative outlook, low activity/positive outlook.
- Barber states that two baselines (activity/affect) are clear and they are also independent of one another: all of us know people who are very active but seem discouraged, others who are quite passive but seem happy, and so forth.

They also state that they both are crude clues to character. This is merely a simple heuristic for understanding the character and basic decision making of the presidency.

Barber's Presidential Psychology

Energy Toward the Presidency (working hard at politics)	Affect Toward the Presidency (enjoying what they do as president)	
	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>
<i>Active</i>	Jefferson, FDR, Truman, JFK, Ford, Carter, Bush 41, Clinton	Adams, Wilson, Hoover, LBJ, Nixon
<i>Passive</i>	Taft, Harding, Reagan	Washington, Coolidge, Eisenhower

Active-Passivity

- How Much Energy does a president have to fulfill their presidential agenda/will?
 - Highly active presidents spend a lot of effort trying to work toward their goals and agenda.
 - Those that are passive, may pursue legislative interests, but largely work within the existing framework, allowing Congress to do most of the legislative work, focusing on maintaining the status quo.

Positive-negative Affect

- This pertains to their overall outlook regarding what they do as president, their legislative success, etc. Meaning, how they feel about the work they do as president
 - Do they seem to experience their political life as happy or sad, enjoyable or discouraging, positive or negative in its main affect.
 - Barber states that the aim of this category is whether they on the surface seem like they have fun in their political life or are they bogged down from the work.

This leads us to the four basic character patterns long familiar in psychological research. In summary form, these are the main configurations:

Active-positive:

- There is a congruence, a consistency, between much activity and the enjoyment of it, indicating relatively high self-esteem and relative success in relating to the environment.
- They have an overall orientation toward productiveness as a value and an ability to use his styles flexibly adaptively, suiting the dance to the music.
- they see themselves as developing over time toward relatively well defined personal goals— growing toward his image of himself as he might yet be.
- This may make the president seem naive or overly optimistic and may fail to take account of the irrational in politics.
- Not everyone he deals with sees things his way and he may find it hard to understand why.

Active-negative:

- Really intense effort to enact change, but with very low emotional reward for that effort.
- The activity has a compulsive quality, the work as president is simply a duty that must be fulfilled.
- They are ambitious, striving upward, power-seeking.
- May revert to the bully pulpit to achieve movement toward their goals.
- Overall, combativeness with the system
- Active-negative types pour energy into the political system, but it is an energy distorted from within.

Passive-positive:

- They strive for agreeableness and cooperation in the system.
- Rather than strongly compel others to enact their will, this type may simply seek compromise and consensus among existing coalitions.
- A hopeful attitude helps dispel doubt and elicits encouragement from others.
- Passive-positive types help soften the harsh edges of politics.
- They often lead to maintenance of the status quo

Passive-negative:

- The factors are consistent—but how are we to account for a president's political role-taking? Why is someone who does little in politics and enjoys it less there at all?
- passive-negative's character-rooted orientation toward doing dutiful service; this compensates for low self-esteem based on a sense of uselessness.
- Passive-negative types are in politics **because they think they ought to be.**
- They may be well adapted to certain nonpolitical roles, but they lack the experience and flexibility to perform effectively as political leaders.

- Their tendency is to withdraw, to escape from the conflict and uncertainty of politics by emphasizing vague principles (especially prohibitions) and procedural arrangements.

Active-positive Presidents want most to achieve results.

Active-negatives aim to get and keep power.

Passive-positives are after love.

Passive-negatives emphasize their civic virtue.

The relation of activity to enjoyment in a President thus tends to outline a cluster of characteristics, to set apart the adapted from the compulsive, compliant, and withdrawn types.