

A Comparative Psychobiography of Hillary Clinton

and Condoleezza Rice

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The purpose of this study was to apply psychobiography to the lives of Hillary Clinton and Condoleezza Rice. Psychobiography can be applied as a method of teaching personality theory and it can also be used as a research method. Most political personas are crafted through 20 second sound bites from the radio, Internet, and television. However, a much more comprehensive and enriched perspective can be developed when exploring developmental backgrounds of influential figures. In particular, studying psychological features sheds light on the person's personality, motivations, and relationship styles. The Big 5 Personality Model was applied along with the Myers-Briggs Profile. The applications of these models highlight important personality characteristics that contribute to their achievements and failings. For example, both Clinton and Rice were rated high in the area of conscientiousness but differed in agreeableness and emotional expression. The authors recommend using psychobiography as an innovative method of teaching personality theory and as a method of understanding the lives of influential people.

Overview of Psychobiography

“Psychobiography is the analysis of historically significant lives through the use of psychological theory and research. Its aim is to understand persons, and to uncover the private motives behind public acts, whether those acts involve the making of art or the creation of scientific theories, or the adoption of political decisions.” (Schultz, 2007)

The two individuals for this analysis were selected based on the substantial interest in their lives as shown in the recent publications of multiple biographies for each along with much media attention. A second reason why they were selected was that they represent cases of great similarities and contrasts. One could argue that they are the two most significant women not only in American politics but internationally as well. A third reason stems from their unique juxtaposition in history. Rice has reached the highest position in politics ever achieved by an African-American woman, while Clinton at the time of this paper is competing to be the 1st female president in U.S. history. Despite these similarities, they possess contradicting political ideologies and sharply contrasting personal histories.

Methods of Psychobiography

Methods of psychobiography typically employ the application of personality models along with samples of life stories that demonstrate these applications (McAdams, 1988). McAdams noted that social scientists in general have gained interest in the use of narratives to understand people and systems. Historically, psychoanalytic theories have dominated these approaches. Contemporary approaches lean towards more empirically derived personality models such as the Big Five Model of Personality (McCrae & Costa, 1990). This scientifically derived model used factor analysis of many personality traits from a large sample to classify 5 primary features; Openness; Conscientiousness; Extraversion; Agreeableness; and Neuroticism. A second popular model of personality also will be applied. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicators (Myers Briggs, McCaulley, Quenk, & Hammer, 1998) are often used in counseling and workforce training settings.

This model does not have the empirical strength, some argue, of the Big 5 but it allows for greater application in relationship and career settings. Finally, personality adaptations will be identified and discussed. These traits were formed in relation to specific cultural and family influences.

There are some common warning flags related to the validity of methods of psychobiography. Falk (1985) listed distortion, evaluation of evidence, lack of self analysis, and lack of corroboration as threats to validity. However, Falk noted that if these pitfalls can be avoided that we can clarify key human issues that influence the entire civilization. The authors will present examples and interpretations using mainly primary source interviews and documents from various sources.

Big 5 Personality Profile

As stated previously, the Big 5 model includes 5 factors of personality. This model sometimes is referred to as the OCEAN model, the acronym for the 5 factors. Openness refers to what degree people are open to new ideas, non-traditional roles, novel experiences. People who rate high in this factor can be adventure seeking, progressive thinking, and desirous of new experiences including vocational, social, and physical areas. Conscientiousness refers to being industrious, motivated, organized, and meticulous. People high in this area are detail oriented, planners, organizers, and often ambitious. People high on the Extrovert factors are energized from social contact. They are outgoing, often personable, and seek attention. They are more likely to have many friendships with fewer 'close' friends. Agreeableness refers to being friendly and seeking harmonious relationships. They are mediators and avoid conflict whenever possible.

Finally, Neuroticism (sometimes referred to in the positive 'Stability' scale) refers to someone's level of anxiety, distress, and mood. Those who score high in this area are irritable, stressed, and sometimes unstable emotionally.

Hillary Clinton

Openness

In many ways going against traditional roles is a cardinal trait of people who score high in this factor. She sought after leadership positions in high school which was somewhat unusual in that era, as a youngster she hoped to be an astronaut and was surprised that women were not allowed, she focused on her career with great ambition despite gender role expectations, and she appears to have a more progressive (liberal) political orientation which is associated with those scoring high in this factor. The paradox lies in her traditional beliefs involving religion and family. She has been involved with a mainstream protestant church (Methodist) and has insisted on salvaging her marriage despite obvious conflicts. For her supporters, these contradictions show an independence of thought and a refusal to be categorized. Her detractors would highlight these inconsistencies as showing hypocrisy and a lack of authenticity. She is rated as generally high in Openness with some exceptions.

Conscientiousness

If there is one cardinal trait for HC it would be her extremely high level of conscientiousness. In the Big 5 Model this refers to being diligent, methodical, and organized. Hard work and perseverance were traits highly coveted in the Rodham household. As a child and teenager, HC was described by many sources as being

extremely motivated as a student, an organized and energetic student leader, and hardworking at home. This pattern continued in college where she also was a student leader. HC was known for being able to do the tough committee work needed to advance projects and policies. Her grades have always been excellent, her teachers often praised her motivation, and students perceived her as diligent both in grade school, high school, and college. In her professional career, HC gained a strong reputation as a tireless lawyer and political advocate for children. Politically, even from childhood she placed much energy into politics. A Republican as a youth, HC worked as a Goldwater Girl. And there are accounts of her going into tough neighborhoods as a youth to check for fraudulent addresses on voter registration forms. She committed great effort into campaigns her entire life. If people wonder why she polls as a frontrunner despite her high negative ratings they could consider this personality feature as an explanation. HC's skills in organizing, maintaining energy and focus, and single mindedness in her goals are unparalleled. Due to these traits, she is rated as extremely high in Conscientiousness.

Extroversion

It is debatable how to classify HC in terms of Extroversion. As a political figure and campaigner one has to be connected to people constantly. In high school she was a joiner. HC was in student government, several school organizations, and was active in the church's youth group. She was sociable in college, living on campus and making many friends and frequently traveling to socials at other colleges. Extraverts do not enjoy being alone and when she was separated from Bill Clinton after college for a brief time it caused great distress. She moved shortly after this and rejoined her partner. In some ways

she does not demonstrate the classic extrovert traits. The pure extrovert gravitates toward open dialogue and is described by many as very personable. Bill Clinton is a good example, even his critiques describe him as charismatic. HC is more of a goal oriented extrovert. She seeks to be part of a group and she does not isolate herself, but the groups tend to be more functional than social. She appears more comfortable working from scripts and performing with structure, traits not usually connected to extroverts. Socially she has several close long term friends and few others tight in her inner circle of trust, traits associated with introverts. She is rated as high in extroversion in the context of work and politics, moderate in the context of social relationships.

Agreeableness

In decision making and times of conflict people generally respond either with a focus on influencing, or a focus on seeking harmonious relationships. By most accounts HC would fall within the first category. In debates she is quick to vocalize weaknesses of opponents, both personal and content based. In her youth, although she was generally well liked she appeared to have a reputation of being 'bossy' and sometimes argumentative. The adjectives have been applied to her adult life as well. Former staffers have reported a sense of intimidation at times. There were several reports of loud arguments with her husband while they lived in the White House. There is no doubt that even if these accounts are overblown, there is at the very least a perception of disagreeableness that she gives to others. She rates the highest among all contenders for the presidential race of 2008 in the area of people having a negative opinion of her, about 50% according to at least one poll. This tough and sometimes abrasive style was likely molded by her father who is described as gruff, argumentative, and a bully. It likely

played an adaptive function in her family life. Supporters argue that HC is no more or less agreeable than most male political figures, but that gender expectations skew people's perceptions. However, there is ample evidence from a wide variety of sources that she rates low to extremely low in this personality feature. This rating does not imply lack of likability always. Many have reported HC to be engaging, charismatic, and likable. This personality feature relates to someone's pattern of behavior regarding relationships, especially in conflict. It is possible to be very popular among some people while rating low in this particular trait.

Neuroticism

While the biographers and writers on Hillary Clinton disagree about many topics there has been little disagreement that HC can demonstrate an elevated temper. What is debatable is the degree of the anger. Is it more like Dick Morris' accounts of her being highly aggressive, mean-spirited, and incredibly vindictive. Or are the accounts distorted and influenced by sexist expectations. Is she really more level and moderated? There are a plethora of accounts of her losing her temper at staffers, political opponents, and her husband. Yet many of her core supporters and staff have been with her for many years suggesting a degree of support unusual for a combative figure. There are some additional depressive indicators, especially from her younger adult years. Nothing at a clinical level but clear symptoms are evident nonetheless. A history of depression in the family is chronicled from her father's side, his brother and possible he himself were impacted with depression. But there is no evidence that this has ever impacted her performance or professional judgment. Her high rating in the category is more related to the common display of anger shown. The more interesting question is 'does HC experience more

anger or does she simply express it more visibly'? Our expression of emotion often was modeled by our parents and her father clearly verbalized and expressed anger freely. In conclusion, she is rated high in this category with the caveat that experiencing emotions and expressing emotions are distinct parts of personality.

Myers-Briggs Type Analysis for HC

The Myers-Briggs type indicator analyzes 4 aspects of personality along a continuum. It is a common tool counselors use to build a profile of a client and it is often used in business settings to help managers better understand personality and motivation. The four scales are Extroversion (E) versus Introversion (I), Intuitive (N) versus Sensing (S), Thinking (T) versus Feeling (F), and Judging (J) versus Perceiving (P). HC has been profiled as ENTJ (Advisorteam, 2008). People fitting this profile are organizers and leaders, and the label Fieldmarshall is often attributed to this type. HC appears to have faith in her own intuitive logic, confidence, skills leading teams, and skills in structuring organizations. Negative aspects of this profile include a lack of empathy, better organizational skills than analytical skills, and a likely need for power. In political and business situations they thrive when they have people on their team who are skilled program designers and architects of policy. Bill Gates and Margaret Thatcher are other noted figures who share this profile with HC, which represents a very small minority of the population at about 2 percent.

Character Adaptations

Many features of personality are developed for their adaptive value to survive and thrive in one's environment. Parents, schools, towns, and nations influence expectations

and values. People adapt their personality to meet these expectations. HC, like all of us, is a product of her culture. One could argue that had she been in grade school during the height of the civil rights movement, instead an impressionable college student, that she may have never been fully motivated to reach national prominence. HC's parents and church had exposed her to conditions in the inner city at a young age, influencing her penchant for social programs. She was not allowed to pursue interest in being an astronaut at a young age because she was female, and she was also influenced by being a teenager/young adult when Martin Luther King and other civil rights leaders were assassinated. These factors contribute to a sense of political and social inequity that resonates in most of her policies. These significant emotional experiences molded her adult beliefs and political ideas. Family factors also played a large role. Having financially stable parents helped her professionally with access to a reputable college. For example, it has been reported that her choosing Wellesley College was based on a recommendation from a high school teacher. It is unlikely this recommendation would have come from a school in an economically impoverished area. Being at Wellesley helped her transition to a culture of connected influential people. She was also undoubtedly affected by her parent's personality. They demanded toughness and set amazingly high expectations. Parental expectations are usually internalized and become manifest as adults. This would account for her high need for achievement and strong reaction to failure. It also explains her most controversial decision, to remain in her marriage despite the conflicts. Divorce was an extreme taboo in her family and church culture. The hate the sin and love the sinner mentality flows strong in HC. One could argue that her political ambition influenced this choice but she was just as open to

criticism from the feminist side by choosing to stay. The choices that seem unusual to many begin to make more sense in the light of personal history and knowledge of cultural influences. Along with her unique characteristics, she is very much a product of the Midwest middle class, the Northeast elite university culture, the Arkansas political system, and more recently the New York and Washington culture of politics.

In summary, the life of HC has been of great interest as seen in book sales and the number of biographies available. Her political influence has influenced and will continue to influence an entire generation of Americans. Her developmental influences have included a highly involved yet critical father, a supportive and tough-minded mother, a progressive preacher in her identity forming years, the political climate of the 60s, many friends and, of course, her iconic husband Bill Clinton. HC's two most emphasized personality characteristics were delineated as her extreme rating in conscientiousness and low rating in agreeableness. Her MBTI profile is similar to Bill Gates and Margaret Thatcher. She is a master organizer, planner, and strategist while being less oriented as an analyst, mediator, or visionary. HC, like all persons, has been greatly influenced psychologically by the culture and people in her life. Several resources were used for this analysis including Bernstein (2007); Clinton (2003); Gerth and Van Natta (2007); and Time Magazine (2008).

Condoleezza Rice's Biography

Condoleezza Rice has reached the most prominent heights of the US government. She has served as both National Security Advisor and Secretary of State by the age of 46 while overcoming incredible cultural barriers. The international policies that she has

spearheaded have been inspirational as well as controversial. Regardless of one's political background, her life story would have to be described as fascinating. Although she was born and raised in the deeply segregated South she has always been motivated towards significant achievements in music, language, education, and career.

Condoleezza was born in 1954 in Birmingham, Alabama. As a child living in the South during this era she was exposed to segregation, racism, and oppression. Obviously living in those conditions as a child would affect psychological development over time. However, she was able to overcome these societal ills and not allow negative emotions to impede her personal or career development. Her neighborhood was described as professional, supportive, and educated and her parents were in service professions, teaching and ministering. Her social support at home and in the community surely helped her to foster ambition and work ethic. Around age 4 she first played the piano. This interest followed her for life and was at one time a primary career interest. In 1963 a childhood friend was killed in a race related bombing, Condi was 8 years old. This experience highlighted the tension of the area and undoubtedly influenced her future perspectives. At age 13 her family moved to Denver and her dad worked at the University of Denver where she later attended college. She shifted interest from music to political science and met professor Joseph Korbel (Madeline Albright's father), an international diplomat from a former Soviet Republic. He was an expert in Soviet affairs and this connection framed the rest of her career. Psychologically, she was mature for her age, showed a high need to achieve, and she was outspoken in class gaining attention, usually positive, from her professors. This confidence will serve her later as she is a young woman negotiating international treaties for the first and second Bush administrations.

She received a master's degree at age 20 from Notre Dame and her PhD at 27. In these formative years identity development is in its peak. Although she voted for Carter in 1976, the failings of the administration helped shift her political identity to later vote Republican. Her personality trait of seeking high achievement was further demonstrated in winning a teaching award at Stanford while still a young professor. She showed an interest in sports and related well to students. She was perceived as agreeable but not passive. Her mom died at around age while Condi was only 30 years old. This death could possibly have lead to her renewed faith in the church which also occurred during this time. In 1987 she meets Scowcroft, a Bush advisor who helped get her on the National Security Council. She went back to Stanford and became the youngest provost, helping them handle a budget crisis. Once again her personality trait of advanced maturity is demonstrated. She later goes back to politics as National Security Advisor and then Secretary of State. This shows her openness to experience, a high degree of self-efficacy, and an ability to manage her emotions.

Five Factor Personality Model

Open to Experience

Condi in her childhood was open to many activities. She learned the piano at a young age and also enjoyed ice skating. She adjusted well when her family moved and succeeded in a variety of cultural settings. People scoring high in this trait are non-traditional, adventurous, and independent minded. She adopted many roles and interests that were not traditional for her gender and ethnicity. However, she maintained poise and demeanor that reflected traditional social norms of her geographic region. Also in contrast to people who score extremely high in openness, she has maintained a core

career interest specialty her entire life. She would not be described as an extreme thrill seeker or risk taker. Accordingly she is rated as moderately high in the openness trait.

Examples of her independent thinking are first highlighted when she verbally confronts her freshman professor as a student and she later shows it with her assertiveness with dominating people like Donald Rumsfeld. Condi did not conform to the beliefs of those around her and she let her opinions be voiced.

Conscientiousness

Condi exemplifies this trait as she is someone who is very high in conscientiousness. This is evidenced by her preferences, career, and life choices. At a young age she was very interested in the piano, playing at the age of 4. At the age of 15 she wanted to become a concert pianist, but she realized later that she did not have the talent needed to succeed in this field, but to this day she continues to play with a chamber music group. Condi was also interested in ice skating. She was very diligent and structured in her practice and her skill. Early mornings before school were sometimes spent at skating practice. Both of these skills show her conscientiousness and her desire to succeed in these areas throughout her childhood. Condi also graduated from high school at the age of 15 and then went on to get her master's and doctorate degrees.

During her adult life Condi's conscientiousness can be seen in her role at Stanford University. She began as a professor at Stanford University and later as Provost (chief budget and academic officer of the university). Through her planning and persistence she became Stanford's first female, first minority, and youngest Provost at the age of 38 years. When CR stepped into the position of Provost, Stanford University was running a deficit, by the time CR left this position Stanford had a surplus. Another example of

conscientiousness is in her positions at the White House. Many White House staff described her as very diligent and intelligent. President George Bush deferred to her during meetings with President Gorbachev because Condi is an expert in Soviet Affairs and policy and speaks Russian.

Extrovert

CR has been described as outgoing and personable. She appears comfortable meeting new people. Her networking abilities have helped vault her to the highest levels of achievement at an early age. As a student she was highly engaged and vocal in the classroom. As a college teacher she was quick to make contact with influential figures during social engagements. As a child she was described as social with other children after taking a lead role. For example when they would play school she would assume the role of the teacher. However she has not described as one to dominate conversation or to have an exaggerated need for attention. Consequently she is rated as a moderately high extrovert.

Agreeableness

CR has been described as charming and personable with the grace of a Southern lady. Her popularity among the college students at Stanford also supports a rating for high agreeableness. She demonstrated an uncanny ability to forge friendly and close relationships with teachers, students, advisors, administrators, and presidents. However, she often verbalized dissent and would speak openly in debate. These behaviors suggest that although harmonious relationships are important to her, speaking openly and being assertive are equally as important. She is rated as moderate in this area.

Neuroticism

By no accounts has CR been described as highly irritable, moody, or anxious. Her self-control and calm nature is described as reassuring to many people associated with her. The only potential evidence to support neuroticism might be her excessive drive for achievement. Sometimes high levels of achievement can be associated with perfectionism and a need for control, but there is no evidence or reports to suggest that applies to CR.

Myers Briggs Profile

As stated before CR demonstrates qualities consists with **extroverts**. As a student she was outspoken in class and in her career she has been vocal and outgoing. There has not been enough evidence to see if this translates into her personal life as well. CR would be characterized higher in the thinking than feeling areas. She is highly analytical and realizes on logic more than emotion in decision-making. She favors structure and having a plan which classifies her as a judger. And she seems to prefer to facts to gut instincts in decision-making which leans her to be classified as a sensing type. This profile has been linked to Harry Truman, Bette Davis, and Sam Walton.

Cultural Factors

There is no doubt that culture played a large role in the psychological development of CR. At the family level her parents championed the importance of education and taught her to be assertive. At the community level despite racism and segregation her local community was hard working, goal oriented, and professional. The prevalent racism of the era, especially in Birmingham also influenced her assertiveness and motivated her to overcome these cultural obstacles. Historical trends greatly influenced her life as she may have used the social problems of the era to fuel her ambition and learn how to succeed in any setting. Several sources were used for this

analysis including Bumiller (2007); Felix (2005); Lusane (2006); and Montgomery (2007).

Comparison

The most striking similarities between these personalities of these two figures are they both share high level of conscientiousness and they both had demanding parents. Conscientiousness is demonstrated in their level of organization, attention to detail, and methodical approaches to career achievement. They are both highly demanding of themselves and of those around them. And although HC's father was more authoritarian, they both had parents with high expectations. A highly involved parenting style is common among high achievers. The two are also similar in that they both have adopted non-traditional social and career roles for their era. Interestingly, both also switched political parties as young adults. And both HC and CR reported close ties with their mothers.

Many differences in upbringing and in adult personality types are evident when comparing HC and CR. For instance, HC was raised as the oldest child and her father took a more authoritarian approach. CR was an only child with demanding but less confrontational parent figures. These differing parental influences likely contribute to the differences in their adult personalities. HC appears more comfortable in confrontational roles, such as being a senator, while CR appears to prefer life more outside the spotlight. They both make strong impressions on people but in different ways. For example, HC gained national attention in her college speech where she was class president. She openly contradicted the conservative message of a well-known political figure who also spoke at the commencement. Conversely, CR gained attention mainly through academic

connections by impressing influential figures as a student and later as a college professor. These examples reflect the contrast between the manager/organizer style versus an analyst/investigative type.

In summary, most of the public will oversimplify the characterizations of these two influential women based on political ideology. However, their lives have transcended political boundaries. They both represent historical transitions that are completely unique. They serve as representatives of the positive outcomes of the civil rights and woman's movements. CR has achieved the highest US political office of an African-American woman, while HC has become the closest a woman has come to be an US president (the primaries are still undecided at the time of this publication). Their lives demonstrate the significance of parenting style, community support, and individual personality features. Regardless of one's political affiliation, their achievements and life stories should be inspirational and insightful. By studying the personalities and psychological histories of these two historical figures we should gain better understanding of our culture and society.

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