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# The Personality of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas

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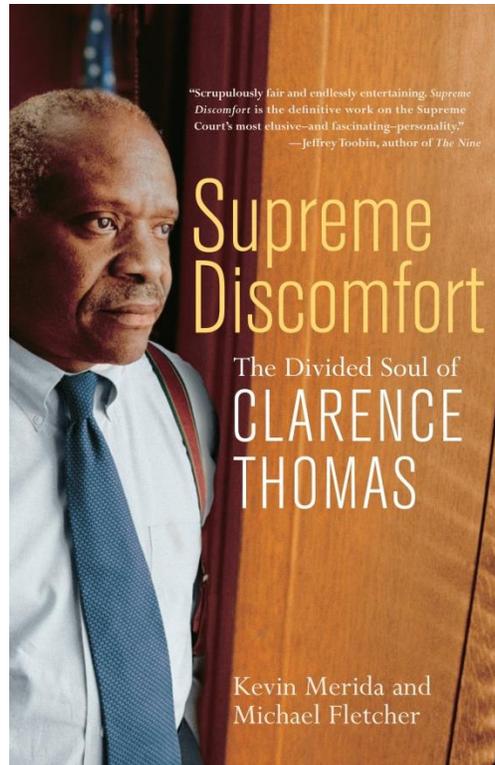
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## **THE PERSONALITY OF U.S. SUPREME COURT JUSTICE CLARENCE THOMAS**

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## *Abstract*

### **The Personality of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas**

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This paper presents the results of an indirect assessment of the personality of U.S. Supreme Court associate justice Clarence Thomas, from the conceptual perspective of Theodore Millon. Information concerning Justice Thomas was collected from biographical sources, speeches, and published reports and synthesized into a personality profile using the second edition of the Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria (MIDC), which yields 34 normal and maladaptive personality classifications congruent with Axis II of *DSM-IV*.

The personality profile yielded by the MIDC was analyzed on the basis of interpretive guidelines provided in the MIDC and Millon Index of Personality Styles manuals. Justice Thomas's primary personality patterns were found to be Contentious/oppositional and Reticent/inhibited, with secondary features of the Conscientious/respectful pattern.

The amalgam of Contentious and Reticent patterns in Justice Thomas's profile suggests the presence of an adaptive, nonpathological variant of Millon's *conflicted avoidant* syndrome. People with this personality composite seek social acceptance while simultaneously anticipating rejection and disillusionment. They have a disproportionate fear of failure and humiliation, but see little alternative but to depend on supporting persons and institutions, which kindles resentment. To protect themselves from the feelings of anger and anxiety prompted by this inner conflict, they tend to withdraw from social interaction or public view.

The major implication of the study is that it offers an empirically based personological framework for understanding the enigmatic Justice Clarence Thomas, who claims to be untroubled by the harsh judgment of his critics while simultaneously casting himself as a besieged victim. In truth, he is hypersensitive to rejection and deeply resentful of his detractors, yet his strong need for acceptance and respect make it difficult for him to confront his critics directly, which carries the risk of further alienation.

## Introduction

This paper reports the results of a psychodiagnostic case study of the personality of United States Supreme Court associate justice Clarence Thomas.

Conceptually, the study is informed by Theodore Millon's model of personality (1969, 1986a, 1986b, 1990, 1991, 1994, 1996, 2003; Millon & Davis, 2000; Millon & Everly, 1985) as adapted (Immelman, 1993, 1998, 2002, 2003, in press) for the study of personality in politics.

I employ the terms *personality* and *politics* in Fred Greenstein's (1992) narrowly construed sense. Politics, by this definition, "refers to the politics most often studied by political scientists — that of civil government and of the extra-governmental processes that more or less directly impinge upon government, such as political parties" and campaigns. Personality, as narrowly construed in political psychology, "excludes political attitudes and opinions . . . and applies only to nonpolitical personal differences" (p. 107).

Personality may be concisely defined as:

a complex pattern of deeply embedded psychological characteristics that are largely nonconscious and not easily altered, expressing themselves automatically in almost every facet of functioning. Intrinsic and pervasive, these traits emerge from a complicated matrix of biological dispositions and experiential learnings, and ultimately comprise the individual's distinctive pattern of perceiving, feeling, thinking, coping, and behaving. (Millon, 1996, p. 4)

Greenstein (1992) makes a compelling case for studying personality in government and politics: "Political institutions and processes operate through human agency. It would be remarkable if they were *not* influenced by the properties that distinguish one individual from another" (p. 124).

The methodology employed in this study involves the construction of a theoretically grounded personality profile derived from empirical analysis of biographical source materials.

A comprehensive review of Millon's personological model and its applicability to political personality has been provided elsewhere (see Immelman, 1993, 1998, 2003, in press). Briefly, Millon's model encompasses eight attribute domains: expressive behavior, interpersonal conduct, cognitive style, mood/temperament, self-image, regulatory mechanisms, object representations, and morphologic organization (see Table 1).

**Table 1**  
*Millon's Eight Attribute Domains*

Attribute	Description
Expressive behavior	The individual's characteristic behavior; how the individual typically appears to others; what the individual knowingly or unknowingly reveals about him- or herself; what the individual wishes others to think or to know about him or her.
Interpersonal conduct	How the individual typically interacts with others; the attitudes that underlie, prompt, and give shape to these actions; the methods by which the individual engages others to meet his or her needs; how the individual copes with social tensions and conflicts.
Cognitive style	How the individual focuses and allocates attention, encodes and processes information, organizes thoughts, makes attributions, and communicates reactions and ideas to others.
Mood/temperament	How the individual typically displays emotion; the predominant character of an individual's affect and the intensity and frequency with which he or she expresses it.
Self-image	The individual's perception of self-as-object or the manner in which the individual overtly describes him- or herself.
Regulatory mechanisms	The individual's characteristic mechanisms of self-protection, need gratification, and conflict resolution.
Object representations	The inner imprint left by the individual's significant early experiences with others; the structural residue of significant past experiences, composed of memories, attitudes, and affects that underlie the individual's perceptions of and reactions to ongoing events and serves as a substrate of dispositions for perceiving and reacting to life's ongoing events.
Morphologic organization	The overall architecture that serves as a framework for the individual's psychic interior; the structural strength, interior congruity, and functional efficacy of the personality system (i.e., ego strength).

*Note.* From *Disorders of Personality: DSM-IV and Beyond* (pp. 141–146) by T. Millon, 1996, New York: Wiley; *Toward a New Personology: An Evolutionary Model* (chapter 5) by T. Millon, 1990, New York: Wiley; and *Personality and Its Disorders: A Biosocial Learning Approach* (p. 32) by T. Millon and G. S. Everly, Jr., 1985, New York: Wiley. Copyright © 1996, © 1990, © 1985 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Adapted by permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. and Theodore Millon.

## Method

### *Materials*

The materials consisted of biographical sources and the personality inventory employed to systematize and synthesize diagnostically relevant information collected from the literature on Clarence Thomas.

**Sources of data.** Diagnostic information pertaining to Clarence Thomas was collected from a variety of sources (see References), including a book-length biography (A. P. Thomas, 2001); a sampling of Justice Thomas's public speeches (Thomas, 1994a, 1994b, 1996a, 1996b, 1997, 1998a, 1998b, 1999); and published reports by journalists or scholars that offered useful, diagnostically relevant biographical information ("Clarence Thomas," 1998; Hoch, 2003; Mauro, 2001; Merida & Fletcher, 2002; "Supreme Court Justice," 2001; White, 1998; Williams, 1987; Wooley, 1992; Zouhary, 1997).

**Personality inventory.** The assessment instrument, the second edition of the Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria (MIDC; Immelman & Steinberg, 1999), was compiled and adapted from Millon's (1969, 1986b; 1990, 1996; Millon & Everly, 1985) prototypal features and diagnostic criteria for normal personality styles and their pathological variants. Information concerning the construction, administration, scoring, and interpretation of the MIDC is provided in the Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria manual (Immelman, 1999).<sup>1</sup> The 12-scale (see Table 2) instrument taps the first five "noninferential" (Millon, 1990, p. 157) attribute domains previously listed in Table 1.

The 12 MIDC scales correspond to major personality patterns posited by Millon (1994, 1996), which are congruent with the syndromes described on Axis II of the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)* of the American Psychiatric Association (APA; 1994) and coordinated with the normal personality styles in which these disorders are rooted, as described by Millon and Everly (1985), Millon (1994), Oldham and Morris (1995), and Strack (1997). Scales 1 through 8 (comprising 10 scales and subscales) have three gradations (a, b, c) yielding 30 personality variants, whereas Scales 9 and 0 have two gradations (d, e), yielding four variants, for a total of 34 personality designations, or types. Table 2 displays the full taxonomy.

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<sup>1</sup> Inventory and manual available to qualified professionals upon request from the first author.

**Table 2**  
***Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria: Scales and Gradations***

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Scale 1A:	Dominant pattern a. Asserting b. Controlling c. Aggressive (Sadistic; <i>DSM-III-R</i> , Appendix A)
Scale 1B:	Dauntless pattern a. Adventurous b. Dissenting c. Aggrandizing (Antisocial; <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.7)
Scale 2:	Ambitious pattern a. Confident b. Self-serving c. Exploitative (Narcissistic; <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.81)
Scale 3:	Outgoing pattern a. Congenial b. Gregarious c. Impulsive (Histrionic; <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.50)
Scale 4:	Accommodating pattern a. Cooperative b. Agreeable c. Submissive (Dependent; <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.6)
Scale 5A:	Aggrieved pattern a. Unpresuming b. Self-denying c. Self-defeating ( <i>DSM-III-R</i> , Appendix A)
Scale 5B:	Contentious pattern a. Resolute b. Oppositional c. Negativistic (Passive-aggressive; <i>DSM-III-R</i> , 301.84)
Scale 6:	Conscientious pattern a. Respectful b. Dutiful c. Compulsive (Obsessive-compulsive; <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.4)
Scale 7:	Reticent pattern a. Circumspect b. Inhibited c. Withdrawn (Avoidant; <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.82)
Scale 8:	Retiring pattern a. Reserved b. Aloof c. Solitary (Schizoid; <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.20)
Scale 9:	Distrusting pattern d. Suspicious e. Paranoid ( <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.0)
Scale 0:	Erratic pattern d. Unstable e. Borderline ( <i>DSM-IV</i> , 301.83)

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*Note.* Equivalent *DSM* terminology and codes are specified in parentheses.

### ***Diagnostic Procedure***

The diagnostic procedure, termed *psychodiagnostic meta-analysis*, can be conceptualized as a three-part process: first, an *analysis* phase (data collection) during which source materials are reviewed and analyzed to extract and code diagnostically relevant content; second, a *synthesis* phase (scoring and interpretation) during which the unifying framework provided by the MIDC prototypal features, keyed for attribute domain and personality pattern, is employed to classify the diagnostically relevant information extracted in phase 1; and finally, an *evaluation* phase (inference) during which theoretically grounded descriptions, explanations, inferences, and predictions are extrapolated from Millon's theory of personality based on the personality profile constructed in phase 2 (see Immelman, 1999, 2002c, 2003, for a more extensive account of the procedure).

### **Results**

The analysis of the data includes a summary of descriptive statistics yielded by the MIDC scoring procedure, the MIDC profile for Clarence Thomas, diagnostic classification of the subject, and the clinical interpretation of significant MIDC scale elevations derived from the diagnostic procedure.

Thomas received 34 endorsements on the 170-item MIDC. Descriptive statistics for Thomas's MIDC ratings are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
***MIDC Item Endorsement Rate by Attribute Domain***

Expressive behavior	10
Interpersonal conduct	5
Cognitive style	6
Mood/temperament	6
Self-image	7
Sum	34
Mean	6.8
Standard deviation	1.7

Thomas's MIDC scale scores are reported in Table 4. The same data are presented graphically in the profile depicted in Figure 1.

**Table 4**  
*MIDC Scale Scores for Clarence Thomas*

Scale	Personality pattern	Raw	RT%
1A	Dominant: Asserting–Controlling–Aggressive (Sadistic)	3	7.5
1B	Dauntless: Adventurous–Dissenting–Aggrandizing (Antisocial)	1	2.5
2	Ambitious: Confident–Self-serving–Exploitative (Narcissistic)	1	2.5
3	Outgoing: Congenial–Gregarious–Impulsive (Histrionic)	0	0.0
4	Accommodating: Cooperative–Agreeable–Submissive (Dependent)	3	7.5
5A	Aggrieved: Unpresuming–Self-denying–Self-defeating (Masochistic)	3	7.5
5B	Contentious: Resolute–Oppositional–Negativistic (Passive-aggressive)	11	27.5
6	Conscientious: Respectful–Dutiful–Compulsive (Obsessive-compulsive)	5	12.5
7	Reticent: Circumspect–Inhibited–Withdrawn (Avoidant)	10	25.0
8	Retiring: Reserved–Aloof–Solitary (Schizoid)	3	7.5
	Subtotal for basic personality scales	40	100
9	Distrusting: Suspicious–Paranoid (Paranoid)	8	16.7
0	Erratic: Unstable–Borderline (Borderline)	0	0.0
	Full-scale total	48	116.7

*Note.* For Scales 1–8, ratio-transformed (RT%) scores are the scores for each scale expressed as a percentage of the sum of raw scores for the ten basic scales only. For Scales 9 and 0, ratio-transformed scores are scores expressed as a percentage of the sum of raw scores for all twelve MIDC scales (therefore, full-scale RT% totals can exceed 100). Personality patterns are enumerated with scale gradations and equivalent *DSM* terminology (in parentheses).

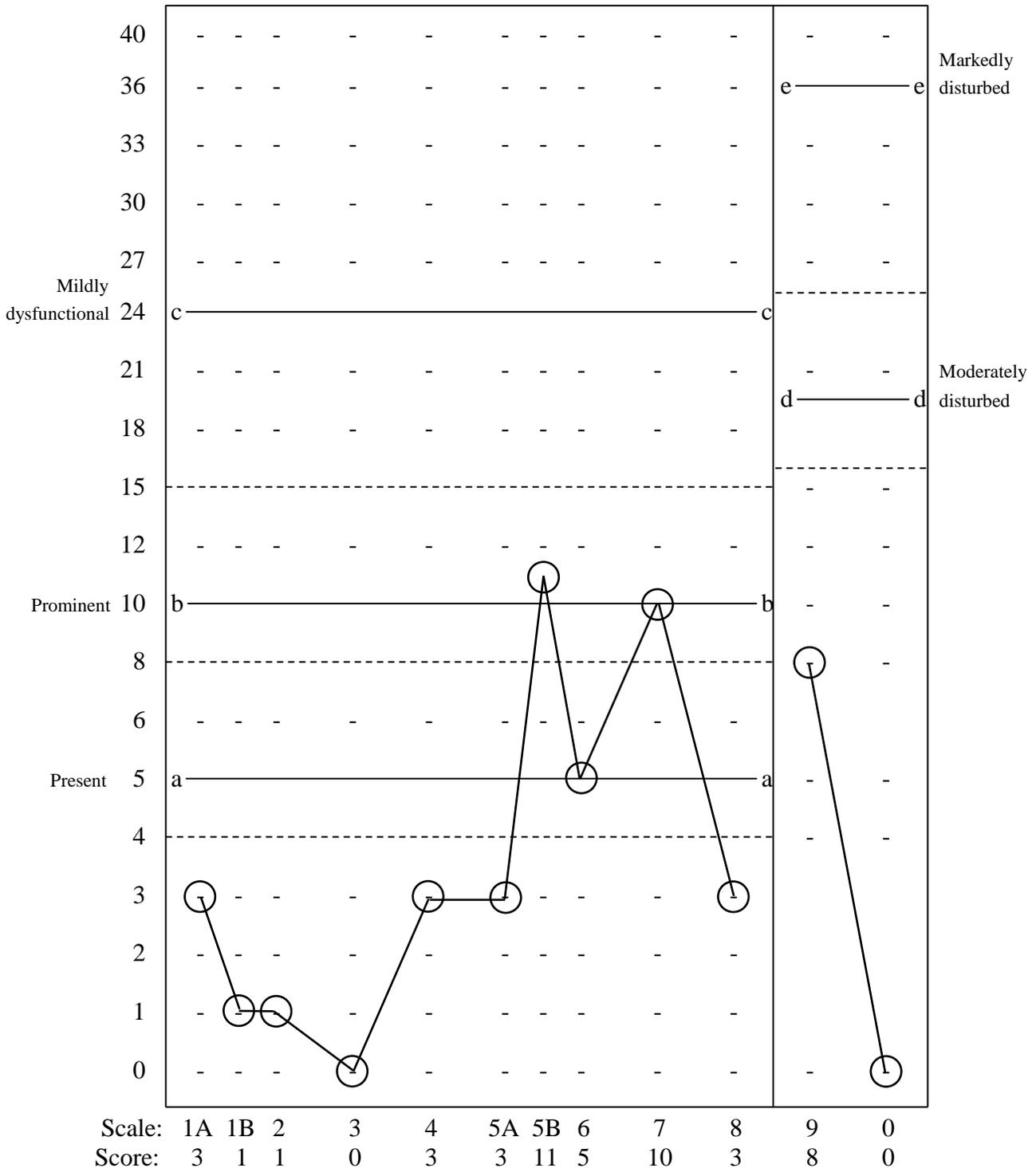
The MIDC profile yielded by the raw scores is displayed in Figure 1.<sup>2</sup> Thomas's most elevated scale, with a score of 11, is Scale 5B (Contentious), closely followed by a score of 10 on Scale 7 (Reticent). Based on cut-off score guidelines provided in the MIDC manual, the Scale 5B and Scale 7 elevations are just within the *prominent* (10–23) range. In Scale 6 (Conscientious) is just within the *present* range. No other scale is psychodiagnostically significant.

In terms of MIDC scale gradation (see Table 2 and Figure 1) criteria, Clarence Thomas was classified as primarily a blend of the Contentious/oppositional (Scale 5B) and Reticent/inhibited (Scale 7) personality patterns, with secondary features of the Conscientious/respectful (Scale 6) pattern.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See Table 2 for scale names. Solid horizontal lines on the profile form signify cut-off scores between adjacent scale gradations. For Scales 1–8, scores of 5 through 9 signify the *presence* (gradation *a*) of the personality pattern in question; scores of 10 through 23 indicate a *prominent* (gradation *b*) variant; and scores of 24 to 30 indicate an exaggerated, *mildly dysfunctional* (gradation *c*) variation of the pattern. For Scales 9 and 0, scores of 20 through 35 indicate a *moderately disturbed* syndrome and scores of 36 through 45 a *markedly disturbed* syndrome.

<sup>3</sup> In each case the label preceding the slash signifies the categorical personality pattern, whereas the label following the slash indicates the specific scale gradation, or personality type, on the dimensional continuum; see Table 2.

**Figure 1. Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria: Profile for Clarence Thomas**



## Discussion

The discussion of the results examines Clarence Thomas's MIDC scale elevations from the perspective of Millon's (1994, 1996; Millon & Davis, 2000) model of personality, supplemented by the theoretically congruent portraits of Oldham and Morris (1995) and Strack (1997). The discussion concludes with a brief synthesis of the practical implications of Clarence Thomas's personality profile.

With his elevated Scales 5B and 7, Thomas emerged from the assessment as a mixed oppositional–inhibited type. The oppositional style is an exaggerated — though generally adaptive — variant of the Contentious (negativistic, or passive-aggressive) pattern. The inhibited style, similarly, is an exaggerated but generally adaptive variant of the Reticent (avoidant, shy) pattern. The interpretation of Thomas's profile must also account for a more modest elevation on Scale 6 (Conscientious).

### *Scale 5B: The Contentious Pattern*

The Contentious pattern, as do all personality patterns, occurs on a continuum ranging from normal to maladaptive. At the well-adjusted pole are cynical, headstrong, *resolute* personalities. Exaggerated Contentious features occur in more complaining, irksome, *oppositional* personalities. In its most deeply ingrained, inflexible form (not relevant to Clarence Thomas) the Contentious pattern displays itself in caustic, contrary, *negativistic* behavior patterns that may be consistent with a clinical diagnosis of negativistic or passive-aggressive personality disorder. Thomas's loading on Scale 5B classifies him as an oppositional type, a generally adaptive though slightly exaggerated variant of the Contentious pattern.

Normal, adaptive variants of the Contentious pattern (i.e., resolute and oppositional types) correspond to Strack's (1997) *sensitive* style and Millon's (1994) *Complaining* pattern. Empirically, Millon's (1994) Complaining pattern has a high positive correlation with the five-factor model's *Neuroticism* factor, is negatively correlated with its *Agreeableness* factor, has a small negative correlation with its *Extraversion* factor, and is uncorrelated with the remaining two factors (Millon, 1994, p. 82). Millon (1994)<sup>4</sup> describes the Complaining (i.e., Contentious) pattern as follows:

Those scoring high on the Complaining [Contentious] scale often assert that they have been treated unfairly, that little of what they have done has been appreciated, and that they have been blamed for things that they did not do. Opportunities seem not to have worked out well for them and they “know” that good things don't last. Often resentful of what they see as unfair demands placed on them, they may be disinclined to carry out responsibilities as well as they could. Ambivalent about their lives and relationships, they may get into problematic wrangles and disappointments as they vacillate between acceptance one time and resistance the next. When

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<sup>4</sup> All Millon 1994 citations in this report refer to the Manual of the *Millon Index of Personality Styles* (MIPS). Copyright © 1994 by Dicandrien, Inc. “MIPS” is a trademark of The Psychological Corporation registered in the United States of America and/or other jurisdictions. Reproduced by permission of the publisher, The Psychological Corporation, a Harcourt Assessment Company. All rights reserved.

matters go well, they can be productive and constructively independent-minded, willing to speak out to remedy troublesome issues. (p. 34)

Stephen Strack (1997) provides the following portrait of the normal (*sensitive*) prototype of the Contentious pattern, based on Millon's theory, empirical findings from studies associating his Personality Adjective Check List (PACL; 1991) scales with other measures, and clinical experience with the test:

Sensitive [Contentious] personalities tend to be unconventional and individualistic in their response to the world. They march to the beat of a different drummer and are frequently unhappy with the status quo. They may be quick to challenge rules or authority deemed arbitrary and unjust. They may also harbor resentment without expressing it directly and may revert to passive-aggressive behavior to make their feelings known. Many sensitive people feel as if they don't fit in, and view themselves as lacking in interpersonal skills. In fact, to others they often appear awkward, nervous, or distracted, and seem angry or dissatisfied with themselves and others. They can be indecisive and have fluctuating moods and interests. An air of uncertainty and general dissatisfaction may reflect an underlying dependency and sense of personal inadequacy. With their best side forward, sensitive persons can be spontaneous, creative, and willing to speak out for what they believe in. These qualities make them especially suited to jobs that are not rule-bound, that give them a certain independence from supervision, and that require unusual duties or creative expression. (From Strack, 1997, pp. 490–491, with minor modifications)

Millon's personality patterns have predictable, reliable, observable psychological indicators (expressive behavior, interpersonal conduct, cognitive style, mood/temperament, self-image, regulatory mechanisms, object-representations, and morphologic organization). Millon's (1996) attribute domains accentuate the maladaptive range of the personality patterns in his taxonomy — in the case of the Contentious pattern, the negativistic pole of the resolute–oppositional–negativistic continuum. The “normalized” (i.e., de-pathologized; cf. Millon & Davis, 2000, p. 474–475) diagnostic features of the Contentious pattern are summarized below; nonetheless, some of the designated traits may be attenuated, less pronounced and more adaptive, in the case of well-functioning public officials.

***Expressive behavior.*** The core diagnostic feature of the expressive acts of Contentious individuals is *nonconformity*; they are individualistic and independent, tend to be outspoken or unconventional, and are frequently unhappy with the status quo. Thus, they are quick to challenge rules or authority deemed arbitrary and unjust. More exaggerated variants of the Contentious pattern are *resistant*; they are stubborn and oppositional, may act in a procrastinating, irksome, or intentionally inefficient manner, and frequently complain of being misunderstood or unappreciated. (Millon, 1996, pp. 549–550; Strack, 1997, pp. 490–491)

***Interpersonal conduct.*** The core diagnostic feature of the interpersonal conduct of Contentious individuals is their *unyielding* manner; they are superficially acquiescent but fundamentally determined and resolute, even willful, in their independence strivings. More exaggerated variants of the Contentious pattern are characteristically *obdurate*; they are oppositional, recalcitrant, mulish, quarrelsome, or disputatious, often vacillating between contrite acquiescence and assertive, hostile independence, which may be revealed in a pattern of inconsistent or unpredictable attitudes and behaviors. (Millon, 1996, pp. 550–551)

**Cognitive style.** The core diagnostic feature of the cognitive style of Contentious individuals is its *freethinking* nature; they are inherently critical, skeptical, cynical, and doubting, with a seemingly ingrained tendency to question authority. Their preference for indirect expression of aggressive intent may be reflected in a propensity for sarcasm or barbed humor. More exaggerated variants of the Contentious pattern are habitually *gripping*; they display a questioning, querulous, grumbling mindset. Consequently, they tend to approach positive events with disbelief and future possibilities with pessimism, anger, or trepidation. (Millon, 1996, pp. 551–552)

**Mood/temperament.** The core diagnostic feature of the characteristic mood and temperament of Contentious individuals is *moodiness*; they are typically sensitive or discontented. Owing to their hypersensitivity, their emotional equilibrium is easily upset, resulting in frequent displays of pessimistic, distraught, or despondent mood. More exaggerated variants of the Contentious pattern are more overtly touchy and *irritable*; they are testy or petulant, and frequently impatient, nettled, or fretful. They are especially prone to displays of sullen, obstinate, resentful moodiness. (Millon, 1996, pp. 551–552; Millon & Everly, 1985, p. 33)

**Self-image.** The core diagnostic feature of the self-perception of Contentious individuals is *dissatisfaction*; they recognize themselves as being generally discontented or cynical about life. More exaggerated variants of the Contentious pattern feel *disillusioned*; they view themselves as being misunderstood, luckless, unappreciated, jinxed, or demeaned by others. They may have a pervasive sense of having been wronged or cheated, that little has worked out well for them. (Millon, 1994, p. 33; Millon, 1996, p. 552)

**Regulatory mechanisms.** The core diagnostic feature of the unconscious regulatory (i.e., ego-defense) mechanisms of highly Contentious individuals is *displacement*; they discharge anger and other troublesome emotions either precipitously or by employing unconscious maneuvers to shift them from their instigator to settings or persons of lesser significance. As a consequence, they vent disapproval or resentment by substitute or passive means, such as acting inept or perplexed or behaving in a forgetful or indolent manner. (Millon, 1996, pp. 552–553)

**Object representations.** The core diagnostic feature of the internalized object representations of highly Contentious individuals is *vacillation*; internalized representations of parents or childhood primary caretakers comprise a complex of countervailing relationships, setting in motion contradictory feelings, conflicting inclinations, and incompatible memories that are driven by the desire to degrade the achievements and pleasures of others, without necessarily appearing so. (Millon, 1996, p. 552)

**Morphologic organization.** The core diagnostic feature of the morphological organization of highly Contentious individuals is its *divergence*; there is a clear division in the pattern of morphologic structures such that coping and defensive maneuvers are often directed toward incompatible goals, leaving major conflicts unresolved and full psychic cohesion often difficult because fulfillment of one drive or need inevitably nullifies or reverses another. (Millon, 1996, pp. 553)

### ***Scale 7: The Reticent Pattern***

Few people exhibit personality patterns in pure or prototypical form; more often, individual personalities represent a blend of two or more prevailing orientations. As noted earlier, Clarence Thomas's elevation on Scale 7 (Reticent) modulates his predominantly Contentious (Scale 5B) pattern. Thomas's loading on Scale 7 classifies him as an *inhibited* type, a generally adaptive but exaggerated variant of the Reticent pattern.

The Reticent pattern, as do all personality patterns, occurs on a continuum ranging from normal to maladaptive. At the well-adjusted pole are watchful, private, socially reserved *circumspect* personalities. Exaggerated Reticent features occur in guarded, insecure, self-conscious, *inhibited* personalities. In its most deeply ingrained, inflexible form (not relevant to Clarence Thomas) the Reticent pattern displays itself in overanxious, mistrustful, reclusive, *withdrawn* behavior patterns that may be consistent with a clinical diagnosis of avoidant personality disorder or social phobia.

Normal, adaptive variants of the Reticent pattern (i.e., circumspect and inhibited types) correspond to Oldham and Morris's (1995) *Sensitive* style, Millon's (1994) *Hesitating* pattern, and Strack's (1997) *inhibited* style. Millon's Hesitating pattern has a strong positive correlation with the five-factor model's *Neuroticism* factor, is negatively correlated with its *Extraversion* factor, has a small negative correlation with its *Conscientiousness* factor, and is uncorrelated with the remaining two factors (Millon, 1994, p. 82). According to Millon (1994), the Hesitating (i.e., Reticent) pattern is characterized by

social inhibition and withdrawal. . . [and] has some common ground with the self-effacing segment of Leary's [1957] self-effacing-masochistic pattern, notable for its tendency to downplay personal abilities, to be shy and sensitive, and to experience feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. . . [It is] akin to Factor IV of the Big-Five, usually termed Neuroticism (as opposed to Emotional Stability). Those scoring high on the Hesitating [Reticent] scale have a tendency to be sensitive to social indifference or rejection, to feel unsure of themselves, and to be wary in new situations, especially those of a social or interpersonal character. Somewhat ill at ease and self-conscious, these individuals anticipate running into difficulties in interrelating and fear being embarrassed. They may feel tense when they have to deal with persons they do not know, expecting that others will not think well of them. Most prefer to work alone or in small groups where they know that people accept them. Once they feel accepted, they can open up, be friendly, be cooperative, and participate with others productively. (p. 32)

Oldham and Morris (1995), with their *Sensitive* style, add the following perspective:

Sensitive [Reticent] people come into possession of their powers when their world is small and they know the people in it. For this commonly occurring personality style, familiarity breeds comfort, contentment, and inspiration. These men and women — although they avoid a wide social network and shun celebrity — can achieve great recognition for their creativity. (p. 180)

Strack (1997) provides the following portrait of the normal (*inhibited*) prototype of the Reticent pattern, based on Millon's theory, empirical findings from studies associating his Personality Adjective Check List (PACL; 1991) scales with other measures, and clinical experience with the test:

As with the introversive style [Retiring pattern], the inhibited [Reticent] personality is marked by a tendency toward social withdrawal. However, for inhibited [Reticent] individuals his pattern is motivated not by indifference, but by a fear of negative consequences. Inhibited [Reticent] persons tend to be sensitive to their own feelings and to those of others. They often anticipate that others will be critical or rejecting of them, and because of this they frequently seem shy or skittish in unfamiliar surroundings. In this regard, family members and acquaintances may see them as being unnecessarily nervous, wary, and fearful. Although inhibited [Reticent] persons tend to get along reasonably well with others, they are often difficult to get to know on a personal level. These individuals usually wish that they could be at ease with others and tend to desire closeness, but they often are just too uncertain of the consequences of closeness and intimacy to let down their guard. As a result, they may experience feelings of loneliness, but be unable or unwilling to do anything about them. Because of their sensitivity to others, inhibited [Reticent] persons are often described as kind, considerate, and empathic by close acquaintances. Inhibited [Reticent] persons often prefer to work alone or in a small group with people they can come to know well. They do best in a stable work environment where stimulation and commotion are kept at low to moderate levels. Persons working with inhibited [Reticent] types need to appreciate their sensitivity to both positive and negative feedback, as well as their need to build trust over a long period of time. (From Strack, 1997, p. 488, with minor modifications)

As stated earlier, Millon's personality patterns have predictable, reliable, observable psychological indicators (expressive behavior, interpersonal conduct, cognitive style, mood/temperament, self-image, regulatory mechanisms, object-representations, and morphologic organization). Millon's (1996) attribute domains accentuate the maladaptive range of the personality patterns in his taxonomy — in the case of the Reticent pattern, the withdrawn pole of the circumspect–inhibited–withdrawn continuum. The “normalized” (i.e., de-pathologized; cf. Millon & Davis, 2000, pp. 141–143) diagnostic features of the Reticent pattern are summarized below; nonetheless, some of the designated traits may be attenuated, less pronounced and more adaptive, in the case of well functioning public officials.

***Expressive behavior.*** The core diagnostic feature of the expressive acts of Reticent individuals is their *watchfulness*; they are circumspect, mindful, quiet, inhibited, and hesitant. More exaggerated variants of the Reticent pattern are distinctly *guarded*; they are wary or fretful, insecure or uneasy, and tend to anticipate embarrassment or personal ridicule. (Millon, 1996, p. 261; Millon & Everly, 1985, pp. 33, 40)

***Interpersonal conduct.*** The core diagnostic feature of the interpersonal conduct of Reticent individuals is their *private* manner; they are socially reserved and quiet. More exaggerated variants of the Reticent pattern are *apprehensive*; they seek acceptance, yet are self-conscious and maintain social distance, avoiding close personal relationships as a safeguard against social rejection or humiliation. (Millon, 1996, pp. 261–263; Millon & Everly, 1985, pp. 33, 40)

***Cognitive style.*** The core diagnostic feature of the cognitive style of Reticent individuals is their *preoccupation* with their inner thoughts and ideas; they may be reflective or ruminative. More exaggerated variants of the Reticent pattern are cognitively *distracted*; they tend to be absent-minded or absorbed in their inner thoughts, sometimes disruptively so, which may interfere with rationally focusing on and attending to external stimuli. (Millon, 1996, p. 263; Millon & Everly, 1985, pp. 33, 40)

**Mood/temperament.** The core diagnostic feature of the characteristic mood and temperament of Reticent individuals is their *uneasy* disposition; they are uncomfortable, anxiety-prone, and easily embarrassed. More exaggerated variants of the Reticent pattern are *anguished*; they often seem distressed or agitated, and their emotional experiences are marked by confusing feelings of tension, sadness, and anger. (Millon, 1996, p. 265; Millon & Everly, 1985, pp. 33, 40)

**Self-image.** The core diagnostic feature of the self-perception of Reticent individuals is their sense of *loneliness*; they recognize themselves as relatively friendless or isolated, yet desire social acceptance. More exaggerated variants of the Reticent pattern feel *alienated* from the world; they are socially isolated and detached and feel empty, neglected, and disaffected. All variants of this pattern tend to devalue their achievements. (Millon, 1996, p. 263; Millon & Everly, 1985, pp. 33, 40)

**Regulatory mechanisms.** The core diagnostic features of the unconscious regulatory (i.e., ego-defense) mechanisms of highly Reticent individuals is *fantasy*; they withdraw into reverie as a means of safely discharging frustrated affiliative needs or angry impulses and may depend excessively on imagination to achieve need gratification or conflict resolution. (Millon, 1996, p. 264)

**Object representations.** The core diagnostic feature of the internalized object representations of highly Reticent individuals is their *vexatious* nature; the inner imprint of significant early experiences with parents or childhood primary caretakers that serves as a substrate of dispositions (i.e., templates) for perceiving and reacting to current life events, are composed of readily reactivated, intense, and conflict-ridden memories of problematic early relations. Consequently, Reticent individuals possess limited avenues for experiencing or recalling gratification, and few mechanisms to channel needs, bind impulses, resolve conflicts, or deflect external stressors. (Millon, 1996, pp. 263–264)

**Morphologic organization.** The core diagnostic feature of the morphological organization of highly Reticent individuals is its *fragility*; the overall architecture of their psychic interior constitutes a precarious complex of tortuous emotions that depend almost exclusively on a single modality for its resolution and discharge (i.e., avoidance, escape, or fantasy). Consequently, when Reticent individuals are confronted with new opportunities, personal risks, or unanticipated stressors, few functional morphologic structures are readily assembled and scant recourse to backup positions, short of regressive compensation, is available to the personality system for deployment. (Millon, 1996, pp. 264–265)

### **Scale 6: The Conscientious Pattern**

It can often prove productive to examine less elevated scales that, although not of primary significance, nonetheless appear to play a secondary role in the individual's overall personality configuration. Such is the case with Clarence Thomas's elevation on Scale 6 (Conscientious), which modulates his more prevailing Contentious–Reticent mixed personality pattern. Thomas's loading on Scale 6 is just within the *normal* (i.e., respectful) range of the Conscientious pattern.

The Conscientious pattern, as do all personality patterns, occurs on a continuum ranging from normal to maladaptive. At the well-adjusted pole are earnest, polite, *respectful* personalities. Exaggerated Conscientious features (not highly relevant to Clarence Thomas) occur in *dutiful*, dependable, and principled but rigid personalities. In its most deeply ingrained, inflexible form (not relevant to Clarence Thomas) the Conscientious pattern displays itself in moralistic, self-righteous, uncompromising, cognitively constricted, *compulsive* behavior patterns that may be consistent with a clinical diagnosis of obsessive-compulsive personality disorder.

Normal, adaptive variants of the Conscientious pattern (i.e., respectful and dutiful types) correspond to Oldham and Morris's (1995) *Conscientious* style, Millon's (1994) *Conforming* pattern, Strack's (1997) *respectful* style, and the *responsible* segment of Leary's (1957) *responsible-hypernormal* interpersonal continuum. Millon's Conforming pattern is correlated with the five-factor model's *Conscientiousness* factor, has a modest positive correlation with its *Extraversion* factor, a modest negative correlation with its *Neuroticism* factor, and is uncorrelated with its *Agreeableness* and *Openness to Experience* factors (see Millon, 1994, p. 82). Adaptive variants of the Conscientious pattern have "a well-disciplined and organized lifestyle that enables individuals to function efficiently and successfully in most of their endeavors," in contrast to "the driven, tense, and rigid adherence to external demands and to a perfectionism that typifies the disordered [compulsive] state." They "demonstrate an unusual degree of integrity, adhering as firmly as they can to society's ethics and morals" (Millon, 1996, pp. 518–519). As stated by Oldham and Morris (1995):

Conscientious-style people . . . [have] strong moral principle[s] and absolute certainty, and they won't rest until the job is done and done right. They are loyal to their families, their causes, and their superiors. Hard work is a hallmark of this personality style; Conscientious types *achieve*. . . . The Conscientious personality style flourishes within cultures . . . in which the work ethic thrives. Conscientious traits . . . [include] hard work, prudence, [and] conventionality. (p. 62)

Being principled, scrupulous, and meticulous, conscientious individuals "tend to follow standards from which they hesitate to deviate, attempt to act in an objective and rational manner, and decide matters in terms of what they believe is right." They are often religious, and maintaining their integrity "ranks high among their goals" while "voicing moral values gives them a deep sense of satisfaction." The major limitations of this personality style are (a) its "superrationality," leading to a "devaluation of emotion [which] tends to preclude relativistic judgments and subjective preferences"; and (b) a predilection for "seeing complex matters in black and white, good and bad, or right or wrong terms" (Millon, 1996, p. 519). Millon (1994) summarizes the Conscientious pattern (which he labels *Conforming*) as follows:

[Conscientious individuals possess] traits not unlike Leary's [1957] responsible-hypernormal personality, with its ideal of proper, conventional, orderly, and perfectionistic behavior, as well as bearing a similarity to Factor III of the Big-Five, termed Conscientiousness. Conformers are notably respectful of tradition and authority, and act in a reasonable, proper, and conscientious way. They do their best to uphold conventional rules and standards, following given regulations closely, and tend to be judgmental of those who do not. Well-organized and reliable, prudent and restrained, they may appear to be overly self-controlled, formal and inflexible in their relationships, intolerant of deviance, and unbending in their adherence to social proprieties. Diligent about their responsibilities, they dislike having their work pile up, worry about finishing things, and come across to others as highly dependable and industrious. (p. 33)

Strack (1997) provides the following portrait of the normal (*respectful*) prototype of the Conscientious pattern, based on Millon's theory, empirical findings from studies correlating his Personality Adjective Check List (PACL; 1991) scales with other measures, and clinical experience with the instrument:

Responsible, industrious, and respectful of authority, these individuals tend to be conforming and work hard to uphold rules and regulations. They have a need for order and are typically conventional in their interests. These individuals can be rule abiding to a fault, however, and may be perfectionistic, inflexible, and judgmental. A formal interpersonal style and notable constriction of affect can make some respectful [Conscientious] persons seem cold, aloof, and withholding. Underneath their social propriety there is often a fear of disapproval and rejection, or a sense of guilt over perceived shortcomings. Indecisiveness and an inability to take charge may be evident in some of these persons due to a fear of being wrong. However, among co-workers and friends, respectful [Conscientious] personalities are best known for being well organized, reliable, and diligent. They have a strong sense of duty and loyalty, are cooperative in group efforts, show persistence even in difficult circumstances, and work well under supervision. (From Strack, 1997, p. 490, with minor modifications)

As noted earlier, Millon's personality patterns have predictable, reliable, observable psychological indicators. Millon's (1996) attribute domains accentuate the maladaptive range of the personality patterns in his taxonomy — in the case of the Conscientious pattern, the compulsive pole of the respectful–dutiful–compulsive continuum. The major diagnostic features of the prototypal maladaptive variant of the Conscientious pattern are summarized below, along with “normalized” (i.e., de-pathologized; cf. Millon & Davis, 2000, pp. 174–176) descriptions of the more adaptive variants of this pattern.

***Expressive behavior.*** The core diagnostic feature of the expressive acts of Conscientious individuals is a sense of *duty*; they do their best to uphold conventional rules and standards, follow regulations closely, and are typically responsible, reliable, proper, prudent, punctual, self-disciplined, well organized, and restrained. They are meticulous in fulfilling obligations, their conduct is generally beyond reproach, and they typically demonstrate an uncommon degree of integrity. All variants of this pattern tend to be overcontrolled, orderly, perfectionistic, dependable, and industrious. Typically scrupulous in matters of morality and ethics, they may strike others as prudish, moralistic, or condescending. They exhibit a certain postural tightness; their movements may be deliberate and dignified and they display a tendency to speak precisely, with clear diction and well-phrased sentences. Emotions are constrained by a regulated, highly structured, and carefully organized lifestyle. Clothing is characteristically formal or proper, and restrained in color and style. (Millon, 1996, pp. 513–515)

***Interpersonal conduct.*** The core diagnostic feature of the interpersonal conduct of Conscientious individuals is *politeness*; they are courteous, proper, and dignified. They strongly adhere to social conventions and proprieties and show a preference for polite, formal, and “correct” personal relationships. With their strong sense of duty, they feel that they must not let others down or engage in behaviors that might provoke their displeasure. They are loyal to their families, their causes, and their superiors. All variants of this pattern tend to be scrupulous in matters of morality and ethics. They typically insist that subordinates adhere to personally established rules and methods but, in marked contrast, tend to treat superiors with deference,

striving to impress authorities with their loyalty, efficiency, and serious-mindedness. (Millon, 1996, pp. 514–515, 516; Millon & Everly, 1985, p. 33)

**Cognitive style.** The core diagnostic feature of the cognitive style of Conscientious individuals is *circumspection*; they are cautious, prudent, deliberate, systematic, and attentive to detail. Wary of new or untested ideas, they are risk avoidant. All variants of this pattern are concerned with matters of propriety and efficiency and tend to be rigid about regulations and procedures — though, ironically, all too often getting mired in minor or irrelevant details. They judge others by “objective” standards and time-proven rules of an orderly society and are inclined to disdain frivolity and public displays of emotion, which they view as irresponsible or immature. Though industrious, tidy, meticulous, practical, realistic, and diligent, their thinking may be deficient in flexibility, creativity, and imagination, and lacking in vision. (Millon, 1996, pp. 515–516; Millon & Everly, 1985, p. 33)

**Mood/temperament.** The core diagnostic feature of the characteristic mood and temperament of Conscientious individuals is *restraint*; they are serious, reasonable, and rarely display strong emotions. Because of their tight emotional control and dignified, serious-minded, solemn demeanor, all variants of the Conscientious pattern tend to appear unrelaxed or tense and may at times be viewed as grim and cheerless. This, however, is due to disdain for frivolity rather than humorlessness per se; thus, although these individuals often come across as reserved, they may exhibit a dry, self-effacing sense of humor. Few, however, have a lively or ebullient manner; most are rigidly controlled and tight, and their failure to release pent-up energies may predispose them to psychophysiological disorders. (Millon, 1996, p. 518; Millon & Everly, 1985, p. 33)

**Self-image.** The core diagnostic feature of the self-perception of Conscientious individuals is *reliability*; they view themselves as dependable, disciplined, responsible, industrious, efficient, and trustworthy. Scrupulous and meticulous in fulfilling obligations, they may appear to others as overperfectionistic, high minded, and fastidious. All variants of the Conscientious pattern at times experience self-doubt or guilt for failing to live up to an ideal. Given their strong sense of duty and their view of themselves as reliable, conscientious, or righteous, these individuals are particularly sensitive to charges of impropriety, which may be devastating to their sense of self. Similarly, they dread being viewed as irresponsible, slack in their efforts, or in error, with a corresponding tendency to overvalue aspects of their self-image that signify perfectionism, prudence, and discipline. (Millon, 1996, p. 516)

**Regulatory mechanisms.** The core diagnostic feature of the unconscious regulatory (i.e., ego-defense) mechanisms of highly Conscientious individuals is *reaction formation*; they display reasonableness when faced with circumstances that would typically be expected to evoke irritation, anger, or dismay. More extreme variants of the Conscientious pattern repeatedly attempt to put a positive spin on their thoughts and behaviors by engaging in public displays of socially commendable actions that may be diametrically opposed to their deeper, forbidden impulses. Conscientious individuals classically employ a greater variety of regulatory mechanisms than other personality patterns, among them *identification*, *sublimation*, *isolation*, and *undoing*. Concerning the latter, in more extreme, compulsive manifestations of the Conscientious pattern, perceived failure of these individuals to live up to their own or others’

expectations may give rise to ritualistic acts to annul the wrong they feel they have wrought, which induces them to seek expiation for their imagined sins, to regain the goodwill they fear may be lost. (Millon, 1996, pp. 516–517)

**Object representations.** The core diagnostic feature of the internalized object representations of highly Conscientious individuals is *concealment*; there is a tendency for only those internalized representations of parents or childhood primary caretakers that are socially acceptable, with their corresponding inner affects, memories, and attitudes, to be permitted into conscious awareness or to be expressed. Thus, personal difficulties and social conflicts anchored to past experiences are defensively denied, kept from conscious awareness, and maintained under the most stringent of controls. These individuals devalue self-exploration, claiming that it is antithetical to efficient behavior and that introspection only intrudes on rational thinking and self-control, or asserting that introspection is indicative of immature self-indulgence and thus anathema to social adaptation. Consequently, highly Conscientious persons often lack insight into their motives and feelings. (Millon, 1996, p. 516)

**Morphologic organization.** The core diagnostic feature of the morphological organization of highly Conscientious individuals is *compartmentalization*; to keep contrary feelings and impulses from affecting one another, and to hold ambivalent images and contradictory attitudes from spilling forth into conscious awareness, the organization of their inner world must be rigidly compartmentalized in a tightly consolidated system that is clearly partitioned into numerous, distinct, and segregated constellations of drive, memory, and cognition, with few open channels to permit interplay among these components. Thus, a deliberate and well-poised surface quality may belie an inner turmoil. To prevent upsetting the balance they have so carefully wrought throughout their lives, highly Conscientious individuals strive to avoid risk and to operate with complete certainty. Their toughest challenge, however, is to control their emotions, which they do by extensive use of intrapsychic defenses. Because they usually have a history of exposure to demanding, perfectionistic parents, a potent force behind their tightly structured world is their fear of disapproval. Because their public facade of conformity and propriety often masks an undercurrent of repressed urges toward self-assertion and defiance, they must guard against “detection,” which they achieve through characteristic control mechanisms such as reaction formation, and by favoring the formalistic interpersonal behaviors described in preceding sections. (Millon, 1996, pp. 517–518)

### ***Summary and Formulation: The Conflicted Avoidant***

With his primary contentious, oppositional (Scale 5B) and reticent, inhibited (Scale 7) mixed pattern, Clarence Thomas matches the personality composite that Millon (1996, pp. 268–269) has termed the *conflicted avoidant*. However, given relatively modest elevations on the two scales in question, it should be noted Thomas likely will display a generally adaptive, nonpathological variant of the syndrome.

According to Millon (1996, pp. 268–269), conflicted avoidants seek social acceptance but anticipate rejection and disillusionment. To mitigate their discontentment, they strive to separate themselves from others — a tendency that conflicts with underlying fears of autonomy. Thus, independence strivings are constrained by fear of failure and humiliation. Complicating the

concern about venturing into close relationships is a deflated self-esteem. Ultimately, these personalities have little alternative but to depend on supporting persons and institutions, which kindles deep resentment. To defend against conflictful feelings and restrain their anger, they become withdrawn and may experience persistent sadness and recurrent anxiety.

The discontent, moodiness, and occasional outbursts of conflicted avoidants often evoke belittlement from others, and these rebuffs only serve to reinforce self-protective withdrawal. Disposed to anticipate disappointment, they may unknowingly frustrate their own needs through obstructive or negative behaviors. They often report feeling misunderstood, unappreciated, and demeaned by others.

Unable to achieve the support or respect they desire from others, conflicted avoidants remain embittered and conflicted. Fully expecting to be slighted or demeaned, they have learned to be watchful and on guard against the ridicule and contempt they anticipate from others. Looking inward offers them little solace because they see few of the attributes admired in others within themselves. During periods when stresses are minimal, they may deny past resentments and portray an image of general well-being and contentment. These efforts, however, give way readily under pressure.

### ***Judicial Implications***

There may be some utility in coordinating the present findings with alternative models of personality in politics. Dean Keith Simonton (1988), for example, has proposed five empirically derived leadership styles (charismatic, interpersonal, deliberative, neurotic, and creative). Given the fidelity with which they mirror the currently popular five-factor model, whose correlates with Millon's personality patterns have been empirically established (Millon, 1994, p. 82), Simonton's stylistic dimensions may have considerable heuristic value for establishing links between personality and behavior in office.

Similarly, Lloyd Etheredge (1978) personality-based model of foreign policy leadership orientation can be employed rationally and intuitively to enhance and complement the predictive utility of Millon's model with respect to judicial performance.

From Simonton's perspective, Clarence Thomas's elevated scores on the MIDC Contentious and Conscientious scales suggest a *deliberative* style, which conceptually corresponds to the "Big Five" Conscientiousness factor. According to Simonton (1988), the deliberative leader

commonly "understands implications of his decisions; exhibits depth of comprehension" . . . , is "able to visualize alternatives and weigh long term consequences" . . . , "keeps himself thoroughly informed; reads briefings, background reports" . . . , is "cautious, conservative in action" . . . , and only infrequently "indulges in emotional outbursts." (p. 931)

Although he does not serve in the executive or legislative branch of government, it is informative to classify Thomas in terms of Etheredge's (1978) fourfold typology of personality-based foreign policy role orientations, which locates policymakers on the dimensions of dominance–submission and introversion–extraversion. Thomas's elevated scores on the MIDC Contentious and Conscientious scales, in concert with a slight elevation on the Dominant scale

(Scale 1A), suggest that he is moderately dominant in orientation. His elevated score on the Reticent scale, combined with a modest loading on the Retiring scale (Scale 8), indicates that he is an introvert. Thus, Thomas is best classified as a *high-dominance introvert* in Etheredge's (1978) typology of personality-based foreign policy role orientations. According to Etheredge, high-dominance introverts tend

to divide the world, in their thought, between the moral values they think it ought to exhibit and the forces opposed to this vision. They tend to have a strong, almost Manichean, moral component to their views. They tend to be described as stubborn and tenacious. They seek to reshape the world in accordance with their personal vision, and their . . . policies are often characterized by the tenaciousness with which they advance one central idea. . . . [They] seem relatively preoccupied with themes of *exclusion*, the establishment of institutions or principles to keep potentially disruptive forces in check. (p. 449; italics in original)

In terms of *judicial temperament*, which the American Bar Association (2002) defines as a judge's exhibition of "compassion, decisiveness, open-mindedness, courtesy, patience, freedom from bias, and commitment to equal justice under the law," Thomas ranks modestly on compassion and patience (e.g., MIDC scale 4 = 3), low on decisiveness (e.g., MIDC scale 6 = 5), and moderately high on courtesy (e.g., MIDC scale 6 = 5). Freedom from bias and commitment to equal justice under the law cannot be inferred from his personality profile.

In conclusion, the major implication of the study is that it offers an empirically based personological framework for understanding the enigmatic Clarence Thomas, who claims to be untroubled by the harsh judgment of his critics while simultaneously casting himself as a besieged victim. In truth, he is hypersensitive to rejection and deeply resentful of his detractors, yet his strong need for acceptance and respect makes it difficult for him to confront his critics directly, which carries the risk of further alienation.

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