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**THE POLITICAL PERSONALITY  
OF 2012 REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE MITT ROMNEY**

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## *Abstract*

# **The Political Personality of 2012 Republican Presidential Candidate Mitt Romney**

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The paper presents the results of an indirect assessment of the personality of Willard Mitt Romney, Republican presidential candidate in the 2008 U.S. presidential election and Republican presidential nominee in 2012.

The study was conducted in 2007–2008 and 2012, from the conceptual perspective of personologist Theodore Millon. Information concerning Romney was collected from biographical sources and media reports and synthesized into a personality profile using 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. Romney's primary personality pattern was found to be Conscientious/dutiful, complemented by secondary Dominant/asserting, Ambitious/confident, and Accommodating/cooperative features and a minor Retiring/reserved tendency.

In the absence of other primary personality patterns that might serve to modify or offset high conscientiousness, Romney's is best described as a dutiful conformist. Leaders with this personality profile are characteristically prudent, proper, dignified, dependable, and more principled than most personality types. They are highly organized, with a strong work ethic and careful attention to detail, which accounts in part for Romney's resounding success in organizational and corporate management and financial restructuring.

Dutiful and diligent, conscientious leaders excel in crafting public policy. On the downside, conscientious leaders often lack the retail political skills required to consummate their policy objectives. In short, they are more technocratic than visionary. Furthermore, in American politics, conscientious leaders lacking in extraversion face serious challenges in attaining high-level public office, because of their difficulty in connecting emotionally with voters and the media.

The major implication of the study is that it offers an empirically based personological framework for identifying Romney's major personal limitations as a candidate and anticipating his likely leadership style as president.

## Introduction

This paper reports the results of psychodiagnostic case study of Willard Mitt Romney, Republican candidate in the 2012 U.S. presidential election campaign, conducted during the 2008 and 2012 election cycles.

Conceptually, the study is informed by Theodore Millon's (1969, 1986a, 1986b, 1990, 1991, 1994, 1996, 2003; Millon & Davis, 2000; Millon & Everly, 1985) model of personality as adapted (Immelman, 1993, 1998, 2002, 2003, 2005) 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).

That perspective provides the context for the current paper, which presents an analysis of the personality of Mitt Romney and examines the political implications of his personality profile with respect to presidential leadership and executive performance.

The methodology employed in this study involves the construction of a theoretically grounded personality profile derived from empirical analysis of biographical source materials (see Immelman, 1999, 2003, 2005).

A comprehensive review of Millon's personological model and its applicability to political personality has been provided elsewhere (e.g., Immelman, 1993, 2003, 2005). 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 Mitt Romney.

**Sources of data.** Diagnostic information pertaining to Romney was collected from a broad array of approximately 170 media reports (2008: 40; 2012: more than 130) that offered useful, diagnostically relevant psychobiographic information, referenced in the Appendix, and from one book-length biography, Michael Kranish and Scott Helman's *The Real Romney* (2012).

**Personality inventory.** The assessment instrument, the Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria (MIDC; Immelman & Steinberg, 1999; Immelman, 2012), 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, 2008).<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 upon request from the 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, 2003, 2005, 2008 for a more detailed 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 Mitt Romney, diagnostic classification of the subject, and the clinical interpretation of significant MIDC scale elevations derived from the diagnostic procedure.

Romney received 35 endorsements on the 170-item MIDC. Judging from endorsement-rate deviations from the mean (see Table 3), data on Romney's expressive behavior (11 endorsements) were most easily obtained and may be overrepresented in the data set, whereas data on his mood/temperament (5 endorsements) were most difficult to obtain and may be underrepresented in the data set.

Descriptive statistics for Romney's MIDC ratings are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
*MIDC Item Endorsement Rate by Attribute Domain for Mitt Romney*

Expressive behavior	11
Interpersonal conduct	7
Cognitive style	6
Mood/temperament	5
Self-image	6
Sum	35
Mean	7.0
Standard deviation	2.1



Romney'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 Mitt Romney*

Scale	Personality pattern	Raw	RT%
1A	Dominant: Asserting–Controlling–Aggressive	8	19.0
1B	Dauntless: Adventurous–Dissenting–Aggrandizing	2	4.8
2	Ambitious: Confident–Self-serving–Exploitative	5	11.9
3	Outgoing: Congenial–Gregarious–Impulsive	2	4.8
4	Accommodating: Cooperative–Agreeable–Submissive	5	11.9
5A	Aggrieved: Unpresuming–Self-denying–Self-defeating	0	0.0
5B	Contentious: Resolute–Oppositional–Negativistic	0	0.0
6	Conscientious: Respectful–Dutiful–Compulsive	14	33.3
7	Reticent: Circumspect–Inhibited–Withdrawn	2	4.8
8	Retiring: Reserved–Aloof–Solitary	4	9.5
	Subtotal for basic personality scales	42	100.0
9	Distrusting: Suspicious–Paranoid	0	0.0
0	Erratic: Unstable–Borderline	0	0.0
	Full-scale total	42	100.0

*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 Romney's raw scores is displayed in Figure 1.<sup>2</sup> (The scale scores yielded by the 2008 and 2012 studies, derived from data independently collected by two teams of research assistants before being pooled for the current report, were remarkably similar, with a scale score correlation of  $r = 0.81$ ).

Romney's most elevated scale by far is Scale 6 (Conscientious), with a score of 14. In addition, Romney obtained secondary elevations on Scale 1A (Dominant), with a score of 8 and Scales 2 (Ambitious) and 4 (Accommodating), both with scores of 5. The only other scale elevation of note is scale 8 (Retiring), with a score of 4. The primary Scale 6 elevation is in the *prominent* (10–26) range, while the secondary elevations on Scales 1A, 2, and 4 are in the *present* (5–9) range. The Scale 8 elevation approaches the lower threshold of the *present* (5–9) range. No other scale elevation is of any psychodiagnostic significance.

<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.

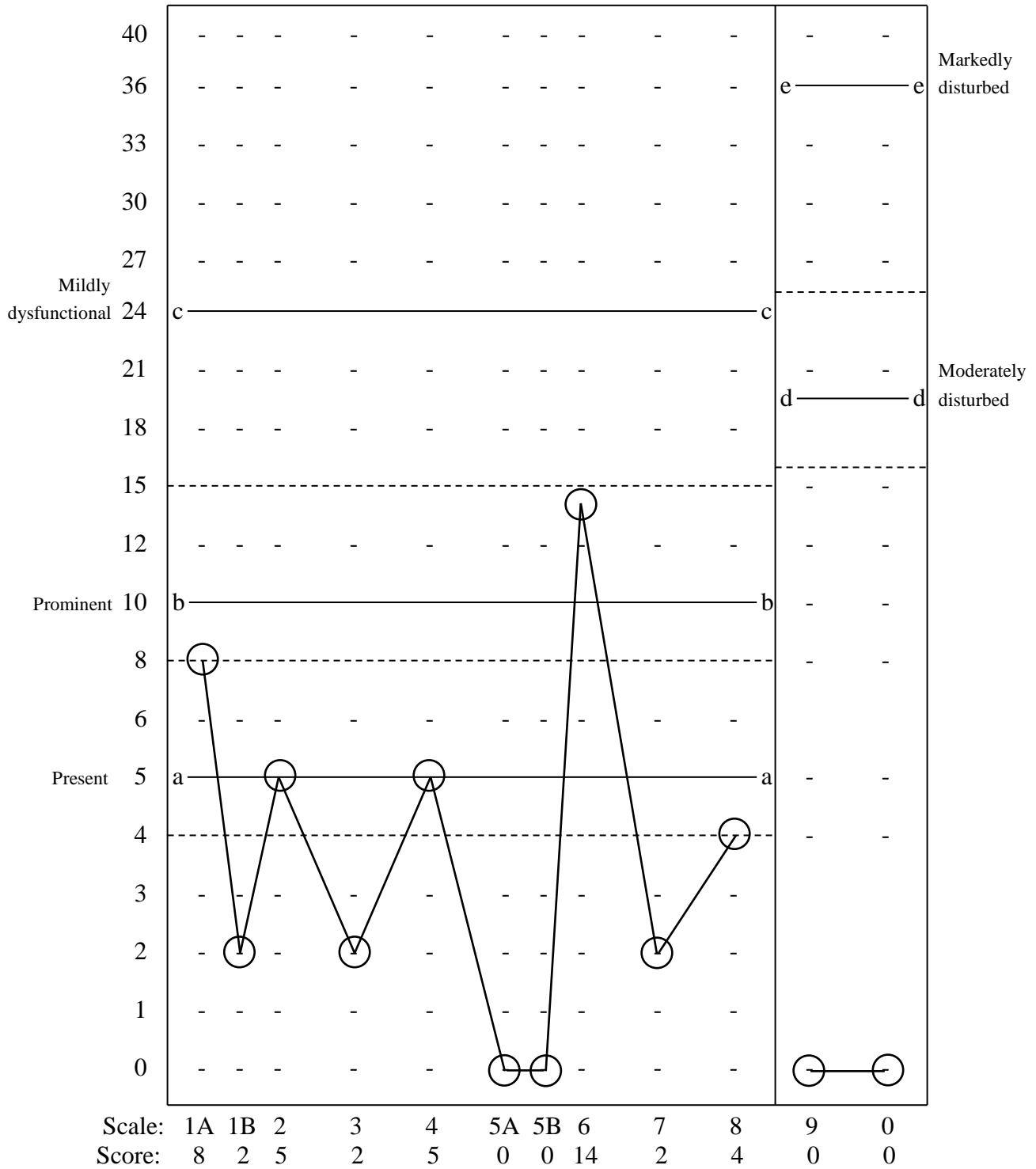
Based on the cut-off score guidelines provided in the MIDC manual, all of Romney's scale elevations (see Figure 1) are within normal limits, though the spike on Scale 6 (Conscientious) is noteworthy by virtue of its moderate elevation and singular prominence in Romney's overall personality configuration (suggesting a somewhat exaggerated, overly rigid personality pattern that may be problematic under certain conditions).

In terms of MIDC scale gradation (see Table 2 and Figure 1–3) criteria, supplemented by clinical judgment, Romney was classified as primarily a Conscientious/dutiful personality, complemented by secondary Dominant/asserting, Ambitious/confident, and Accommodating/cooperative features and a minor Retiring/reserved tendency.<sup>3</sup> The prominence of the Conscientious pattern, in conjunction with the absence of other primary personality patterns that might serve to modify or offset high conscientiousness, dictates that Romney is best described as a prototypal *dutiful conformist*.

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<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 2. Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria: Profile for Mitt Romney (2012)**



## Discussion

The discussion of the results examines Romney'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 Romney's personality profile.

With his moderately elevated Scale 6, Romney emerged from the assessment as a *dutiful* type, an adaptive, slightly exaggerated variant of the Conscientious pattern. His slight secondary elevation on Scale 1A (Dominant), in my opinion, is not of great consequence, being near the lower threshold of what would typically be expected in a presidential candidate or an individual in a high-level leadership position. Similarly, Romney's modest secondary elevations on Scale 2 (Ambitious) and Scale 4 (Accommodating) are unremarkable, reflecting, respectively, an adaptive level of self-confidence (or healthy narcissism) and cooperativeness (a conciliatory tendency). It is noteworthy that Romney obtained a very low score on extraversion (Scale 3 = 2), while evincing a slight introversive tendency (Scale 8 = 4).

### Scale 6: 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 occur in *dutiful*, dependable, and principled but rigid personalities. In its most deeply ingrained, inflexible form (not relevant with respect to Romney), the Conscientious pattern displays itself in a moralistic, self-righteous, uncompromising, cognitively constricted, *compulsive* behavior pattern that may be consistent with a clinical diagnosis of obsessive-compulsive personality disorder.

In the case of Romney, only the normal (associated with earnest, polite, respectful personalities) and intermediate (associated with dutiful, dependable, relatively principled though somewhat rigid personalities) variants have any relevance, given Romney's moderate Scale 6 elevation.

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 (signifying emotional stability), 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*. ... Conscientious traits ... [include] hard work, prudence, [and] conventionality. (p. 62)

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)

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'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 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. More exaggerated variants of the Conscientious pattern tend to be *rigid*; they are typically overcontrolled, orderly, and perfectionistic. Though highly dependable and industrious, they have an air of austerity and serious-mindedness and may be stubborn, stingy, and possessive. They are typically scrupulous in matters of morality and ethics, but may strike others as prudish, moralistic, and 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. More exaggerated variants of the Conscientious pattern are *exacting*; they are scrupulous in matters of morality and ethics and unbending in their relations with subordinates, insisting that they adhere to personally established rules and methods. In marked contrast, they treat superiors with deference, are obsequious, and may ingratiate themselves, 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. More exaggerated variants of the Conscientious pattern — minimally present in the case of Romney, if at all — are *unimaginative*; they are methodical, structured, pedestrian, uninspired, or routinized. Perfectionism may interfere with decision making and task completion, and they may have difficulty dealing with new ideas. 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. More exaggerated variants of the Conscientious pattern — not empirically established in the case of Romney — are characteristically *solemn*; they are emotionally controlled, tense, or unrelaxed. Because of their dignified, serious-minded, solemn demeanor, all variants of the Conscientious pattern 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, even stiff, “wooden,” or “heavy,” 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. More exaggerated variants of the Conscientious pattern accurately perceive themselves as highly *conscientious*, even to a fault; they view themselves as scrupulous, meticulous in fulfilling obligations, and loyal, despite often being viewed by others as high minded, overperfectionistic, and fastidious. All variants of the Conscientious pattern value aspects of themselves that exhibit virtue, moral rectitude, self-discipline, prudence, and loyalty, and are wary of error or misjudgment. 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. (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 and may engage in public displays of socially commendable actions that may be diametrically opposed to their deeper impulses. (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 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. Consequently, highly Conscientious persons often have limited insight into their deeper 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 tends to be 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 typically have a family history of exposure to demanding, perfectionistic parents, a potent force behind their tightly structured world is their fear of disapproval. By the same token, their public facade of conformity and propriety may mask an undercurrent of repressed urges toward self-assertion and defiance. (Millon, 1996, pp. 517–518)

### **Scale 1A: The Dominant Pattern**

As noted earlier, it is doubtful that the Dominant pattern (Scale 1A) plays a central role in Romney's personality functioning beyond accounting for a threshold level of assertiveness and competitiveness. That is to say, the Dominant pattern plays a secondary role in Romney's overall personality functioning. As do all personality patterns, the Dominant pattern occurs on a continuum ranging from normal to maladaptive. In the case of Romney, only the normal variant — associated with assertive, strong-willed personalities — has any bearing.

The normal, adaptive variant of the Dominant pattern corresponds to Strack's (1997) *forceful* style and the *managerial* segment of Leary's (1957) managerial–autocratic continuum. According to Millon (1994, p. 82), Controlling (i.e., Dominant) individuals tend to be emotionally stable and conscientious. In combination with the Conscientious (Scale 6) pattern (as is the case with Romney), an elevated Dominant pattern points to a presidential style that Simonton (1988) has labeled *deliberative*. Strack (1997) provides the following description of the normal (*forceful*) prototype of the Dominant 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:

Like confident [Ambitious] persons, forceful [Dominant] individuals can be identified by an inclination to turn toward the self as the primary source of gratification. However, instead of the confident [Ambitious] personality's internalized sense of self-importance, forceful [Dominant] people seem driven to prove their worthiness. They are characterized by an assertive, dominant, and tough-minded personal style. They tend to be strong-willed, ambitious, competitive, and self-determined. ... In contrast to their preferred, outwardly powerful appearance, these individuals may feel inwardly insecure and be afraid of letting down their guard. In work settings, these personalities are often driven to excel. They work hard to achieve their goals, are competitive, and do well where they can take control or work independently. In supervisory or leadership positions, these persons usually take charge and see to it that a job gets done. (Adapted from Strack, 1997, p. 490, with minor modifications)

### **Scale 2: The Ambitious Pattern**

The Ambitious pattern, as do all personality patterns, occurs on a continuum ranging from normal to maladaptive. In the case of Romney, only the normal variant — well-adjusted,



confident, and socially poised — has any bearing on his overall personality functioning and executive performance.

Normal, adaptive variants of the Ambitious pattern (i.e., confident and self-serving types) correspond to Oldham and Morris's (1995) *Self-Confident* style, Strack's (1997) *confident* style, and Millon's (1994) *Asserting* pattern. Millon's Asserting pattern is positively correlated with the five-factor model's *Extraversion* and *Conscientiousness* factors and negatively correlated with its *Neuroticism* factor (Millon, 1994, p. 82). It is associated with "social composure, or poise, self-possession, equanimity, and stability" — a constellation of adaptive traits that in stronger doses shades into its dysfunctional variant, the narcissistic personality. (Millon, 1994, p. 32)

Millon (1994) summarizes the Asserting (i.e., Ambitious) pattern as follows:

An interpersonal boldness, stemming from a belief in themselves and their talents, characterize[s] those high on the ... Asserting [Ambitious] scale. Competitive, ambitious, and self-assured, they naturally assume positions of leadership, act in a decisive and unwavering manner, and expect others to recognize their special qualities and cater to them. Beyond being self-confident, those with an ... [Ambitious] profile often are audacious, clever, and persuasive, having sufficient charm to win others over to their own causes and purposes. Problematic in this regard may be their lack of social reciprocity and their sense of entitlement — their assumption that what they wish for is their due. On the other hand, their ambitions often succeed, and they typically prove to be effective leaders. (p. 32)

Strack (1997) provides the following description of the normal (*confident*) prototype of the Ambitious 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:

Aloof, calm, and confident, these personalities tend to be egocentric and self-reliant. ... In the workplace, confident [Ambitious] persons like to take charge in an emphatic manner, often doing so in a way that instills confidence in others. Their self-assurance, wit, and charm often win them supervisory and leadership positions. (Adapted from Strack, 1997, pp. 489–490, with minor modifications)

#### ***Scale 4: The Accommodating Pattern***

As noted earlier, my clinical judgment, informed by considerations of theoretical coherence, suggests that Romney's Dominant (Scale 1A) features are offset by a secondary Accommodating tendency. The Accommodating pattern, as do all personality patterns, occurs on a continuum ranging from normal to maladaptive. In the case of Romney, only the normal variant — associated with cooperative, conciliatory personalities — has any significance.

The normal, adaptive variant of the Accommodating pattern corresponds to Strack's (1997) *cooperative* style and Millon's (1994) *Agreeing* pattern. The Accommodating pattern also overlaps with the *docile* and *cooperative* segments of Leary's (1957) *docile-dependent* and *cooperative-overconventional* interpersonal styles. Millon's Agreeing pattern is highly correlated with the five-factor model's *Agreeableness* factor. The Accommodating style is equivalent to Simonton's (1988) *interpersonal* executive leadership style.

According to Millon (1994) the Accommodating pattern (which he labels *Agreeing*)

is akin to the normal “cooperative” segment of Leary’s [1957] cooperative–overconventional interpersonal style, representing an accommodating, participatory, compromising, and agreeing pattern of behavior. . . . [The Accommodating pattern] corresponds . . . to the Big-Five’s Factor II, Agreeableness . . . in conveying a self-respecting concordance with others; a congenial obligingness is voluntary rather than being coerced or being a product of self-derogation. Those who fit the congenial/Agreeing [Accommodating] pattern are notably cooperative and amicable. Disinclined to upset others, they are willing to adapt their preferences to be compatible with those of others. Trusting others to be kind and thoughtful, they are also willing to reconcile differences and to achieve peaceable solutions, as well as to be considerate and to concede when necessary. Cordiality and compromise characterize their interpersonal relationships. (p. 34)

Millon (1996) further notes that Accommodating personalities in the adaptive range of the pattern tend to demand little from others, are relatively uncritical, and are invariably gracious, even to those they may dislike (p. 335).

Strack (1997) provides the following portrait of interpersonal style of the normal (*cooperative*) prototype of the Accommodating 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:

Cooperative [Accommodating] persons are often cooperative, reliable, considerate of others, and deferential. They may appear even-tempered, docile, obliging, or self-effacing. When faced with difficult or stressful situations, cooperative persons may seek others to provide authority, leadership, and direction. (Adapted from Strack, 1997, p. 489)

## Summary and Formulation

Predominantly conscientious (Scale 6) personalities who are not highly aggressive (Scale 1A) and, in fact, may somewhat agreeable (Scale 4), as in the case of Romney, may be characterized as *dutiful conformers*. These personalities are duty-bound, earnest, rule-bound, and hardworking. They have a greater fear of failure or error than most personality types, which makes them more risk-averse than most and which at times may give rise to self-doubt and indecisiveness.

## Leadership Implications

The present study offers an empirically based framework for anticipating Romney’s performance as chief executive. The prominence of the Conscientious pattern in Romney’s profile, in conjunction with the absence of other primary personality patterns that might serve to modify or offset his high conscientiousness, suggests a *dutiful conformist* personality prototype, forming a personological substrate (i.e., psychological driver) for his leadership style.

There is utility in coordinating the present findings with alternative models of personality in politics. Stanley Renshon (1996), for example, in developing a psychologically grounded theory of political performance, proposed “three distinct aspects” (p. 226) of political leadership shaped by character: *mobilization*, the ability to arouse, engage, and direct the public; *orchestration*, the

organizational skill and ability to craft specific policies; and *consolidation*, implementing one's policy proposals (pp. 227, 411).

Romney's most serious personality-based limitation as a presidential candidate is the ability to arouse, engage, and direct the public (i.e., mobilization), which is more commonly the province of highly outgoing, less conscientious leaders like Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

As a chief executive, Romney's greatest strength, by dint of his high conscientiousness, is orchestration. Consequently, Romney can be expected to display superlative organizational skill in conjunction with the sustained focus and attention to detail necessary to excel in the minutiae of political campaigning (e.g., fundraising, assembling an effective "ground game") and in presidential performance with respect to crafting specific policies.

Regarding the third element of personality-driven political leadership, consolidation, the picture is more opaque. Although the ability to implement one's policy proposals is partially dependent on the same qualities that favor orchestration — Romney's strong suit — Romney may be severely hampered by his lack of outgoing personality traits, with attendant deficits in the requisite retail political skills necessary for consummating his policy objectives.

Dean Keith Simonton (1988) proposed five empirically derived presidential 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 have heuristic value for establishing links between personality and political leadership.

From Simonton's perspective, Romney's slightly elevated Scale 6 (Conscientious) score suggests a *deliberative* leadership 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)

In terms of the hypothesized links between Millon's personality patterns and concomitant leadership styles (Steinberg, 2008; Steinberg & Immelman, 2008), the following generalized expectancies regarding Romney's likely leadership style as a highly conscientious, "dutifully conformist" chief executive can be inferred from his personality profile:

**Motivation for leading.** Leaders with a personality profile dominated by conscientiousness are less likely to be motivated by ideology or personal validation, and more likely to display a tendency to centralize *power* in the executive branch, generally guided by *pragmatism*. Tending to be substantially controlling, rigid, and perfectionistic, they are likely to try to concentrate power in themselves as a way of preventing matters, to their way of thinking, from spinning out of control. Because conscientious types are relatively lacking in imagination, with a structured, pedestrian form of cognition, they eschew new or untested ideas, which makes them wary of ideologically driven proposals and more comfortable with a pragmatic approach to politics.

**Task orientation.** Conscientious leaders are inclined to be interested both in accomplishing their *goals* — demonstrating their strong work ethic — and in the *process* itself. As a consequence, they are notably respectful of tradition and authority and may be unbending in their adherence to social proprieties.

**Investment in job performance.** Because of their work ethic, attention to detail, and managerial competence, the leadership style of conscientious leaders pivots around the need for productivity in the form of policy implementation and their insistence on maintaining propriety in relationships among members of the government and the civil service.

**Staff management strategy.** Predominantly conscientious leaders are more likely to act as *advocates* within their administration and less likely to be consensus builders or arbitrators. Having displayed due deference to their superiors when they served in lower-level political office, they now expect to be treated in the same way by their associates and are inclined to be unbending in their relations with them. Because conscientious leaders tend to lack imagination and to be somewhat rigid, policy choices will often take on a black-or-white quality — a situation in which the building of consensus plays a secondary role to the implementation of the morally “correct” or the most efficient policy.

**Information management strategy — degree of involvement and source of information.** Given the conscientious personality’s penchant for overcontrol, orderliness, and perfectionism, these leaders are likely to exhibit a *high degree of involvement* in managing information, as a way of protecting themselves from possible error. At the same time, however, their respect for order and hierarchy is likely to be reflected in a preference for obtaining that information in-house (from administration officials and the civil service) rather than from independent sources outside of government.

**Personnel relations — degree and type of involvement.** In terms of relations with personnel, conscientious leaders can be relied on to be *highly interactive* with aides, assistants, and staff, lest something important escapes their notice. And, their treatment of their subordinates is likely to be mixed. At the lower end of the prominent range (as in the case of Romney), conscientious leaders are likely to treat subordinates in a polite and courteous fashion; at the higher end of that range (not the case with Romney), their perfectionistic tendencies are more evident, leading to uncompromising and *demanding* or *domineering* behavior. Unlike narcissistic or highly extraverted leaders, they are unlikely to engage in attention-seeking or seductive behavior with their aides, since they are motivated by duty, not vanity.

**Party-political relations.** In their dealings with members of their own party in the legislative branch of government, their national party organization, and opposition parties, conscientious leaders can be expected to behave in a dutiful fashion. Thus, they are likely to treat those whom they consider subordinate in either a *cooperative/harmonious* or a *competitive/oppositional* fashion depending on the intensity of their conscientious tendency. Given Romney’s moderate scale elevation on conscientiousness, he is more likely to behave in a cooperative/harmonious manner.

**Media relations.** In their relations with the media, conscientious leaders are likely to behave in a reasonably *open*, relatively cooperative, yet polite, formal manner.

**Public relations.** In relating to the public, the behavior of conscientious leaders can be expected to be somewhat mixed. They are likely to be more *active* than passive in view of their strong sense of duty and responsibility; however, given their somewhat rigid, perfectionist personalities, they are unlikely to enjoy this aspect of governing and may be prepared to allow their senior officials some role in articulating and defending their administration's policies.

**In summary**, the present assessment of Mitt Romney's personal psychology points to the general tenor of a Romney presidency along the following lines:

- Generally guided by pragmatism, not ideology or personal validation
- Tendency to centralize power in the executive branch
- Strong task orientation, with an emphasis on managerial competence and job productivity
- Consensus building secondary to implementing the most efficient or morally "correct" policy
- High involvement in information management
- Highly interactive, cooperative/harmonious staff relations
- Generally open, relatively cooperative, yet formal and polite media relations
- Low affinity for public relations, tending to delegate articulation and defense of administration policies to senior officials

## Conclusion

I conclude this paper with a newspaper opinion column, published during the 2008 presidential primaries, in which I collaborated with a student to summarize Romney's major personality strengths and limitations and attempted to anticipate the likely tenor of a Romney presidency, based on the personality profile reported in the present study.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Note.* A slightly edited version of this article was published under the title "Romney is conscientious and assertive" in the *St. Cloud Times* (p. 5B), Jan. 15, 2008.

## Dutiful Romney Continues to Struggle for Votes

By Mick Lundstrum and Aubrey Immelman  
January 11, 2008

Mitt Romney, the presidential candidate better known for his Mormon faith than for his policy positions, has been dogged by obstacles and setbacks on the campaign trail. In Iowa, where he had dumped nearly three-fifths of his campaign expenditure, he was blindsided by the come-from-nowhere Huckabee juggernaut. In New Hampshire, he was bested by a resuscitated back-from-the-dead McCain campaign.

By all appearances, Gov. Romney is an attractive candidate. He looks “presidential,” is well financed, and has a strong track record in business and government. Yet, despite an MBA and law degree from Harvard, a successful business career as management consultant and venture capitalist, president and CEO of the 2002 Salt Lake Winter Olympics Organizing Committee, governor of Massachusetts, and chair of the Republican Governors’ Association, Romney has found little traction with Republican voters.

So, how do we account for Romney’s floundering campaign for Republican support?

Some have pointed to Romney’s Mormon beliefs, viewed with suspicion by elements of the Christian Evangelical Republican base. Others have pointed to his “flip-flop” on abortion. Another consideration, which has not received much air time in the media or in print, is Romney’s personality — those aspects of his typical modes of thinking, acting, and relating to others that remain relatively consistent over time and across situations.

For insight into this aspect Romney’s character, we generated a personality profile using a standard assessment procedure developed at the Unit for the Study of Personality in Politics at the College of St. Benedict and St. John’s University in Minnesota. This is what we found.

### Conscientious

Perhaps not surprising for someone with Romney’s academic and professional credentials, he emerged from the assessment as a highly conscientiousness personality. What *is* remarkable, however, is that few candidates for president can claim conscientiousness as a prominent trait — in the past several elections cycles, an exclusive club of losing candidates consisting of Michael Dukakis, Bob Dole, Steve Forbes, Bill Bradley, and Al Gore.

People with Romney’s levels of conscientiousness are best described as “dutiful.” They are characteristically proper and dignified, dependable, and principled (though the latter trait is somewhat at variance with perceptions of Romney as a flip-flopper).

Above all, they are highly organized, which accounts for Romney’s roaring success in organizational and corporate management and financial restructuring. Dutiful and diligent, and adept at getting the job done without letting work accumulate, conscientious leaders are movers and shakers who are at the top of their game when making and implementing policy.

On the downside, conscientious persons can be rigid thinkers with a closed-minded tendency; as leaders, they are technocratic rather than visionary. For that reason, in high political office they may be better suited to the role of assistant to the chief executive — perhaps as vice president, cabinet secretary, or chief of staff.

With their attention to detail, their work ethic, and their prudence, conscientious persons are potentially good leaders; however, in the United States they usually have trouble attaining high-level political office, because of the difficulty they have connecting with voters and the media.

### **Dominant**

Like many politicians who strive for higher office, Romney also has a pronounced dominant tendency — though not nearly as pervasive as the aggressive dominance of a Rudy Giuliani or the self-asserting boldness of a John McCain. Instead, it would be more accurate to describe Romney as merely assertive, strong-willed, and goal-directed.

Some aspects of Romney's dominance reinforce his fundamental conscientious tendency — most notably his strong work ethic, proneness to cognitive inflexibility, and obstinacy, which suggests he may stay in the race longer than he remains a viable candidate. That said, leaders like Romney, with moderate levels of conscientiousness and dominance, generally are effective, deliberative leaders who make informed decisions and manage to get things done.

In terms of his experience and psychological profile, Romney may be one of the better candidates for president, but as recent presidential election history has shown, he does not fit the profile of a successful presidential candidate.

Next Tuesday's Republican primary in Michigan — where native son Mitt Romney has the rare advantage of contesting an early-primary state where his father once served as governor — will be the acid test for whether that particular chapter in U.S. election history repeats itself.

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## APPENDIX

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