Two Reagans? Genre Imperatives, Ghostwriters, and Presidential Personality Profiling

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Attempts to gauge presidential personality on the basis of speeches and other public statements are subject to several potential validity threats. This paper presents a test of the genre imperative of the tendency to make the president sound "presidential," in combination with the fact that most presidential addresses are drafted by ghostwriters. The test involves comparing the "activity" and "positivity" levels of 235 syndicated radio commentaries that Ronald Reagan wrote and delivered during the years immediately before he became president and 299 weekly radio addresses that he delivered while he was president. The two Reagans were by no means fundamentally different, but the differences between them nonetheless sound a note of caution about basing personality assessments on presidents' public statements.

KEY WORDS: Ronald Reagan, activity, positivity, personality assessment, content analysis

Over the years, numerous assessments of the personalities of presidents of the United States have been based on content analyses of their speeches. Among the dimensions of presidential personality gauged in this way have been achievement motivation (Winter, 1987), future orientation (Evered, 1983), integrative complexity (Suedfeld & Wallace, 1995), pessimism (Zullow, Oettingen, Peterson, & Seligman, 1988), and pragmatism (Hantz, 1996).

Such personality profiling warrants skepticism. For one thing, speeches, like all other forms of human communication, are susceptible to biases associated with self-presentation (Goffman, 1959) and impression management (Leary, 1995). Consistent with this idea, substantial differences have been uncovered in the "onstage" and "backstage" personas that two presidents (Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon) projected (Sigelman, 2000) and in the complexity of the ideas that 20th-century presidents expressed before and after assuming office (Tetlock, 1981). Tetlock established that after assuming office, modern presidents have

spoken in ways indicative of greater flexibility and evenhandedness than had characterized their campaign rhetoric. Moreover, the substance and tone of a speech may be shaped by the character of the audience. For example, Lyndon Johnson sounded most "hawkish" about U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia when he was speaking to "hawkish" audiences (Miller & Sigelman, 1978).

The interrelated rhetorical biases associated with the drives to present oneself favorably and to cater to the prejudices of one's audience are fairly well understood, but less well understood are two other ways in which presidents' words might lead personality profilers astray. The latter two biases serve jointly as the foci of the present study. One of them stems from the "genre imperatives" (Griswold, 1981) that a president confronts whenever he appears in public. The "institution of the presidency limits and controls what an individual president can do . . . in terms of . . . symbolic acts and utterances" (Erickson, 1985, p. 4). Above all else, the president is expected to look, act, and sound "presidential" (Kinder, Peters, Abelson, & Fiske, 1980)—to seem to be in control of events even when they are spinning out of control, to appear calm and resolute even when he is agitated and unsure of himself, to project energy and optimism even when he is worn out and depressed.

Also limiting the ability to extract reliable information about a president's personality from his public statements is the simple fact that the president's words are generally not his own. This is so even if the president seems to be speaking spontaneously rather than from a script, and especially if he is delivering a major speech (the inaugural address, the State of the Union message, a declaration of war, and the like). Because so much of what a president says publicly passes through the filter of being drafted by others and vetted by still others (Gelderman, 1997), it is legitimate to wonder whether presidential statements are better guides to the psyches of presidents or to the projections of their underlings. Thus, a recent study of public statements by presidents Carter and Clinton uncovered what the authors interpreted as evidence that whether a statement was ghostwritten significantly affected the conceptual complexity of the president's remarks (Dille & Young, 2000).[1]

In short, presidential rhetoric is subject to influences that may have little or nothing to do with a president's personality. This paper presents an assessment of the effects of the drive to make presidents sound presidential and of the fact that except on odd occasions, presidents speak the words of others. A host of relevant factors are held constant by analyzing two long-running series of brief, policy-oriented addresses to a nationwide radio audience. At the same time, the focal

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[1] This conclusion was based on a comparison between ghostwritten speeches on the one hand, and the presidents' remarks at press conferences and other question-and-answer sessions on the other. Unfortunately, the effect that Dille and Young attribute to ghostwriters could instead stem from the difference between impromptu comments and scripted remarks, without regard to whether the script was prepared by ghostwriters or by the president himself. This is not an idle possibility, for both Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, among modern presidents, are known to have drafted some of their own major addresses.

factors vary. Although separable analytically, these two factors are almost invariably linked in practice, as is the case here. The broadcasts analyzed here were delivered either before or after the president assumed office; the latter were ghostwritten, but the former were not. Underlying the analysis is the assumption that the professionals in charge of crafting a president's public persona, including speechwriters and the president himself, are keenly aware of the importance of projecting an appropriate image. If this is so, then the persona that the president projects after assuming office should differ from the persona he had projected earlier—the change being in the direction of greater consistency with what the American public wants from a president.

Data and Methods

In January 1975, Ronald Reagan, now a private citizen after completing his second term as governor of California, launched a syndicated series of daily 5-minute radio commentaries. By mid-year, Reagan's "Viewpoint" commentaries were being aired on nearly 300 stations throughout the country. Except for a hiatus of several months during Reagan's unsuccessful pursuit of the Republican presidential nomination in 1976, they continued until late 1979, when he announced his candidacy for the 1980 nomination (Skinner, Anderson, & Anderson, 2001, pp. xiv–xv). An admirer of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and an experienced broadcaster, Reagan took a special interest in these commentaries, most of which he wrote himself, in longhand. The scripts he wrote, which eventually numbered over a thousand, were unearthed years later and in 2001 a selection of them was published (replete with Reagan's misspellings, stylistic infelicities, emendations, and so on) as a 500-page "document dump" (Ferguson, 2001) titled *Reagan, in His Own Hand* (Skinner et al., 2001).

After being scanned and edited to correct Reagan's misspellings and to remove his cross-outs and the like, the "Viewpoint" scripts constituted 235 texts that collectively comprised more than 130,000 words (approximately 555 words per script).[2] To reiterate, Reagan himself wrote every one of these commentaries during the years just before he became president.

Complementing these "Viewpoint" commentaries are the texts of 299 of the 326 brief national radio broadcasts that Reagan delivered on Saturdays during the 8 years of his presidency. Early in Reagan's first term, White House communications director Michael Deaver arranged eight such broadcasts, which subsequently became a staple of the Reagan presidency, airing for a few minutes almost every Saturday; this practice has been carried on by each of Reagan's successors in the White House. Like the "Viewpoint" commentaries, Reagan used these talks as opportunities to speak out on a wide array of issues, concentrating more often than

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[2] Two "Viewpoint" commentaries were dropped from consideration—one that consisted almost in toto of Reagan reading from documentary materials and one that was delivered by Mrs. Reagan.

not on his favorite themes of the nation's economy and international security. Overall, the texts of the 299 talks analyzed here total more than 245,000 words, averaging approximately 821 words apiece.[3]

The drafts of the Saturday radio addresses are stored in the Reagan Presidential Library. These drafts are not available for public inspection, but the online index of the Library's textual holdings (www.reagan.utexas.edu/resource/fin-daid/speechdr.htm) identifies the authors of 299 of the 326 drafts; the authorship of the other 27 cannot be ascertained from the index. Bently Elliott (who headed the Office of Speechwriting for most of Reagan's presidency) drafted 83 of the broadcasts, followed by 12 other Reagan speechwriters: Peter Robinson (37), Josh Gilder (33), Anthony Dolan and Dana Rohrabacher (29 each), Clark Judge (26), Aram Bakshian (19), Peggy Noonan (11), Landon Parvin (9), Mark Klugman and John Podhoretz (8 each), Mari Maseng (4), and Allen Myer (3).

The question, simply stated, is whether Reagan "sounded like the same person" in his Saturday presidential radio talks as in his "Viewpoint" radio commentaries. The expectation is that because his ghostwriters were writing for President Reagan rather than for Ronald Reagan, the private citizen who had written the "Viewpoint" commentaries, there should be a visible split between the personalities that Reagan projected in the two sets of broadcasts. The genre imperatives of the office should lead a modern president to come across publicly as positive and active, consistent with the iconic status of the president as an inspirational and competent leader.

This expectation should not be overstated. When he moved into the White House, Reagan, by then 70 years old, had deeply ingrained personal traits and a well-established political persona; as one commentator put it, by the time he became president Reagan "had thought through and epitomized for himself virtually every issue of public and foreign policy—from arms control to energy policy to public education" (Lewis, 2001, p. 49; see also Glad, 1983). It would hardly be realistic to expect someone at this stage of his life and political career to undergo a truly fundamental change of "voice." Moreover, Reagan's ghostwriters were tasked with conveying his familiar style and tone, not with crafting a new persona for him. As Bently Elliott explained, "What I personally did to sound like Reagan was to spend the three weeks before I went to work for him reading all his speeches and making these sheaves of notes . . . and I just absorbed his way of expressing things" (quoted by Muir, 1992, pp. 25–26). Reagan helped out by making himself relatively easy to imitate. When he became president, he delivered a packet of his old speeches to his new writers, whom he instructed to parrot his style and substance

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[3] Transcripts of Reagan's Saturday morning broadcasts were obtained from Israel (1987) and *Public Papers of the Presidents* (1982–1990).

(Erickson, 1985, pp. 8–9). A skilled draftsman, he was also likely to edit the penultimate draft of an important address, further schooling his writers.[4]

Nor should major *policy* differences be anticipated between the "Viewpoint" commentaries and the Saturday presidential broadcasts. As already noted, Reagan's basic issue positions were firmly set before he became president.[5] Also, as has been the case with most recent presidents, speechwriters were regarded by those around Reagan as unwelcome intruders into the policy process (Noonan, 1990, pp. 74–81), and the practice of having drafts circulated to policy staffers created "a very fine review sieve that usually strained out any factual errors or deviation from policy" (Anderson, 1988, p. 256).[6] Nor were Reagan's speechwriters predisposed to pursue their own policy goals in any event; rather, they were "policy clones of Reagan on almost all issues" who "knew what he wanted written without asking" (Anderson, 1988, p. 256). As a consequence, Reagan's ghostwriters fit former White House speechwriter James Humes' (1997) description of practitioners of his craft as being "more 'image maker' than 'idea maker,' . . . more beautician than brain truster" (p. 1).

To gauge differences between Reagan's pre-presidential and presidential radio talks, I focus on two key dimensions of his rhetoric, the *activity* and *positivity*

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[4] See, e.g., Maseng Will (1993). A good sense of Reagan's approach to editing speech drafts comes through in an anecdote told by George Shultz, Reagan's Secretary of State:

I was to deliver the Reagan administration's position on an important foreign policy issue. I brought the text of my proposed speech with me to our private meeting and I asked him to look it over to be sure that I had it the way he wanted it.

He nodded, took the speech draft, read it through carefully, then looked up at me and pronounced it to be "perfectly satisfactory."

Then there was a slight pause and he said, "Of course, if I were giving that speech, it would be different."

That got my attention. I asked, what did he mean?

"Well," he said, "you've written this so it can be read. It can be reprinted in the *New York Times* or in your *State Department Bulletin* that goes around the world. That's perfectly appropriate. But I talk to people—when they are in front of me, or at the other end of a television camera or a radio microphone—and that's different.

"I'll show you what I mean."

He took the text of my speech, flipped it open at random, took out a pen and quickly began to edit the page. He made four or five edits and put a caret in the margin and wrote "story." Then he handed it back to me.

As I read what he had done, I saw that he had changed the tone of my speech completely. (Shultz, 2001, pp. ix–x)

[5] The main elements of Reagan's political creed were contained in his nationally televised campaign address on behalf of Barry Goldwater during the 1964 presidential campaign—subsequently known as "The Speech"—variants of which permeated Reagan's rhetoric ever after. For an abridged version of The Speech, see MacArthur (1992, pp. 352–354).

[6] Reagan speechwriter Peggy Noonan (1990) conjured up colorful images of how policy staffers' editing affected the speeches she drafted:

How were speeches made in the Reagan administration? Here's an image: Think of a bunch of wonderful, clean, shining, perfectly shaped and delicious vegetables. Then think of one of those old-fashioned metal meat grinders. Imagine the beautiful vegetables being forced through the grinder and being rendered into a smooth, dull, textureless purée. Here's another image: The speech is a fondue pot, and everyone has a fork. And I mean everyone. (p. 74)

embodied in his language. These are two of the most fundamental dimensions of interpersonal evaluation (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957), although they have not proven to be especially powerful predictors of presidential performance in office (Rubenzer, Faschingbauer, & Ones, 2000; Simonton, 1987). They are, however, the dimensions that Barber (1992) used to classify presidents, although his approach was altogether different from the one used here. The Dictionary of Affect in Language (DAL) computer program (Whissell, Fournier, Pelland, Weir, & Makarec, 1986; for previous applications, see, e.g., Whissell, 1994, 1997) was used to score the 235 "Viewpoint" commentaries and the 299 Saturday broadcasts on the activity and positivity dimensions. The DAL program begins with ratings, on scales ranging from "passive" through "active" and from "unpleasant" through "pleasant," of approximately 90% of the English language words in regular use. For a given text (here, one of the 534 broadcasts), the DAL program calculates the percentages of unusually active and unusually passive words (defined as those with ratings in the top or bottom decile on the activity dimension) and the percentages of unusually pleasant and unusually unpleasant words (defined the same way, but for the positivity dimension). For each broadcast, Reagan's score on a dimension is expressed as the arithmetic difference between the elements of each pair (the percent active minus the percent passive and the percent pleasant minus the percent unpleasant).

In sum, activity and positivity scores were calculated for each of 534 brief, conversational addresses that Reagan delivered to a nationwide radio audience. This means that most relevant aspects of the broadcasts (speaker, audience, medium, length, and tone) are fixed, whereas the key factors—whether the talk was given before or during Reagan's presidency, and who drafted it—vary. Not fixed, and therefore necessary to take into account in the analyses reported below, are the subject matter and exact timing of a given broadcast. To account for the possibility that Reagan may have sounded different depending on what he was talking about, I categorized each broadcast as focused on a domestic issue, an international issue, a combination of domestic and international issues, or a holiday or other special event (e.g., Veterans Day or the end of the baseball strike).[7] Because a simple comparison of broadcasts from before and during Reagan's presidency could mask a steady, long-term evolution in his projected personality rather than a sharp break at the time of his assumption of office, a daily time counter was also included in the analysis, set at 0 for Reagan's first "Viewpoint" commentary in 1975 and running through 5120 for his last presidential Saturday broadcast in 1989.

The basic model tested here contains one or the other of a pair of dependent variables (the activity or positivity score for each address), a set of three dummy variables that identify the subject matter of an address, and a pair of time-based variables that jointly constitute an interrupted time-series design (a

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[7] This categorization was straightforward, especially because Reagan typically began his Saturday broadcasts by saying, "Today I want to talk to you about . . ."

dummy variable indicating whether an address was from Reagan's pre-presidential or presidential years, and the daily time counter).[8] To clarify the role of ghostwriters, I also tested a more elaborate version of this model that, in essence, decomposes the pre-presidential versus presidential dummy variable into a set of 13 dummy variables, each of which identifies the author of a particular address (one dummy variable coded 1 for Bently Elliott and 0 for all others, including Reagan; another coded 1 for Peter Robinson and 0 for all others, including Reagan; and so on for all the other writers except for Reagan, who thus plays the role of excluded or reference category in interpreting the results).

Results

The activity and positivity scores of the 235 pre-presidential "Viewpoint" radio commentaries and the 299 Saturday presidential broadcasts are arrayed in Figure 1, and the means, standard deviations, and interitem correlations are given in Table 1. It takes only a brief glance at the figure to see that, as a group, the "Viewpoint" commentaries (represented by darkened squares) cluster below and to the left of the Saturday presidential broadcasts (represented by asterisks). The clustering of pre-presidential broadcasts on the left and presidential broadcasts on the right means that Reagan generally came across as more passive in the former than in the latter. As Table 1 indicates, the mean activity scale score for the "Viewpoint" commentaries was –17.5, significantly lower than the mean activity scale score for the Saturday broadcasts of –14.5 ($F = 150.4$, $p < .001$, $\eta = .47$).

Unlike the activity scale scores, every one of which was negative, Reagan's scores on the positivity scale ranged from slightly negative (–5 or so) to decidedly positive (+10 or so). The scores for the "Viewpoint" commentaries were packed in around 0 (mean = 0.4, SD = 2.0), indicating an almost equal balance of negativity and positivity. On average, the scores for the Saturday presidential broadcasts were higher (mean = 2.2, SD = 2.3), another statistically significant difference ($F = 95.3$, $p < .001$, $\eta = .39$).

What should be made of the facts that passivity invariably outran activity in Reagan's broadcasts (often by a wide margin) and that positivity was only slightly more common than negativity? The activity and positivity means for Whissell's large corpus of common English-language textual materials (popular novels, news reports, introductory textbooks, and so on) are –15.3 and 2.2, respectively. Insofar as cultural norms can be gauged from Whissell's text corpus, then, the degree of activity that Reagan projected in an average broadcast (–15.8) was close to the

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[8] Also tested were slightly more elaborate interrupted time-series models that include an interaction term between the daily time counter and the pre-presidential versus presidential dummy variable. The point of those models is to determine whether the slope of any time-based trend differed from Reagan's pre-presidential to presidential years. Those results are not reported here because the observed differences were far too slight to warrant attention, and their inclusion in the model complicates the interpretation and presentation of the remaining results.
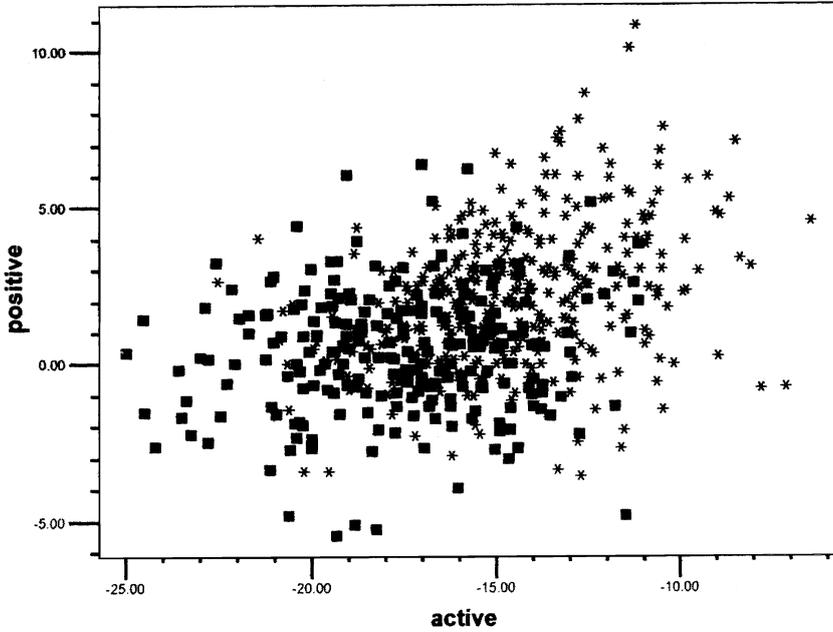
Figure 1. Activity and positivity scores of Reagan's radio broadcasts. Darkened squares denote daily "Viewpoint" commentaries; asterisks denote weekly presidential addresses.

cultural norm (–15.3), and the same can be said about Reagan's mean (1.4) and the text corpus mean (2.2) on the positivity dimension. Given these similarities, it seems fair to say that when Reagan spoke to the nation on the radio, he sounded like the kind of person with whom listeners were likely to be well acquainted, not like some odd character whose personality was fundamentally different from what they were accustomed to.

The regression results summarized in Table 2 isolate the pre-presidential versus presidential differences in Reagan's projected activity and positivity, with other pertinent factors held constant. Some of these other factors significantly shaped Reagan's rhetoric. For example, Reagan's activist approach to American foreign policy and his more laissez-faire approach to domestic policy were re-

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for Activity and Positivity

| | Activity | | Positivity | | |
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Correlation
Pre-presidency	−17.5	2.9	0.4	2.0	.10
Presidency	−14.5	2.7	2.2	2.3	.30

Note. N = 235 for pre-presidency broadcasts, 299 for presidency broadcasts.

Table 2. The Impacts of Topic, Time, and Ghostwriter on Reagan's Radio Rhetoric

| | Activity | | | | Positivity | | | |
| | (1) | | (2) | | (3) | | (4) | |
	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE
Constant	−16.77***	.29	−16.97***	.36	1.03***	.22	0.79**	.28
Topic								
International	0.66**	.25	0.67**	.25	−0.19	.19	−0.18	.20
Combination	−0.57	.53	−0.28	.52	0.61	.40	0.69	.40
Event	0.67	.61	0.87	.61	2.86***	.46	3.00***	.48
Day counter	−0.001***	.00	−0.001**	.00	−0.0005***	.00	0.0003	.00
Pre-presidential vs.								
presidential address	6.01***	.63			2.98***	.48		
Ghostwriter								
Aram Bakshian			4.24***	0.84			2.27***	0.66
Anthony Dolan			4.60***	1.10			1.35	0.86
Josh Gilder			4.80***	1.07			1.92*	0.83
Clark Judge			4.18***	2.23			2.12*	0.95
Mark Klugman			7.32***	1.50			2.20	1.17
Mari Maseng			7.72***	1.46			4.63***	1.13
Allen Myer			4.58**	1.70			2.37	1.32
Peggy Noonan			5.80***	1.16			1.51	0.90
Landon Parvin			3.75***	1.06			1.76*	0.83
John Podhoretz			6.47***	1.54			2.93*	1.19
Peter Robinson			4.83***	1.09			2.09*	0.85
Dana Rohrabacher			5.71***	1.09			2.40**	0.85
Bently Elliott			6.55***	0.79			2.93***	0.62
Multiple R	.52		.57		.48		.51	
Adjusted R^2	.26		.30		.22		.23	
SEE	2.73		2.65		2.08		2.06	

Note. N = 534. b is the ordinary least squares regression coefficient; SE is the standard error of the coefficient. The omitted or reference topic is domestic.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

flected in his radio rhetoric, for he scored significantly higher on the activity scale when he was addressing international issues than when he was talking about domestic policy. On the positivity dimension, his rhetoric rose to the occasion when he was commemorating special occasions, soaring almost 3 points higher than in his talks on domestic issues.

    More important in the present context, the significant negative coefficients for the daily time counter in columns 1 and 3 of Table 2 indicate that, with other factors held constant, Reagan's image was one of steadily decreasing activity and positivity over time. If these decreases had gone unchecked, they would have produced drops of more than 5 points on the activity dimension and 2½ points on the positivity dimension from Reagan's first "Viewpoint" commentary in 1975 though his final presidential broadcast in 1989. But these decreases did not go unchecked. Offsetting them were very substantial *increases* in the activity and positivity of

Reagan's rhetoric upon his assumption of the presidency. As shown in the estimates for the pre-presidential versus presidential dummy variable in columns 1 and 3, these increases added up to 6 points in activity and 3 points in positivity. Thus, the interrupted time-series regression results convey a rather different picture of the impact of speaking as president than the simple pre-presidential versus presidential results shown in Figure 1. The clear implication is that becoming president shaped Reagan's rhetoric to a greater extent than would be apparent from a simple comparison of the two sets of broadcasts.

Columns 2 and 4 of Table 2 show the results for the more elaborate versions of the regression models, in which the drafters of the 299 presidential broadcasts are identified. These results indicate that no matter who drafted Reagan's presidential broadcasts, he came across as more active and more positive than he had in his "Viewpoint" commentaries. The coefficients for the ghostwriters indicate, all other things being equal, activity differences ranging from 3.8 to 7.7 percentage points and positivity differences ranging from 1.4 to 4.6 percentage points between Reagan's pre-presidential and presidential broadcasts. Other factors being equal, Reagan sounded most active and most positive in the broadcasts that Mari Maseng drafted, although it should be borne in mind that Maseng drafted only four broadcasts. More generally, the activity and positivity that Reagan expressed in his Saturday radio addresses clearly did vary from ghostwriter to ghostwriter.

Overall, two patterns stand out in these results. First, because there is every reason to believe that the 13 ghostwriters, overseen by Reagan himself, were trying to make his speeches sound like the real thing, it is especially striking that every one of Reagan's ghostwriters made him sound more active and more positive as president than he had sounded before becoming president. This pattern is consistent with Barber's (1992, pp. 95ff., 224) contention that Reagan worked hard at presenting an "active-positive" face to the public: "He came on as if he were a Mr. Active—looking and sounding like a leader bursting with energy, a fellow who seemed so confident and intense and determined to lead the nation in the right direction that it seemed foolish to suppose he was passive." This pattern suggests a conscious intent to accentuate the active and positive in Reagan's presidential persona. Second, some writers made Reagan sound more active and positive, others less so. Although many of these differences are relatively minor, it is nonetheless true that knowing who had drafted one of Reagan's presidential broadcasts would provide a useful clue about the extent to which Reagan came off as active and positive in that broadcast. This does not mean that Reagan spoke in entirely different voices depending on who was drafting his remarks, for he did not. But his tone of voice did vary considerably. Of course, not all personality assessments of presidents are based on analyses of words spoken in public settings. However, both producers and consumers of analyses that are based on presidential rhetoric would do well to bear these findings in mind.

Conclusions

It would be an exaggeration to claim that two wholly disparate Reagans—the first passive and negative, the second active and positive—came through in the two sets of broadcasts. Rather, the Ronald Reagan of the "Viewpoint" commentaries and the President Reagan of the Saturday presidential broadcasts were variations on a theme. What is especially intriguing about these variations is that the self-scripted Citizen Reagan sounded significantly less active and positive than the ghostwritten President Reagan. Accordingly, the personality that came through on Saturdays during Reagan's time in the White House bore a significantly closer resemblance to the active-positive presidential ideal than did the personality Reagan had projected in his daily commentaries before he became president.

It obviously would be inappropriate to treat the Reagan of the syndicated daily commentaries as the "real" Reagan and the Reagan of the weekly presidential broadcasts as some sort of ventriloquist's dummy. As noted earlier, accounts of speechwriting during the Reagan administration make it clear that the president did not hesitate to edit drafts and that his writers had neither the desire nor the capacity to get him to say anything he was not disposed to say.[9] Moreover, the "Viewpoint" commentaries, as public addresses, were subject to self-presentation biases—indeed, to the self-presentation biases of an individual gearing up for a presidential campaign. Nonetheless, the data considered here indicate that Reagan came across as less active in the commentaries that he himself drafted when he was speaking as a private citizen than in his ghostwritten Saturday presidential broadcasts. He also came across as less positive before he became president, perhaps because once in office he often found himself playing the role of policy advocate rather than critic, and perhaps because of a generic imperative to emphasize the positive and downplay the negative.

Methodologically, the findings reported here suggest the need for caution in gauging presidents' personalities from their spoken words. By no means would one reach fundamentally different conclusions about Ronald Reagan's personality if one's assessment were based on the daily radio commentaries that he drafted in the years before he became president rather than on his ghostwritten weekly presidential radio broadcasts. There were, however, significant tonal differences between the two sets of addresses. The broader message is to reinforce the idea that any attempt to infer underlying personality predispositions from the public utterances of a president has a capacity to mislead. Research cited earlier suggests that this capacity stems in part from the tendency of presidents to present themselves differently in their public addresses than in their private conversations, and in part from their tendency to present themselves differently when speaking publicly to audiences of various types. To those sources of caution can now be added evidence

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[9] For useful accounts of speechwriting in the Reagan White House, see Gelderman (1997), Maseng Will (1993), Muir (1992), and Noonan (1990).

of the combined effects of the generic imperatives of speaking as president (versus as a private citizen) and of speaking from scripts prepared by others (as opposed to by oneself).

Notwithstanding the need for caution that personality assessment via content analysis of presidential rhetoric engenders, much can be learned about presidents through analysis of the words they utter in public—if not about their core personality, then certainly about the self-images they project. When the president speaks, "the words and messages affect us as if they were purely his," no matter what their source may have been (Erickson, 1985, p. 8). Much remains to be learned about these effects, a pursuit in which the psychological analysis of presidential rhetoric promises to play a key role.

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