

Bill Clinton, In Light of Adlerian Psychology

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## Abstract

It can be argued that of all of America's presidents, Bill Clinton was the most psychologically complex. He knew the least about his paternal family of origin background. He began life in humble circumstances and against huge obstacles, he attended Yale, became a Rhode Scholar, Governor of Arkansas and President of the United States. People either adore Bill Clinton or they hate him, there seems to be little emotion in between. This study views Clinton using the psychology of Alfred Adler. Various aspects of Clinton's political life are discussed and analyzed. Adlerian psychology views the individual as a whole person who can only be understood by examining all the aspects of her/his life. Bill Clinton is examined by viewing him in the context of his early social environments, the influential people in his life and his movement and choices in life.

## Introduction

The aim of this study is to describe, analyze, and discuss the private and public lives of President Bill Clinton and his presidency in the light of the psychology of Alfred Adler. This study views Clinton using Adlerian concepts and terms to explain Clinton's unique approach to life. Various aspects of Clinton's political life are discussed and analyzed and the study does take notice of political processes and outcomes. This is not to take a political stance on Bill Clinton; rather the aim is to view the movement of his life and his presidency in regard to equality, balance of power, social interest and his ability to lead with respect and dignity to others. In order to describe and analyze Clinton objectively through the lens of Adlerian psychology, the whole person must be reviewed.

Applying Adlerian insights to the presidency of Bill Clinton is a fairly easy task since he was a president that was always in the public eye. He gave frequent interviews through out his presidency and more news conferences than any other modern president. However, it is more difficult to analyze him from a private perspective. He can only be known by the interviews given on T V about his early life and by the book, which he wrote, titled *My Life*. There are other challenges that are greatly multiplied by an

intensely controversial nature that makes it especially difficult to obtain consistent or unbiased descriptions of his life and personality. Clinton was very popular but also had numerous critics. There have been many conflicting accounts told by his enemies of his early life as well as his adult life. As Morris, who served for two decades as Clinton's political consultant, and McCann (2004) note in their stinging analysis, Clinton was both "one of the most popular and successful presidents in modern history" and "only the second president to be impeached by the House of Representatives since the creation of the republic" (p. 1). In public life, Clinton was "revered as a cultural icon by his supporters, while at the same time loathed and reviled by his opponents" (p. 1).

Further complicating the task at hand are the numerous complexities and contradictions that the subject himself embodies. Clinton possesses powerful "charisma, intellect, and charm that captivate even the most skeptical observers," Clinton is also cursed by "moodiness, temper, self-absorption, and lack of discipline" that "make him an easy target for his critics"(pp.1-2). Levin (1998) with these characterizations, noting that although Clinton is "brilliant, well educated, and informed" and "a consummate politician; a superb communicator; and possesses a manner

of vast charm” (p.2), he also ill - advisedly engages in “risky, self-destructive behavior” that provides his opponents with “ample ammunition to use against him” and feeds his foes “exactly what they are hungry for” (pp. 144-145).

Bill Clinton is a man who loves to tell stories and seems to remember even the smallest events of his childhood. This trait assisted in applying the Adlerian tools to his life. In the first 120 pages of his autobiography *My Life*, (2004), he describes his life as a very young child growing up in Hope, Arkansas. There are early recollections that give a picture of the nature of the relationships between Clinton and the important people in his early life. The book appears to be open and candid and was well received by the millions of people who lined up across the country to purchase it. However, some who have read it have written that Clinton did not reveal enough about himself. For instance Morris & McCann, (2004) wrote that Clinton hardly makes mention even of the intense pain and humiliation that his impeachment must have caused him, concealing such feelings in a torrent of contempt and rage for those whom he portrays as responsible for his downfall (Morris & McCann, 2004).

This study is divided into eight major sections. The first section introduces key concepts from Adlerian psychology that are pertinent to the analysis of Clinton's life, and discusses Adler's wide-ranging impacts on scholarship and popular discourse. The second section examines and analyzes major events from Clinton's early, formative years-events that Adlerian analysis would indicate are critical for understanding how the former president developed his unique approach to life. The third section of the study explores Clinton's possible mistaken beliefs and their formation in his early childhood. This section also examines the many positive conclusions and personality traits that allowed Clinton to lead with empathy and respect for people from all walks of life.

The fourth section of the study examines how Clinton's painful earliest recollections and his interpretation of organ inferiority pushed him to over compensate in his life. The fifth section applies Adlerian tools of birth order analysis to examine how Clinton's position as an only child/firstborn within his family affected his unique approach to life. The sixth section explores Clinton's early relationships with the women in his life. His mother, Virginia, and his Mawmaw (maternal grandmother), influenced his later views of women and even his choice of

spouse. The seventh section in turn applies Adlerian insights to explain the role of "Family Hero" in Clinton's life and its later impact on his adult life and presidency. The eighth section attempts to understand how such a brilliant leader and popular president could give his enemies the ammunition they wanted by continuous sexual infidelities. Is it possible that the most powerful man in the world still had lingering feelings of inferiority and through sexual conquest; he sought an unquenchable quest for validation? Finally, the conclusion will sum up the accomplishments of Bill Clinton. This Section will review where he began and the personal obstacles that he overcame to be elected twice to the highest office in America.

## I. Fundamentals of Adlerian Psychology

Alfred Adler (1870-1837) was almost single-handily responsible for founding the highly influential school of individual psychology (Adler & Deutsch, 1959; Rattner, 1983). The term "individual" is understood to have a somewhat unconventional meaning in this respect, as Adler had actually adopted the Latin derivation of the term, which might be more accurately translated as "indivisible" (Sperry, 1993). As such, individual psychology is based on the notion of the human subject as a unitary, indivisible whole that is greater than the sum of her/his unified, interconnected parts (Adler, 1992; Sperry, 1992).

Adlerian psychology is fundamentally grounded in holism-in the conception of the individual as an indissoluble whole who can only be understood in its totality (Adler & Deutsch, 1959; Mosak & Maniacci, 1999). As Adler (1979) specified: " Anyone who wants to understand Individual Psychology correctly must orient himself by its classification of the unitary purposefulness of [the] thinking, feeling, willing, and acting of the unique individual " (p. 52). Moreover, the holism of individual psychology recognizes that humans are innately communal beings, who can be understood only within the context of

their broader social environments (Adler, 1992; Adler & Deutsch, 1959).

Another of Adler's most important contributions involved the insight that individuals respond to life events in ways that are not, as strict Freudians of an earlier era might have suggested, conditioned solely by genetic endowments or social environments (Mosak & Maniaci, 1999; Parrott, 1992). Boldly carving a way out of the intractable "nature vs. nurture" debate, Adler proclaimed that one's biological constitution and immediate social environment are not the result of mere statistical probability (Mosak & Maniaci, 1999). Instead, Adler insisted that individuals are largely responsible for their own behaviors and react to their social environments in creative ways: humans are not passively shaped by their life experiences but rather are actively self-determined by the meanings that they give to these experiences (Mosak & Maniaci, 1999; Parrott, 1992; Udall, 1992). To this end, Adler asserted that "no experience in itself is a cause of success or failure," and that only the meaning that individuals give to these experiences will determine their impact (Adler, 1992, p. 24).

Furthermore, Adler (1979) rejected the early Freudian notion that the human psyche was propelled to act by

“drives,” maintaining instead that all humans act in ways that reflect the goals and directions that they establish, consciously or unconsciously, for their lives. Noting that movement and direction are basic principles that drive all forms of life, Adler (1979) proclaimed that: “psychological movement without direction and goal is unthinkable and could not be carried out” (p. 52). Taken together, these central tenets of Adlerian psychology indicate that humans are creative, self-determining beings whose unique patterns of movement and direction originate in their freely (if often unconsciously,) chosen distinctive “creative life powers” (Adler, 1979, 1992; Mosak & Maniacci, 1999). Emphasizing the “creative self”-the principle that humans are actors who shape their own destinies, rather than mere reactors whose lives are shaped by heredity and environment-Adlerian psychology is premised on the notion of teleology: that all individuals strive towards a (consciously or unconsciously) established purpose or goal and direct their movements through life towards that goal and purpose (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999; Rattner, 1983). As such, all individuals could be seen as constantly striving to move from a position of inferiority (or a perceived minus situation) towards a position of

superiority (or a perceived plus situation) (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999; Rattner, 1983).

Moreover, since each individual is ultimately responsible for the choices she/he makes in responding to the challenges of life-and for how she/he deals with the consequences of these choices-individual psychology leaves no room for blame or finger pointing (Adler, 1992; & Deutsch, 1959). Adler specified that the characteristic choices and responses that one makes are in turn largely determined by one's "life style"-i.e., an individual's unique personal philosophies, beliefs, and distinctive approach to life (Adler, 1992; Hopper & Holford, 1998; Mosak & Maniacci, 1999). Thus, a person's life style may be regarded as his or her characteristic "style of dealing with life" and serves as the unifying feature of her or his personality (Adler, 1979, 1992; Hopper & Holford, 1998).

Adler argued that one's life style is shaped by how one uniquely dealt with "the three tasks of life", the three overarching experiences in human life that everyone must confront (Adler, 1992). These three inescapable tasks include: 1) pursuing an occupation or line of work that is socially useful;) 2) constructing fruitful relationships with fellow humans; and 3) satisfying one's roles in love, intimacy, marriage, and family (Adler, 1992; Hopper &

Holford, 1998). Under ideal circumstances, psychologically healthy individuals are inspired by "social interest" to approach the tasks of life with courage and common sense, and with the overarching desire to enhance one's connectedness to the rest of humanity through productive contributions to the betterment of humanity (Adler, 1979, 1992; Sperry, 1992). The holism of individual psychology therefore extends to all humanity, and ultimately, to the welfare of all beings (Hopper & Holford, 1998).

However, Adler (1992) believed that those who lacked social interest, or who allowed their selfish striving for personal superiority, were dangerous elements in society. Thus, Adler was deeply concerned that: "It is the individual who is not interested in his fellow human beings who has the greatest difficulties in life and causes greatest pain to others," adding that "It is from such individuals that all human failures spring" (p. 12). Beneath their often seemingly untroubled surfaces, many individuals who lack interest in their fellow humans are plagued by acute feelings of inferiority and insecurity that result in an over-compensatory "striving for significance" that pushes the individual towards the destructive goals of securing individual power and superiority over others (Adler, 1979, 1992). Rather than

striving holistically to advance the greater welfare of humanity, such individuals' grasp on reality by their constant, insatiable preoccupations with what others think of them and about the impressions that they make on the world (Adler, 1992; Sperry, & Ansbacher, 1993).

In consequence, the deep-set inferiority complex that takes hold of the individual is overcompensated for and shielded by a fictive superiority complex grounded, not in genuine feelings of self-respect and admiration, but in the manipulation and exploitation of the feelings of others (Adler, 1979; Sperry & Mosak, 1993; Sperry, & Ansbacher, 1993). In pathological cases, overcompensating individuals who regard themselves as superior believe that they must always be perfect and, as such, they work to "justify" all their thinking and actions, however problematic they may be, as the only means of achieving perfection (Sperry, 1993). Unless the overcompensating individual recognizes that the resolution of the underlying inferiority complex depends on the extent to which she/he can advance the broader, holistic social interest, the dire doubts associated with the inferiority feeling will continually press against them (Adler, 1979).

According to Adler, one's life style is indelibly shaped by how one responds creatively to the early life

experiences that shape all her perceptions of herself, the world around her, and the emotions, motives, and actions that she experiences in responding to life's tasks (Adler, 1979, 1992; Hopper & Holford, 1998). Adler suggested that an individual's life style begins to develop from their earliest days and their earliest groupings to gain the meaning of life (Adler, 1979). One's life style is believed to develop partly through observation of how other family members respond to different situations and life tasks, and partly from conclusions that the child draws from within his or herself (Hopper & Holford, 1998; Rattner, 1983). As such, by somewhere between the fourth and sixth years of life, one's distinctive approach to life's problems and tasks- the unique "law of movement" that "dominates all of one's functions and expressive movements and gives him direction"- are fully formed and crystallized (Adler, 1979, p. 51; Hopper & Holford, 1998; Peven 1993). From this point onward, the world would be perceived from and reacted to through an "established scheme of appreciation" that the individual is often fiercely reluctant to modify, even when the scheme results in repeated misfortunes and unhappiness (Adler, 2002, pp. 22-23). Indeed, one's life style will remain "unalterable until the end-unless the individual recognizes what is

erroneous, incorrect or abnormal and attempts to correct it" (Adler, 1979, p. 52).

Adler's theories constitute a vibrant, growing, evolving system whose fundamental principles are ever more widely incorporated into psychology, psychiatry, social psychology, sociology, anthropology, education, and other fields (Adler & Deutsch, 1959; Mosak & Maniacchi, 1999). Yet one of the most notable features of Alfred Adler's work involves the fact that, despite the founder's profound impacts on the field of psychology, and even on popular understanding of how the human psyche develops and operates, his immense contributions are rarely recognized or acknowledged, even by those who borrow heavily from Adler (Adler & Deutsch, 1959; Parrott, 1992; Udall, 1991). Udall (1992) notes that even during Adler's lifetime, many of the key principles that he had developed and honed with great diligence and originality were being widely appropriated without attribution to the original source. Paradoxically, although Alfred Adler is hardly a household name, his key insights have by now so "subtly and quietly permeated modern psychological thinking" that indeed the question that should be asked of psychologists and therapists "is not whether one is Adlerian but how much of an Adlerian one is" (Adler & Deutsch, 1959, xv).

It is unclear whether Bill Clinton is aware of Adlerian psychology. However, the man is so well read that it would not be at all surprising to learn that he is well versed in it. It is interesting that the first 50 pages of his autobiography tell about his early life experiences and he relates many of these early recollections to his later political philosophies. Other Clinton biographers have also drawn conclusions from what he experienced growing up and the later actions that he took as an adult.

## II. Clinton's Formative Experiences

As mentioned above, from an Adlerian perspective, the most important variables in the development of an individual's psyche and her/his life style are those that impact the first formative years. Adler (1979) maintained that the more well-trained an individual is during childhood in the critical principles of social interest- i.e., the more she/he is made ready for cooperation, love, and fellowship-the more socially productive will be her/his efforts to surmount the inferiority feeling. Crucial for this training in cooperation, love, and fellowship is the existence of parental models - of mother and fathers who are engaged in loving, harmonious, mutually respectful marriage endeavors (Peven, 1993).

Levin (1998) notes that many of the variables that shaped Bill Clinton emerged before he was even born. As Hamilton (2003) points out, "Few American presidents have had so little idea of their family's past as William Jefferson Clinton" (p. 3). Clinton's socioeconomic background was modest at best. His father died in a car accident before he was born. Even though Clinton never met his biological father, he describes him in rosy terms in *My Life*, as a man who, following the death of his father when he was just 16 years, "always tried to take care [of his

sisters]” and who “grew up to be a handsome, hardworking, fun-loving man” (p.4). Much later as an adult, Clinton learned that his biological father had two other families in addition to his mother at the time of his death. Since that time Clinton has met several half-siblings that he never knew existed.

Bill Blythe, Clinton’s father, spent just one year in high school. Blythe witnessed the foreclosure and sale of the family farm during the Depression, and he was essentially forced to take care of himself following his father’s death (Hamilton, 2003; Moraniss, 1995). With such a troubled background, it is hardly surprising that Blythe would develop into a highly unstable young man, engaging in itinerant work and racing desperately from one passionate, pointless tumultuous “romantic” relationship to the next (Hamilton, 2003; Moraniss, 1995).

Clinton’s mother and father were married only a few months when Blythe, his father, was sent over seas to fight in World War II. A few months after the couple were together again, Blythe died in a car accident on the way to establish a more stable home for his pregnant wife. A fatherless Bill Clinton was born just 8 months after Virginia and Blythe reunited.

Though Clinton came into the world under stressful circumstances, it is clear that his mother tried to provide him with loving, caring adults in his life. When Bill was two years old Virginia left Bill in the care of his maternal grandparents so that she could train in New Orleans as a nurse anesthetist. Clinton describes his grandparent's home in contradictory terms. For, despite having a "great laugh," Mammaw was also "full of anger and disappointment" and plagued by "obsessions she only dimly understood" (Clinton, 2004, p. 10). Although Clinton provides little insight into how these tirades might have affected him, it seems likely that he must have been deeply confused, scared, and traumatized at witnessing his loving Mammaw, with little apparent reason and no justification, suddenly and viciously attacking his "incredibly kind, generous" Papaw, violently throwing and breaking household objects (Clinton, 2004, p. 10; Levin, 1998). Clinton describes his Papaw (grandfather) as the first male influence in his life. He says that he felt pride that he and his Papaw shared the same birthday. Clinton describes his Papaw as an incredibly kind and generous man, one who would during the depression invite boys to ride the ice truck that he drove just to get them off the street. He also describes in *My Life*, that it was rare to find an

uneducated rural southerner without a racist bone in his body. "That's exactly what my grandfather was. I could see that black people looked different but because he treated them like he did everybody else, asking after their children and about their work, I thought they were just like me" (p. 11). From this description of his grandfather, it is fair to conclude that some of Clinton's positive conclusions about men are that men are fair, men are kind and generous and that men take care of those less fortunate. Clinton is also clear that his grandparents and other members of his family were influential in shaping his values and teaching him certain principles. In his book he writes, " I learned a lot from the stories my uncle, aunts, and grandparents told me: that no one is perfect but most people are good; that people can't be judged only by their worst or weakest moments; that harsh judgments can make hypocrites of us all; that a lot of life is just showing up and hanging on; that laughter is often the best, and sometimes the only response to pain" (Clinton, 2004).

Clinton describes the women in his life with less consistently favorable descriptions. He talks about his Mamaw's tirades that were directed at his mother and at his Papaw. "Mammaw's main goals for me were that I would eat a lot, learn a lot, and always be neat and clean..." (Clinton

2004) Bill Clinton's mother Virginia was not fully present in his life from age 2 till age 4. This was the period that she was studying nursing in New Orleans. He does not talk much about their relationship at this time except to describe her as a lovely young widow. Clinton mentions one incident when he was three and he went to visit his mother in New Orleans. He writes in *My Life* that, "I'll never forget what happened one of the times I got on the train to leave. As we pulled away from the station, Mother knelt by the side of the railroad tracks and cried as she waved good-bye. I can see her there still, crying on her knees, as if it were yesterday" (p. 8). The conclusions that can be drawn from these sketchy descriptions of his early relationships with women are, women provide sustenance, women have expectations, women are unpredictable and I have power over women. When Bill's mother finally returned from New Orleans, he now had two adoring females in his life, his mawmaw and his mother. Each of the women seemed to want the most influence over his development (Levin, 1998; Maraniss, 1995).`When Clinton was 4 years old he moved out of Cassidy with his Mother after she married an already twice divorced man, Roger Clinton. Roger Clinton appears to have possessed many of the qualities that Virginia found so appealing in William

Blythe: like Blythe, Roger was a dedicated ladies' man, albeit one who was perhaps more flashy, high-stepping, well-dressed than Clinton's biological father had been (Fick, 1998; Levin, 1998). In addition, Virginia's new husband was also a heavy drinker, with a history of spousal battery (Hamilton, 2003; Maraniss, 1995).

By all accounts young Bill was thrilled to have a father in his life and almost immediately began to call the man whose surname he would later adopt "Daddy" - despite the fact that Roger reportedly rarely took interest in Bill and never adopted him as a son (Levin, 1998). Roger Clinton did provide Bill and his mother with a nicer home and Roger bought Bill a Lionel train set. Unfortunately Roger Clinton also became a violent force in Bill Clinton's life. Clinton describes in his autobiography and several of his biographers describe the widely reported incident in which, during an especially heated dispute, Roger Clinton fired a gun just over Virginia's head (Clinton, 2004; Hamilton, 2003; Levin, 2004; Maraniss, 1995). Clinton (2004) reports having unwittingly witnessed the shot, which marked the first occasion in which the youngster had seen or heard a gun being fired. Shockingly, although the quarrel that led to the shooting had resulted from Roger's refusal to let Virginia visit a grandparent who was dying

in the hospital, Virginia promptly reunited with her husband following his brief stay in jail-where he had been sent after she reported the incident to the police (Clinton, 2004; Levin, 1998).

### III The Development of Possible Mistaken Beliefs

When Bill was 14 years old, his parents divorced (Fick, 1998; Maraniss, 1995). In her deposition Virginia declared that Roger had "continually tried to do bodily harm to myself and my son Billy" (quoted in Fick, 1998, p. 40). However, this divorce did not end the couple's troubled relationship. In fact, a year later Virginia remarried Roger Clinton, who promised to reform his ways (Fick, 1998). The remarriage proceeded despite the opposition of 15 - year old Bill, who correctly recognized that Roger Clinton would never stop abusing either alcohol or his wife (Fick, 1998). It is hard to imagine the confusion that must have been felt in 15-year-old Clinton's mind when his mother told him that she was going to remarry their abuser. It is safe to conclude that Clinton knew that his mother was not a person to be trusted to always have his or her own best interest at heart. However once the second ceremony was completed, Clinton took on the role of peacemaker in his family. He was so struck by the desire to please his mother and to be the peacemaker that shortly after his parents' reunion, Bill legally adopted the surname of the man who never legally adopted him.

Perhaps he was trying to overcompensate for his parent's shortcomings by overly embracing their new marriage.

In *My Life*, Clinton maintains "Roger Clinton really loved me and he loved my mother, but he couldn't ever quite break free from the shadows of self-doubt, the phony security of binge drinking and adolescent partying, and the isolation from and verbal abuse of Mother that kept him from becoming the man he might have been" (p. 19). Clinton seems to be charitable and forgiving toward his stepfather in this passage from his book. However he also seems to be trying to gloss over or keep secret how painful and upsetting living with this man must have been. He writes that his biggest concern was what the traumas of childhood domestic violence did to his brother Roger, and not to himself. He seems to deflect a lot of his pain onto his brother. Thus, Clinton (2004) expresses regret that after an especially horrific incident during which he saved his mother from possible murder at the hands of her drunken husband, he did not console his traumatized younger brother (Roger, Jr.) by letting him know how "proud" he was of him, and by explaining to him that hating his dangerously abusive father "would only spread the sickness to him" (p. 79). From an Adlerian perspective Clinton seems to have had the mistaken belief that I must be my brother's

protector, I must be my mother's savior, I must keep secrets and I must hide my pain. If I pretend things are not as bad as they are then I can ignore the pain. These mistaken beliefs led to some difficulties later in his life, however they also allow him to show compassion and empathy for people. He has been able to be empathetic and supportive of people from various walks of life in his presidency. In addition, it allowed him to connect with individuals that have been traditionally ignored by people in positions of power. His ability to do this garnered him nearly 90% of the African American vote in both of his bids to become president. Clinton's experiences with his abusive stepfather could have affected him in such a way that left him so self-protective that he developed with little social interest. However, Adler wrote that we are self-determined by the meaning we give to our experiences; meanings are not determined by situations, but we determine ourselves by the meanings we give to situations (Adler, 1958). Clinton came away from the abuse he suffered at the hands of his stepfather and also his mother's unwillingness to protect him, with a sense that he should protect those people in this world who are smaller and less fortunate.

There is a passage in *My Life*, in which Clinton suggests that the memory of the father he never knew profoundly affected his approach to life:

My father left me with the feeling that I had to live for two people... And his memory infused me, at a younger age than most, with a sense of my own mortality. The knowledge that I, too, could die young drove me both to try to drain the most out of every moment of life and to get on with the next big challenge. Even when I wasn't sure where I was going, I was always in a hurry (Clinton, 2004, p. 7).

It is likely that the father that he never knew influenced Clinton. In *My Life* he writes on page 5 that, "when I was about twelve, sitting on my Uncle Buddy's porch in Hope, a man walked up the steps, looked at me, and said, you're Bill Blythe's son. You look just like him. I beamed for days." However when Clinton writes that he feels that he must always be in a hurry, some of this feeling or anxiety must be attributed to living with an alcoholic, abusive, violent, and dangerous step- "Daddy." Clinton seems reluctant in *My Life* to give Roger Clinton any credit for shaping the man he has become. He even refuses to give him credit for making him a stronger and more caring person. However, since Virginia married Roger Clinton when Bill was just 4 years old, he must have had a huge impact on how he learned to view life. One value that Clinton did learn from his parent's marriage was to keep family secrets. In *My Life* he writes that, "I came to accept the secrets of

our house as a normal part of my life. I never talked to anyone about them--- not a friend, a neighbor, a teacher, or a pastor. Many years later when I ran for President several of my friends told reporters they never knew. Of course, as with most secrets, some people did know. Daddy couldn't be on good behavior with everyone but us, though he tried. Whoever else knew, family members, Mother's close friends, a couple of policemen-didn't mention it to me, so I thought I had a real secret and kept quiet about it. Our family policy was don't ask, don't tell" (p. 46).

#### IV. Earliest Recollections & Organ Inferiority

This section explores what Clinton's earliest recollections and his experiences with organ inferiority reveal about the development of his approach to life. Adler (1959) characterized early recollections as "the most noteworthy way of exploring personality" (p. 91). In fact, Adler (1992) suggested that it was less important to establish whether the early events that an individual recollects actually occurred (Parrott, 1992). More important was the fact that the individual remembers them, because these memories in themselves indicate that the individual regards the real or imagined event as having critical bearing on their current situation (Adler, 1992; Hopper & Holford, 1998; Parrott, 1992). Therefore, every early memory, regardless of how insignificant the event involved might appear in retrospect, is important precisely because it represents something that the individual regards as critical (Adler, 1992; Hopper & Holford, 1998). Adler (1992) maintained that these memories may be critical in showing how long the individual has possessed a characteristic life style, and in showing the conditions under which this approach to resolving life tasks was formulated (Adler, 1992).

Clinton recounts an early recollection in *My Life* of a time when he was 6 years old and he was attacked by a ram on his uncle's farm. He writes, "Soon he caught me and knocked my legs out from under me. Before I could get up he butted me in the head. Then I was stunned and hurt and couldn't get up. So he backed up, got a good head start, and rammed me again as hard as he could. He did the same thing over and over and over again, alternating his targets between my head and my gut. Soon I was pouring blood and hurting like the devil. After what seemed an eternity my uncle showed up, picked up a big rock, and threw it hard, hitting the ram square between the eyes. The ram just shook his head and walked off, apparently unfazed. I recovered, left with only a scar on my forehead, which gradually grew into my scalp. And I learned that I could take a hard hit, a lesson that I would relearn a couple more times in my childhood and later in life" (p.22).

Clinton's own assessment of this early memory is an interesting one in light of the fact that in later years he stood up to his stepfather. When he became President and his political enemies hounded him, this belief that he could take a hit and get right back up, served to give him resiliency.

Some of Clinton's painful early recollections involve what Adler interpreted as "organ inferiority". Adler (1992) maintained that during the formative early years, organ inferiority-perceived or actual defects in one's bodily organs-can have profound, lifelong impacts upon children who sense that this inferiority prevents them from achieving social interest and contributing fully to society. This inferiority manifests itself through anomalies in how the organ is located or formed, or in how it functions, and can severely hamper how the individual proceed with their lifelong struggles for self-assertion (Rattner, 1983).

In many instances, even minor organ inferiority is magnified in the eyes of the "afflicted" child to the point where it affects everyday living and compromises the individual's efforts to fit in with their community (Hooper & Holford, 1998). If as a result the child comes to feel that he cannot fit in, then their feelings of general inferiority deepen and he comes to feel less valuable than others, launching him/her on potentially lifelong patterns of low self-esteem (Hooper & Holford, 1998). Young children may circumvent the challenge of organ inferiority if they are encouraged to transcend the problem through a productive compensation that enables the child to attain a

more balance sense of “normality” (Hooper & Holford, 1998). Often, however, overcompensation may result, in which case the individual seeks not just to be adequate or “normal”, but also to be superior to peers (Hooper & Holford, 1998). Childhood overcompensation for organ inferiority might help to explain some of the life style traits that Clinton exhibits today.

In Bill Clinton’s case, organ inferiority was not necessarily of the conventional, congenial, outwardly obvious form described in Adler’s earlier writings (Hooper & Holford, 1998). Instead, Bill Clinton’s organ inferiority appears to have initially been only perceived, although it would ultimately become quite real. Clinton (2004) recollects being so “chunky and slow” in his very early years-apparently before the kindergarten level-that he was once “the only kid at an Easter egg hunt who didn’t get a single egg, not because I couldn’t find them, but because I couldn’t get them fast enough” (p. 18). Later, an incident during Clinton’s formative kindergarten years appears to have to be something of a self - fulfilling prophecy, whereby Clinton again describes his young self as being slow and wearing cowboy boots, could not clear a jump rope. He tripped and broke his leg above the knee (p. 19).

Clinton says of the incident that the doctor was reluctant to put him in a cast up to his hip because at that age he was growing so fast. As a result he was in the hospital with his leg suspended for two months. Clinton describes his feelings at this time as both foolish and pleased to be out of school and receiving so many visitors. He also writes in *My Life* that, "I took a long time getting over that leg break. After I got out of the hospital, my folks bought me a bicycle, but I never lost my fear of riding without the training wheels. As a result, I never stopped feeling that I was clumsy and without a normal sense of balance until, at the age of twenty- two, I finally started riding a bike at Oxford. Even then I fell a few times but I thought of it as building my pain threshold" (P. 19). The feelings that Clinton attributes to this incident, foolish and pleased, indicate that he was embarrassed by what happened but he also recognized that even though he was physically helpless in the hospital he had the power to bring people to him. He loved having his family and other visitors come to him and it is easy to picture the politician that he became later in life drawing crowds of people to surround him.

Clinton is a large man both in stature and weight. However he was not athletic in high school or college.

Arkansas, like most southern states, values their football players and field and track runners very highly. It must have been difficult for a boy to grow up with little or no athletic accomplishments. He compensated for his perceived clumsiness by joining the band and learning to play the saxophone. Later in college he joined the debate team.

Adler argues that children born with inferior organs or whose early experiences cause them injury are self-depreciating and often behave in ways that are contrary to that of normal individuals (Adler et al, 1930). In addition, he asserts that children that are placed in adverse situations early in life may develop inferior organs equal to those that were born with inferior organs. Adler asserts that when children are presented with such stressors they find it difficult to cope with life and the complications that arise (Adler et al, 1930). Additionally, Adler found two types of children that are usually affected with an inferiority complex, spoiled children and unwanted children. In other writings, Adler explains that the feelings of inferiority usually arise at a time when the individual is experiencing one of the three "great problems in life" (Adler et al, 1930). Adler

describes these three great problems or tasks of life as love, vocation and society (Adler et al, 1930).

When examining the life of Bill Clinton we can see that a great deal of his early environment was stressful. However it does not appear that he was overly spoiled or unwanted. He seems to have managed his organ inferiority on the useful side of life. He compensated for his clumsiness by becoming musical and also by excelling in his schoolwork.

It is likely that the reason Clinton never learned to ride his bike without training wheels is attributable to the low quality of parental support that he received at home. He may have not felt empowered by his parents to overcome his clumsiness due to the tension and hostility in the home. However it is to his credit he learned to ride once he was far removed from his home situation.

## V. Clinton's Position as an Only Child/Firstborn

Adlerian analysis also suggests that Clinton's life style was probably profoundly shaped by his position within his immediate family, first as an only child for several years, then as a firstborn with a kid brother. Adler (1928) was one of the pioneers of birth order research, inspiring decades of intense psychological interest in how an individual's birth order position is related to such personality variables as achievement, affiliation, and intelligence (Andeweg & van den Berg, 2003; Nelson & Harris, 1995; Todd, Friedman, & Steele, 1993). Indeed, Adler regarded birth order as the third most important influence on personality development, exceeded in importance only by the influences of the mother-the most important of all-and of the father (Parrott, 1992). Birth order has been defined as "the sequential position of a person among his or her siblings with respect to order of birth" (quoted in Nelson & Harris, 1995, p. 282). In reality, however, Adler was more interested in psychological rather than the actual sequential positioning of children within the family (Campbell, White, & Stewart, 1991; White et al., 1997).

Adler proclaimed that "It is not, of course, the child's number in the order of successive births which

influences his character, but the situation into which he is born and the way in which he interprets it" (quoted in White et al., 1997, p. 89). Indeed, various investigations have indicated that significant disparities often exist between specific individuals' ordinal and their self-perceived, psychological positions within the family unit (Campbell, White, & Stewart, 1991; Nelson & Harris, 1995; White et al., 1997). Nonetheless, in Bill Clinton's case there is clear evidence that sequential and psychological positioning closely coincided. In fact, studies have found that first borns constitute a decidedly more homogenous group than do other birth order positions, with the psychological positions of firstborns more often coinciding with their ordinal positions than is the case among other siblings (Nelson & Harris, 1995; White et al., 1997).

Clinton's position as firstborn explains much about his public life and his choice of career. In fact, numerous studies indicate that firstborns tend to score higher than other siblings in terms of achievement, competitiveness, dominance, independence, perfectionism, striving for success, and superiority (Hopper & Holford, 1998; White et al., 1997; Todd, Friedman, & Steele, 1993). During their adult years, firstborns tend to have special facility with language and abstract processes, and evidence

strong proclivities for careers that involve working with others, often in positions from which they direct others (White et al., 1997) - traits and tendencies which President Bill Clinton demonstrated in abundance. Indeed, Andeweg and van den Berg (2003) note that diverse studies indicate that firstborns like Clinton are disproportionately represented among American presidents, British and Australian prime ministers, and national leaders across the globe.

Andeweg and van den Berg (2003) also note, however, that decades of research have failed to determine conclusively what factors might account for such overrepresentation of firstborns among world leaders. Some researchers have focused on the potential effects of "differential parenting" on different family members maintaining that firstborns typically receive a larger portion of parental resources and, consequently, feel a greater need to fulfill parental expectation (Andeweg & van den Berg, 2003). Other researchers have emphasized the potential interactions between siblings as causal variables, suggesting that first - born children are better prepared for power struggles with their sibling (Andeweg & van den Berg, 2003). However, Andeweg and van den Berg's (2003) investigations of political leaders revealed that

the most important effect derives from the parental impact. The authors find that only children - who do not have any experiences of leadership in the family or of power struggles with siblings but who are the sole recipients of parental resources and concern - are disproportionately represented among political leaders (Andeweg & van den Berg, 2003).

Other research indicates that "early training in independence and autonomy" might account for firstborns' high levels of achievement motivation (Nelson & Harris, 1995; White et al., 1997). Together, these findings explain much about Clinton's life style. After all, as stressful and traumatic as some of Clinton's early childhood experiences were, they did compel him, towards independence and autonomy. Moreover, although Clinton is technically a firstborn, the long birth spacing between himself and his kid brother also means that during his formative years Clinton was in effect an only child. Adler (1928, 1959) suggested that with the arrival of a sibling many firstborns experience "dethronement" and fear of parental deprivation, particularly when parents fail to adequately prepare the first born for the arrival of this sibling. The author also suggested that this traumatic period in the life of the firstborn may cause him/her to feel inferior

and to develop a strong need to compete for parents' attention (Adler, 1928, 1959).

However, it is difficult to imagine that dethronement might have played an important role in the development of Clinton's psychological profile, or in his lifelong quest for recognition. Indeed, one could argue that rather than feeling threatened by dethronement, the arrival of Clinton's only sibling, his half - brother on his mother's side, Roger Clinton, Jr., was compelled him into adult responsibilities. With Roger, Bill appeared in many ways to assume the status of father - figure, rather than that of a dethroned older brother. Roger, Jr. recounts in his autobiography (1995) that:

I don't recall much about my abusive father before I was five years old. Bill was really more of an important figure to me. He was obsessive about wanting me near him and was my best friend, my guardian, my father, and my role model (p. 3).

In the opening passage of his autobiography, the younger Clinton recounts one of his earliest childhood memories: a night when Bill saved their mother from one of her husbands' drunken, murderous rampages. Before comforting his traumatized mother and kid brother, Bill warned Daddy "You will never hurt either of them [Mother and Roger]

again. ... If you want them, you'll have to go through me" (Clinton, 1995, p. 1-3).

Thus, even by mid - adolescence Bill had apparently assumed the role of protector and savior, not just to his kid brother, but to his mother as well. Tellingly, Roger Clinton notes "Bill was sixteen then, still a kid to many, but he was much more than that to Mother and me" (p. 2). Roger echoed these remarks in a conversation that was secretly tape- recorded when he was being investigated as a cocaine dealer (and minutes after he had inhaled cocaine powder): " I didn't have a father growing up and he was like a father to me growing up, all my life, so that's why we've always been so close. There isn't anything in the world he wouldn't do for me" (quoted in Moraniss, 1995, p. 423).

In any event, it is evident that Adler regarded the experience of being an only child for an extended period as a critical feature in the development of the firstborn personality. Adler (1928) maintained that the experience of being an only child imbued firstborns with strong feeling of power and influence, as well as a love of being the center of attention. Indeed, research by various Adlerian psychologists demonstrates that firstborns and only children tend to have several significant

psychological traits in common (White et al., 1997) – a situation that is perhaps most likely to prevail in firstborns whom, like Clinton, were only children for extended periods. Only children are the center of their parents' worlds (or in Clinton's case, of his grandparents' and his mother's worlds), a fact that fosters an increased interest in the world of adults than that of peers (White et al., 1997).

Moreover, although only children enjoy important advantages as a result of their special place with their parents, they also live with tremendous pressures deriving from the perception that the family's hopes "are resting on their shoulders" (White et al., p. 91) As the analysis below indicates, the young Bill Clinton apparently felt some of these pressures of being a firstborn. White and associate's (1997) investigations into the relationships between psychological birth order and career interests led to the finding that among firstborns, "the more an individual identifies with the need to strive for perfection and please others, the greater interest he or she may express in socially oriented careers requiring interpersonal abilities" (p. 95). This characterization seems to fit almost perfectly with Clinton's psychological profile and his political career.

In his book, *Family Constellation: Theory and Practice of a Psychological Game*, Walter Toman (1961) describes the likely character traits of the oldest brother of brother(s). Toman writes, "He is the leader, the master of other men, whether he shows it by force or cunning. He is in charge. He is in control, not so much of a field of work or endeavor as he is of other people in that field. He can tell people what to do; again either directly or by clever soft sell. He knows how to take them. He is on good terms with other males, especially when they are not older brothers themselves. As a matter of fact, the only one he cannot stand in his immediate vicinity and will have to get out of the way is another oldest brother of brother(s), no matter how well he may understand him otherwise" (Toman 1961, pg 24). Toman (1961) also asserts that the oldest brother is likely to be a good worker and leader. The author points out that such a child is an especially good leader of expeditions and enterprises. In addition, the firstborn brother of brother(s) tends to be an inspiration to others and often takes the worst hardships upon himself, which inevitably makes him stronger.

Toman's description of the firstborn brother of brothers sounds a great deal like Clinton and also his Presidency. He had a leadership style that encouraged

cooperation. His ability to communicate is almost legendary. His style was to lead by persuasion rather than by force.

Clinton took on the worst hardships in his family by standing up to his stepfather and serving as the family protector. When Roger Clinton Jr. was arrested for cocaine possession, Clinton went to family therapy with him in order help him deal with his addiction. He continued to serve in the role of father as well as big brother to Roger Clinton Jr. continually when Roger had troubles in his life.

## VI Clinton's Early Relationships with Women

The women in Clinton's life were primarily his mother and his maternal grandmother. Alfred Adler wrote about mothers in *What Life Could Mean To You*, that from the moment of birth, a baby seeks to bond with her mother. This is the purpose of all her behavior. For many months, her mother plays by far the most important role in the baby's life; she is almost completely dependent upon her mother. It is in this situation that the ability to cooperate first develops. The mother gives the baby her first contact with another human being, first interest in someone other than herself/himself. She is the baby's first bridge to social life; a baby who could not make any bond at all with her mother, or with some other human being who took her place, would inevitably perish. (1931).

Clinton describes his grandmother in *My Life* as just over five feet tall and weighing about 180 pounds. He says she was bright, intense and aggressive and had once been pretty. She had been a good student and ambitious. After high school she took a correspondence course in nursing from the Chicago School of Nursing. She became a private duty nurse. He also describes her as a person with a great laugh but full of anger and disappointment. She was

the primary female figure in his life from age 2 till 4. Clinton writes that his grandmother loved him very much but that she did not love his own mother (her daughter) or his grandfather. Mawmaw did not approve of Roger Clinton when Bill Clinton's mother later remarried. The influence that this grandmother had on Clinton seems to have begun an early expectation for him that women should be strong and smart. It is possible that he also absorbed the message and developed the expectation that strong and smart women are also frequently angry.

Bill Clinton's mother worked as a nurse anesthesiologist during his childhood. Clinton describes his mother as a woman who never met a stranger, worked hard to put her patients at ease before surgery, and genuinely enjoyed the company of her co-workers. Then he writes that, not everybody liked her. She could be abrasive with people she thought were trying to push her around or take advantage of their positions to treat others unfairly. Unlike me, she actually enjoyed making some of these people mad (p.49).

Clinton seems to gloss over the impact of his mother's marriage to an abuser. However he does write in *My Life*, about his confusion when his mother left Roger Clinton, divorced him and then remarried him. The reason that she

gave her young son for her decision was, "she would never forgive herself if she did not give him another chance." She never at anytime seems to take either of her young son's safety into consideration. If Clinton felt rage at his mother about this decision, he never lets the reader know. He does write; I think Mother found enormous relief from the strains of her marriage in her work and friends, and at the races. There must have been many days when she was crying inside, maybe even in physical pain, but most people didn't have a clue. The example she set stood me in good stead when I became President. She almost never discussed her troubles with me. I think she figured I knew about all I needed to know, was smart enough to figure out the rest, and deserved as normal a childhood as possible under the circumstances (2004). Later when Clinton married Hillary Rodam, he also married a woman who seems to have never discussed her husband's infidelities with others. One can only imagine the hurt that Hillary must have concealed during Clinton's affairs. Clinton managed to marry a woman like his mother, strong and not inclined to discuss her troubles. He found in Hillary a strong, intelligent, woman who is a master at keeping secrets and enduring pain.

## VII Role of Family Hero

Clinton acknowledges in *My Life*, that the adults around him worked hard to convince him that he was a special child. He notes that: " For all their own demons, my grandparents and my mother always made me feel like I was the most important person in the world to them" (pp. 9-10).

In the book *Transcending Turmoil: Survivors of Dysfunctional Families*, (1992) the oldest child often plays the role of family hero. This individual often takes on the burdens of the family and becomes very accomplished. This person stands as proof that their family was stable even if it was not. The family hero announces to the world that the family is not only OK, but terrific. If they become such an accomplished person, then it must mean that the parents are wonderful because they raised the child. Teachers like them, kids like them, and they get praise and support and a feeling of being special. It also gives them a separate identity from their dysfunctional family (Hofman et al 1994).

The family hero is striving in life for significance by being the special one in the family. They are determined not to fall into the trappings that made the

family dysfunctional. Clinton may have taken on this role to show the world that his upbringing was not too detrimental or to show them that even though his family environment was tumultuous he was able to succeed. The difference between the two is that the former creates an illusion, the latter deals with the reality of the situation.

Clinton excelled in school and his accomplishments are many. He very early learned to gain attention by pleasing his grandmother with learning to read early and reciting the words that she held up for him. Later when his mother and stepfather fought, he learned to be the peacemaker in the family. When he grew older and his stepfather's rages became more violent, he stood up to Roger Clinton. He more than once called the police to the home to save his mother from his stepfather's abuse.

Fein (1992) explains that the individual in the family that plays the role of the family hero often feels like a failure. This feeling exists because they believe they did not live up to the expectations of others. There is not evidence in any of Clinton's own words that he believes that has not lived up to his family's expectations. However it is likely that one of the driving forces in his life that propelled him to achieve to the level that he has

is his belief that he must rescue his family from the dysfunction that seem to plague them. Gail Sheehy in her book, *Hillary's Choice*, attributes these words to Clinton, "Those students at Georgetown know so many languages. They have all traveled. They've had opportunities that we didn't have here." She says that Virginia Clinton remembers Clinton making a firm declaration: "I am going to go to Georgetown, and I am going to go on to grad school, and I am going to get the greatest education I can and come home to Arkansas and put it to work for the people here" (p, 105). Clinton had taken his role as family hero and expanded it to being the hero of the people of the state of Arkansas. He did not let his drive to excel prevent him from also using the hero status for social interest. He found a way to use his driving forces on the useful side of life.

### VIII Neurotic Tendencies

Bill Clinton's love affairs before he held public office and after he was an elected politician are legendary. However, it is hard to imagine that he would have put his presidency in jeopardy if he had been able to control his sexual compulsions. Jerome Levin, in his book, *The Clinton Syndrome*, makes the case that Clinton was a sexually addicted man. The following list represents an adaptation of the DSM diagnostic criteria for addiction, keeping in mind that the substance for the purposes of this subject is sex. These criteria manifest in people who suffer from sexual addiction.

1. Repeated sexual activity resulting in a failure to fulfill major role obligations at work, school, or home.
2. Repeated sex-related legal problems.
3. Sexual activity in potentially dangerous situations.
4. Continued sexual activity despite persistent or recurrent social or interpersonal problems.
5. Tolerance.
6. Withdrawal.
7. Larger amounts of sexual activity over longer periods of time than originally intended.

8. An enduring desire to control sexual activity and simultaneous failed attempts to do so.
9. Increased time spent in activities necessary to obtain sexual activity and/or to recover from its effects (Levin 1998).

Only three of the listed symptomatic behaviors need to be present for the diagnosis to be made.

The early experiences of Clinton's life when his mother left him with his grandparents to study nursing may have begun the seeds of his later sexual addiction. Levin (1998) points out that because Clinton had no control over whether his mother left him, he would later seek to control other women, wanting to possess them in one way or another. His sexual addictive behavior was partially driven by an unconscious compulsion to recapture the mother who initially abandoned him. In addition to wanting a more satisfactory relationship with his mother, much of Clinton's sexual activity can be seen and understood as an endlessly repeated attempt to recapture the feeling of being adored and even worshiped by women just as he gained significance as a child by being adored by his mother and grandmother. The adult role models in Clinton's life were his mother who was a flirt and gambler. His stepfather, Roger Clinton, was an alcoholic and a womanizer. His

grandmother was known to be flirtatious but also violent toward his mother and his grandfather. Clinton learned very early that flirtatious behavior was acceptable and even to be rewarded. However, guilt, pain and rage were to be suppressed and secrets must be kept.

Another factor that may have contributed to Clinton's sexual addiction was that he was alone frequently as a young child. His mother left the boys and her raging husband to gamble or to go dancing in the evenings. He virtually raised himself and then attempted to be a father figure to his young brother. Levin writes that, "Feelings of panic when left alone can remain with the child as he or she matures, and as adults, these individuals may ultimately suffer from the psychiatric disorder called abandonment depression... feelings of panic when left alone can also predispose children to addiction because addictions are ways (albeit) unhealthy ways) of being companioned. The reasoning is that I am not alone, I am with Chivas Regal. In the case of a sex addicted person, I am not alone, I am with a sex partner" (70). Clinton once told an interviewer that, "The violence and dysfunction in our home made me a loner, which is contrary to the way people view me, because I'm gregarious, happy, all of that.

But I had to construct a whole life inside my own mind”  
Sheehy (1999).

According to Levin (1998) and Sheehy (1999) Bill Clinton was never faithful to Hillary. He always had other girlfriends even through their engagement and in the early years of their marriage. By all accounts Hillary was aware that there were other women in Bill’s life. Even though their marriage was tense on many occasions and volatile, Hillary in many ways enabled Bill to continue his philandering ways. When the Jennifer Flowers story broke in 1992 during the general election, it was Hillary who came to Clinton’s defense and insisted that he was a faithful husband. All evidence suggested that she knew that her husband had been having an affair with Flowers for many years. She seemed aware that her husband had sexual impulses that he could not control and she was willing to look the other way and when necessary to lie for him.

Adler (1979) boldly rejected as “distorted” and “farfetched” early Freudian notion of the libido as an omnipotent power that drives the human mind and psyche (p. 219). Instead, Adler (1979) argued that sexual desire, like all other strivings, thoughts, feelings, and expressions was ultimately a product of an individual’s efforts to successfully resolve life’s problems. Indeed,

Adler was among the first psychologists to recognize the fact that much of sexual behavior is motivated by underlying wants and desires that are not primarily sexual in nature, and in fact individuals generally pursue sex for a wide variety of decidedly non-sexual reasons (Peven, 1993). The Adlerian understanding of addiction is the constant striving for superiority by using the substance or in Clinton's case continually having sexual conquest. He could temporarily fill the emptiness inside of himself with the superior feelings that came with each sexual conquest. The sexual addiction has a purpose, by giving the sexual addict a sense of comfort and a semblance of significance and security.

The fact that Clinton's behavior led repeatedly to sex related legal problems and he continued his sexual activity despite social or interpersonal problems and he had sexual activity in potentially dangerous situations shows Clinton met at least three of the criteria for the sexually addicted person. Bill Clinton did not seem like a person who was motivated by self - destruction. If his presidency had been 20 or 30 years ago, the public would not have known about his behavior. John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson and Dwight D. Eisenhower were all known to have had mistresses. John F. Kennedy's behavior appears to have

been the most similar to Clintons own in regard to sexual indiscretions. Levin (1998) points out that Clinton's private life was public only because we, as a nation, have lost the ability to be civil in our public discourse and because his enemies, abated by a prurient press, have microscopically scrutinized every facet of his personal life and magnified it to huge proportions.

### Summary and Accomplishments

Bill Clinton was one of the youngest presidents in U.S. history. No other president has started out with so little and achieved so much. His father died before he was born. His mother left him during the crucial formative years from age 2 until 4 with his grandparents. Clinton grew up with an alcoholic and violent stepfather. His mother was frequently under involved in his life or over involved. Yet, this man-attended Georgetown University, Yale Law School and became a Fulbright scholar. Clinton returned to his home state of Arkansas and was elected governor. Clinton absorbed both positive and negative messages from the adults in his life. His grandfather taught him the importance of accepting people for who they are and not judging people by the color of their skin. This was a radical thought for a working class southern man in the 1940s. He also learned from his grandparent's marriage and his mother's marriage that married people fight viciously and that families keep secrets. The balance of Clinton's life is one of public service and attempting to travel through life on the useful side. The fact that he was so popular is one of the reasons that he disappointed so many people because he gave his enemies the ammunition they were

looking for. His sexual addiction is troubling, however it can be argued that it brought more harm to the country by Clinton's enemies insistence on dragging it through the courts than Clinton's own individual actions.

Many of Clinton's policies when he became president were instrumental in forging economic empowerment. In addition, Clinton made several strides towards improving air quality in the country and improving pollution caused by gas emissions. Additionally, Clinton was the first president to bring into focus the AIDS crisis occurring on the continent of Africa. Indeed the Africa Trade Bill that the former president signed in 2000 was an executive order to reduce trade restrictions on intellectual property to sub-Saharan Africa (Africa Trade Bill, 2000). This is an act that has undoubtedly saved many lives; this seems to be a cause for which the former president is firmly committed. Even after leaving office, he has been instrumental in attempting to provide people on the continent of Africa with the Antiviral that is readily available in America and other parts of the world.

Additionally the Clinton administration sponsored a bill to give monies to the world health organization to provide birth control to women in developing countries. Many of these women begin having children at age 13 and

continue to give birth until they die from infections in their mid to late 20s. The access to birth control allows them to have some choices in their life and to possibly pursue an education. Since the enactment of this funding, the current administration has discontinued giving these funds to the world health organization. Clinton was also the first president to employ an extremely diverse staff of both women and minorities. In particular, Clinton appointed Madeleine Albright as Secretary of State, Donna Shalala to the Department of Health and Human Services, Alexis Herman to the Department of Labor, Rodney Slater to the Department of Transportation, and Togo D. West to the Department of Veterans affairs (The Clinton Administration, n.d.). Clinton embraced diversity and showed America the need for such.

Adler felt strongly that mental health-personal success in life-was a function of an individual's social interest, which means "identification with humanity," a "feeling of community," or "belonging to life" (Manaster & Corsini). By this definition, Clinton, was a successful president and is a successful person.

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