

7-31-1998

# The Construct of Personality: Implications for Psychological Profiles, Background Investigations, and Intelligence Agent Preassessment and Evaluation

Editor

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp>



Part of the [Other Psychology Commons](#)

## Recommended Citation

Editor (1998) "The Construct of Personality: Implications for Psychological Profiles, Background Investigations, and Intelligence Agent Preassessment and Evaluation," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*: Vol. 5 : Iss. 5 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol5/iss5/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Bulletin of Political Psychology by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact [commons@erau.edu](mailto:commons@erau.edu).

## International Bulletin of Political Psychology

Title: The Construct of Personality: Implications for Psychological Profiles, Background Investigations, and Intelligence Agent Preassessment and Evaluation

Author: Editor

Volume: 5

Issue: 5

Date: 1998-07-31

Keywords: Assessment, Criminal Justice, Evaluation, Intelligence, Investigations, Personality, Typology

**Abstract.** This article describes complexities of the construct of personality and their implications for psychological profiles, background investigations, and intelligence agent preassessment and evaluation.

Psychological theories based on experimentation, observation, and yet other theories suggest that the construct of personality denotes psychological consistencies that constitute people. Among, between, and within people these consistencies may differ qualitatively as to their content, quantitatively as to their intensity, and situationally as to their applicability and salience.

Given the above, the construct of personality also suggests relevance for political endeavors such as criminal investigations, intelligence analyses, and intelligence operations. First, so-called psychological profiles might be developed that suggest the psychological consistencies of yet to be identified criminal perpetrators as well as jury pools--including behavioral preferences and actual behaviors associated with these consistencies. Profiles might also be developed through assumption of psychological consistencies to help predict and understand the behaviors of political leaders. Second, background investigations might be carried out in the quest for psychological consistencies that may be germane to security-trustworthiness--e.g., the awarding of a security clearance or access to sensitive information--or suitability for various criminal justice and political responsibilities. Third, intelligence agent preassessment--i.e., deciding whether a calculus of risks and benefits merits making an initial approach to a potential agent--and evaluation--i.e., judging the credibility, loyalty, and utility of an agent--seem founded on the notion that there are, indeed, psychological consistencies.

However, a huge dilemma for personality constructors and consumers alike is the lack of a valid criterion of accuracy. Showing that (1) most methods claiming to identify particular psychological consistencies yield similar estimates of these consistencies (convergent validity) and (2) most methods claiming to identify consistencies different than those claimed to be identified by another method yield dissimilar estimates (divergent validity) may suggest nothing more than collective delusional fallacies. That this positing of an "emperor with no clothes" may be more than mere sophistry is supported by experimental findings concerning human targets judged by their families, friends, and coworkers. When the judgments involve the "Big Five" personality factors--viz., the five personality descriptors that seem to subsume almost all other personality descriptors--targets are viewed consensually within judgment groups (families, friends, coworkers) but much more differently between these groups. Moreover, all of these judgments may significantly differ from a target's own self-judgments as well as that target's judgments about how these others will judge the target. When one realizes that there is also significant psychological research to show that such judgments by groups and by the target may differentially change through time and via social, cultural, and historical transformations in knowledge, the lack of a valid criterion of accuracy becomes analogous to being caught in conceptual quicksand without a tree branch in sight.

Is psychological research on personality fated to ineluctably arrive at a conclusion that signals its own academic and practical demise? If this is the case, opponents of applied psychology in matters of

## International Bulletin of Political Psychology

criminal justice and intelligence would not be surprised. (See Albright, L., Kenny, D.A., & Malloy, T.E. (1988). Consensus in personality judgments at zero acquaintance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 55, 387-395; Malloy, T.E., Albright, L., Kenny, D.A., Agatstein, F., & Winqvist, L. (1997). Interpersonal perception and metaperception in nonoverlapping social groups. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72, 390-398; Malloy, T.E., & Kenny, D.A. (1986). The social relations model: An integrative method for personality research. *Journal of Personality*, 54, 199-225; Moskowitz, D.S., & Schwarz, J.C. (1982). Validity comparison of behavior counts and ratings by knowledgeable informants. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 42, 518-528.) (Keywords: Assessment, Criminal Justice, Evaluation, Intelligence, Investigations, Personality, Typology.)