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Title: Profiling Racial Profiles: Challenges from Political Discourse

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Abstract. This article describes problems in evaluating the validity and appropriateness of racial profiles based on reactance with political discourse on such profiles.

Previous IBPP articles have explored problems in evaluating racial profiles based on the nature of race, approaches to statistical validity, the political sensitivity of race, and the consequences of profiling for mislabeled individuals. Mostly unexplored have been the effects on racial profiling and on these Issues of the very political discourse concerning and surrounding them.

Political discourse can affect how specific false positive and false negative--as well as true positive and true negative--rates are perceived by a political community. It also can affect the very quantitative values of true and false positive and negative rates. Political discourse can affect what constitutes "race" and "ethnicity," as well as how these constructs are socially valued as sole, supplementary, and/or complementary indices of some variable or characteristic itself varying in how it is socially valued.

Observations on the effects of political discourse on racial profiling and profiling-related Issues yield an unfortunate paradox. On the one hand, political discourse in a representative democracy is highly and positively valued as a signal virtue of democracy. This discourse is hopefully continuous and continual--its vitality and vibrancy also cherished as a virtue. On the other hand, the substance of discourse--e.g., specific political Issues--is treated as a discrete object existing independently and unaffected by the many descriptive, analytical, and rhetorical techniques constituted by that discourse. In essence, discourse proceeds about something that in essence is nothing--i.e., not that thing that is something, but a seamless sequence of somethings that may be anything at any temporal point, including that something which is nothing. This paradox may help account for the shortfall between the sturm and drang of political discourse and the heat and light of what discourse seeks to address.

So there are many profiles of racial profiling. And political discourse is concurrently a boon in profiling and an insurmountable bane. (See *Aviation security: An Analysis of Opposition to Evaluating Racial Profiling*. (January 21, 2001). IBPP, 8(3); Okingwu, A.F., & Mencher, J.P. (2000). *The anthropology of public policy: Shifting terrains*. Annual Review of Anthropology, 29, 107-124; Powell, W.W., & Clemens, E.S. (Eds.). *Private Action and the Public Good*. Yale University Press; *Racial profiling in the Persian Gulf: Ethical, moral, and legal implications*. IBPP, 8(13); Sachs, S. (May 1, 2001). Files suggest profiling of Latinos led to immigration raids. The New York Times, <http://www.nytimes.com>; Stake, R.E. (1997). *Advocacy in evaluation: A necessary evil?* In E. Chelimsky & W.R. Shadish (Eds.). *Evaluation for the 21st Century*. (pp. 470-476). Sage Publications, Inc.) (Keywords: Racial Profiling.)