

11-26-2018

# Psychological Profiling of Political Leaders: Searching for Three White Whales

Editor

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

 Part of the [Defense and Security Studies Commons](#), [Epistemology Commons](#), [International Relations Commons](#), [Other Political Science Commons](#), [Other Psychology Commons](#), and the [Philosophy of Science Commons](#)

## Recommended Citation

Editor (2018) "Psychological Profiling of Political Leaders: Searching for Three White Whales," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*: Vol. 18 : Iss. 6 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol18/iss6/4>

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).

**Title:** Psychological Profiling of Political Leaders: Searching for Three White Whales

**Author:** Editor

Psychological profiles—including those of political leaders—are attempts to capture the essence of what someone has done. If still alive, the option of what that someone is doing and will do. The profiling essence is two-fold. What has been of greatest significance among that someone's behavior within some sociocultural context and historical context. And what has been of greatest significance to facilitate the understanding, explaining, influencing, controlling, and appearance of that behavior.

Psychological profiles go back at least as far as India's earliest *Puranas* (5<sup>th</sup> century CE), Sima Quian's *Shiji* (China) (1<sup>st</sup> century BCE), Menetho's *Aegyptiaca* (Egypt) (3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE), Plutarch's *Lives of the Famous Greeks and Romans* (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries CE) and Suetonius's *The Twelve Caesars* (2<sup>nd</sup> century CE) to the greatest biographies (Banabhatta's *Hashacharita*, (India) (7<sup>th</sup> century CE) about and autobiographies (Augustine of Hippo's *Confessions*, 4<sup>th</sup> century CE) by political and religious leaders. More recently, a small number of interviews could be included (1). All psychological profiles are challenged with amounts of primary and/or secondary information and levels of analysis from which to choose. The present article suggests three types of information worthy of analysis.

The first is *conscious* to the profilee and varies from *ideological beliefs* to *behavioral intentions*. The *ideological beliefs* often enough are subjugating discourses and examples of false consciousness that ensnare the profilee in cognitive-emotional-affective nets, webs, and chains mitigating against optimal goal identification and achievement while facilitating the optimal for other people, often enough rivals. The *behavioral intentions* usually are perceived as the cause of behavior even as they may just be intrapsychic components associated with behavior in temporal and spatial contiguity.

The second comprises information that is *unconscious*, not a motivated unconscious but information out of awareness that seems to cause (in Aristotle's sense of efficient cause) or be associated with behavior. Political leaders may significantly differ among other leaders and among various situations in self-awareness and potential access to what they are not aware. Some may know what they don't know, some may not. Information may be the same nature as what is conscious, less easily accessible to spoken and written language but differentially constituted as some proto-language.

The third comprises information that is *conscious*, perhaps, *too conscious*. The political leader is very well aware of needs that need to be satisfied. These needs and attempts to sate them may not be in the leader's professional interest and may invite professional disaster in the quest for fulfilment. Examples of such needs include seemingly insatiable needs for power and recognition, insatiable needs for certain sexual practices or configurations, insatiable needs to fail at the most dramatic moment. When such hungers are not recurrently sated, there are interludes of discomfort, even despair,

while many others in the world can only fantasize how much they would like to be the leader.

So, there are three types of information, and, metaphorically with Herman Melville and *Moby Dick* (2), the psychological profiler is on the hunt for three types of white whales. As with Captain Ahab, his ship, and his harpoons, the psychological profiler may be ill-equipped to capture them, ill-equipped to survive with the usual human epistemologies. In fact, the profiler may miss the boat all together, or drown in the whirlpool of the ships' destruction. The soul survivor? Don't call the profiler Ishmael (3).

**References.** (1) Great interviews. *The Guardian*.

<https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/series/greatinterviews>. (2) Melville, H. *Moby Dick*. (1999/1851). Wordsworth Editions Limited. (3) Barrett, T. (2014). De-individualising autobiography: A reconsideration of the role of autobiographical life writing within disability studies. *Disability & Society*, 29(10), 1569-1582. Duerringer, C. (2014). The elision of agency in The Autobiography of Malcolm X. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 25(2), 156-170. Duerringer, C. (2014). The elision of agency in The Autobiography of Malcolm X. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 25(2), 156-170. Feldman, O., & Valenty, L. O. (Eds). (2001). *Profiling political leaders: Cross-cultural studies of personality and behavior*. Westport, CT, US: Praeger Publishers/Greenwood Publishing. Ponterotto, J. G. (2015). Psychobiography in psychology: Past, present, and future. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 25(5), 379-389. Schultz, T. W., & Lawrence, S. (2017). Psychobiography: Theory and method. *American Psychologist*, 72(5), 434-445. Sigelman, L. (2002). Two Reagans? Genre imperatives, ghostwriters, and presidential personality profiling. *Political Psychology*, 23(4), 839-851. Walsham, A. (2018). Chronicles, memory and autobiography in Reformation England. *Memory Studies*, 11(1), 36-50.

**Keywords:** Conscious. Epistemology. Hermeneutics. Leadership. Political. Profiling. Psychological. Leadership.

**Abstract/Description:** This article describes three types of information crucial to psychological profiling of political leaders.

**Disciplines:** Other Psychology, Philosophy, Philosophy of Science. Political Science, Other Political Science, Psychology, Defense and Security Studies, International Relations, Epistemology

To comment on this article, please go online to <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol18/iss6/4>