



by Jeff Baile

Power & Perspective Taking

Please perform this coordination task before reading further.

- 1 Raise your dominant hand index finger out in front of you and imagine the tip has been dipped in black ink.
- 2 Place your “inked” finger in the center and at the top of your forehead.
- 3 Now close your eyes and draw a large capital E on your forehead.

Power n.

The capacity to influence other people; it emerges from control over valuable resources and the ability to administer reward and punishments.

From the beginning, it was anything but the friendly interview Mitt Romney was expecting. He was doing okay keeping it together until asked about the mandated health care he'd implemented as governor of Massachusetts. That's when the interview began to deteriorate.

“Do you still support the idea of a mandate?” the reporter pressed as he leaned in. “Do you believe that was the right thing for Massachusetts?”

A visibly flustered Romney responded, “I don't know how many times I've answered that. This is an unusual interview: let's do it again.”

Just looking at what Governor Romney said provides little insight into his attitude about those questions, but how he said those words reveals exactly how he felt. What I mean by “visibly flustered” is this: as the words leave his lips, a minute expression of surprise appears – he wasn't expecting the line of questioning. Then he sneers in contempt, his lips angrily purse, and an unconvincing smile emerges in an effort to hide his scorn. Romney finally retreats in his chair and pulls his left leg over his right, building an instant psychological fence against more attacks. This all happened in four seconds. You didn't have to be an expert in body language analysis to

realize he completely fell apart nonverbally.

The presidential hopeful went on justifying his health plan but the sharp journalist clearly saw he'd struck a nerve so he continued—as any good reporter would—his verbal assault. That sent Romney into a tailspin.

In my view, a big reason his actual feelings were exposed was that Romney did not automatically self-monitor at the moment he felt threatened. During those brief seconds, he was entirely unaware of what his nonverbals were saying compared to his words. His movements and fake smiling easily showed the interviewer and millions of viewers that he was conflicted. It's my guess he really didn't want to give that impression. But in a way, it wasn't his fault.

Scientists have found that those who hold positions of “power” have a tougher time seeing themselves as others do. They generally are more concerned with personal achievements than with worrying how they look. Overly concentrating on the self would ordinarily trigger a high self-monitoring effect. But this is not the case when power is thrown into the mix – the exact inverse results.

Romney's dual power titles – businessman and candidate – psychologically muted his ability to see and consider what the reporter perceived: that he (Romney) was rattled about the topic of mandated health care. Unfortunately, Romney's gaffe signaled the journalist he was on to something, which caused Romney an extremely painful next five minutes. And the media talked and wrote about those five minutes for days.

Seeing the other side

The E experiment you completed was a quick way to test our own self-monitoring, empathy, and perspective taking abilities. It's only a rough estimate though. Drawing the letter E on our foreheads is not important in its own right, so don't be too concerned about how it turned out. Nonetheless, the task may offer a deeper insight into some of our personality traits – attributes we do not consciously know exist.

An interesting set of experiments, in which the E drawing task was used, occurred at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management to investigate connections between self-monitoring, perspective-taking, power, and the ability to empathize. To examine the power and perspective prongs, two experimental groups were created: one high-power and one low-power. A participant's mental state during the experiment was either “I have power over people” or “I don't have power over people.” The researchers concluded that the high-power group was almost three times as likely as the low-power group to draw a self-oriented E.

This makes sense considering power holders tend to be more concerned with personal goals and feelings and less about outward appearance. That's why the E appears backwards (Figure 1). They also find it difficult to empathize and to spontaneously take another person's view.

As researchers comment in *Power and Perspectives Not Taken*, it is difficult for power people to step outside “[their] own experience imagining the emotions,

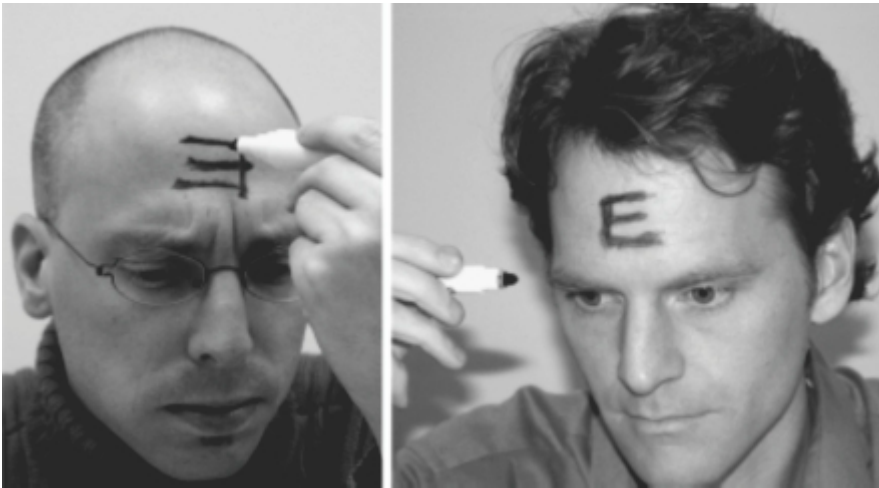


Figure 1. Self-oriented high power E (left) indicative of internal perspective taking. External low power E perspective takers (right) tend to draw the E so others can read it. Photo originally appeared in *Power & Perspectives Not Taken* and is used with permission.

perceptions, and motivations of another individual.”

“Across these studies,” they remark, “power was associated with a reduced tendency to comprehend how others see, think, and feel.”

There are two possible explanations for why power holders develop these behaviors. People in charge have more control over things and therefore tend to become less reliant on others. They can make autonomous decisions with little concern about others' opinions. Power holders also have more demands placed on them, making it difficult to consider the viewpoints of everyone under their control.

Snap judgments and self-awareness

We often form our opinions about the character traits of others in as little as one tenth of a second. This is important because studies show that the impact of a first impression can instantly dictate the direction of any social interaction. When people are up close and personal, first impressions are (unconsciously) formed by swift judgments of a person's face followed by evaluations of body language.

When evaluating others at greater distances, we first assess nonverbal communication signals. Then, as proximity to an unknown person shrinks, we consider his or her face. Either way, the problem is that quick conclusions about someone's character do not involve rational thought.



Trait inferences – especially from the face – reached after only brief exposure to someone should not be given much weight, but unfortunately they are. Such opinions are instinctive. People have no idea why they feel the way they do, they just do.

Scientists say people using these hasty, shallow, non-thoughtful ways of inferring personality traits are unconsciously using “system 1 processes.” System 1 processes are automatic (biased) mental structures

that produce uncertain and indeed faulty errors in judgment and impression formation.

For example, an evaluation is made (he looks angry) which results in a reflexively formed first impression (he's mad because he's mean so I don't trust him) and at that moment, in seconds, the evaluation and impression become reality to the observer.

People confidently believe their first-impression-based reasoning is correct because there's no immediate information saying otherwise. Any subsequent thoughts about the person will also be supported by using system 1 processes. If there is no opportunity for the observer to change his mind – which happens frequently in police work – his impression of the subject will remain valid in his eyes and unchanged.

For example, if an outside observer saw this officer leaning on someone's car, he might make an impulsive judgment that the officer is disrespectful – but maybe he's leaning closer to hear better.

Standing with arms crossed in public, even briefly, shouts that we're unapproachable – perhaps it has to do with officer safety though. Passing by people in the courthouse with a scowling face might lead them to interpret that you are mad at the world. But have you ever been really mad after just losing a big case?

However brief it is, the way we first appear to others has a strong tendency to hold more weight than it really should. It's not fair, but that's just how we're made.

Having sufficient time to change others' minds would be best, but of course that's not always possible. So people are going to be left with what they have: a superficial impression of our personality and profession that may or may not be correct.

When people encounter the conservation officer, even if only briefly, we want any perception to be positive, and this can result from an adaptation of a high self-awareness way of thinking.

This in turn, as we have discussed, will help us accept the perspectives of others more easily.

A power mentality probably does not cause willful decisions to blatantly dismiss the viewpoints of others. It is, though, a psychological state of mind that makes perspective-taking more difficult.

Personality tendencies found in those holding positions of power:

- create distance from others
- less likely to spontaneously to adapt another person's point of view
- more likely to use stereotyping
- greater difficulty experiencing empathy
- form less complex interpersonal impressions about people
- decreased accuracy in detecting emotion
- less accurate at estimating the interests of others
- more likely to make self-serving recognitions

Reference

Hass, G.L. (1984). Perspective Taking and Self-Awareness: Drawing an E on Your Forehead. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 46(4) 788-98.

Galinsky, A., Magee, J., Inesi, M., Gruenfeld, D. (2006). Power and Perspectives Not Taken. *Psychological Science*, 17(12), 1068-1074.

Willis, J. & Todorov, J. (2006). First Impressions: Making up your mind after a 100-Ms Exposure to a face. *Psychological Science*, 17(7), 592-598.

Wiseman, R. *Quirkology: How we discover the big truths in small things*. Basic Books, New York, 2007.

Morewedge, C. & Kahneman, D. (2010). Associative processes in intuitive judgment. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 14(10), 435-440.

Jeff Baile is a 26-year veteran of the Illinois Conservation Police

**Home: 309.692.3251
Mobile: 309.370.2580**

**jeffreybaileandassociates@comcast.net
or www.jbaile.com**

NEW SUBSCRIBER?

Want to build a reference library?
Need to fill in a few lost issues?

SPECIAL: Purchase four or more back issues and get them for \$3.00 each. Shipping included!

Look for other IGW and NAWEOA merchandise also, just a few clicks away at www.naweo.org.



Why advertise with IGW Magazine?

- ✓ **IGW** crosses the desk of almost every conservation enforcement 'decision-maker' on the continent
- ✓ **IGW** is read by thousands of conservation officers across the continent
- ✓ Conservation officers and the gear they employ influence the gear used by untold numbers of outdoorsmen, and
- ✓ It's an excellent way to TARGET a very special market and at a bargain price!

For further details contact...

Carlos Gomez, IGW Advertising Manager

Phone: 918/232-8449

E-mail: advertising@igwmagazine.com
or cgomez115@att.net



And NAWEOA members receive 'finders-fees' for locating an advertiser!