Hillary Clinton poses for selfies at an Orlando, Florida, event on Sept, 21, 2016.
● *BARBARA KINNEY/TIME*

University of Salford psychologist Ashley Weinberg:

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Ashley Weinberg is a chartered psychologist and senior lecturer in psychology at the University of Salford, UK. Working on the psychology of politics and politicians during his career, he has published several books, most recently an edited collection of papers, 'Psychology of Democracy: Of the People, By the People, For the People', published by Cambridge University Press in 2022.

Before we get to the actual interview, I'd like to know a bit more about you. How was your life as a scholar of psychology who has been working with politicians?

Well, I feel very privileged to have the opportunity to study the topics that I do. It's given me a bit of academic freedom and some personal space to shape the research that I'm interested in. But for about 30 years, I've been very interested in the psychology of politicians, those who make the decisions that affect all of us, and whatever political system there is in place. To have the chance to do that, engage other people, and, thirty years later, be able to publish a book with 30 or more people from across the world; that means we're making progress, I hope, in getting people to think along those lines and share ideas. What I hope for is a future publication where we can have someone from every country

contributing. That would be my dream.

So for me, I feel very lucky to have the opportunity, and it's always nice when people take an interest in the topic. But I also hope we're all interested because it's something that means something to everyone, particularly how we have a voice in the world.

Let's start the conversation about your book with looking into your sessions with politicians, if you don't mind. When you are doing the psychological analysis of political leaders, what happens if you feel that you are dealing with a patient?

Gosh. If I'm interpreting you correctly, I must say that I got my PhD in psychiatry, so I studied psychology, but also how we would assess people in terms of their mental well-being. I, however, recognize that I'm not a qualified clinician, so I'm very careful in my research that what I'm

doing and measuring is for academic purposes. In addition, there are obviously considerable ethics and considerations that come with that. We want to make people feel safe, so that they can talk about their emotions. And sometimes people you speak to, whether it's research with MPs or politicians or other groups, they want advice and perhaps some support.

I hope research in mental health, whether it's in politics or other areas of work, demonstrates that people need psychological support. And if the research can feed into generating mechanisms such as counseling so people can talk about their emotions, or practical solutions in a workplace, even in political institutions, to improve the way we design the job of being a politician, then I hope what we're doing is making sure anyone, whether they are feeling unwell or well, can benefit from better working con-

ditions.

I also like to think – and this is perhaps an idealistic idea – that if we can do that in whatever political system there is, we set an example for all workplaces in the countries that we're working in.

Now, let's discuss methodology: If I talk to you, for example, I do not have any reason to hide my true self. I may not be as confessional or sincere as possible, but I do not try to portray myself in a way that I'm not. However, many politicians are performers, at least in our times. So how can you be sure that you are understanding that person correctly to perform a psychological analysis?

That's a really important question. When I started doing this research, what surprised a lot of people was that politicians were willing to share their emotions on paper and – some of them – to speak to me one to one. Whilst, yes, it is

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