Abstract: Manipulation. A word with such a special echo that exceeds the boundaries of semantics, creating rumor and scenarios which are more or less whimsical, with a pregnant whiff of conspiration. Passing through the scientific-psychological essential aspects, we reach the coup de grace: from the manipulation of the masses, through the culture of mediocrity, to the much debated manipulation through the use of mass media. We do not strictly treat the psychology of large groups, neglecting the individual. Thus, we will tangentially walk the path of Intelligence. How are these strings pulled? Who are the puppeteers and how can we become them?

Keywords: manipulation; subliminal messages; CIA techniques; religion

The concept of “manipulation” is highly debated nowadays and utterly present in day-to-day respects. Although virulently criticised for its prevalent negative aura, it is undoubtedly useful when it comes to recognize its specific signs in order to fight against it, let alone using it for personal, harmless purposes. Subsequently, we enter a fascinating world resembling a complex show with puppets and puppeteers with different scenarios and actors. The usually scorned puppets, orchestrated by their master’s personnel will could be anyone of us whether it comes to a person as part of a nation, seduced and heavily influenced by an evil personality cult, as history provides us numerous examples or the individual facing a myriad of commercials with subliminal messages, demagogic speeches of politicians following certain psychological techniques designed to appeal the subconscious, foreign agencies trying to recruit us or other persons attempting to take advantage of our weaknesses. In our project we will present “Mice” - the most basic scheme in every recruitment process, a short analysis of of the infamous personality cult that characterizes every dictatorship or non-democratic regimes, like Nazism and last but not least, an attempt to penetrate the internal mechanism of manipulation used in advertising, sales and the most banal fields of our lives.

Let’s dissect the process a bit. Let’s start off simple, linear. What is it? How is it created? Which are the main methods? Psychological manipulation is a type of social influence that aims to change the perception or behavior of others through underhanded, deceptive, or even abusive tactics. By advancing the interests of the manipulator, often at another's expense, such methods could be considered exploitative, abusive, devious, and deceptive. Social influence is not necessarily negative. For example, doctors can try to persuade patients to change unhealthy habits. Social influence is generally perceived to be harmless when it respects the right of the influenced to accept or reject and is

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not unduly coercive. Depending on the context and motivations, social influence may constitute underhanded manipulation.

**Manipulation within mass-media.** In the old days, we only had a few threats to fear when it came to media manipulation: the government propagandist and the hustling publicist. They were serious threats, but vigilance worked as a clear and simple defense. They were the exceptions rather than the rule — they exploited the fact that the media was trusted and reliable. Today, with our blog and web driven media cycle, nothing can escape exaggeration, distortion, fabrication and simplification.

Media manipulation exploits the difference between perception and reality. The media was long a trusted source of information for the public. Today, all the barriers that made it reliable have broken down. This all happens because of the poor incentives. When readers don’t pay for news, the creators of the news don’t have any loyalty to the readers either.

**Subliminal messages.** Subliminal perception is a deliberate process created by communication technicians, whereby you receive and respond to information and instructions without being aware of it. Messages in the form of printed words, pictures or voices presented either very rapidly or very obscurely bypass your conscious awareness. Anything consciously perceived can be evaluated, criticized, discussed, argued, and possibly rejected. Anything programmed subliminally to your subconsciousness meets no resistance. This subliminal information is stored in your brain and capable of influencing your judgment, behavior and attitudes.

Serious commercial experiments with subliminal messaging were conducted in the mid 50-s. The **BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION** experimented with projecting subliminal images on television. Pictures were flashed on the screen too quickly to be seen consciously, but they did make an impression on the subconscious. The BBC experiment was followed by experiments by the **CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION**, **MEXICO'S TELEVISA** commercial TV and radio network, **US TV station WTWO in Bangor** and many more. The most known experiment with subliminal messaging was conducted by a marketing researcher and psychologist James Vicary in 1957 during the presentation of the movie "Picnic". Every 5 seconds the words “Hungry? Eat popcorn. Drink Coca Cola” were projected for 0.003 seconds. That is extremely fast. Sales of popcorn and COKE in that New Jersey theater increased 57.8 percent and 18.1 percent respectively. Numerous scientific researches following these experiments confirmed beyond any doubt that subliminal messaging works. When advertising industry and government agencies understood the potential of subliminal messaging they started investing millions in developing and perfecting of subliminal techniques, which can be used not only for marketing, but also for propaganda and mind control.

**How our perception works?** How can something that we don't notice affect our behavior? Well, unheeded doesn't mean unseen. As you know, our mind consists of two interacting parts: conscious and subconscious. The subconscious part of mind operates below the level of conscious awareness, it controls reflexes, automatic functions and handles the processing and storing of incoming information. Subconsciousness is able to process 20,000 bits of information simultaneously, while consciousness can deal only with 7 ± 2 bits of information at the same time. Instead of the simplistic five senses of Aristotle — sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell — there are at least thirty-seven known, differentiated sensory inputs into the brain. All of the information picked by these senses is sent to the brain and absorbed by the subconsciousness, however, only very concrete and relevant data is passed to the conscious mind after it has been processed and reduced. All the rest remains ignored. A good example of this is the Cocktail Party Effect: You can talk with a friend in a crowded party and still listen and understand what he says even if the place is very noisy. You can
simultaneously ignore what another nearby person is saying, but if someone over the other side of the room suddenly mentions your name, you notice that sound and respond to it immediately. Not only that your name immediately triggers your attention, you usually are aware of the entire sentence it has came in. From this experience we can learn that our brain records everything that takes place around us. Interesting that certain words like “sex”, “blood”, “death” have the same effect in triggering your attention as your name.

**Emotional Manipulation Techniques.** Nowadays, battles are not only waged on a battlefield. They are also waged inside your mind. Through the misuse of emotional manipulation, brainwashing and mind control techniques, your enemies can actually assert some sort of control over you. Emotional blackmail is one of the most used manipulation techniques in this new war. A lot of people succumb to this trick because they feel as if they have no choice. Sentences like “Don’t you care about the company?” or “If you really want to be my friend, you would do this for me” usually force them to make decisions they don’t really want to. Focusing On the Negative Sides. Some people just like to put a damper on your brilliant idea by spitting out all the things that could go wrong with it. These people are no longer offering critique. And these people will usually raise questions that will raise doubts in you. For example, you announce that you are thinking of flying to London for a week-long vacation. People using psychological manipulation will most likely react to your news by stating the danger of flying or the number of negative things awaiting you at the airport. Teenage Rebellion. Sadly, even those way past their teenage years like to act out as a response against your decision or whatever it is you have just told them. For example, you want to move out of your home to live independently. At first, everyone seems to be fine with it. But just as you start hunting for that perfect apartment, things just start happening one after another. Some sort of personal crisis occurs in the family, your mother suddenly starts smoking again. Emotional manipulation techniques may be all over your life; but that doesn't mean you have to give in to them.

**Crowd Manipulation.** Crowd manipulation is the intentional use of techniques based on the principles of crowd psychology to engage, control, or influence the desires of a crowd in order to direct its behavior toward a specific action. This practice is common to politics and business and can facilitate the approval or disapproval or indifference to a person, policy, or product.

**Adolf Hitler’s rise to power in Nazi Germany.** In a little over a year, one man completely manipulated an entire government and legal system to acquire a totalitarian regime. What many are not aware of is how Hitler’s strategy arose. After a failed coup attempt in 1923, a short stay in prison and a controversial novel, Adolf Hitler abandoned his ideas that force was the sole solution in achieving complete control over Germany. His second attempt revolved around statutes and regulations. By understanding and contorting the law Hitler achieved sole political control and completely reorganized the German judiciary, all while under a blanket of legitimacy. The fundamental difference between Hitler’s two attempts to gain control over the government was that the use of raw power and emotion hypnotized a large group of Germans. The romantic ideals of fighting for national pride and honor are enough to motivate any individual. Hitler referred to emotion as a kind of doorway or “gateway” into the more suggestible regions of the human heart and mind; once this door has been opened it is possible to “get inside” of people's heads and direct their responses and actions. In the wake of the economic collapse in Germany and the humiliations heaped upon the German people after World War I, Hitler was able to use the emotions that emerged from these events to manipulate public opinion and, ultimately, to lead his people into a terrible and destructive war. Where emotion was lacking, such as in the case of the Jewish question, events were staged or phony stories planted in order to fire people's emotions in the direction that the government wanted to go.
television and mass communication devices, modern propaganda has become much more subtle, effective, and powerful.

**Religious manipulation** refers to the abuse administered under the guise of religion, including harassment or humiliation, possibly resulting in psychological trauma. One specific meaning of the term religious abuse refers to psychological manipulation and harm inflicted on a person by using teachings or doctrines of that person’s religion. This is perpetrated by members of the same or similar faith, and includes the use of a position of authority within the religion over another person to inflict such harm. It is most prevalently directed at children and emotionally vulnerable adults, and motivations behind such abuse vary, but can be either well-intentioned or malicious. Even well-intentioned religious abuse can have long-term psychological consequences. Causing the victim to be intensely fearful can induce that person to develop a specific phobia about the topic they were warned against, or develop a long-lasting depression. They may have an unshakable sense of shame that persists even when they have either grown up or left the church. The person can also be manipulated into avoiding a beneficial action, such as a medical treatment or to engage in a harmful behavior. In his book “Religious Abuse”, pastor Keith Wright describes an example of such abuse. When he was a child, his Christian Scientist mother became very ill, and eventually was convinced to seek medical treatment at an inpatient facility. Members of the Christian Scientist Church went to the treatment center and convinced her to stop treatment and leave, instead to trust prayer and Christian Scientist methods of treatment. She died shortly thereafter. While the church members may not have had any malicious intent, their misguided interpretation of their religion's teachings to manipulate Wright's mother ultimately resulted in her death.

**Manipulation in the Intelligence era** “Today’s recruiters must learn and use the significant breakthroughs in understanding of human motivations and the means for influencing them that have occurred since the early 1980s.” Ask any CIA National Clandestine Service officer what his or her mission is and the likely reply will be “to recruit spies, to steal secrets and conduct covert action”.

**Is spying rational?** On the surface, committing espionage appears to be less than rational. Agents risk death, either at the hands of an enemy or by their own legal systems. Even some countries that do not impose the death penalty for criminal acts make exceptions for spies.

**Mice: Money.** On the surface, money, or what money can provide (such as security, ducation for children, a better living standard, or a ticket out of an undesirable environment), seems to be a rational reason to take on the risks of spying. Certainly a long list of individuals who have volunteered to provide intelligence to their country’s enemies have cited the need for money as their reason. In a study of 104 Americans who spied and were caught between 1947 and 1989, the majority, indeed an increasing number over the years studies, reported that money was their sole or primary motivator.

**Mice: Ideology.** More than the “venal” recruit who pursues money, an ideologically driven agent is seen as a much greater threat by counterintelligence (CI) officers. For CIA recruiters, agents who serve for reasons of belief are the only agents that most officers can truly respect.

**miCe: Coercion or Compromise** Coercion or compromise (blackmail) provide relatively easy-understand reasons agents take on the risks of espionage — as seen in countless movies and CI training films.16 Both factors appear in many past spy cases. Compromise most often occurs when potential agents make mistakes and come to believe they must seek the assistance of a foreign intelligence agency to avoid punishment. Compromise and coercion were clearly prime concerns of CI officials during the Cold War. Anyone with a security clearance was warned that any illegal or “deviant” behavior as defined in the day put a person at risk of being blackmailed into spying. Stories
abound in both fiction and nonfiction of officials being coerced on account of their illicit sexual behavior, whether it was homosexuality or adultery resulting from being caught in the “honey traps” set by the infamous Soviet “sparrow squads.” In addition to these sordid stories, CIA officers also knew that many of their brethren in the FBI and other US law enforcement agencies regularly coerced informants, often overlooking criminal offenses or working to mitigate consequences in exchange for cooperation.

**mice**: Ego or Excitement. The final letter in MICE can stand for “Ego” or “Excitement.” Of the two, ego satisfaction appears to be the more prevalent driver. Spy fiction may portray espionage as an exciting world of gun battles, explosions, car chases, and sexual adventures, but anyone who has lived in this world knows the truth is very different. For every hour spent on a street a case officer will spend many hours more writing up the results of the last meeting, preparing for the next meeting, and endlessly evaluating current cases and constantly looking for new assets. For the agent’s part, the life is usually equally dull and demanding. Successful agents must continue to perform in whatever jobs provide them the access for which they were recruited in the first place, all the while meeting the tasks levied by case officers. They only need to have egos stroked and to be given the chance to harm a system that has wronged them. Such reasons may provide good beginnings on the road to espionage, but will they keep agents on that road for decades?

To put it briefly, manipulation is a prevalent phenomenon and it has shaped societies from the primordial times to contemporaneous in its various areas. It is a spectacle in which everyone of us is involved, guided by invisible strings like speeches, laws, commercials, subliminal messages which are wittily pulled by certain puppeteers – a metaphor for the state, charismatic leaders, religion, companies and even individuals. It is essential to understand its mechanism in order to exceed the propaganda and the persuasion and to avoid a deformed view of reality. It is desirable to master its principles so as to become, from puppets, puppeteers.

**Bibliography**


