

# Manipulations & Mind Games: The Secret Battle to Control How We Think

 [web.archive.org/web/20200216185002/http://themindunleashed.com:80/2015/02/manipulations-mind-games-secret-battle-control-think.html](http://web.archive.org/web/20200216185002/http://themindunleashed.com:80/2015/02/manipulations-mind-games-secret-battle-control-think.html)

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Kingsley Dennis, *New Dawn*

Throughout history the mechanisms of persuasion and influence have always been manipulated by those in power as a means to maintain authority and legitimacy. In more recent times the overall manipulation of the mass public mind has become less about overt spectacles of fear and obedience, and more about subtle forms of media propaganda. The manufacturing of consent<sup>1</sup> is endemic and has become a pervasive presence within modern societies.

Edward Bernays,<sup>2</sup> who has been called ‘the father of public relations’, was a nephew of Sigmund Freud and introduced psychological and psychoanalytical methods into modern propaganda. Bernays considered media propaganda essential for manipulating public opinion because society, in his regard, was composed of too many irrational elements (the people) which could be dangerous to the efficient mechanisms of power (‘democracy’). Within the context of our modern mass societies, propaganda has morphed into a mechanism for not only engineering public opinion but also as a means for consolidating social control.

Modern programs of social influence could not exist without recent developments in mass media. Today, it exists as a combination of expertise and knowledge from technology; sociology; social behaviourism; psychology; communications; and other scientific techniques. Almost every nation state has made use of a controlled mainstream media, to various degrees, for the regulation and influence of its citizenry.

By way of mainstream media, a nation's controlling authority is able to exert psychological influence upon people's perception of reality. This capacity works hand-in-hand with the more physical components, such as enforcing the legal system and national security laws (surveillance and monitoring). State control, acting as a 'psychological machine', instigates specific psychological manipulations in order to achieve desired goals within its national borders (and often beyond).

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Examples of these psychological manipulations include the deliberate use of specific cultural symbols and embedded signifiers that catalyse conditioned reflexes in the populace. These triggers have included 'Red' and 'Communist' during the US's 1950s McCarthyism; or 'Muslim Terrorist' during the recent media-hyped 'War on Terror'. Targeted reactions can thus be achieved making the populace open to further manipulation in this state. This is a process of psychic re-formation that works repeatedly to soften up the people through continued and extensive exposure to particular stimuli. These are often the subconscious symbols we live by – artificial signifiers in order to create a compliant society.

Today's media, which includes the dominant presence of advertising, extensively uses the notion of 'attractors' and 'attractor patterns' to target audience consciousness. This type of symbol-manipulation is often referred to in the business as neuro-marketing. Mainstream media corporations are using the huge growth in global communications to further shape their science of targeting human consciousness.

In the case of neuro-marketing, many advertisers first audience-test their commercials using brain-scanning techniques in order to know which part of a person's brain is being activated by specific strong attractors. For example, it has been discovered that specific attractors can bypass the logical part of the brain and impact directly the emotional part. In such cases, as in the film industry, the advertisers place an award symbol (such as an Oscar or Golden Globe) which has proven to be an effective 'strong attractor' that influences the emotional part of the brain. The philosophy here is to adjust the level of consciousness of an advertisement in relation to the measurable level of consciousness of the consumer.<sup>3</sup>

Advertisers are aware that a person's consciousness passes on messages indirectly to the body in the form of galvanic skin response, pupil response, electrical nerve response, etc, and so every element of the screen promotion must elucidate the correct conscious reception. In order to achieve this correct set of attractor patterns, all elements are deliberately worked on: the music, the visuals, the script, the voice. Interesting, symbolic strong attractors that have the most impact to persuade the audience include visuals such as smiley faces and cute

animals (dogs wagging their tails and kittens purring). In terms of voice, they include words such as 'honesty'; 'integrity'; 'freedom'; 'hope and change'; 'friendship', etc. For this reason it can be seen how politicians use a great deal of these attractor-patterns in their speeches and promotional material.<sup>4</sup>

Other methods of blatant media coercion include the use of so-called 'expertism'; that is, using the expert in the white lab-coat tactic for creating simulacra of truth. For such propaganda to be effective it cannot be too far off the truth; in other words, it must have the appearance of reality. Trade, employment, and financial figures are an example of this when the media discusses statistics as if they represented the truth. And which members of the general public have the knowledge or the resources to check and confirm such figures? Those people that do know are usually those that have a vested interest in maintaining the illusion, such as traders and financiers. As a norm, statistics of a negative connotation are usually drawn from the smallest possible pile. And once a false (or 'doctored') claim is disseminated and accepted by the public, it becomes established and hard to deconstruct or invalidate (unless persuasive anti-propaganda is just as effective).

### **Accepted Forms of 'Individualism'**

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Modern societies are set-up to accommodate and appeal to not only the mass collective but also to individualism. But the forms that accepted 'individualism' takes are often a sheath to hide the workings of a mass psyche. It is the 'allowed liberty' that is provided to the modern person in pursuit of material gains as long as they remain within the parameters of their established society. Liberty, then, is an expression of mobility within a pre-described system: it does not denote liberty external to the system. Examples are the rock clichés that the mainstream media love to promote and adorn their front pages. Notables are the raging antics of destroying hotel rooms and throwing televisions out of the window, behaviour that later morphed into copycat corporate rock PR. In essence, such 'rebels' are allowed, and even encouraged, because their antics sell records. Rebelliousness in these forms is thus another contribution to a consumerist society, albeit through a different manner. And today there are many forms in which individualism is allowed to manifest as long as it plays within a pre-described system.

Another form of individualism is corporate-media centralisation masquerading as diversity and choice. The display of diversity in the information coming from the mainstream media gives the illusion of independent reportage and news. Yet mainstream media, if it is not government owned, is likely to be owned by a corporate conglomerate, often with high-level state relations. An individual is generally attracted to a particular newspaper that reflects their views, beliefs, lifestyles, etc, without suspecting these are all diversified patterned behaviour within the system. The mainstream media caters for these needs by operating a variety of newspapers that support these mythical standpoints, whether they be politically left, right, left/right of centre, liberal, independent, this, that, or any other of the positions available for the 'diversity within the unity' of the mass mind.

## Concentration of Media Ownership

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It is somewhat worrying to learn that most Western media organisations are owned by only a handful of giant corporations: News Corp; Viacom; Time-Warner; Disney; Vivendi Universal, and Bertelsmann. For example, Disney (The Walt Disney Company) is the largest entertainment and media multinational in the world. Disney owns the TV networks ABC (USA), Disney Channel, ESPN, A&E, and the History Channel, as well as publishing, merchandising, and theatre subsidiaries. They also own Walt Disney Pictures, Touchstone Pictures, Hollywood Pictures, Miramax Film Corp., Dimension, and Buena Vista International, as well as 11 theme parks around the world.

News Corp comes in next as the world's second largest media multinational with an incredible range of TV and satellite channels, magazine and newspaper holdings, record companies and publishing companies based worldwide, with a strong presence in Asian markets. Similarly, Time-Warner owns more than 50 magazines; a film studio as well as various film distributors; more than 40 music labels (including Warner Bros, Atlantic, and Elektra); and several TV networks (such as HBO, Cartoon Network, and CNN).

Viacom owns TV networks CBS, MTV, VH1, Nickelodeon, Comedy Central, Paramount Pictures, and nearly 2,000 cinema screens, as part of their media empire. Likewise, Vivendi Universal owns 27% of US music sales via labels such as Interscope, Geffen, A&M, Island, Def Jam, MCA, Mercury, Motown and Universal. They also own Universal Studios, Studio Canal, Polygram Films, Canal+, and numerous Internet and mobile phone companies. Then there is Bertelsmann which, as a global media corporation, runs Europe's second largest TV, radio and production company (the RTL Group) with 45 TV stations and 32 radio channels; Europe's largest printing and publishing firm (Gruner & Jahr); the world's largest English-language general trade book publisher (Random House); the world's largest book and music club group (Direct Group); and an international media and communications service provider (Arvato AG).

In terms of mainstream news reporting it is always important to check the source when reading a news item, i.e. is it of an independent source or is it 'according to a government source', etc. The mainstream media is largely fed via global news wire services, the two largest being Reuters (now Thomson Reuters) and Associated Press. The Rothschild banking family bought Reuters around 1895 and in 1988 Reuters bought 44% of Associated Press. This again constitutes a centralisation of news information, as well as the various well-established political press offices. When such sources (especially PR offices) disseminate information as 'truthful news', it is doing nothing more than was parodied in Orwell's 1984 as Newspeak.

Each day the mainstream media offers a kaleidoscopic view of the world – tragedies, disasters, coups, and politics flash before the eyes like a glitterball. As a result the viewer rarely has the chance to focus on one issue, and generally remembers very little. Nor is there the need to remember a specific event as the next day it is likely to be replaced by the next

item of news. In this way the average viewer is granted their ‘nourishment’ and feeling of ‘open news’ whilst at the same time being denied any real depth of knowledge. In such media-saturated environments people are provided with a conversation space or talking point amongst friends and work colleagues; or as a buffer zone to cover up the embarrassment of a non-communicative family. And if all hell breaks loose at work, at least you have *Breaking Bad* or *The Walking Dead* waiting for you on the home screen!

The mainstream media and entertainment industry also manipulate viewers’ emotions through the continual images of sexual arousal to the point whereby many of us are desensitised and more accepting of sexual misconduct. The media of escapism allows us to live out our fantasies in what is considered a less harmful way. It provides us with an external platform on which to project our wishful desires. It is supposed to placate us, to make us forget the drudgery of our humdrum lives. There are also those few who are motivated to mimic the acts seen in the media, whether through violence or sexual perversion. No doubt the few who do indulge are considered worth the trade-off against the millions who are mollified and happily passive in front of the screen.

The creative capacity of human imagination is being substituted for a ready-made set of imaginative programming. We don’t need to imagine for ourselves when the whole stage-show is presented to us in magnificent Technicolour and computer-generated imagery (CGI). We have our tickets into the ‘flight into unreality’.

## **Arrested Development**

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Another more worrying possibility is that television can act as a factor in causing arrested development within younger children, thus resulting in a later generation of less neurologically developed adults. Child researcher Joseph Chilton Pearce has published findings that indicate how television prevents the higher brain in children from developing as television engages solely with the lower (aka reptilian) brain. If the higher brain is not activated sufficiently through external stimulation – which it rarely is via child institutions – then at age 11 the brain begins to destroy many of its unused neurons. This can lead to a permanent condition of arrested development, according to Chilton Pearce. What this points to is a serious lack of proper stimulants for many children in overly institutionalised and controlled social environments. Also, our brains do not fully mature until we are around age twenty-five, which explains the early targeting of children through advertisers and conditioning institutions.

Recent disclosures have described how large food corporations are targeting children through what has now been dubbed ‘advergames’ – free games to download onto smartphones and tablets that contain subtle advertisements for high-sugar products.<sup>5</sup> A report commissioned by the Family and Parenting Institute, published in 2012, suggested that children’s brains process advergames in a different way from how they would process

traditional adverts; that is, on a more subconscious and emotional level. In this context many children do not understand that such games are actually very sophisticated adverts and so have no conscious 'cognitive defence' to the food product marketing.

This is no longer a one-way game, and the media landscape is undergoing a significant transition. What has changed the playing field of the media over recent years has been the rise of distributed and decentralised global communications between individuals. The Internet in particular, as well as other forms of social and community media, has spurred the growth of individuals seeking to verify information for their own selves. Independent media, such as is now coming of age via the Internet, has served to counter-neutralise some of the overwhelming persuasive power of mainstream media. This has helped to shift some people away from the propaganda that was previously virtually unchallenged. This bottom-up media revolution has seriously compromised the conditioning techniques used by governments and corporations alike. A major example of this citizen media revolution was seen during the Arab Spring, circa 2011, where civil resistance was effectively organised through social media networks. There are, as would be expected, now concerted efforts underway to censor the Internet and other social media networks in various nation states, as well as on a global level.

It is therefore imperative that our independent media be protected; our social networks of free speech preserved; and our right to seek and speak the truth defended. Manipulating and messing with our minds has no place in a truly democratic and egalitarian future.

You can explore these subjects further by reading Kingsley Dennis's book *The Struggle for Your Mind: Conscious Evolution and the Battle to Control How We Think* (Inner Traditions, 2012), a revolutionary call to overthrow society's mental controls and expand consciousness for the greater good of humanity. Available from all good bookstores and online retailers.

## About the Author

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**KINGSLEY L DENNIS PhD** is a sociologist, researcher and writer. He is the author of several critically acclaimed books including *New Consciousness for a New World*; *Struggle For Your Mind*; *After the Car*; *The Struggle for Your Mind* and the celebrated *Dawn of the Akashic Age* (with Ervin Laszlo). His new book is *The Phoenix Generation*. He previously worked in the Sociology Department at Lancaster University, UK. Kingsley is the author of numerous articles on social futures; technology; new media communications; and conscious evolution.

Check out Kingsley Dennis's follow up article "Winning the War of Minds & the Battle to Control How We Think" in *New Dawn 145*.

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## Footnotes

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1. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manufacturing_Consent:_The_Political_Economy_of_the_Mass_Media)
2. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward Bernays](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Bernays)
3. This idea, as well as neuro-marketing, was given to me in personal correspondence by Darryl Howard, who sent me his research 'Advertising in the New Paradigm' (Darryl Howard & Associates).
4. Anyone wishing to know more on this subject should investigate Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP).
5. 'Food giants target children with addictive "advergimes"', [www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/food-giants-target-children-with-addictive-advergimes-9222302.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/food-giants-target-children-with-addictive-advergimes-9222302.html)

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