DECEPTION: TYPES, PRINCIPLES, AND TACTICS

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ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose	The paper provides general background on the who, what, when, and why of deception.
Methodology	It uses a naturalistic observational methodology. Whenever possible, the paper provides examples.
Contribution	The research cited in this paper comes from a large variety of disparate fields of study. As such, it is one of the few multidisciplinary attempts to understand deception.
Findings	The research uncovered general principles for conducting deception and tactics that support these principles.
Impact on Society	The authors hope that this paper's finding will shed light on the topic of fake news as well as misinformation and disinformation, particularly in politics.
Keywords	deception, principles, tactics, fake news

INTRODUCTION

In contrast to an earlier paper in this series that laid the groundwork for examining fake news from a high level, a conceptual overview focusing on informing science literature (E. Cohen, 2019), this paper has no such lofty philosophical aspiration. Instead, it attempts to explore more fully the principles and tactics of deceiving, particularly how false and misleading information is delivered, as shown in Figure 1. That is, this paper explores the tactics and principles commonly used to deceive.
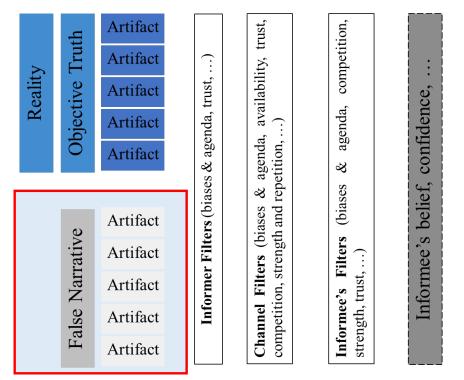
Figure 1. This paper focuses on the principles and tactics used to disinform, with emphasis on the areas outlined in red. (Adapted from Cohen, 2019)

HOW WE DECEIVE: TYPES OF DECEPTION

On the least granular level, there are three types of deception: stating untruths, concealing the truth, and paltering, a cross between the two. The paper turns its attention to each in turn.

STATING UNTRUTHS

Lying refers to knowingly stating untruths with the intent to deceive. It involves two elements 1) providing false information (an act of commission) in conjunction with the 2) intention to mislead. This paper acknowledges that there is no universally accepted definition of lying acceptable to all philosophers (Mahon, 2016). Nevertheless, the notion of lying, while nuanced, is well understood by most.

CONCEALING THE TRUTH

Another type of deception is an act of omission, choosing not to voice the truth by concealing at least some relevant facts. Purposefully concealing (hiding, obscuring, masking) of the truth is another form of deception. An example of that seen in deceiving the government taxation office by failing to report all sources of one's income.

PALTERING

The third type of deception falls in the middle, between deceiving by an act of commission and deceiving by omission. It is known as paltering. Vocabulary.com defines paltering as voicing "*deliberately ambiguous or unclear [statements] in order to mislead or withhold information*" ("Palter," n.d.) O'Sullivan (2019) reports, "*Agents of disinformation today mix factual and false information, making it more difficult for audiences to determine what is real and what is fake.*" Gerdeman (2016) defines it slightly differently as "*active use of*

truthful statements to influence a target's beliefs by giving a false or distorted impression." Figure 2 shows paltering in a Venn diagram as the intersection of lying and concealing since it contains elements of both.
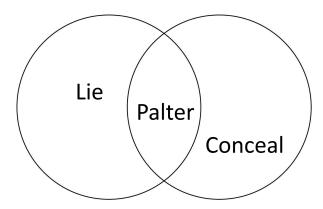

Figure 2: Three Broad Ways to Deceive: by Commission, Omission, and Paltering.

Components of paltering can include equivocations, exaggerations, minimalization, and spin. We now examine these terms in turn:

Equivocations

Equivocation means making vague or ambiguous statements to conceal the truth or avoid committing oneself. For example, when the mayor of Chicago was about to make the unpopular decision to close schools, he phrased it as in positive-sounding terms that concealed the details of his decision, namely "*optimizing school resource utilization*." Also, see Chang (2018).

Exaggeration

Exaggerations (auxesis) refer to overstating or stretching the truth. In some cases, exaggerations do not endeavor to hide the truth, as in, for example, "his brain is the size of a pea." Other times, they defy facts, as when a politician said an event had "the largest audience ever to witness an inauguration, period, both in-person and around the globe."

Minimization

Minimizations (meiosis) denote the opposite of exaggerations, understatements, and downplaying of facts. They include belittling statements made by a politician, such as "How can a dummy dope like Harry Hurt, who wrote a failed book about me but doesn't know me or anything about me, be on TV discussing Trump?"

Spin

Spin in the context of deception can be understood as paltering squared. It involves both the minimization of inconvenient facts and the exaggerating of helpful facts to make vague statements. The politician whose parent died on the gallows may attempt to cleanse his family history in the eyes of his audience by spinning that "while attending a large public event, my father died when the platform he was standing upon suddenly collapsed."
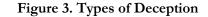
Many disciplines study spin. Gerdeman (2016) provides examples of the use of paltering in politics as "attempts to distort the story to influence voters." Rogers, Zeckhauser, Gino, Norton, and Schweitzer (2017) experimentally examine paltering in everyday human behavior, particularly negotiations from a psychology viewpoint.

CREATING A PERSPECTIVE ON DECEPTION

Two different research efforts, each using two-dimensional charts, endeavored to relate the impact of deception and to differentiate the types of deception. Both looked at lies and concealment, although neither explicitly looked at paltering.

Rowe and Rothstein (2004) examined types of deception using the dimensions of the duration of the effect's impact (long-term/short-term) and the degree the type is active or passive and offer the following chart (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Types of Deception
Source: Adapted from Rowe and Rothstein (2004) image retrieved from Wikipedia
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Spectrum_of_deception_types.gif

Druckman and Bjork (1991), reviewing the psychological literature, took a more expansive view of deception and offer a different two-dimensional mapping of terms, in this case, based on the dimensions of the degree of covertness and degree of harmfulness, as shown in Figure 4.
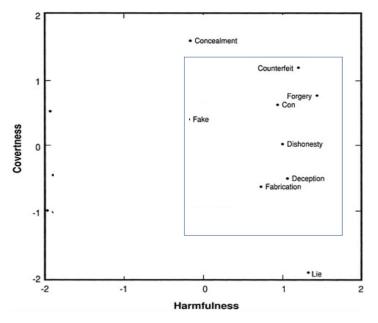

Figure 4. Deception by harmfulness and covertness.
(Adapted from Druckman & Bjork, 1991, p. 179.)

The figures were adapted to omit many additional terms that are irrelevant to this paper for reasons of clarity. From these two analyses, we discern lying categorized as having the attributes of being *overt, harmful, and short term* while concealment as *covert with long term effects*. We can speculate that paltering would follow in the middle. Figure 4 shows a box around several terms that may be related to disinformation. In other words, while lying harms, the damage from paltering and by concealment are more durable and insidious.
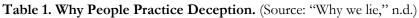
WHY PEOPLE DECEIVE

All forms of deception (lying, paltering, and concealment) have their potential downside when the truth is later revealed. So why deceive. Table 1 suggests that people practice deception to gain esteem or an advantage and to avoid punishment or embarrassment.

Much of the deception described below is for political gain. People also deploy deception for personal financial gain. For example, clickbait "news" sites on the web show misleading headlines designed to entice visitors to click a link and thereby to increase the website's advertising revenue (Holiday, 2013). For example, the headline might read, "You will never guess what he just said."

Some deceive to garner sympathy and to gain fame. Deb and Healy (2019) write that actor Jussie Smollet reportedly orchestrated a fake attack to advance his cause (and thus his net worth).

Some spread false information without intending to deceive when a misunderstanding leads to the dissemination of misinformation. For example, Jenny McCarthy advocates against vaccinating children against diseases, believing that the vaccination caused her son's autism.

Table 1. Why People Practice Deception. (Source: "Why we lie," n.d.)

	What is being achieved	
	Gaining	Avoiding
Material	**Gaining advantage**	**Avoiding punishment**
Social	**Gaining esteem**	**Avoiding embarrassment**

WHO ENDEAVORS TO DECEIVE?

Sun Tzu wrote in the Art of War some 2600 years ago that deception is the basis of all warfare. However, deception use certainly is not limited to warfare. Politics, business, literature, cinema, and magic tricks all make use of deception. Nonetheless, many of the tactics of deceptions span usage across fields.

Only a fine line separates deception from persuasion (see, for example, Schudson, 2013). Consumer products use marketing techniques to lead people to want to purchase their wares. Likewise, people utilize public relations firms to help market themselves and their reputations. When people's deeds have severely damaged their reputations, some turn to reputation management firms. One tactic is to replace the current top of page listing of real news reports about the person's indiscretions with favorable stories by using fake news outlets to eclipse the accurate adverse news reports (Levy, 2019).

PRINCIPLES AND TACTICS OF DECEPTION

The following is exploratory research on the principles and tactics used to deceive. The following list evolved from reviewing the relevant literature but mostly first from observation and then a search for supporting literature. For this reason, this list is a work-in-progress. Readers who object to

knowledge obtained through observing occurrences in real-life settings need to recall the break-throughs in developmental psychology provided by Jean Piaget and his disciples.

The principles observed by the author include the following.

PRINCIPLE: DISTORT THE TRUTH - LIE

The foundation of deception is the lie, expressing an untruth. Gilbert experimentally showed that exposing people to false information, *even when they know it to be false*, leads them to believe it (Gilbert, Krull, & Malone, 1990; Gilbert, Tafarodi, & Malone, 1993). One cannot un-ring a bell.

PRINCIPLE: LIE BIG

The "big lie" (*große Lüge*) is a lie so big that it defies logical thinking. Hitler coined the term Big Lie in Mein Kampf ("his combat") to express using a *lie* so "colossal" that no one would believe that someone "could have the impudence to distort the truth so infamously."

PRINCIPLE: REPEAT THE LIE (FIREHOSE OF FALSEHOOD)

Repeat a lie repeated often enough, and some will believe it. Lenin may have said, "*A lie told often enough becomes the truth*." Commentator Stephen Colbert calls this effect "truthiness," a sense that a belief is true without checking the facts ("Truthiness," n.d.). Ira Hyman (2013) refers to this by the more academic-sounding term "illusory truth effect."

This phenomenon, the "illusory truth effect," has been well-studies and replicated (De keersmaecker et al., 2019). Former KGB chairman Yuri Andropov said, *"We have only to keep repeating our themes that the United States and Israel are fascists, Imperial-Zionist countries bankrolled by rich Jews"* (Shaw, 2019). Paul and Matthews (2016) refer to this as the Russian "firehose of falsehood" propaganda model.

Corollary: Keep repeating a big lie

Joseph Goebbels is given attribution for the quote, "*If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it*" (cited in McCarthy & Walsh, 2017).

PRINCIPLE: WHEN CAUGHT IN A LIE, DENY

As pointed out by Vox ("1. Deny everything," 2018), a successful playbook when accused of sexual misconduct is to deny, deny, deny. Repeated accusations of sexual misconduct plagued several powerful US politicians in recent years, including Brett Kavanaugh, Donald Trump, Roy Moore, Bill Clinton, and Clarence Thomas. They all (1) denied the allegations of sexual impropriety, (2) found others to provide them with favorable testimonials, (3) questioned the accusers' judgment and motivation, (4) diverted the discussion, and then (5) moved on. This five-step playbook for denial has proven successful for these politicians, all of whom have weathered their many accusations of sexual misconduct.

Tactic: Doubling down

The tactic of Doubling Down refers to repeating a denial when questioned on its veracity and becoming even more resolute, zealous, and tenacious. Madhani (2019) and Sherman (2018) provide examples of doubling down.

Tactic: Blame others for one's failures

Scapegoating of others is typically found in narcissists. Vesil Vex (n.d.) writes, "*A person who constantly blames others for their own actions thinks of themselves as perfect, probably because of some abuse or trauma they've suffered early in life. Having parents that were abusive, punishing you for your mistakes would naturally cause you to adopt a kind of perfectionist approach to life.*"

Alternatively, it may be related to the fundamental attribution error. Sullum (2017) provides an example of this trait in a leader.

Tactic: Instead of accepting failure, distract the press by changing the topic (perhaps by creating a crisis)

Zeke Miller (2019) notes a tactic at least one leader uses when confronted with a problem: turning attention away from the failure or falsehood by creating a crisis from which one later retreats until attention has moved away from the original failure.

Tactic: Mirror the accusation to create the illusion of equivalence

The mirroring tactic is found on the playground of schools and of politics. Children mirror insults with, "That's what you are, but what am I?". Some politicians behave similarly. When accused of wrongdoing, they claim the accuser of the same wrongdoing. Perhaps doing so provides a fictitious shield of moral equivalence. For example, when the speaker of the US House of Representatives charged the President for contravening the constitution, he accused her of violating the constitution. This tactic requires no factual basis.

(See also the related discussion under the principle: Distract, deflect, divert attention.)

PRINCIPLE. ATTACK – PREVENT FREE SHARING OF IDEAS BY OTHERS

Another principle is to attack one's opponent to prevent their thoughts from being heard. College campuses and, to a lesser extent, other public assemblies provide the stage for such tactics to oppose free speech.

Tactic. Censor speech by occupying the limited seating

A tactic found on college campuses under the guise of free speech is to thwart free speech by organizing large numbers of agitators, sometimes including nonstudents, to arrive early to a public talk that they want to shut down. These early arrivals occupy the seating, which often is limited and, by doing so, prevent others from hearing the talk.

Tactic. Censor speech by heckling the speaker

A tactic to thwart free speech by those with opposing views employs heckling the speaker and by this disruption and noise, prevent the audience from hearing the speaker.

A variation of this tactic is for hecklers to wait until the speaker begins the talk and then disrupt the talk, in turn, shouting, often that the speaker is a liar. Once police escort out the first hooligan, the next one begins this obstruction anew. The article "11 times campus speakers were shouted down by leftist protesters this school year" (2018) outlines these tactics in action.

Tactic. Censor speech by threatening to riot or pressuring to disinvite

Another tactic to disrupt academic freedom relates to requiring the organization that invited the speaker and not the university to pay for police protection. Doing so assures that inviting organizations will need to deplete their limited budget to have their voices heard.

Similarly, if the university is to be held responsible for riots threatened by the insurgents, the administration may choose to disinvite the speaker.

A similar tactic to prevent free speech is to demand the university to disinvite the speaker for even the flimsiest of reasons. Nelson and Greenberg (2016) note, "*at Brown University in March, the transgender activist Janet Mock canceled a speech after 160 anti-Israel students objected because the campus Hillel chapter* [a student organization] *was among the sponsors*."

PRINCIPLE: WHEN OFFENSE IS EXPOSED, REVERSE VICTIM AND OFFENDER

Blaming the victim of one's aggression is a potent principle for deception.

After Russian invaded Ukraine, it claimed victimhood when Ukrainian civilians attempted to navigate Ukrainian waters (Moore, 2018). A recent example of perpetrators claiming victimhood is discussed by Tawil (2019), who describes that when terrorists fire rockets across the border at Israeli civilians from civilian locations (home, school, mosque), the culprits criticized Israel for protecting its civilians.

The tactic below is a variation: attacking the whistleblower.

Tactic. Attack the one who discloses wrongdoing or the process

Once malfeasance is revealed, one tactic is to retaliate against the person or attack the process that divulged the wrongdoing. When the malfeasance occurs in a workplace setting, often the one who reports violations of laws or regulations may elect to do so anonymously as a whistleblower. Many organizations, including the US Department of Labor, protect whistleblowers by guaranteeing anonymity and freedom from retaliation.

Defaming the messenger can be an ad hominem abusive (that is, personal) attack. LaBossiere (2010, p 46) describes such actions as substituting "*abusive remarks for evidence when attacking another person's claim or claims.*" Another definition is "*a fallacious argumentative strategy whereby genuine discussion of the topic at hand is avoided by instead attacking the character, motive, or other attribute of the person making the argument, or persons associated with the argument, rather than attacking the substance of the argument itself*" ("Ad hominem," n.d.).

The DARVO Combo - Deny, attack, reverse victim and offender

The term DARVO expresses the combination of the above three tactics: deny, attack, claim victimhood. Rapists use DARVO to attack their victims in public.

Politicians also employ the DARVO combination of tactics. See "1 Deny everything" (2018).

The principle is that when one's attack on a victim comes to light, the perpetrator does two things: denies it and attacks the victim (for example, by bullying, threats, terror), thus attempting to shift blame to the victim.

PRINCIPLE: DEMONIZATION OF THE OPPONENT

In some cases, the defaming of the messenger becomes truly ugly, containing demonization. Getting the public to demonize one's opponent prevents rational thinking, notes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (n.d.) video "The Path to Nazi Genocide." Demonization portrays those who are different or even have a different viewpoint as evil. Philip Cole explores the phenomenon in his book "The Myth of Evil" (2006). The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. (n.d.) explores it in "Chapter 3: From Citizens to Outcasts, 1933–1938" of its film "The Path to Nazi Genocide."

More recently, the United States President Donald Trump declared in a speech that his deceased opponent was in hell ("President Trump implies…," 2019). In other cases, Trump has used this tactic to demonize those reporting his actions (Freedman, 2018), opponents of his building a border wall (Bonn, 2019), and those who disagree with his energy policy (Schroeder, 2019). Peter Wehner (2019) notes that supporters of Trump are increasingly portraying their critics as demons.

At present, as has happened in the past, this same demonization has been used against the Jewish people and is seen in the Russian language and Arab press as well as on US campuses (See Figure 5). Such demonization occurs even now on US college campuses (see Sharf, 2017). This author observes

that nations, such as the US, are now witnessing a replacement of rational discussion with others holding alternative beliefs with discourses of demonization. Slogans are overtaking truth.
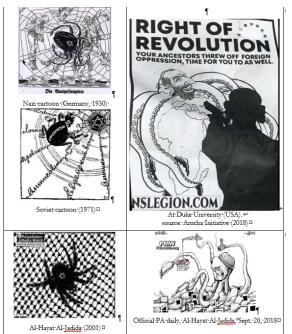

Figure 5. Antisemitic memes in Nazi, Soviet, and Arab media plus a poster distributed at Duke University found on May 1, 2018. Note that they all use similar imagery of Jews.
(Source: AMCHA Initiative Antisemitism Tracker, 2018)

PRINCIPLE: DIVIDE AND CONQUER – CREATE CHAOS

The tactic of divide and conquer (or divide and rule) may have originated in the Kingdom of Macedon over 2,200 years ago. The idea that is it easier to overcome an opponent by splitting it into parts, or factional groups. When two millennia ago, Rome conquered Israel, it split the nation into five administrative districts. In modern times, Russian agents use social media to generate factionalism in other countries by creating tribalism, that is, what Freud called the narcissism of small differences ("Narcissism of small differences," n.d.). As used here, narcissism is not of oneself, but one's faction.

Tactic: Employ tribalism to create dissension

Tribalism, in its political context, refers to peoples' loyalty to their social group over society as a whole. We encounter tribalism in everyday life. For some, active support of one's preferred sports team may include rioting against and pummeling supporters of other teams. The differences between sports teams are small, often limited to the location of their home stadium, hence the narcissism of small differences

In the political arena, Haddad (2017) writes that tribalism helps explain the many conflicts in the middle east.

Tactic: Infiltrate tribes to inject one's message

Tribalism can be artificially stoked. The Kremlin, for example, uses tribalism tactics to trick people of goodwill into doing their ill bidding. Over 70 years ago, the KGB created "peace" movements in the West, such as the World Peace Council, to weaken democracies and dampen protests against Soviet aggression. As stated above, historical research shows that the KGB organized and infiltrated "peace" movements in the West to weaken democracies. The essence of this approach is to inject another's partisan message into a tribe.

Consider the biological process by which a virus invades a body. Larson (2018) writes that misinformation is like a virus. The virus has a message (its RNA instructions) to infiltrate and grow in the host. To overcome the body's defenses, it may appear to the body to be one of the body's own components, and so bypass the host body's defenses against intruders.

Similarly, those with messages they wish to cultivate will infiltrate existing host organizations to gain control over the host and have it do its bidding.

Reciprocation. Robert Cialdini (2007) notes that an effective way to influence and persuade people is by reciprocation (I will march in your parade if you march in mine). We seek out informational sources from like-minded people. To sway US elections, the Russians set up or joined social media groups on various topics, including Black Lives, religion, even animal lovers, and used the trust given by those who subscribed to these social media groups to sway opinions toward their preferred presidential candidate.

Similarly, antisemites joined special interest groups in the US, even ones with contrary viewpoints, to sway those groups to endorse antisemitism (Engel, 2019). The Women's March, an organization to advance women's aspirations, was infiltrated by at least three antisemites whose goal was to advance antisemitism. Only after the light of day revealed their bigotry, and other membership declined, did these infiltrators lose their leadership positions. However, by this time, its cancer had already metastasized, and "the Israel-haters have colonized the Women's March, and they're not letting go." ("The Women's March still has an anti-Semitism problem," 2019).

The truth was not a cure for this deception. Singer (2018) and O'Sullivan (2019) point out the infiltration of the Women's March and the Black Lives Matter movement by antisemites, even though, unlike many Islamic countries, in Israel men and women are treated equally in society and under the law. Followers of Louis Farrakhan, a self-proclaimed racist and antisemite, infiltrated both groups. Farrakhan, the head of the Nation of Islam, calls for separation by races, promotes antisemitism, opposes LGBTQ rights, and is against treating men and women equally. The United Kingdom has for 30 years prohibited Farrakhan from visiting or even giving a videotaped or live stream message to a UK audience. According to Queen's Counsel Nicholas Blake, Farrakhan has not only targeted Jews in his speeches but also "said unkind things about whites, Catholics and gays" ("Farrakhan banned from Britain," 2002; Muhammad, 2017). Lipstadt (2019, p. 195) writes, "*Using a language of shared oppression, progressive groups have made Israel part of the matrix of their concerns.*"

Tribalism works because people tend to believe people they perceive as being like them, with whom they are homophilous.

Homophilous Channels and the Spiral of Silence. Homophily can best be understood as "birds of a feather flock together." The purpose of infiltrating homophilous groups is to lever the trust that the group engenders to advance one's cause. We tend to believe and repeat what we hear from friends, and people we think are similar to us, that is our communities, yet "[c]*ommunities can have an insidious effect on what people believe and consequently on their decisions and actions*" (Sloman & Fernbach, 2017, p. 260). A result can be trusting untrustworthy narratives.

While there is little cost to accepting the false narrative offered by the infiltrator, Gill points out that "*communicating outright rejection of a fake news story could potentially result in exclusion (e.g., we might be 'unfriended' on Facebook) from a homophilous group that is otherwise unanimous in its acceptance*" (Gill, 2019). This exclusion-attempt happened to US commentator Bill Maher, who noted that Tlaib refused to visit her grandmother living in Ramallah when she could not use the opportunity to promote a boycott of Israel:

> Rep. Rashida Tlaib, D-Mich., advocated a boycott against HBO host Bill Maher after he denounced the international movement to boycott Israel as a "bullshit purity test by people who want to appear woke but actually slept through history class." Tlaib responded in a tweet, "Maybe folks should boycott his show" (Rozsa, 2019).

Tlaib's blatant misrepresentation of her motives will be ignored by those who feel an allegiance to her in what might be called the Emperor's New Clothes effect. Gill (2019) notes, "In environments of high extrinsic complexity, the importance of truth in a news story will often be secondary to the motivational and emotional benefits that accrue from reinforcing group membership and coherence…Believing [disinformation] or pretending to believe it (and acting accordingly) would both serve the purpose of reinforcing membership within the group of self-similar individuals who believe (or actively pre-tend to believe) the same."

Noelle-Neumann (1977) calls this phenomenon the Spiral of Silence, the fear that voicing an idea contrary to the one dominant in the group will isolate the individual. To stay in the good graces of fellow members of the Women's March, one had to voice or at least accept its antisemitic message.

Infiltrate Allies. The issue of "I will march in your parade if you march in mine" was noted above by Sharf (2019) as a method for demonizing Jews. Russian operatives used it in a broader way to sow discord in the US 2016 election, as noted in the Report of the Select Committee on Intelligence on Russian Active Measures Campaigns and Interference in the 2016 U.S. Elections, Volume 2 (2019). One method mentioned in this paper and explored more fully elsewhere was to create fake accounts and even fake websites to garner trust by homophilous groups to manipulate real people and events to exploit existing fissures and create new ones.

The Report found that Russian election interference was not limited to US elections. Several other elections, including in Europe, were mentioned.

PRINCIPLE: DISTRACT, DEFLECT, DIVERT ATTENTION

According to magicians Penn and Teller, a fundamental principle of magic is driving attention and focus away from what the magician wants hidden ("Penn and Teller 7 principles of magic," 2015). R. Hyman (1989) and Macknik et al. (2008) provide fuller descriptions of the psychology of magic. See "Colour changing card trick" (2007) for a highly recommended video that demonstrates the impact of changing one's focus.

Misdirection (distracting and diverting attention) works because humans have limited attention capacity, a topic this author wrote about almost a half-century ago (Shiffrin, Craig, & Cohen, 1973). Magicians use attractive assistants to distract the audience. Politicians will dodge the question, and typically the audience (or interviewers) follow the new "shiny object" the politician offers as the distraction.

Tactic: Evasion – dodge, stall, deflect

Evasion is the term used in ethics to deceive by paltering. Peter Bull in his book "The Microanalysis of Political Communication: Claptrap and Ambiguity," (2003, as cited in "Evasion (ethics)," n.d.) points out six techniques to evade answering a political question. They include ignoring the question "What you are asking is not important," acknowledging the question without answering it, attacking the question, and attacking the questioner "What are you talking about?" and "Don't you have something better to do?"

Tactic: Deflect attention by changing the topic

This author learned in graduate school another tactic to handle the situation when he did not have the answer, deflection. A deflection might take the form of "What you need to know is …" and then provide the information that the individual wants to give. Politicians favor this technique, according to Abdullah (2012).

Tactic: Distract by exaggerating minor details

An example best explains the tactic of distracting by exaggerating minor details. If a politician cannot attack the substance of a report condemning her, she asks who selected the hideous color of its cover and asks to open an investigation in the color choice.

PRINCIPLE: DEFLECT ATTENTION

People have a limit to their capacity to pay attention. We can be distracted by tangling a "shiny" object in front of us (or in the case of the stage magician, a quick movement of the hand.) Understanding this, when confronted with an undesirable topic, politicians know how to misdirect the public's attention with a verbal "shiny object" of their choosing.

Tactic: Misdirect, Confuse, Move on

To understand the tactic of "misdirect, confuse, and then move on," consider an example. When Trump appointee for US Attorney General Jeff Sessions lying to Congress about his contacts with Russians came to light, President Trump used this tactic to misdirect the media's attention away from the scandal. Trump dangled before the media a twitter "shiny" object declaring, "*How low has President Obama gone to tapp (sic) my phones during the very sacred election process*!" In doing so, Trump successfully deflected media attention away for the topic of Russian interference in the US election (Robenault, 2017).

PRINCIPLE: HIJACKED EMOTIONS OVERTAKE REASON

The effect of using emotions when lying is even more effective (Brady, Wills, Jost, Tucker, & Van Bavel, 2017). Most people wish to comfort those who are crying. Crying indicates distress and mobilizes emotional support from others.

Marshall McLuhan (1964) titled the first chapter of his book *Understanding Media* as "The medium is the message," pointing out the medium used to convey a message impacts (biases) the receiver. For example, images of a crying or dead child convey a more significant impact on the receiver than providing statistics about children's health. Images evoke emotions that can bypass the ration parts of the brain and so are ripe for *agitprop*, a term coined by Stalin for a type of propaganda that mixes fiction with facts to create false information; the term also includes organized guerilla armies as Moscow has done in Spain, Ukraine, and Israel. Agitprop focuses on the emotional, non-rational parts of the brain "to arouse [the] audience to indignation or action" ("Agitprop," n.d.)

David Konn and Pok Fu Lam (2018) write in the South China Morning Post, "*Pictures of children killed or injured make great 'copy' and fulfil the narrative of Israel as an 'oppressor state.'*" (The photo they referred to was fake.) Truth cannot compete with a fake photo of a crying child.

PRINCIPLE: EMPLOY A FAKE NARRATIVE PRINCIPLE

> *The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie – deliberate, contrived and dishonest –*
> *but the myth – persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic.*
> John F. Kennedy (1962)

A narrative is a story that people tell themselves and others about themselves. It is common for people to teach their children a sanitized version of their history, one that omits any dispiriting historical details.

A fake narrative is fashioned in large part from fiction. It is a myth on a mission. De Baets (2019) is of the view that lying about history is a crime. *It is no exaggeration to say that the cumulative effects of fake news – especially if it takes the form of defamation, privacy invasion, war propaganda and hate speech – can seriously undermine democratic societies. As such, it is a real danger* (De Baets, 2019).

Fake narrative and magic. Parts of a fake historical narrative may be based on actual history and other parts on **hiding** elements of the past, **misdirection**, and **simulation**, that is, given the impression that something happened that did not. These constructions are elements of Penn & Teller, the 7 Basic Principles of Magic (2015):

1. Palm: To hold an object in an apparently empty hand. (hide)
2. Ditch: To secretly dispose of an unneeded object. (Change topic)
3. Steal: To secretly obtain a needed object.
4. Load: To secretly move a needed object to where it is hidden.
5. Simulation: To give the impression that something that has not happened, has. (assert as true without factual basis)
6. Misdirection: To lead attention away from a secret move.
7. Switch: To secretly exchange one object for another.

The fake narrative is deceptive because it relies not on actual history and its artifacts but on fictitious constructions and omission of relevant historical facts. See, for example, Plosker (2018).

PRINCIPLE: WORK IN SECRET (COVERT)

> *Publicity is justly commended as a remedy for social and industrial diseases. Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants; electric light the most efficient policeman.*
> Louis Brandeis, 2014, p. 92

Deception works best when it is accomplished covertly (Mayer, 2017). As noted above, the Soviet (now the Russian) State early on engaged in disrupting democracies by covertly creating discord among factions. Much of the success of the Russian disinformation has been due to its ability to keep these "active measures" concealed from scrutiny.

PRINCIPLE: EMPLOY MESSAGE MAGNIFIERS

Deception is most effective when concealed. When infiltrating a group to inject a message, endeavor to hide your intent from the host lest it employ antibodies to protect itself. It helps to find a susceptible and trusting host, a useful idiot, or an unwitting agent.

Useful Idiots. A related technique is employing useful idiots. The term "useful idiots," attributed to Vladimir Lenin, refers to recruiting a useful pawn, one who shares your goals to disseminate your message. Cybenko, Giani, and Thompson (2002) delve into these and other elements of cognitive hacking (ways to manipulate perception). According to B. Cohen (2019), Carlos Enrique Bayo published in the left-wing Catalan newspaper *Público* the Iranian authored hoax that "*Spanish security services, eager to overrule their Catalan subordinates, colluded with the Islamist terrorist cell that planned the attacks, and that the Mossad, Israel's intelligence service, executed the attack on the Rambla by remotely controlling the truck from an operational base thousands of miles away in Richmond, Va.*".

Unwitting Agents are ordinary people who unwittingly repeat misinformation (Starbird, 2019). Repeated exposure to misinformation can create a false memory (Loftus, 2005). Gieryn (1999, pp. 150, 200) talks about the "gentleman witness" who is willing to testify to something that never happened.

Reporters, planting stories, and controlling the vocabulary. A report issued by the research institute Data and Society (Donovan & Friedberg, 2019) identifies the tools and tactics used to employ well-meaning journalists and others to disseminate propaganda, that is, misleading and outright false information. Reporters as useful idiots and as unwitting agents at times repeat and even amplify planted stories.

Planting Stories. One technique to influence reporters involves planting in some friendly outlet (such as RT or Aljazeera) a fake story that resembles legitimate news. "*Then they (the Russians) use fake accounts to amplify the story — repeatedly tweeting it, making it appear like it is being shared by real people, making*

it 'trend' — until someone like a journalist, or maybe a politician, shares it and it goes into the mainstream" writes David Halevy, a Jerusalem-based correspondent for Time Magazine (as cited in O'Sullivan, 2019). A specialist on disinformation and the media at the Alliance for Securing Democracy, Bret Schafer (2019) tracks Russia's digital deception. He writes of the technique of planting anti-Western worldview stories in Russian media sources. This disinformation is then picked up and repeated by more mainstream reporters (Mayer, 2017; Zappone, 2019). Note that the message is spread from one (or more) less reputable news sources to ones with greater trustworthiness, thereby gaining a glimmer of respectability and believability.

So far, the paper has brought to the fore principles and tactics for deception. The paper concludes by pointing out when deception is entertaining and when it is dangerous.

WHEN DECEPTION IS ENTERTAINING: MAGIC, CINEMA, LITERATURE

Not all deception is undesirable. In addition to white lies, there are times and places where deception is highly desirable, such as in magic shows, the theatre and cinema, and literature.

Magic. As mentioned above, principles of magic illusion involve the psychology of deception, particularly concealment, distraction, and misdirection. R. Hyman (1989) and chapters 9 and 10 on deception in the Druckman and Bjork book (1991) describes these. Readers will find the short video "Colour changing card trick" (2007) interesting, entertaining, and relevant. It demonstrates the principles used in magic (and politics) to drive and redirect attention and focus.

Arts. Deceiving the audience/reader adds interest to the story of literature, theater, and cinema. One example is the popular thriller film, "The Sixth Sense," which hides an essential plot feature until the end. Murder mysteries by Agatha Christie likewise tell the story by leaving out essential features until they resolve at the end. Robert Fulford (2012) writes, "deception is perfectly at home in the movies."

WHEN DECEPTION IS NOT FUN: JOURNALISM, POLITICS, WAR

In most fields, deception is ethically dishonest. Faking results in a scientific paper can not only waste the time of other researchers but in medical research even lead to deaths. Similarly, it is not fun when used by the military against another nation in war or even in impacting their elections.

Journalism. The problems occur when journalists and others justify their lying as a means for expressing a greater truth. See, for example, Lee (2004).

It might seem evident that journalists should acknowledge in their writing the bias of the people they interview and explore and own up to their own biases. Those trained in old-school journalism expect journalists do a thorough job of searching for the truth (Dean, n.d.). However, some journalists share the view of Doyle (2018), that reporters should be advocates, picking and choosing what facts to ignore and when to embellish the truth. For example, Neil Kressel (1987) studied press coverage of the Arab-Israel conflict and found disturbing evidence of media bias through the publication of untruths, double standards, slants, and failure to follow journalist norms. An in-depth quantitative study by the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting (2001) replicated this finding, as did Kalb and Saivetz (2007). Weimann (2000) shows how this and other abuses of modern media create "fake realities," perhaps a precursor to the term "fake news."

A corollary danger of deception in journalism is that other important issues receive reduced attention or even go unreported.

POLITICS

As seen from the examples offered above for paltering, elected officials prefer to palter rather than to make statements that some of their constituents might oppose. Nevertheless, deception is also part of countries' diplomacy when diplomats meet with other diplomats, and as part of public diplomacy in which broadcasts, narrowcast, and printed works are offered to citizens to gain their support, for

example, by the Voice of America radio broadcasts of the USA, China's news magazine China Today and, in the USSR, the national newspapers Pravda and Izvestia.

Media and Cyber. In the past, the most pressing security concern of nations has been physical or cyber-attacks from other nations (Clarke & Knake, 2010). Today countries are aware of another danger, the use of media and psychologic warfare to spread misinformation and propaganda. Peter Pomerantsev (2019) writes, "*War used to be about capturing territory and planting flags,*" but now the war is about propaganda, perhaps even more than using armies to inflict harm on adversaries. He writes that propaganda, with its lies and half-truths, threatens democracy. In his 2014 paper published in *Foreign Policy*, Pomerantsev writes of Russian efforts against Ukraine as if that campaign was something new. However, Cohen and Boyd (2019) demonstrate that the playbook is an old one.

Many have explored in great depth the role of the Soviets in influencing elections, e.g., Mueller's (2019) report on Russian interference in the US 2016 election. Time Magazine reported on recent Russia's social media attacks on American democracy (Calabresi, 2017) and the New Republic reported on Russian disinformation attacks on Ukraine (Cain, 2019). These and other campaigns by Russians have been exposed elsewhere (Engel, 2019).

CONCLUSION

This paper documents some essential issues regarding deception, such as the who, when, why, and how. However, for the most part, the descriptions have been generalities. What is missing is a specific example of using deception to create a false narrative.

With this, the paper serves as an introduction to Operation SIG, a specific example of a government disinformation campaign that, 50 years after its inception, is highly successful in sowing discontent and division. Operation SIG is the focus in the paper by Cohen and Boyd (2019).

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BIOGRAPHY

Eli Cohen serves as a governor and Executive Director of the Informing Science Institute. He focuses his current research on bias, misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda.