

**THE BITE MODEL OF AUTHORITARIAN CONTROL:  
UNDUE INFLUENCE, THOUGHT REFORM, BRAINWASHING, MIND CONTROL,  
TRAFFICKING AND THE LAW**

A dissertation submitted

by

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to

**FIELDING GRADUATE UNIVERSITY**

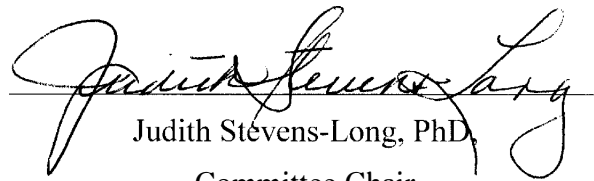
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**The BITE Model of Authoritarian Control:  
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and the Law**

by

Steven Alan Hassan

**ABSTRACT**

The justice system needs to be updated to incorporate research that explains the psychology of predatory exploitation and factors that can help to identify it when it occurs. Too often, people argue that judgments about undue influence constitute a “slippery slope,” or that “People are responsible for their actions once they reach 18 years of age.” It is also said that “One cult is another person’s religion” whenever the topics of brainwashing, thought reform, mind control or undue influence are brought up in legal cases.

This dissertation offers quantitative evidence about the BITE model (Behavior, Information, Thought, and Emotion) as a potential tool to help evaluate cases involving exploitative control or undue influence. BITE (Hassan, 1988, 2015) offers a clearly defined model based on observable behaviors that expert witnesses can use to evaluate the presence of mind control or thought reform across a variety of settings and groups.

The term *undue influence* has a several hundred-year-old history in British common law, but its use has mostly been confined to the area of wills and testaments. The studies of systematic social influence have produced several models to describe exploitative influence over a person or

group of people. A literature review was conducted on existing laws that address trafficking, coercive control, and undue influence. An analysis of major models of thought reform, mind control, or brainwashing was done using Robert Jay Lifton's Eight Criteria (Lifton, 1961); Edgar Schein's model which includes Kurt Lewin's model for change (Schein, et al., 1961); Margaret Singer's Six Conditions (Singer & Lalich, 2003); and the Influence Continuum and BITE Model (Hassan, 1988). Schefflin's Social Influence Model (Schefflin, 2015) offers an overall framework for expert witnesses to comprehensively evaluate any potential undue influence situation.

Legal systems value quantitative research over qualitative research. A total of 1044 participants took part in this study designed to determine the efficacy of the BITE model in identifying undue influence. The items in the BITE model of mind control were found to have a reliability score of .98, and a Cronbach's alpha of .93 demonstrated internal consistency and validity. A principal component analysis identified one highly significant factor that captures undue influence: Authoritarian Control. The BITE model offers a look at the dimensions that allow one to predict the presence of Authoritarian Control, particularly where undue influence is suspected in both civil as well as criminal contexts. Implications are discussed.

*Keywords:* Undue Influence, Thought Reform, Brainwashing, Mind Control, Coercive Control, Torture, BITE model, Influence Continuum, Trafficking, Terrorism, Extremism, Dissociative Disorder, Hypnosis, Parental Alienation, Predatory Alienation, Authoritarianism.

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Research into understanding the law regarding undue influence and how to potentially help create a paradigm shift to determining it in a civil or criminal case has been daunting. However, the long-term goal is to help create new institutional policies regarding the conduct of people and organizations has been a major focus of my life in recent years. Testifying as an expert witness is a major endeavor that involves training, practice and understanding the culture of the legal adversarial system. Fortuitously, I was introduced to Thomas Gutheil, M.D., one of the most respected forensic psychiatrists in the world. He invited me to do a presentation at the forensic think tank he co-founded, along with Harold Bursztajn M.D. and Archie Brodsky, The Program in Psychiatry and the Law (PIPATL) at Harvard Medical School. Dr. Gutheil and I went to lunch and fortunately he agreed to mentor me. Every week for the past four years, I have had the great opportunity to listen and learn every Wednesday from 11 am to 12 noon from so many phenomenal people. Aside from my weekly Torah study, this is an hour I value so much and always enjoy. This affiliation has enabled me to learn about being an expert witness by participating as an instructor for Trial Advocacy Workshop at Harvard Law School several times. It also led to an invitation by Dr. Bursztajn to present with him on a panel at the International Academy for Law and Mental Health congress in Prague (Hassan, 2017).

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becoming an established and more credentialed expert witness. He told me that doing solid scientific research and participating in precedent-setting cases were the ways the legal system changes. Dr. Commons has been very involved in the research—advising and guiding of this effort from the very beginning. He also encouraged me to set up a division of his non-profit, Dare Associates, called Freedom from Undue Influence. He also introduced me to his research assistant Mansi Shah who, because of her interest in my work has become an invaluable resource. Mansi has been stellar and coauthored my first research effort which resulted in an Elsevier journal article based on a presentation I delivered in Prague for the International Academy of Law and Mental Health. Her contributions to this research project and other writing efforts has led to great productivity. I look forward to doing more research and publication together. Thank you so much, Mansi.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	6
Legal Context.....	6
DEFINITION OF UNDUE INFLUENCE.....	15
Early Work on Thought Reform, Brainwashing, and Coercive Persuasion .....	26
ROBERT JAY LIFTON’S EIGHT CRITERIA FOR THOUGHT REFORM.....	26
EDGAR SCHEIN’S MODEL FOR COERCIVE PERSUASION .....	35
MARGARET SINGER’S SIX CONDITIONS FOR THOUGHT REFORM.....	42
STEVEN HASSAN’S INFLUENCE CONTINUUM AND THE BITE MODEL OF MIND CONTROL .....	48
THE BITE MODEL.....	52
SCHEFLIN’S SOCIAL INFLUENCE MODEL (SIM) .....	63
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY .....	70
Research Statement.....	70
Research Design.....	71
Research Questions and Hypotheses .....	72
Data Collection .....	72
Participants.....	73
Targeted Population .....	73
Sampling Procedure .....	75
Participants’ Demographic Characteristics .....	75
Instrumentation .....	78
Item Development Process .....	78
Preliminary Testing.....	79
Instrument .....	79
Demographic Items.....	80
BITE Items.....	80
Research Methodology - Introduction to Factor Analysis.....	81
Introduction to Factor Analysis .....	81

Reason to Use Factor Analysis .....	82
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS .....	84
Data Analysis .....	84
Data Cleaning.....	84
Analysis of the Four Instruments .....	85
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION.....	104
Open Questions.....	109
Future Considerations .....	111
Powerful, wealthy forces who engage in undue influence will wish to keep it out of jurisprudence.....	112
REFERENCES .....	114
APPENDIX: (CONSENT DOCUMENT, INSTRUCTIONS & SURVEY).....	129
Influence Survey .....	130

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In February 1974, Patricia Hearst was kidnapped by force from her apartment in Berkeley by a fringe political cult, the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA). She was put in the trunk of a car, later locked in a closet, sexually abused, and indoctrinated for weeks to become “Tania.” She became a devout member of the SLA and participated with other cult members in robbing a bank and a sporting goods store. Authorities hunted her down, arrested her, put her on trial, and found her guilty of these crimes. Her case was only the second legal case that used the concept of brainwashing as a defense in a criminal trial (Hearst & Moscow, 1982).

Her defense team included a group of famous researchers who had studied Chinese communist brainwashing. These scholars preferred to use terms like “thought reform” or “coercive persuasion” rather than “brainwashing.” Among them was Robert Jay Lifton, MD, Margaret Singer, PhD, Edgar Schein, PhD, and Louis Jolyon West, MD. There were 11 other well-known experts on social influence who testified in her defense. At the final summation at the trial, her attorney, F. Lee Bailey, decided not to use brainwashing for Hearst’s defense, ignoring the testimonies of his own hired experts. The jurors believed the prosecution narrative that Hearst was a wealthy heiress who was rebelling from her family. She was convicted and served 2 years before President Jimmy Carter commuted her sentence. Eventually, Hearst was granted a full pardon by President Bill Clinton.

In February 1974, that very same month that the SLA kidnapped Hearst by force, I was psychologically abducted by the Moon organization, a destructive Korean cult. The recruitment was nonviolent, more of a deceptive seduction. The three attractive female recruiters flirted with me, asking many personal questions. At the time, I had just been rejected by a former girlfriend.

I was 19, a creative writing major, and an upper junior at Queens College in New York. The women lied in several different ways. They withheld vital information, distorted information, and outright lied. I had no idea they were part of a religious group and certainly not one which was also antidemocratic and an extreme right-wing political group. I was lured to an estate in upstate New York, sleep-deprived, and subjected to a carefully constructed social influence program. I came to believe that the Messiah was alive on earth in the person of Sun Myung Moon. Within 2 weeks, I experienced a conversion and became a “Moon” cult member.

The experience was far more subtle and sophisticated than the overt coercion Patty Hearst reported. While it seemed like I was making my own decisions, I was not. This “illusion of choice” is at the center of all modern-day mind-control cults. Indoctrination was relentless. Moon was acclaimed as the Messiah and he and his wife, Hak Ja Han, were celebrated as humanity’s sinless *True Parents*. The programming assured me that Milton and Estelle Hassan were only my physical parents and products of Satan. I became a right-wing fanatic who worked 18 to 21 hours a day, 7 days a week for no pay. I dropped out of college, donated my bank account, and recruited and indoctrinated others. Members were programmed to die or kill on command and were sent on various missions to take over the world for “God.” Moon hoped to create a global theocracy where Korean was the only language, absorbing or destroying all other religions and governments to establish God’s original ideal—The Garden of Eden.

I became disillusioned and exited the cult after I was allowed to visit my family following a harrowing traffic accident. I fell asleep due to sleep deprivation while driving a fundraising van, crashing into the back of a tractor-trailer truck at 80 miles an hour. I was rescued from the wreckage, hospitalized for a severely fractured ankle, and needed surgery and weeks to recover. I had to ask and receive permission to visit my sister.

Once at her house, I was confronted by my father, who begged me to listen to several ex-Moonies who had themselves been deprogrammed. I wanted to prove to my family that I had not been brainwashed. Fortunately, on the fifth day, I woke up to the realization that Moon was a liar and was therefore untrustworthy. He could not be God's man on earth. Learning about Robert Jay Lifton's eight criteria of Chinese communist brainwashing was a central part of what helped me to begin reality-testing and decide to leave the right-wing fascist cult. Ever since that day on May 11, 1976, and for the past 44 years, my life has been dedicated to research on undue influence, social psychology, hypnosis, cults, and all related topics.

I came to learn a lot about the political context of modern-day research and programs to recruit and indoctrinate people to be obedient slaves. In the past 70 years or so, post-World War II, psychological research has been defined by the goal of predicting and controlling behavior. Since the Mao thought reform programs (Chen & Chiu, 1955), it has been of significant military interest to understand the communist programs developed to influence Chinese citizens and Westerners to overcome their "bourgeois" tendencies. It was in this period that Allen W. Dulles became the first CIA director from 1953 to 1961. Dulles mounted several operations aimed at influencing countries abroad. Dulles funded Sidney Gottlieb's MKULTRA's research into mind control, "which included experiments conducted by psychiatrists to create amnesia, new dissociated identities, new memories, and responses to hypnotic access codes" (Schefflin & Opton, 1978; Epstein et al., 2011). After my deprogramming, I was extensively interviewed about the Moon organization for a congressional subcommittee investigation into Korean CIA in the United States that directly named the Moon organization (United States House Committee on International Relations, 1977). The final report was issued 18 days before the assassination of

congressman Leo J. Ryan at the hands of Jim Jones and the People's Temple murder of over 900 Americans including over 300 children.

This work, initially undertaken to understand communist thought reform programs (Lifton, 1961, Schein, et al., 1961), has been used for years to describe the phenomenon of identity change. Over the years, many different terms have been used including "*brainwashing; thought reform; coercive persuasion, mind control, coordinated programs of coercive influence and behavior control and exploitative persuasion*" (Singer & Lalich, 2003). Additional terms like undue influence (Winder, 1939), DDD syndrome (debility, dependency, and dread Farber et al., 1957), Stockholm Syndrome, coercive control, predatory alienation, psychological programming, psychological torture, and trafficking have been used to describe the exploitative influence of a person (or group) over a person to that person's detriment. Undue influence is the most established term used in the legal system.

Since the death of Sun Myung Moon, his wife, Hak Ja Han, is now the leader and figurehead. The Moon cult continues to operate using different front group names including the Universal Peace Federation. The organization owns *The Washington Times* newspaper in Washington, DC, United Press International, a gun factory, vast holdings in the fishing industry, and is still very active and influential on the world stage.

I received my master's degree in 1985, became a licensed mental health counselor in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and continued my research and activism to help people to wake up to cult mind control and to heal. I have developed some useful models which include an influence continuum as well as what I call the BITE model (Behavior, Information, Thought, and Emotional control) to help identify unethical, destructive cults and relationships. Over the past

decades, I have authored four books, written articles and chapters for academic texts, given lectures and workshops, and made extensive media appearances (Hassan (n.d.)).



## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Legal Context

In the United States there is currently no federal law that defines undue influence or like concept. Therefore, there are many rulings in civil and criminal cases that do not serve the cause of justice. This study aims to ascertain whether some version of the BITE model (Hassan, 1988, 2015) can offer a tool to operationalize an essential component of undue influence. Justice will be better served by having a way to define undue influence equitably—in the United States and perhaps in other countries as well.

Many major legal concepts are based on outdated models of human psychological functioning. For example, criminal acts are thought to comprise two aspects: *actus reus* and *mens rea*. *Actus reus* speaks to whether the individual actually committed a criminal act. *Mens rea* speaks to intentionality and whether the person understood the act was criminal. Historically, psychological explanations, such as “not guilty by reason of insanity” have been unsuccessful in exculpating criminal activity (Legal Information Institute, 2020). The occasional rare case where this explanation succeeds is usually based on forensic evidence of schizophrenia, psychosis, or low cognitive-processing capacity. Cases that claim brainwashing or mind control are even rarer and less successful.

The *mens rea* issue is complicated when considering members of destructive cults. Authoritarian cults typically inculcate an “ends justify the means” belief system. Indoctrinated cult members are usually aware that they are committing what society sees as a crime but are told that they are following a higher directive, such as God’s law or the Constitution, or that such activity is justified because of a greater evil that must be fought. Members may, in some cases,

be covertly hypnotized and given suggestions for amnesia, so they do not remember committing the act (Schefflin & Shapiro, 1989; Brown, et al., 1998; Katchen,1992; Dell, 2017). Legal systems around the world have not progressed in terms of understanding behavior like Patty Hearst robbing a bank as “Tania.”

It is noteworthy that coercive persuasion has been identified as a *dissociative disorder* for decades in the mental health system. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association* Version 5 (DSM-V; 2013) offers a category that includes identity changes caused by coercive persuasion or thought reform—Dissociative Disorders: Not Otherwise Specified 300.15 (F44.89). It states that

Identity disturbance due to prolonged and intense coercive persuasion is recognized in the DSM-V for individuals who have been subjected to intense coercive persuasion (e.g., brainwashing, thought reform, indoctrination while captive, torture, and long-term political imprisonment). It has also been applied to those who have been recruited by sects/cults or by terror organizations and present with prolonged changes in, or conscious questioning of, their identity. (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p.305).

The American Psychological Association (APA) empaneled an expert task force in 1983 to create and submit a report on the validity and implications of models of coercive persuasion. After 4 contentious years, the report was ultimately rejected on procedural grounds; specifically, the APA found that the available empirical evidence in 1983 was insufficient for the organization to take a stand on the issue. This finding has been mischaracterized by the cult defenders as an outright rejection of the notion that such a thing as mind control or thought reform exists. A

closer examination shows that APA had, in fact, simply not yet taken an official stance on the topic (Amitrani, & Di Marzio, 2000).

Difficulties in identifying undue influence also arise from federal law in the arena of religion and religious practices (Hamilton, 2007). Freedom of religion applies broadly to the right to believe but the law has categorized certain behaviors as illegal, including polygamy and the handling of poisonous snakes during Christian services (State v. Green, 1936; LaBarre, 1962). Especially in the United States, if a group has been granted IRS status as a religion, it is given wide latitude, even if it infringes on the civil liberties or human rights of its adherents.

Over the past three decades, significant academic research has appeared on cults, brainwashing, thought reform, and new religious movements (a term developed by cult defenders), as well as the harm that they have caused (Langone, 2000). However, there is still a long-standing schism in academia. There are those who accept mind control as a legitimate phenomenon including, for the most part, clinicians such as counselors, social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists. Those who dismiss it as fiction are mostly sociologists and scholars of theology, who are often referred to as “cult apologists” in the literature (Ottinger, 1980; Robbins & Anthony, 1982; Barker, 1984, 2010; Richardson, 1991; Langone & Eisenberg, 1993; Kent & Krebs, 1998; Anthony, 1999; Hall et al., 2000; Robbins, 2001, Robbins & Arnstern 2009; Chryssides, 2011; Lucas & Robbins, 2004; Introvigne et al., 2017; Atack, 2020).

Sociologists of religion, including J. Gordon Melton and Eileen Barker, have received funding as well as substantial honorariums and expenses for attending conferences sponsored by the very groups they are supposed to be studying (Shterin, 1998, Carley, 1989, Barker, 1995). Critics point out that neither Melton, who has published work on Scientology nor Barker, whose work is on the Moon organization have responded to these concerns (Zablocki, 2001). *The Cult*

*Apologist FAQ: Exposing the Cult's Willing Defenders* is a detailed critique of the writings and actions of many well-known cult defenders in academia (Hausherr, 2002).

To be accurate, over the decades, mainstream religious groups, as well as the ACLU, have issued supportive amicus curiae briefs for legal cases involving cult groups (Richardson, 1991). There has been substantial lobbying by these religions to keep any definitions of undue influence vague for fear that it might impinge on their own activities. Freedom of religion should be based on freedom of mind, which includes informed consent (Schefflin, 1983). Businesses are penalized by law for fraudulent claims or omitting vital information, but religions are exempt from this fundamental obligation. For example, the Watchtower Society's members have to spend time every month proselytizing, and they do so by offering to study the Bible. However, those approached may be unaware that the Bible the Jehovah's Witnesses use is denounced by Jewish and Christian scholars as theologically unsound. They should be warned.

Jehovah's Witnesses use their own "New World Translation" which lacks Biblical scholarship (Phillips, 2015). Furthermore, potential recruits are urged to be baptized by the Watchtower Society yet are seldom informed that the group forbids blood transfusions and has a practice of disfellowshipping (shunning). Members may be shunned if the elders believe a member has sinned, even for petty acts like sending a birthday card to a nonmember. Researchers assert that if an organization is to have the benefits of non-profit status, it should be required to be transparent and practice informed consent. Deceptive recruitment violates people's religious freedom and should be illegal, and the organization's leadership penalized. This means that a way to legally define and measure undue influence must be found. Members should have the freedom to question the leaders, the doctrine, and the policies and have the freedom to leave the religion with harassment, threats, or experiencing trauma.

Especially since the 1960s and '70s, cults have periodically captured headlines for disturbing acts of violence. Charles Manson's cult, the SLA, People's Temple, Branch Davidians, Solar Temple, Heaven's Gate, Aum Shinrikyo, Rajneesh movement, ISIS, and, more recently, QAnon true believers have acted violently. Other cults have been in the news for a variety of illegal behaviors including the Moon organization, Scientology (Joffe, 1997), Children of God (Kent, 2001), Fundamentalist Latter-Day Saints (FLDS), iskcon (Krishna), and Synanon, to name just a few. Other groups like Transcendental Meditation, International Church of Christ, Church Universal and Triumphant, have been exposed for lies, immoralities by leadership, or destructive practices.

High demand cults can be described in a number of categories: religious cults, political cults, commercial cults, psycho-therapeutic cults (Hochman, 1984), Large Group Awareness Trainings (LGAT), and more broadly as ideological cults and personality cults. Some of these cults involve violent extremism (Hankir & Hassan, 2019). In the United States, the International Cultic Studies Association estimates there are 5,000 to 8,000 cults worldwide with millions of members (ICSA, n.d.). Cults, which are the focus of concern for harm to their members or others, usually entail references to concepts like brainwashing and mind control (Rosedale & Langone, 2015).

Ofshe and Singer (1986) help us here by distinguishing thought reform programs that are political when they point out that such programs focused on changes in belief systems that were peripheral to one's sense of self. Cults can be thought of as second-generation thought reform programs. As Singer and Ofshe (1990) argue,

The tactics of a [second generation] thought reform program are organized to destabilize individuals' sense of self by getting them to drastically reinterpret their life's history, radically alter their world view, accept a new version of reality and causality, and develop a dependency on the organization, thereby being turned into a deployable agent of the organization operating the thought reform program.

Lalich and Tobias (2006) described the output of such a process as “cult conversion,” characterized by “. . . dependency, compliance, rigid obedience, stunted thinking, and childlike behavior.”

Litigation involving cults has produced a number of important legal decisions that have held consequences for the court (Van Hoey, 1991). A number of articles have raised issues about the viability of an undue influence defense in criminal cases, like that of Patty Hearst and Lee Boyd Malvo (Chapman, 2013). Furthermore, current law rests on the assumption that once a person reaches the age of 18, they are fully responsible for their actions. Even though the law requires one must be 18 to be tried as an adult, judges have decided that some minors, like DC sniper Lee Boyd Malvo, although arrested at age 17, can be tried as an adult.

Malvo was recruited at age 14, groomed, trained to fire guns, and directed to kill by John Muhammed, a member of the Nation of Islam. Forensic psychologist Steven Eichel served as an expert on the Malvo defense and believes Malvo was brainwashed to become a terrorist (Eichel, 2004). Malvo was found guilty and sentenced to die. His attorneys are currently appealing the decision.

In the late 1970s, legal decisions disallowed emergency ex parte conservatorships requested by concerned parents that would allow them to hire deprogrammers to help rescue

their adult children from cults (Langbein, 1977). These temporary ex parte conservatorships were awarded without the concerned individual (or an attorney) present to represent him or herself (Farlex, 2020).

While the terms “brainwashing”, “mind control”, and “thought reform” have had very limited success, the idea of undue influence may be more useful (Delgado, 1977, 1984; Fingarette, 1985; Madoff, 1997; Spar, et al., 1995; Taylor, 2004). Undue influence usually refers to exploitative control of a person or group as a way to deny inheritances in estate legal cases. This centers around an individual’s testamentary capacity, or the person’s cognitive ability to act on their own behalf (Appelbaum & Gutheil, 2007; Gutheil, 2007). Unfortunately, these forensic evaluations are very simple, focused only on the immediate date of testing, and typically ignoring research on abusive forms of influence (Green, 1943). In the 1970s, Dr. Gutheil was asked to conduct an evaluation on a young man who wished to give his inheritance to the Moon group. The young man passed his evaluation, and Gutheil was unwilling to block his action even though the man had trouble with abstract reasoning. Gutheil told me he refused to testify for the man’s family using the current norm for testamentary capacity (T. Gutheil, personal communication, November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016).

To properly address the wrongs done to victims of destructive cults, the justice system needs to incorporate research on human development and undue influence (Hassan & Shah, 2019). Some neuroscientists, for example, say a person’s brain does not even reach maturity until age 25 (Aamodt & Wang, 2011). However, one prominent neuroscientist Dr. Moran Cerf, told me that judges wanted him and other neuroscientists to “come back in 10 years” and

demonstrate that the methods they employ have been established, replicated, and accepted (M. Cerf, personal communication, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019)

For example, current law incorrectly assumes that human beings make rational choices (Kahneman, 2003) once they reach the age of majority despite the fact that neuroscientific research shows the brain continues to mature until age 25 (Johnson, et al., 2009). In *Thinking, Fast and Slow* Kahneman, who won the Nobel Prize in Behavior Economics, and Tversky demonstrated that most human beings depend on unconscious heuristics to make fast decisions and, only when necessary, use slow, conscious data analysis (Kahneman, 2011).

In 1993, the Supreme Court established the Daubert standard for the admission of expert testimony, supplanting an earlier standard (*Frye v. United States*, 1923) that had allowed judges to decide if a method for collecting evidence was generally accepted by the field in which it was developed. Under the *Daubert* standard, the factors that may be considered in determining whether the methodology is valid are much stricter:

- “(1) whether the theory or technique in question can be and has been tested;
- (2) whether it has been subjected to peer review and publication;
- (3) its known or potential error rate;
- (4) the existence and maintenance of standards controlling its operation; and
- (5) whether it has attracted widespread acceptance within a relevant scientific community.” (Legal Information Institute, 2020).

The Daubert standard is now being challenged, encouraging judges to allow experts to offer evidence which would permit a more nuanced view in a wide variety of expert witness testimony. Judges and juries may now consider the context and social psychological influences (Gutheil & Bursztajn, 2003, *Harvard Law Review*, 2010). What has been missing is a widely



accepted model that ensures a consistent structure around which expert witnesses can include information in their testimony concerning undue influence. In this dissertation, California law on undue influence, federal trafficking laws, and the coercive control laws of the United Kingdom are considered along with models of brainwashing and thought reform, to flesh out the key attributes of undue influence.

Recently, some encouraging changes have emerged in American jurisprudence. For example, substantial progress has been made on the state level. California probate law considers undue influence focused on the elderly to be a violation of their human rights. In 2010, a thorough research report on undue influence was prepared for the Borchard Foundation Center for Law and Aging (California Administrative Office of the Courts. Quinn, M. et al., 2010; California Elder Justice Coalition, 2020). The project director, Mary Joy Quinn, wrote “Defining Undue Influence” in *Bifocal*, A Journal of the American Bar Association (Quinn, 2014).

In 2014, Quinn’s article led to a California law concerning undue influence and the elderly. Several years later a protocol for screening undue influence was developed to help Adult Protective Services evaluate elderly people as to whether they have been subjected to undue influence (Quinn et al., 2017). Focus group members identified vulnerabilities that made their clients susceptible to manipulation. These included biological, psychological, sociological, and cultural factors. Impaired functional abilities were discussed as a consequence of myriad situations and challenges. Primary themes identified within the domain of vulnerability included dependency on others, isolation, and fear (Quinn et al., 2017).

**DEFINITION OF UNDUE INFLUENCE**

**California Welfare and Institutions Code §15610.70**

(a) “Undue influence” means excessive persuasion that causes another person to act or refrain from acting by overcoming that person’s free will and results in inequity. In determining whether a result was produced by undue influence, all of the following shall be considered:

**Table 1**

*Elder Abuse and Dependent Adult Civil Protection Act*

<b>(1) Vulnerability of the victim</b>	<b>(2) Influencer’s apparent authority</b>	<b>(3) Actions or tactics used by the influencer</b>	<b>(4) Equity of the result</b>
Evidence of vulnerability may include, but is not limited to, incapacity, illness, disability, injury, age, education, impaired cognitive function, emotional distress, isolation, or dependency, and whether the influencer knew or should have known of the alleged victim’s vulnerability.	Evidence of apparent authority may include, but is not limited to, status as a fiduciary, family member, care provider, health care professional, legal professional, spiritual adviser, expert, or other qualification.	Evidence of actions or tactics used may include, but is not limited to, all of the following: A. Controlling necessities of life, medication, the victim’s interactions with others, access to information, or sleep. B. Use of affection, intimidation, or coercion. C. Initiation of changes in personal or property rights, use of haste or secrecy in effecting those changes, effecting changes at inappropriate times and places, and claims of expertise in effecting changes.	Evidence of the equity of the result may include, but is not limited to, the economic consequences to the victim, any divergence from the victim’s prior intent or course of conduct or dealing, the relationship of the value conveyed to the appropriateness of the change in light of the length and nature of the relationship. (b) Evidence of an inequitable result, without more, is not sufficient to prove undue influence.

Table 1 reflects the exact language contained in Welfare and Institutions Code Section §15610.70. NOTE: No one category is weighted more than another. Not all categories are required for a legal finding of undue influence.

California Probate Code §86 states that “undue influence” has the same meaning as defined in Section §15610.70 of the California Welfare and Institutions Code.

*The Encyclopedia of Elder Care* (Brown, et al., 2018; Capezuti, et al., 2018) offers five models for evaluating undue influence that takes place within the geriatric population:

1. SODR (The Restatement [Third] of Property, 2003):

SODR is a model of undue influence that is based on case law in the United States. It is defined by the following dimensions:

- (a) the donor was **susceptible** to undue influence,
- (b) the alleged wrongdoer had an **opportunity** to exert undue influence,
- (c) the alleged wrongdoer had the **disposition** to exert undue influence, and
- (d) there was a **result** appearing to be the effect of the undue influence (The Restatement [Third] of Property [Wills & Don. Trans.] § 8.3 cmt.)

Note: The Schefflin social influence model which will be presented later is based on SODR.

2. SCAM (ABA Commission on Law and Aging & APA, 2008):

SCAM is the behavioral variant of SODR. The elements of this model include

- (a) **susceptibility** of the victim,
- (b) a **confidential** and trusting relationship between the victim and perpetrator,

- (c) **active procurement** of the legal and financial transactions by the perpetrator, and
- (d) **monetary loss** of the victim.

### 3. IDEAL (ABA Commission on Law and Aging & APA, 2008)

IDEAL was created by forensic psychiatrist Bennett Blum in the 1990s primarily for use in cases involving elder financial abuse, although it is used in many types of cases involving excessive or inappropriate manipulation tactics. This model includes

- a.* Isolation: Isolation refers to isolation from pertinent information, friends, relatives, or advisors. Frequent causes include medical disorders, perpetrator interference, history of poor relationships with others, geographic changes (e.g., travel), and technological isolation (e.g., loss of telephone services).
- b.* Dependency: Dependency refers to the victim's dependence on the perpetrator (e.g., for physical support, emotional intimacy, or information).
- c.* Emotional manipulation or exploitation of weaknesses: Emotional manipulation usually manifests as promises, threats, or a combination of both and involves issues of safety and security, or companionship and friendship.
- d.* Acquiescence: Acquiescence refers to the victim's apparent consent or submission. Such "consent" is based on the factors noted earlier—dependency on the perpetrator, emotional or other vulnerability factors, and exposure to inadequate, misleading, or inaccurate information
- e.* Loss: Loss refers to the loss, damages, or harm resulting from the claimed undue influence (such as inter vivos financial loss).

4. The Brandle/Heisler/Steigel model (ABA Commission on Law and Aging & APA, 2008):

This model is based on domestic violence relationships, stalking, and sexual assault. It assumes that undue influence parallels these other situations. This model is currently taught by the National College of District Attorneys and the National District Attorneys Association for use in criminal prosecutions, but it is also applicable in some civil or probate proceedings. There are eight factors:

1. The victim was kept unaware.
2. The victim was isolated from others and information.
3. The Influencer tried to create fear.
4. The influencer preyed on vulnerabilities.
5. The influencer tried to create dependencies.
6. The influencer attempted to make victims lose faith in their own beliefs.
7. The influencer tried to induce shame and secrecy.
8. The influencer performed intermittent acts of kindness.

5. The “thought reform” or “cult” model of Margaret Thaler Singer, PhD (ABA Commission on Law and Aging & APA, 2008) developed from her work on the tactics used by cults and cult leaders and has been widely referenced. The model proposes six stages: creating isolation, fostering a siege mentality, inducing dependency, promoting a sense of powerlessness, manipulating fears and vulnerabilities, and keeping the victim unaware and uninformed. The model also specifies certain tactics as follows:

- (a) keeping the victim unaware of what is going on and what changes are taking place;
- (b) controlling the victim’s time and, if possible, physical environment;

- (c) creating a sense of powerlessness, covert fear, and dependency;
- (d) suppressing much of the person's old behavior and attitudes;
- (e) instilling new behavior and attitudes; and
- (f) putting forth a closed system of logic, allowing no real input or criticism.”

Margaret Singer's work has been instrumental in the development of California's undue influence law. The Singer model was also used in the Borchard Foundation's research on undue influence (Quinn, et al., 2010). Although the Foundation's focus was to protect the elderly, the report added a category called "dependent adults." Young adults involved in cult groups were mentioned as a population who have been unduly influenced. The fact that Singer's model is one of the five major models used to evaluate undue influence on the elderly demonstrates its unique formulation. Unfortunately, the federal legal system has yet to recognize undue influence explicitly.

### **Trafficking Laws**

The U.S. government has passed a law to make labor and sex trafficking illegal. Federal law defines *trafficking* as using force, fraud, or coercion to enslave a person (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2017). According to the U.S. Office in Trafficking Persons (2017), coercion includes

- (a) Force** includes physical restraint, physical harm, sexual assault, and beatings.

Monitoring and confinement are often used to control victims, especially during early stages of victimization to break down the victim's resistance.

**(b) Fraud** includes false promises regarding employment, wages, working conditions, love, marriage, or better life. Over time, there may be unexpected changes in work conditions, compensation or debt agreements, or nature of relationship.

**(c) Coercion** includes threats of serious harm to or physical restraint against any person, psychological manipulation, document confiscation, and shame and fear-inducing threats to share information or pictures with others or report to authorities.

The National Human Trafficking Hotline is a nonprofit to help victims of trafficking. In this literature review, it is important to reference laws that currently exist that involve undue influence. Their website states, “Human trafficking, also known as trafficking in persons (TIP), is a modern-day form of slavery. It is a crime under federal and international law; it is also a crime in every state in the United States” (para 1).

### ***Federal Anti-Trafficking Laws***

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 is the first comprehensive federal law to address trafficking in persons. The law provides a three-pronged approach that includes prevention, protection, and prosecution. The TVPA was reauthorized through the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) of 2003, 2005, 2008, 2013, and 2017.

Under U.S. federal law, “severe forms of trafficking in persons” includes both sex trafficking and labor trafficking:

**Sex trafficking** is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purposes of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age (22 USC § 7102).

**Labor trafficking** is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery (22 USC § 7102).

### ***TVPA Definitions***

#### ***Involuntary Servitude***

a condition of servitude induced by means of any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that, if the person did not enter into or continue in such condition, that person or another person would suffer serious harm or physical restraint; or the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process (22 U.S.C. 7102 (6)).

#### **Debt Bondage**

the status or condition of a debtor arising from a pledge by the debtor of his or her personal services or of those of a person under his or her control as a security for debt, if the value of those services as reasonably assessed is not applied toward the liquidation of the debt or the length and nature of those services are not respectively limited and defined (22 U.S.C. 7102 (5)).



## **Coercion**

- (A) threats of serious harm to or physical restraint against any person;
- (B) any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that failure to perform an act would result in serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; or
- (C) the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process (22 U.S.C. 7102 (3)).

## **Commercial Sex Act**

The term “commercial sex act” means any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person (22 U.S.C. 7102 (4)).

## ***Trafficking Victims Protection Act Summary***

Below are links to the initial Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 and its subsequent reauthorizations. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act Summary resource pack includes the TVPA Fact Sheet which provides a summary of the initial legislation and some of the key modifications made with each legislation.

- [Trafficking Victims Protection Act Summary Resource Pack](#)
- [Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000](#)
- [TVPA Reauthorization Act 2003](#)
- [TVPA Reauthorization Act 2005](#)
- [TVPA Reauthorization Act 2008](#)
- [TVPA Reauthorization Act of 2013](#)
- [TVPA Reauthorization Act of 2017](#)

## **The Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015**

The Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act (JVTA) of 2015 improves the U.S. response to human trafficking. It contains a number of important amendments that strengthen services for victims. Among these amendments are changes in the criminal liability of buyers of commercial sex from victims of trafficking, the creation of a survivor-led U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking, and new directives for the implementation of a national strategy for combating human trafficking.

The JVTA also requires the creation of a domestic trafficking victims fund to support victim assistance programs, block grants for child trafficking deterrence programs, and additional training requirements for first responders, among others. Notably, the JVTA amended the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) by declaring youth who are victims of severe forms of trafficking in persons are eligible for services under the RHYA. It also amended the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) by adding human trafficking and child pornography as forms of child abuse.

## **The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014**

The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014 seeks to reduce the incidence of sex trafficking among youth involved in the foster care system. The portion of this law specific to sex trafficking requires child welfare systems to improve their response to sex trafficking by screening and identifying youth who are sex trafficking victims or those who are at risk for sex trafficking, provide appropriate services to youth who experience sex trafficking, report missing children to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children,

and develop protocols for locating missing or runaway children and determine what circumstances they faced while away from care.

Furthermore, state child welfare agencies are required to report instances of sex trafficking to law enforcement and provide information regarding sex trafficking victims or at-risk youth to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, who will in turn report these numbers to Congress. For more information on the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act, see the National Conference of State Legislators Summary.

One state, New Jersey, instituted a research project into the problem of undue influence. A non-profit organization, NJ Safe & Sound, lobbied the State legislature and a bill was passed to order research into the problem they termed, “predatory alienation” (New Jersey Senate Bill 2562, 2016). As a result, the Rutgers School of Social Work conducted research which included myself in 2017 published its final report entitled “Evaluating the State of Predatory Alienation in New Jersey Final Report” (Duron & Postmus, 2017). For its literature, review, they wrote,

Data Collection. The research team searched Academic Search Premier, Ebscohost, and Google Scholar for existing academic literature, research studies, technical reports, fact sheets, white papers, working papers, and committee reports. Additional articles were collected based on relevant references from these sources.

Various combinations of the following search terms were used:

- a. predatory alienation
- b. coercion
- c. persuasive coercion
- d. manipulation
- e. isolation
- f. Recruitment
- g. undue influence

- h. (sexual) exploitation
- i. exploitative relationships
- j. coercive control
- k. domestic violence
- l. financial exploitation
- m. scams
- n. Fraud
- o. elderly
- p. older adults
- q. senior citizens
- r. young adults
- s. youth
- t. teens
- u. trafficking
- v. street gangs
- w. cults
- x. Extremism
- y. terrorists
- z. Recruitment
- aa. grooming
- bb. Internet
- cc. online technology
- dd. risk factors
- ee. protective factors

The literature review included research on:

- a. predatory behaviors
- b. isolation and grooming tactics used by traffickers
- c. scammers
- d. Cults
- e. gangs
- f. extremist groups
- g. domestic violence perpetrators
- h. online predators
- i. risk factors for victimization of young adults and older adults
- j. protective factors for young adults and older adults
- k. research on best practices and policy related to addressing predatory behaviors.

Widespread propaganda and disinformation efforts are being waged that challenge the very notion of the validity of science, experts, or facts. A way to distinguish facts from beliefs and freedom to think from different points of view is vital to preserving any sense of trust in a

shared community. Without public education, disinformation can pave the way for authoritarianism and the end of democratic rights, principles, and conventions.

The existing laws are insufficient to protect citizens' needs regarding the unethical psychological and behavioral exploitation by predators and predatory organizations of all types. Individuals who have been subjected to undue influence should have a remedy within the law to hold their abuser accountable. Likewise, responsible family members should have a legal recourse when an adult child falls victim to a person or authoritarian group. For those unfortunate people who were victimized and then went on to commit a criminal act, like a murder or bombing, while it may be clear they committed the heinous act, sentencing should reflect what is appropriate to the situation. If a person was radicalized to do a terrorist act, a death sentence might be viewed as an act of martyrdom rather than as an effective deterrent. Creative sentencing might be recommended rather than a death sentence or lifetime imprisonment. For example, a terrorist who is properly deprogrammed might be useful to help deradicalize others, might earn money to tell their story and the funds used to partially offer compensation to the victim's families, or could aid authorities in the assessment of possible future terrorist acts. The next section delves in the existing models for such extremist recruitment and indoctrination.

## **Early Work on Thought Reform, Brainwashing, and Coercive Persuasion**

### **ROBERT JAY LIFTON'S EIGHT CRITERIA FOR THOUGHT REFORM**

Psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton's seminal work *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of "Brainwashing" in China*, was first published in 1961. It was this book and

specifically Chapter 22 titled “Ideological Totalism ” that Lifton described eight criteria to evaluate a thought reform environment. He preferred the term thought reform to the word brainwashing.

Lifton wrote that he believed all eight criteria needed to be present to comprise a thought reform environment. He explicitly said that groups considered “normal” did some of these things, including his experience in medical school. Lifton’s ideas followed from interviews with people about their experiences with Chinese thought reform in the 1950s. Lifton was an expert witness for the Patty Hearst defense team and this model has been used in expert testimony for decades.

These eight criteria, what he later came to call the Eight Deadly Sins (Lifton, 2019), have stood the test of time of proving to help people in a wide variety of undue influence situations. The criteria are milieu control, mystical manipulation, demand for purity, cult of confession, sacred science, loaded language, doctrine over person, and dispensing of existence. In addition to my description and comments, direct quotes will be taken from Robert Jay Lifton’s *The Future of Immortality and Other Essays for a Nuclear Age* (Lifton, 1987). Martin (Hassan, 2019) used these eight criteria of thought reform when evaluating the NXIVM cult as an expert witness.

### **Milieu Control**

This criterion is about control of the environment and communication within that environment. This includes not only what people communicate with each other, but how the group gets inside a person’s head and controls his internal dialogue.

It is what sometimes has been called a “God’s-eye view”—a conviction that reality is the group’s exclusive possession. This kind of process creates conflicts with respect to individual autonomy: if sought or realized in such an environment, autonomy becomes a threat to milieu control. Milieu control within cults tends to be maintained and expressed in several ways: group process, isolation from other people, psychological pressure, geographical distance or unavailability of transportation, and sometimes physical pressure. There is often a sequence of events, such as seminars, lectures, and group encounters, which becomes increasingly intense and increasingly isolated, making it extremely difficult both physically and psychologically for one to leave. (Lifton, 1961 p. 421).

Lifton later came to refer to a phenomenon he called “doubling” when he wrote his book, *The Nazi Doctors*. Lifton, to my knowledge, never outright referred to doubling as a dissociative phenomenon but descriptively pointed out that the loving husband, father, and healer could also be the cruel, inhuman experimenter for the Nazi cause.

### **Mystical Manipulation**

The contrived engineering of experiences by leadership to stage seemingly spontaneous and supernatural events that are planned or contrived is considered mystical manipulation. Everyone is manipulated for a higher purpose.

There is a cult pattern now in which a particular “chosen” human being is seen as a savior or a source of salvation. Mystical manipulation can take on a special quality in these cults because the leaders become mediators for God. This can be understood as a misattribution error

in the person influenced— that he or she wrongly attributes “divine” forces to what is basically trickery. The person thinks the influencer is reading their mind, or that there are magical forces at work, for why things happened the way they did.

While mystical manipulation leads (in cult members) to what I have called the psychology of the pawn, it can also include a legitimation of deception (of outsiders)—the “heavenly deception” of the Unification Church, although there are analogous patterns in other cult environments. If one has not seen the light, and it is not in the realm of the cult, one is in the realm of evil and therefore can be justifiably deceived for the higher purpose. For example, a Korean karate cult arranged for a potential student to be “mugged” at night by masked “robbers.” The perpetrators were actually students who had been instructed by the leader to do this, to help motivate the individual to sign up for the advanced course.

Another example is a person who comes to a cult “Bible study” but does not realize that the person who invited him was instructed to learn all about his background and report it to the leader. So, when the Bible study is conducted, key teachings would be made, designed to give the new person the subjective feeling that God knew “all about him” and his struggles and was directing him to become involved.

### **Demand for Purity**

Establishing impossible standards for performance, creates an environment of guilt and shame. No matter how hard a person tries, he always falls short, feels bad, and works even harder. Lifton describes a black/white good versus evil belief system framework. Demand for purity for me (?) can also include “perfectionism” and the internalization of the incorrect belief (and hubris)



that human beings can be perfect. Many cult recruits are highly successful students academically, as well as in sports, art, or whatever they did.

The demand for purity can create a Manichean quality in cults, as in some other religious and political groups. Such a demand calls for radical separation of pure and impure, of good and evil, within an environment and oneself. Absolute purification is a continuing process. It is often institutionalized, and, as a source of stimulation of guilt and shame, it ties in with the confession process. Ideological movements, at whatever level of intensity, take hold of an individual's guilt and shame mechanisms to achieve significant influence over the changes he or she undergoes.

Lifton's use of Manichean describes a black/white good versus evil belief system framework. Demand for purity can also include "perfectionism" and the internalization of the incorrect belief (and hubris) that human beings can be perfect. Many former cult members I have encountered were highly successful students academically, as well as in sports, art, or whatever they did, as if they were striving for perfection.

### **The Cult of Confession**

The cult of confession involves the destruction of personal boundaries, and the expectation that every thought, feeling, or action past or present that does not conform to the group's rules be shared or confessed. This information is not forgotten or forgiven but, instead, used to control.

Thought reform is done within a confession process that has its structure. Patterns of criticism and self-criticism accompany sessions in which one confesses to one's sins, generally transpiring within small groups and with an active and dynamic thrust toward personal change.

Unlike most of these criteria, the cult of confession is not practiced in all mind control situations, at least formally. Indeed, it can be done in a one-on-one situation or in a group confession situation in many groups. It may be more useful to think in terms of a breakdown of healthy boundaries of self/ group where the cult or controller believes it is their right to know absolutely everything about the individual's life, and this person has no right to keep any secrets which includes negative thoughts and feelings about the controller.

### **Sacred Science**

The belief that the group's dogma is absolutely scientifically and morally true, with no room for questions or alternative viewpoints, sacred science can offer considerable security to young people because it greatly simplifies the world. The Unification Church is a good example, but not the only one, of a contemporary need to combine a sacred set of dogmatic principles with a claim to a science embodying the truth about human behavior and human psychology. In the case of the Unification Church, this claim to a comprehensive human science is furthered by inviting prominent scholars (who are paid unusually large honoraria) to large symposia that stress unification of thought; participants express their views freely, but nonetheless contribute to the desired aura of intellectual legitimacy.

The Moon cult (Unification Church mentioned above) held scholarly conferences that Nobel Laureates would attend. This created an atmosphere of legitimacy, as they claimed to be "unifying science and religion" and would provide powerful reinforcement of Moon's claim to be "changing the world." What we now see throughout the digital world is an overwhelming number of conspiracy theory cults who all claim to be scientific while making the most

outlandish assertions without a speck of scientific evidence. True believers in cult ideologies fail to understand that science is a process involving a community effort that is continually changing and not a fixed ideology. Theories are beliefs and in the scientific method are referred to as hypotheses and are always subject to scrutiny, challenge, and abandonment when scientifically validated evidence is provided and is replicated.

### **Loading the Language**

Unlike a healthy use of a large vocabulary to help navigate the world, a person influenced by thought reform has a vastly reduced set of words and concepts. The term *loading the language* refers to a reification of language—words or images becoming sacred or divine. A much-simplified language may seem cliché-ridden but can have enormous appeal and psychological power in its very simplification. Because every issue in one’s life—and these are often very complicated young lives—can be reduced to a single set of principles that have an inner coherence, one can claim the experience of truth and feel it. Answers are available. Trilling (1950) has called this the “language of non-thought” because there is a cliché and a simple slogan to which the most complex and otherwise difficult questions can be reduced.

The term “loading the language” refers to a literalization of language—and words or images becoming God. A much-simplified language may seem cliché-ridden but can have enormous appeal and psychological power in its very simplification. Because every issue in one’s life—and these are often very complicated young lives—can be reduced to a single set of principles that have an inner coherence, one can claim the experience of truth and feel it. Answers are available. Lionel Trilling has called this the “language of non-thought” because

there is a cliché and a simple slogan to which the most complex and otherwise difficult questions can be reduced.

In 2020, terms like “fake news,” “enemy of the people,” and “libtards,” democrats can qualify as loaded language terms in the cult of Trump. Words should be tools we use to help us think and to better understand the complexities of the world. It is not words that simplify and concretize reality into a set of fixed beliefs—about policies or people.

### **Doctrine over Person**

The imposition of group beliefs over individual experience, conscience, and integrity. I remember reading the words of an ex-Moonie (author unknown) who wrote that when he first joined the group, he said to himself, “I can believe this based on my experience. However, after a while, I find myself thinking, I have to believe this, despite my experiences.” In an ideologically driven group, no other competing worldviews or ideologies are seen as legitimate or valid. There is a clearly defined enemy or devil that is at work to undermine the good work of the group, and a fear of what will happen if the group is unsuccessful in its mission.

The pattern of doctrine over person occurs when there is a conflict between what one feels oneself experiencing and what the doctrine or dogma says one should experience. The internalized message in totalistic environments is that one must find the truth of the dogma and subject one’s experiences to that truth. Often the experience of contradiction, or the admission of that experience, can be immediately associated with guilt or else (in order to hold one to that doctrine) condemned by others in a way that leads quickly to that guilty association. One is made to feel that doubts are reflections of one’s own evil. Yet doubts can arise, and when conflicts

become intense, people can leave. This is the most frequent difficulty of many of the cults: Membership may represent more of a problem than money.

### **Dispensing of Existence**

The belief that individuals in the group have the right to exist and all ex-members and critics or dissidents do not is common, although often metaphorical. In some groups, once a person decides to leave, they are labeled and shunned by members. In some cases, they are actually killed. Being versus nothingness (if one exists) creates great fear of being hopeless. The totalistic impulse to draw a sharp line between those who have a right to live and those who do not—though occurring in varying degrees—can become deadly when people are characterized as objects (vermin, scum, defectives). It justifies all kinds of mistreatment and even death. Members are programmed to believe that if they are kicked out of the group or exit the group, only “terrible things will happen to them.” Many cults refer to ex-members as “walking dead,” spiritually dead, and in some cults, physical threats and harassment, and even murder is seen as legitimate.

But if one has an absolute or totalistic vision of truth, then those who have not seen the light—have not embraced that truth, are in some way in the shadows—are bound up with evil, tainted, and do not have the right to exist. There is a “being versus nothingness” dichotomy at work here. Impediments to legitimate being must be pushed away or destroyed. One placed in the second category of not having the right to exist can experience a tremendous fear of inner extinction or collapse psychologically. However, when one is accepted, there can be great satisfaction of feeling oneself a part of the elite. Under more malignant conditions, the dispensing of existence, the absence of the right to exist, can be literalized; people can be put to

death because of their alleged doctrinal shortcomings, as has happened in all too many places, including the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. In the Peoples Temple mass suicide- murder in Guyana, a single cult leader could preside over the literal dispensing of existence—or, more precisely, nonexistence—by means of a suicidal mystique which he himself had made a part of the group’s ideology. (Subsequent reports based on the results of autopsies reveal that there were probably as many murders as suicides.) The totalistic impulse to draw a sharp line between those who have a right to live and those who do not—though occurring in varying degrees—can become a deadly approach to resolving fundamental human problems. Furthermore, all such approaches involving totalism or fundamentalism are doubly dangerous in a nuclear age.

### **EDGAR SCHEIN’S MODEL FOR COERCIVE PERSUASION**

In the same year Lifton published his book, an Army research psychologist who also was involved in studying brainwashing, Edgar Schein, published his essential book, *Coercive Persuasion* (Schein et al., 1961). Schein used social psychologist Kurt Lewin’s model of change and applied it to what the Chinese were doing to change people.

Kurt Lewin (1947) described a three-step model of change.

*Unfreezing*: breaking a person down

*Changing*: indoctrination

*Refreezing*: reinforcing the new identity

An adaptation and expansion of Kurt Lewin's three-stage model in Schein's work in *Coercive Persuasion* (1961) was necessary to understand specific behaviors used by authoritarian cults to program new identities. The following list is a result of the researcher's work to unpack the three-phase process. This model helps explain how the dual identity gets created as described in the DSM-V dissociative disorder 300.15 (West & Martin, 1994). The person's self is first confused and disoriented or unfrozen. The indoctrination of the ideology and behavior codes follows, and then the refreezing of the new, cult identity (Hassan, 1988, 2012). These granular elements will be able to serve to demonstrate undue influence by an authoritarian group.

### **Three Stages of Gaining Control of the Mind—Unfreezing, Changing, and Refreezing**

#### **1. Unfreezing**

- a. Disorientation/confusion
- b. Sensory deprivation and or information/ experience overload
- c. Physiological manipulation
  - 1. Sleep deprivation
  - 2. Privacy deprivation
  - 3. Change of diet
- d. Hypnosis
  - 1. Age regression
  - 2. Visualizations

3. Storytelling and metaphors
  4. Linguistic double binds, use of suggestion
  5. Meditation, chanting, praying, singing
- e. Getting the person to question his or her identity
- f. Redefining the individual's past (implant created memories, forget positive memories)

## **2. Changing**

- a. Creation and imposition of the new identity, step by step
1. Formally within indoctrination by individual and or group sessions
  2. Informally by members, videos, games, movies, publications, social and digital media
- b. Use of behavior modification
1. Rewards and punishments
  2. Thought-stopping
  3. Control of environment: isolation or use of people
- c. Mystical manipulation- creating misattribution experiences
- d. Use of hypnotic and other mind-altering techniques
1. Repetition, monotony, rhythm
  2. Praying, chanting, decreeing, visualizations, physical behaviors
- e. Use of confession and testimonials

## **3. Refreezing**

- a. New identity reinforced, old identity suppressed
1. Separate from the past; decrease contact or cut off friends and family



2. Give up meaningful possessions and assets
  3. Engage in cult activities: recruit, fundraise, move in with members
- b. New clothing, hairstyle, language, name, and family
  - c. Pair up with new role models, buddy system
  - d. Ongoing indoctrination: workshops, retreats, seminars, individual studies, group activities

### **Unfreezing**

Human beings learn and adapt to their environment unconsciously. Likewise, most information influences people without conscious analysis. There are specific conditions as well as techniques that systematically create confusion and self-doubt in an individual. Disorient them. Confuse them. Assault their beliefs in the way they make sense of reality. Do they know themselves? Their sexuality? Their real family of origin story? Have they experienced trauma? Death? What do they believe about the meaning of life?

It is a much-used technique to overload individuals with too much information in too short a time for them to process. Surround them with other believers. Isolate them from non-believers. Manipulate their sleep, food, use drugs, privacy, and minimize time and resources that encourage any reality testing. It is relatively fast and easy to do because human beings function poorly when they are kept tired, isolated, and deprived of basic needs.

Hypnotic techniques can capture a person's attention to side-step critical analytic thinking. When a person is in a trance, the mind can be hijacked, with false beliefs implanted into their unconscious. Mirror neurons help a person adapt to cult members' mindsets, and it is incredible how fast people unconsciously conform. Some cults use formal hypnotic inductions, including meditations and guided visualizations.

Age regression is a potent mind-altering technique to disorient and make the recruit more compliant. The person believes they are back in time when they were children and therefore have the child's mindset. They can be programmed to believe that the new cult leaders are their parents. Intense emotional visualizations are another technique, like, "Imagine if you were there 2,000 years ago while Jesus is being nailed to the cross with blood spurting out of his pierced hands." People can feel the emotional pain of the suffering and the horror of the punishment. Storytelling is the ultimate teaching tool, but in cults, the indoctrination usually takes place for many hours over many days. Keeping people for lengthy indoctrination sessions forces the recruit to conform and comply to group authority. Ultimately, questioning their self-identity and beliefs will make them easier to change.

## **Changing**

A step-by-step process forms the new thought-reformed "identity." Formal indoctrination sessions are often required. Informal influence activities such as recruiting others, listening to videos and tapes, reading books, reading social media, and just being around other believers help mold the new identity. Common strategies used to change identity include behavior modification techniques, rewards and punishments (e.g., clothes, hair, nails, food, hotel rooms), control of environment, mystical manipulation, re-interpretation of past events, use of hypnosis, thought-stopping techniques, repetition, monotony, rhythm and use of confession and testimonials.

The changing stage contains both formal and informal indoctrination sessions for the new identity. This includes the new belief and behavioral code of conduct. The person is often paired up with an older member of the group to help role-model proper cult behavior—substantial time investment in learning the new ideology and specialized language. Reward desired behavior with

positive contingencies such as praise, promotion, and compensation. Punishment occurs whenever a member disregards the rules. The cult always seeks to control the member's environment as much as possible.

Mystical manipulation (Lifton, 1961) is a feature of a thought reform environment. It is essentially a misattribution effect. Many destructive cults, particularly religious cults, trick people into thinking the leader has supernatural powers like being able to read members' minds. They believe the leader can prophesy the future. The trick is that cult members gather information from other sources. The member does not understand this is being done. Then when something comes true, people mistakenly think they must be following "God." Of course, professional magicians often use these covert information-gathering techniques, in their toolbox of techniques to cause awe and wonder. A powerful technique utilizes sleight of hand, to manifest things out of the air. The Indian godman, Sai Baba, had millions of devotees who believed he could manifest a Rolex watch (with serial number) out of thin air.

### **Refreezing**

The new identity suppresses the person's old identity. The real identity is not erased or destroyed. The recruit feels reborn. Often, they will be given a new name, different clothes, tattoos, new hairstyles, a new language, a new family, and directed to move, pairing up with new role models, buddy system with other girls (the "stable") or older members. Separation from the past might include destroying old photographs, videos, or any memorabilia. Continuing indoctrination occurs—workshops, studying group beliefs, values, and activities. Money and possessions are often donated. Group functions are mandatory and scheduled to occupy many hours a week. Cult activities include fundraising as well as recruiting and indoctrinating others.

Schein decided not to work in the area of cults or thought reform but focused his career in organizational change and development, becoming legendary for his contributions to understanding how people and organizations operate and how to help them work better. In a 2014 article, Schein offered an updated model to understand coercive persuasion, where he targets the institution of education itself (Schein, 2014). It becomes clear that this is the destructive use of social influence and mirrors some of the same patterns used by Lifton, Singer, and the BITE model.

### **The Role of Coercive Persuasion in Education and Learning Conditions.**

1. Keep the person from leaving.
2. Isolate the person from others who have different messages or values.
3. Control the communications to that person.
4. Make the person self-conscious, and thereby vulnerable, by removing the props that sustain identity.
5. Stimulate behavior consistent with the new concepts and values through coercion or seduction.
6. Surround the person with others who already have the concepts and values.
7. Help the person to see the validity of the point of view you are trying to teach.
8. Supply a coach whose job is to train the learner in the new attitudes and behavior.

It is worthy to note that Schein wrote this eight-point model many decades after his work on communist thought reform and chose to frame his model in terms of “coercive persuasion in education and learning conditions (p. 1-24). It is clear that he was aware of not only Lifton’s models but especially the Singer model, as a number of his points mirror the criteria that were described in 1996. One of the original researchers of coercive persuasion, Dr. Edgar Schein (Schein et al., 1961), recently reviewed the journal article that preceded this doctoral study and

wrote that he “found it most interesting that ... a way to operationalize this complicated process and do research on it [was found] (E. Schein, personal communication, July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020).”

## **MARGARET SINGER’S SIX CONDITIONS FOR THOUGHT REFORM**

Psychologist Margaret Singer was another mental health professional tasked to research Chinese Communist brainwashing during the 1950s. She went on to become a leading expert in cult-related legal cases and frequently offered expert witness testimonies. Singer preferred the term thought reform to mind control or brainwashing. Singer wrote the foreword to *Combating Cult Mind Control* (Hassan, 1988, 2015). Singer and Lalich (2003) wrote *Cult in our Midst: The Continuing Fight Against Their Hidden Menace*. Singer presents her model in this volume using what she calls “six conditions” for how to evaluate thought reform or undue influence. The model is behavioral and much simpler to understand than Lifton’s very heavily theoretical and descriptive model.

Singer disagreed with the position I hold on whether the military, in some cases, uses mind control on its soldiers. It is impossible to evaluate military boot camp training like the Marines or Seals, and not see mind control policies and behaviors. The influence continuum, the pyramid structure model, and the BITE model can be used to evaluate any particular person’s experience. Singer’s position is that people are not deceived into the military as they are with cults. Veterans complain that their military recruiters lied to them about what they would do when they enlisted to become soldiers. Singer argued that unlike most authoritarian cults, the military differs in significant ways that are persuasive. The government gives recruits a salary and benefits. Soldiers have paid vacation time. Soldiers are not isolated or alienated from their families and friends who are critical of the military. After completing a tour of duty, soldiers can

exit without any punishments. The military has its laws and a justice system to judge and implement its sentences. There is a code of conduct that supports the right to disobey a superior's order if it violates the law or even of conscience. Studies concerning dissociation issues in veterans show a correlation with trauma (Özdemir, et al., 2015) Dissociative Disorder (300.15) is the diagnostic category for those experiencing identity issues related to coercive persuasion and cult mind control.

### **The Singer Model**

1. Gain control over a person's time, especially his thinking time and physical environment.
2. Create a sense of powerlessness, fear, and dependency while providing models that demonstrate the new, ideal behavior.
3. Manipulate rewards, punishments, and experiences to suppress the recruit's former social behavior and attitudes, including the use of altered states of consciousness to manipulate experience.
4. Manipulate rewards, punishments, and experiences to elicit behavior and attitudes desired by leadership.
5. Create a tightly controlled system with a closed system of logic, wherein dissenters feel their questioning indicates something inherently wrong with them.
6. Keep recruits unaware and uninformed that there is an agenda to control or change them. Thought reform is impossible when a person is functioning at full capacity with informed consent.

Singer's model has been used as a foundation for understanding undue influence in the legal system. It helps identify some of the behavioral mechanisms that characterize thought reform or undue influence. Gaining control over time, especially time to think, as well as control of the recruit's physical environment is imperative. Capturing people's psychological attention might be a more useful construct than "thinking time," as one can argue that cult members do not do much thinking. Keeping cult members busy enough to occupy most of their waking time is a common strategy.

Lifton's first criterion is milieu control, so for him as well as Singer, control of the physical environment is important. Control of the physical environment is always essential and powerful. Work by Omotoyinbo (2014) described online recruitment and radicalization taking place through people's smartphones, computers, tablets, and television monitors. People rarely are physically isolated anymore living in a compound or community like cults in the 1970s through 1990s.

Singer's second condition describes the creation of emotional states in recruits that include feeling helpless, fearful, and dependent while simultaneously offering cult solutions that resolve these intense negative emotions. Cognitive dissonance is intentionally manufactured to create change. Emotional control includes idealizing how "special" and "chosen" the recruit is while manipulating various guilt beliefs, as well as utilizing existing fears or installing phobias. Behavior control incorporates modeling "right" behavior for members. The goal is to make people dependent and obedient.

The third condition describes behavior conditioning using rewards and punishments to inhibit a person's sense of self and their actions. Lifton's psychoanalytic framework does not mention conditioning and behavior modification. Singer had training in hypnosis and taught about its use in presentations and wrote about it in her 2003 book, *Cults in Our Midst*. Louis Jolyon West, MD (Weiner & Yamamoto, 1999), also learned and taught about hypnosis and received honors in recognition of his contribution. Singer's use of the term "altered states of consciousness" is a euphemism for hypnosis.

The use of hypnosis in cults has been researched by Katchen (1992). He argues covert hypnosis techniques, including neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), are being spread across the

world over the Internet with astonishing speed, particularly around the area of sexual seduction by “pick-up artists.” In 2016, Ohio divorce attorney Michael Fine took a plea deal for 12 years in jail for covertly hypnotizing his female clients, raping them, and creating amnesia to block any memory of the rapes (Hassan, 2016). Israel has passed a law against the unethical use of hypnosis (State of Israel Ministry of Health 1984). Singer’s description of altered states overlaps with Lifton’s mystical manipulation.

Singer’s fourth condition parallels the third condition, except it includes behavioral conditioning to reinforce (refreeze) the newly prescribed cult identity. The fourth condition refers to the programming of new behaviors, new beliefs, and new experiences that reinforce them. Cult rituals such as group services, studying group ideology, religious practices such as praying, meditating, singing, marching, bowing, when applicable, are used to mold the recruit’s identity.

A closed system of logic as well as the blaming of the believer when things do not go well or add up defines Singer’s fifth condition. It can be argued that cult ideologies rarely display any logic at all. They do have a story that has some internal consistency—enough for true believers to focus on and ignore numerous inconsistencies. Authoritarian cults are sometimes referred to as self-sealing (Riebel, 1996). This includes loaded language that influences thought. It also includes forbidding questioning the leader, doctrine, or policy.

Finally, Singer’s sixth condition requires keeping recruits ignorant of the process and agenda being used on them. In legal terms, this is a lack of informed consent. Singer’s statement that thought reform is impossible to do with fully informed consent and full cognitive capacity is



powerful. However, it assumes incorrectly that the person is educated about covert hypnotic techniques and other techniques of undue influence.

Lifton's eight criteria and Singer's six conditions together offer a valuable framework to understand some key aspects of the thought reform process. Lifton's perspective is theoretical, borrowing heavily from Erik Erikson's identity model (1968) as well as from psychoanalytic tradition derived from Freud. Singer's model offers a more straightforward, more behavioral approach. However, it misses many important themes and behaviors that have proved useful for people in cults trying to exit.

Singer created a model that helps describe a variety of societal contexts and how to differentiate them using a number of parameters that make sense. This was her contribution to help differentiate the different ways of seeing how thought reform is extreme influence.

### **Singer's Continuum of Influence and Persuasion**

Singer outlined evaluative criteria that distinguish ethical influence (education and advertising) from propaganda, indoctrination, and thought reform. One important point for Singer is the use of deception. Thought reform is intentionally and systematically practiced on people without their understanding of what is happening. Singer lists nine dimensions along which various types of information can be distinguished. Table 2 shows these along the left side of the table and various modes of communication along the top. Singer highlights differences along the influence continuum to show the extreme of authoritarian thought reform.

**Table 2**  
*The Continuum of Influence and Persuasion*

	<b>Education</b>	<b>Advertising</b>	<b>Propaganda</b>	<b>Indoctrination</b>	<b>Thought Reform</b>
<b>Focus of body of knowledge</b>	Many bodies of knowledge based on scientific findings in various fields.	Body of knowledge concerns product, competitors; how to sell and influence via legal persuasion.	Body of knowledge centers on political persuasion of masses of people.	Body of knowledge is explicitly designed to inculcate organizational values.	Body of knowledge centers on changing people without their knowledge.
<b>Direction &amp; degree of exchange</b>	Two-way pupil-teacher exchange encouraged.	Exchange can occur but communication generally one-sided.	Some exchange occurs but communication generally one-sided.	Limited exchange occurs, communication is one-sided.	No exchange occurs, communication is one-sided.
<b>Ability to change</b>	Change occurs as science advances; as students and other scholars offer criticisms; as students & citizens evaluate programs.	Change made by those who pay for it, based upon the success of ad programs by consumers law, & in response to consumer complaints.	Change based on changing tides in world politics and on political need to promote the group, nation, or international organization.	Change made through formal channels, via written suggestions to higher-ups.	Change occurs rarely; organization remains fairly rigid; change occurs primarily to Improve thought- reform effectiveness.
<b>Structure of persuasion</b>	Uses teacher-pupil structure; logical thinking encouraged.	Uses an instructional mode to persuade consumer/buyer.	Takes authoritarian stance to persuade masses	Takes authoritarian & hierarchical stance.	Takes authoritarian & hierarchical stance; No full awareness on part of learner.
<b>Type of relationship</b>	Instruction is time-limited: consensual.	Consumer/buyer can accept or ignore communication.	Learner support & engrossment expected.	Instruction is contractual: consensual	Group attempts to retain people forever.
<b>Deceptiveness</b>	Is not deceptive.	Can be deceptive, selecting only positive views.	Can be deceptive, often exaggerated.	Is not deceptive.	Is deceptive.
<b>Breadth of learning</b>	Focuses on learning to learn & learning	Has a narrow goal of swaying opinion to promote and	Targets large political masses to make them believe a specific	Stresses narrow learning for a specific goal; to become	Individualized target; hidden agenda (you will be

	about reality; broad goal is rounded knowledge for development of the individual.	sell an idea, object, or program; another goal is to enhance seller & possibly buyer.	view or circumstance is good.	something or to train for performance of duties.	changed one step at a time to become deployable to serve leaders).
<b>Tolerance</b>	Respects differences.	Puts down competition.	Wants to lessen opposition.	Aware of differences.	No respect for differences.
<b>Methods</b>	Instructional techniques.	Mild to heavy Persuasion.	Overt persuasion sometimes unethical.	Disciplinary techniques.	Improper and unethical techniques.

Thought reform is an identifiable system of psychological and social influence aimed at coopting a person’s autonomy. It is done on unsuspecting people using deception and sophisticated psychological methods. It is dramatically different from educational models that motivate and encourage curiosity, asking questions and learning. People are treated as unique individuals. It encourages exposure to a wide variety of worldviews and perspectives on being a human being living in a psycho-historical cultural context.

**STEVEN HASSAN’S INFLUENCE CONTINUUM AND THE BITE MODEL OF MIND**

**CONTROL**

**The Influence Continuum of Due Influence (ethical) to Undue Influence (unethical)**

In order to have a framework that can protect a person from undue influence, one needs to utilize an influence continuum which is broad and easy to understand. On this ethical side of

the continuum, informed consent is a vital practice. People need accurate information about the recruiter, the ideology, and what happens to them if they say yes. Ethical, healthy influence recognizes that each person is unique. This framework assumes that people should enjoy free will, critical thinking, conscience, creativity, humor, love, as spelled out in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948).

The themes described in the continuum are fleshed out by evaluation using the BITE model, which is detailed below. A person needs to have the motivation, technical skills, and digital access to do research about whether those claiming knowledge even have credentials or authority to make the truth claims they make. Independent research must include critics and former members. Lastly, the researcher needs to be able to hold his own belief system and value system while learning about other ideological systems. Singer's model is helpful, but a broader and more concrete approach seems important in evaluating undue influence in the legal area. Singer raises more questions than she answers in many ways. My model, described below, is a response to this need to operationalize undue influence in a way that can be used by advocates in the law.

**FIGURE 1**

*The Influence Continuum*



**The BITE Model as a Guide to Evaluating Groups and Situations—The Control of Behavior, Information, Thought, Emotion**

The BITE model is derived from the work of Robert Jay Lifton, Edgar Schein, Margaret Singer, and psychiatrist Louis Jolyon West, all of whom were involved in researching communist brainwashing. The BITE model presents a simpler, more concrete way to help people understand the complex phenomena entailed with cult mind control. The model began with the realization that Leon Festinger's (1957) famous theory of cognitive dissonance held a vital

theoretical key. Festinger argued that beliefs have a cognitive, affective, and behavioral component. Festinger was studying a UFO cult and was very curious about why people did not just leave the group when the spacecraft failed to appear on the designated mountain at the appointed time. To the contrary, many believers became even more firmly committed to their belief in aliens and the leader's knowledge about them. Festinger proposed that human beings dislike conflict and prefer to have consistency or congruence, so that thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are aligned. These ideas laid the foundation for all cognitive-behavioral therapy.

The BITE model uses these three components and adds information as a fourth and overlapping component. The model proposes that behavior, thought, emotional and information control constitute the four components of mind control (Hassan, 1988). Human beings operate on the information they receive to function. Our brain relies on our senses to filter and evaluate data so that we can decide how to act. Sensory deprivation or information overload creates a condition where human beings cannot function optimally. Cults suppress the real self and build a new identity over that which is controlled by the external authority or cult. This is a crucial insight into understanding the dissociative disorder cited in the DSM-V.

The BITE model identifies and fleshes specific components that characterize destructive cult policies. Since 1988, tens of thousands of people have reported that the BITE model has helped them to identify their involvement in a destructive cult, enabling them to exit and reclaim their power. Its value has been demonstrated by individuals involved in a wide variety of destructive cults and controlling relationships across the world. Below are the BITE model criteria. The more criteria present under each component, the more controlling the destructive relationship or group is determined to be.

## **THE BITE MODEL**

### **BEHAVIOR CONTROL**

1. Regulate an individual's physical reality
2. Dictate where, how, and with whom the member lives and associates or isolates
3. Dictate when, how, and with whom the member has sex
4. Control types of clothing and hairstyles
5. Regulate diet—food and drink, hunger and/ or fasting
6. Manipulation and deprivation of sleep
7. Financial exploitation, manipulation or dependence
8. Restrict leisure, entertainment, vacation time
9. Require significant time spent with group indoctrination and rituals and/ or self-indoctrination with Internet
10. Require permission for major decisions
11. Use rewards and punishments to modify behaviors, both positive and negative
12. Discourage individualism, encourage groupthink
13. Impose rigid rules and regulations
14. Punish disobedience by beating, torture, burning, cutting, rape, or tattooing/branding
15. Threaten harm to person, family, and friends
16. Force individuals to rape or be raped
17. Encourage and engage in corporal punishment
18. Employ kidnapping
19. Separate family members

20. Use imprisonment
21. Permit torture, lynching, murder
22. Instill dependency and obedience

## INFORMATION CONTROL

1. Deception
  - a. Deliberately withhold information
  - b. Distort information to make it more acceptable
  - c. Systematically lie to the cult member
2. Minimize or discourage access to non-cult sources of information, including
  - a. Internet, TV, radio, books, articles, newspapers, magazines, media
  - b. Critical information
  - c. Former members
  - d. Keep members busy so they do not have time to think and investigate
  - e. Control through cell phone with texting, calls, Internet tracking
3. Compartmentalize information into outsider vs. insider doctrines
  - a. Ensure that information is not freely accessible
  - b. Control information at different levels and missions within group
  - c. Allow only leadership to decide who needs to know what and when
4. Encourage spying on other members
  - a. Impose a buddy system to monitor and control member
  - b. Report deviant thoughts, feelings, and actions to leadership
  - c. Ensure that individual behavior is monitored by the group



5. Extensive use of cult-generated information and propaganda, including
  - a. Newsletters, magazines, journals, audiotapes, videotapes, YouTube, movies and other social media
  - b. Misquote statements from non-cult sources or use them out of context
6. Unethical use of confession
  - a. Information about sins used to disrupt and/or dissolve identity boundaries
  - b. Withholding forgiveness or absolution
  - c. Manipulation of memory, implant false memories

#### THOUGHT CONTROL

1. Require members to internalize the group's doctrine as truth
  - a. Adopting the group's "map of reality" as reality
  - b. Instill black and white thinking
  - c. Decide between good vs. evil
  - d. Organize people into us vs. them (insiders vs. outsiders)
2. Change person's name and identity
3. Use of loaded language and clichés which constrict knowledge, stop critical thinking and reduce complexities into platitudinous buzz words
4. Encourage only "good and proper" thoughts
5. Hypnotic techniques are used to alter mental states, undermine critical thinking, and even to age regress the member
6. Memories are manipulated, and false memories are created

7. Teaching thought-stopping techniques which shut down reality testing by stopping negative thoughts about the cult and allowing only positive thoughts using denial, rationalization, wishful thinking, chanting, meditating, praying, speaking in tongues, singing or humming
8. Reject rational analysis, critical thinking, constructive criticism
9. Forbid critical questions about leader, doctrine, or policy allowed
10. Label alternative belief systems as illegitimate, evil, or not useful
11. Instill new “map of reality”

#### EMOTIONAL CONTROL

1. Manipulate and narrow the range of feelings
2. Frame needs as evil, wrong, or selfish
3. Teach emotion-stopping techniques to block feelings of homesickness, anger, doubt
4. Make the person feel that problems are always their own fault, never the leader’s or the group’s fault
5. Promote feelings of guilt or unworthiness including doubts about oneself, one’s family, one’s past, one’s affiliations, identity, and actions.
6. Instill fear, such as fear of the outside world, independent thought, loss of salvation, shunning, and the disapproval of other members
7. Promote extremes of emotional highs and lows – love bombing and praise one moment and then declaring you are horrible sinner
8. Employ ritualistic and sometimes public confession of sins

9. Inculcating irrational fears or phobias about leaving the group or questioning the leader's authority in any of the following ways:
- a. Contend that no happiness or fulfillment is possible outside of the group
  - b. Contend there will be terrible consequences if you leave: hell, demon possession, incurable diseases, accidents, suicide, insanity, 10,000 reincarnations, and so forth
  - c. Shun those who leave; use fear of being rejected by friends and family
  - d. Reject any legitimate reason to leave; those who leave are weak, undisciplined, unspiritual, worldly, brainwashed by family or counselor, or seduced by money, sex, or rock and roll
  - e. Threaten harm to ex-member and family

### **BITE Model–Behavior Control**

The ultimate goal of behavior control is dependency on and obedience to the group, its ideology, and its leadership. All major life decisions must be approved or else dictated by the group. A member who does not get permission first for major decisions faces punishment. Individualism is discouraged and putting “God” or the group first is mandatory. Rigid rules and regulations are mandated and enforced. Thoughts, feelings, and activities (of self or others) must be reported to superiors.

Clothing and hairstyle are just some of the factors to create and enforce conformity (Asch, 1951). People frequently need to live with approved people in approved housing. Control of diet as well as fasting is often used. Of course, sexuality is strictly controlled and regulated by cult leadership. Typically, members are sleep deprived. Research has demonstrated people on the average require 7-9 hours of sleep (Hafner et al., 2016). Members are typically financially

exploited, manipulated, or made entirely dependent. Usually, group indoctrination and self-indoctrination sessions demand many hours of members' lives (Goldberg & Goldberg, 1982). The Internet serves as a 24/7 indoctrination tool for mind controllers to keep members fully committed (UNODC, 2012). There is little non-group leisure time or vacation time away. Those in power dole out rewards for "good" behavior and punishments for "bad" behavior.

### **BITE Model–Information Control**

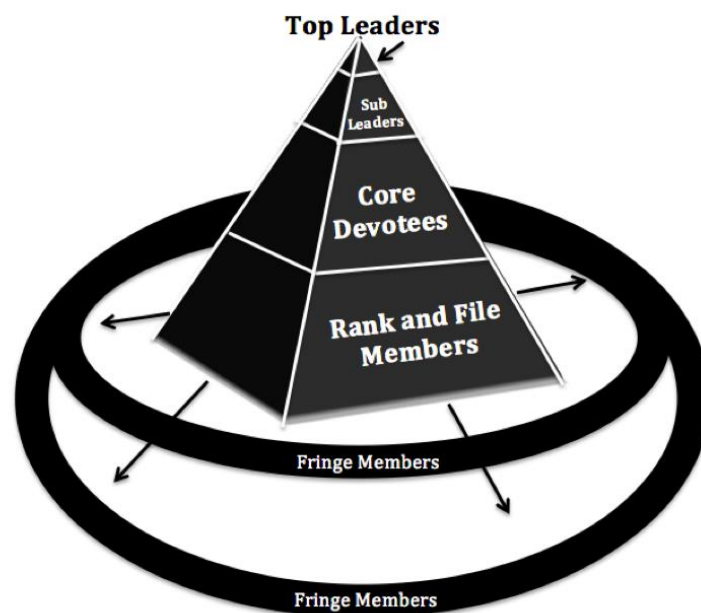
Analyzing information is vital to understanding undue influence. For example, an ethical group will inform newcomers about who they are, what they believe, and what is expected of them if they become a member. An unethical group uses deception by outright lying, withholding vital information, or distorting information to make it appear more acceptable. Often all three types of lying are used and undermine the legal right of citizens to have informed consent to make decisions in their best interest.

Authoritarian cults usually have a pyramid shape with circles that emanate from its base. Data flow from the top downward. The senior leadership decides who needs to know what and when people should know anything at all. There can be sharp discrepancies between what members hear versus what outsiders learn. This important framework that needs to be considered is level of involvement. Experience dictates that people experience the undue influence organization in very different levels of involvement. By far, the vast number of members are fringe members and only are ideologically influenced but are not part of the rank-and-file indoctrination. When a forensic evaluation on social influence is conducted, determining how high up in the command-and-control structure is essential. Leadership might mean greater privileges, separate housing, salary, access to internal leadership documents and meetings. It

might be a title and therefore higher status but no independent decision-making ability. Members of destructive cults might get promoted and demoted several times over years of involvement. This too is significant. The position in the cult is also significant as lower-level members might not have access outside sources of news at all. If the person is in the legal department of public relations, they will know much more information that goes up to the upper levels of the pyramid.

**Figure 2**

*Destructive Cult Structure*



Members must spy on others, including family and friends. Improper thoughts, feelings, and actions must be reported to leadership; otherwise, that person will get into trouble too. Many groups use a buddy system to monitor and control, especially when out proselytizing. The

information gained about a member's past, either through formal confessionals or through members reporting them, is used to maintain group control. These data include false confessions (Kassim, 2015) of childhood abuse that may have been "remembered" through suggestive counseling or group practices (Lynn et al., 2015). If a member starts showing signs of wishing to leave the group, the leadership will typically use this information and the threat of disclosure to get the member back in line.

Mind control cults, especially political cults rely on the extensive use of propaganda (Márquez, 2018). Internet websites and public and private videos are available 24/7 and meetings are often live streamed. Bigger groups have publication departments that churn out newsletters, magazines, journals, audiotapes, videotapes, podcasts, blogs, apps, and other media. Famous people are quoted, often without their permission and totally out of context, but in a way that supports the credibility of the group.

To be independent thinkers, people require information from a wide variety of reputable sources. Cults indoctrinate members to distrust critics, former members, and any media that is negative. Some groups tell members to avoid newspapers, books, articles, TV, radio, and any academic, science-based information. Some controllers keep believers so busy they do not have time to think or check things out or make outside relationships. Other groups control believers through their cell phones with GPS tracking, frequent texting, or calls. Some authoritarian groups have countless "front" groups to hide the parent organization.

### **BITE Model–Thought Control**

Hypnotic and suggestive strategies that induce "altered state of consciousness" are often used to reprogram people's thoughts and memories (Kozłowska, 2004). Other techniques to

induce thought control range from hours of tedious, monotonous lectures several times a week where members must memorize and regurgitate the correct answers to audible prayers, chanting, speaking in tongues, and meditation, in ways that reduce critical thinking. Eyes-closed visualizations, and guided meditation techniques can allow a group to insert thoughts and beliefs into their members.

The ideology of authoritarian groups, as discussed previously, is typically all or nothing, black and white, us versus them and good versus evil. Members believe the doctrine to be the ultimate “Truth” that is sacred and scientific (Lifton, 1961). Members learn “thought-stopping” techniques to keep themselves pure and to resist evil thoughts. The language system of closed groups can be an actual dialect not shared by outsiders. “Thought-terminating clichés” make complex ideas into platitudinous buzzwords known by only other members. Not all groups give the member a new name. However, when they do, it is a powerful technique that supports changes in the person’s identity (Hassan, 1988; Dubrow-Marshall, 2007; Jenkinson, 2016).

Critical questions about the leader, the doctrine, or the organization’s policies are avoided or are forbidden. Rational analysis, critical thinking, even constructive criticism is deemed wrong. Expressing this is turned around on a member as a weakness of character and their lack of devotion. All other groups and their belief systems are illegitimate, evil, or at the very least, not useful.

### **BITE Model–Emotional Control**

People are often initially “love-bombed,” flattered, and made to feel special. However, cult love is conditional upon being a good cult member and is quickly withdrawn if the person

makes trouble by asking problematic questions. Members are required to always be grateful and happy as they are part of the chosen people who know the Truth. They believe they have the key to the world's salvation in one way or another. Members often sing songs written about the leader or the doctrine or the group to keep positive. Listening to music and especially singing cult songs to oneself as well as in community helps to access positive emotional states.

Members learn techniques like thought-stopping (Bakker, 2009) and emotion-stopping, mainly to block feelings of homesickness, anger towards leadership, or doubt. Whenever a person feels depressed or anxious or fearful, they are encouraged to feel guilty and engage in practices to further surrender themselves to the great leader or group. Whenever there is a problem, the group and leader are always right, and it is the member's fault. If members feel healthy emotions, like sexual attraction to someone who is not approved, they are told they are evil and sinful or tempting Satan. Likewise, jealousy, greed, and envy are labeled as "negative," so members deny and suppress them.

Sometimes, members must repent publicly and confess these negative emotions. They are made to feel guilty, selfish, unworthy, and even unspiritual. The group can even try to make them feel guilty for their religion of origin, race, country, and personal history. The system of being in the cult always keeps people frustrated and dependent. Cult leaders want members to derive positive self-esteem by being a part of the group, not by individual accomplishments. Guilt and fear are the two most frequently used emotional control techniques.

One nearly universal technique used by cults is phobia indoctrination (Hassan, 1988, 2000, 2012, 2015, 2018). Mental health professionals know how devastating phobias can be and how they can disrupt a person's ability to function. Cult leaders either piggyback their



programming onto pre-existing phobias or install phobias into members' minds to such an extent that they cannot imagine being happy and fulfilled without the group. In a cult member's thinking, leaving the group equals loss of existence (Lifton, 1961). Phobias can be quite diverse and range from fears about *spiritual health*, (i.e., going to hell, being possessed by demons, losing your soul) and *physical health*, (i.e., getting cancer, AIDS, being killed by a car) to *psychological health*, (i.e., going insane, being committed to a mental hospital, being given drugs, or never being a success; Hassan, 2012).

People can be emotionally threatened or coerced into remaining a member even if they no longer believe because they fear being called "bad" or sinful by leadership. Members might be afraid that family and friends will stop interacting with them unless they repent, return, and toe the line. Some member's livelihood is dependent upon remaining in the group. Emotional coercion is especially forceful if you were raised in the group and convinced to avoid the outside world as evil and, therefore, do not know anyone who can help you exit. Some groups will threaten physical and psychological violence, blackmail, and extortion if one tries to leave the authoritarian group. These threats can not only be directed to the member but also their loved ones.

In summary, the models Lifton, Singer, and Schein developed can be described by utilizing the BITE model, influence continuum, and Lewin model of unfreezing, changing and refreezing with the elements fleshed out within the Schefflin social influence model.

## **Recognition and Utilization of the Influence Continuum and BITE Model in Trafficking**

The BITE model includes the three trafficking criteria—force, fraud and coercion—that illuminate how control is exerted to exploit victims. Attorney and former trafficking survivor Carissa Phelps has created Runaway Girl, an organization that utilizes former trafficking victims to offer educational and support programs (Phelps & Warren, 2012). *Ending the Game*, the first program to help women sex trafficking survivors understand pimp and trafficker mind control, was developed using the Influence Continuum and BITE model (Thomas et al., 2015). Law professor Robin Boyle-Laisure used the BITE model to explain how sex traffickers exert control (Boyle-Laisure, 2016). The *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* published an article by Alvarez, and Cañas-Moreira (2015) entitled “A Victim-Centered Approach to Sex Trafficking Cases” in which the BITE model is featured to help explain the mind control used to recruit and indoctrinate people into slavery. In a landmark case, the destructive cult leader of NXIVM, Keith Raniere, was found guilty of seven counts including “racketeering and racketeering conspiracy; sex trafficking, attempted sex trafficking and sex trafficking conspiracy; forced labor conspiracy and wire fraud conspiracy (U.S. Attorney’s Office, Eastern District of New York, 2019) The racketeering offense included predicate acts of extortion, identity theft, and production and possession of child pornography.” The prosecutors did not mention cults of thought reform or the BITE model in their case to not muddy the water for the defense to try to attack. A major focus was on utilizing anti-trafficking statutes. Raniere was ultimately sentenced to 120 years in prison (U.S. Attorney’s office, Eastern District of New York, 2020).

### **SCHEFLIN’S SOCIAL INFLUENCE MODEL (SIM)**

What is needed is a model that expert witnesses can use in the legal system that offers a comprehensive framework for evaluation of social influence. Schefflin has created such a model which can be utilized in a fair and structured way. One major objection that has been raised to applying undue influence more widely is what is called “the slippery slope” argument. That one person’s undue influence is not that at all but rather free will or non-conformist beliefs and actions. A framework model will need to be flexible and take into account a wide body of information in order to be evaluated.

Alan Schefflin is professor emeritus of law at Santa Clara University. Schefflin (2015) created SIM as a framework for a systematic approach that allows expert witnesses to analyze and evaluate the elements of any specific case in terms of the degree of undue influence. The model clearly demonstrates the predator-prey relationship judges and juries must understand to decide whether undue influence exists.

Schefflin prefaces his model with a poem, “The Elephant’s Child,” by Rudyard Kipling (1900), long used in the training of journalists:

I keep six honest serving-men  
They taught me all I knew;  
Their names are What and Why and When  
And How and Where and Who.

Schefflin identifies each element of his model with one of the categories given in the poem:

Influencer - Who

Influencer’s motive – Why

Influencer’s methods – What and How

Circumstance – Where and When

Influencee's receptivity/vulnerability - Who

Consequences – What

### **1. Influencer (Who)**

Relationship to the Influencee

- a. Authority Figure
- b. Confidential Relationship
- c. Advisor
- d. Family Member

Specific characteristics of that person or group's identity and higher perceived status carries weight and power. Does he or she have power and authority over the influencee? For example, is he or she a teacher, priest, therapist, law enforcement, or coach? Is the influencer much older? Is he or she a high-status member of the person's family? Often the influencer/ predator or predatory organization has narcissistic characteristics like pathological lying and lack of empathy (Fromm, 1964). If possible, psychological testing could be done on the influencer to determine their healthiness.

### **2. Influencer's Motives (Purpose - Why)**

- a. Financial Gain
- b. Sex
- c. Behavioral Acquiescence
- d. Ideological Adherence
- e. Ego Gratification
- f. Political or Social Power

Cult leaders always seek power, money, and usually sex from their followers. Unlike con-artists and hucksters who are only interested in money and moving on to the next “mark,” cult leaders try to program a new identity that is dependent and obedient. Political cult leaders wish to take over and control local government, city, state, country, or even the world. Sexual predators often seek to have power over their target and, in some cases, have sex once and move on. Others seek more sustained control, like pimps and traffickers who seek to control for purposes of making money or gaining information from the mark, as spies may do.

### 3. Influencer’s Methods (What/How)

*The Science of Social Influence* (Pratkanis, 2007) describes more than a hundred social influence techniques, from which Schefflin extracts the following:

- a. “Foot in the Door” [Small request, then larger one]
- b. “Door-in-the Face” [Large request, then small one]
- c. “Help Me Help You”
- d. “Won’t You Help?”
- e. “Don’t You Want to Do the Right Thing?”
- f. “I’m Really Depending on You”
- g. “This May Be Your Only Chance”
- h. “Everyone’s Doing It” [“Don’t Be Left Behind”]
- i. “God Has Selected You”
- j. “Love-Bombing”
- k. “Grooming”/Progression of Seduction

Schefflin then adds a four-part descriptive of the influence process:

- a. The Bait
- b. Building Trust
- c. Sweetening the Scam
- d. Closing the Fraud

Social psychologist, Robert Cialdini has studied influence for decades. He has written important books on influence and outlined important principles of social psychology that are invaluable to better understand how people can be made to do things (Cialdini, 1984, 2016).

#### **4. Circumstances (Where/When)**

- a. Location
- b. Control of Physical Environment
- c. Control of Information (Input and Output)
- d. Access to Independent Advice
- e. Frequency, Duration, and Nature of the Contacts

#### **5. Influencee's Receptivity/Vulnerability (Who)**

- a. recently moved to new city, state or country
- b. divorce or breakup of significant relationship
- c. suffered death of a loved one
- d. suffers from intellectual or emotional problems
- e. suffered recent trauma
- f. autism spectrum disorder
- g. lack of secure attachment
- h. personality type (individual differences)
- i. Hypnotic Induction Profile (HIP)
- j. Revised Stanford Profile Scales of Hypnotic Susceptibility, Forms I and II
- k. Gudjonsson Suggestibility Scales

#### **6. Consequences (What)**

- a. Financial
- b. Behavioral
- c. Ideological

What changes took place in the influencee's life as a result of the influencer? Is there long-term psychological trauma? Is there dissociative disorder, phobias, or an anxiety disorder? Did they spend large amounts of money or time working for no compensation? Did they engage in behaviors which endangered them or others? Were they encouraged to commit any criminal acts?

If they were trafficking victims, did they make pornography that appeared online? Did they end a marriage, harm children, turn over property and/or inheritance? Are they seeking recompense for money they gave the influencer?

This framework describes a robust social context that an expert witness can analyze in any particular case and present the findings to a judge or jury. Unlike evaluating testamentary capacity, one must do a much more extensive investigation of the entire situation rather than a 2-to-4-hour examination of the subject of concern. Interviews with family members and friends will be necessary as well as collecting any writings by the influencee that show a radical change in personality and belief systems. Research into the background of the influencer or predatory organization would be required. It is my contention that the influence continuum and BITE model (behavior, information, thought and emotional control) offers significant behavioral components to #3 Influencer's Methods (Techniques) of the social influence model.

In terms of the BITE model and influence continuum, it is also usefully applied to the criteria of the methods or tactics used by the influencer. The BITE model includes this behavior of social influence. For example, an influencer might text the influencee hundreds of times a day. The influencer might regularly keep the influencee up all night talking even though they have work in the morning. The influencer might pressure the influencee to move out of their domicile to live with them. Isolation of the influencee can be both physical and digital, which could include closing down all accounts or having passwords to all accounts, using surveillance technology, to programming a person to believe the person's family and friends and the outside world are evil and out to harm them.

Evidence of actions or tactics used may include, but is not limited to, all the following:

- a. controlling necessities of life,

- b. medical and dental care including medication,
- c. the victim's interactions with others
- d. access to information or sleep
- e. Use of affection, intimidation, or coercion
- f. Initiation of changes in person or property rights
- g. use of haste or secrecy in effecting those changes
- h. effecting changes at inappropriate time and places
- i. claims of expertise in effecting change

This chapter has summarized some of the main issues with undue influence in the legal system as well as the main thought reform or brainwashing models. The social influence model is a much-needed framework for experts to be able to do a competent job doing a forensic analysis of undue influence in courts (Schefflin, 2015). The BITE model, which has been qualitatively validated for some 30 years, is the subject of this research study. None of the existing thought reform models have been evaluated quantitatively. This is the focus of this dissertation study.



## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the research methodology and description of instrumentation is outlined. It provides an overview of the research statement, research design, research questions and hypothesis, targeted participants and sampling procedures, participants' demographic characteristics statistics, experiential items statistics, description of instrumentation, and the statistical procedure used. Specifically, it is focused on the steps utilized for statistically validating the new measure for the instrument, the BITE model of mind control (behavior, information, thought and emotion control).

### **Research Statement**

The BITE model offers very concrete identifiable behaviors which have qualitatively proven helpful to scores of individuals over three decades. This study aimed at developing a quantitative instrument that was both reliable and valid in measuring the constructs of the BITE model. It attempts to offer solid criteria for determining the destructive, unhealthy end of the influence continuum, which have been described by the other respected models of thought reform and brainwashing (Lifton, 1961; Schein et al., 1961; Singer & Lalich, 2003, Lalich, 2004). Undue influence exists in a variety of forms from trafficking to one-on-one control to involvement in large, destructive cult groups. The study serves a unique purpose of identifying how many underlying factors are involved in the BITE model of mind control. A second purpose of the study was to better understand the internal consistency and reliability of the instrument. Results from this research will help create a clear guideline for people to use for reality-testing—to understand if they were unduly influenced into a controlling, exploitative

relationship or group. Used within the Schefflin social influence model, the BITE model potentially can become a recognized, acceptable tool for experts to testify in courts of law and civil cases as well as criminal cases to help determine undue influence. The BITE model offers very concrete specific behaviors for an analysis.

## **Research Design**

I conducted a quantitative research study using online survey methods. This design assists in data collection and provides insights about the members who were involved in the group. Collection of participant data from a purposive sample provides numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of the population under study (Creswell, 2014). Considering the purpose of the study, conducting an anonymous survey was the most appropriate research method. The survey was designed to understand if people would agree with the research statements made for the original BITE model. Would individuals who were raised or recruited into a high-control group validate these identified behaviors? To determine the factorial validity of the constructs of the BITE model, principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted.

With the goal of developing a comprehensive understanding of the construct, this BITE model study used a principal component analysis (PCA) to discover the underlying construct of observed variables. In other words, principal component analysis (PCA) is a technique for reducing the dimensionality of datasets, increasing interpretability but at the same time has the advantage of minimum information loss (Jolliffe & Cadima, 2016). In short, PCA should reveal the underlying dimensions related to the members who were unduly influenced. Prior to focusing on the instrument development and the statistical procedures involved in PCA, the research

questions and related hypotheses as well as the sample population are summarized in the next section.

## **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

To reiterate, the study set out to answer these two research questions and related hypotheses:

### **Research Question 1**

What are the underlying dimensions of the items of the behavioral, information, thought and emotional (BITE) control model of mind control?

### **Null Hypotheses 1**

Simple structure will fail to emerge after conducting the principal component analysis under the factor analysis of the behavioral, information, thought and emotional (BITE) model of mind control.

### **Research Question 2:**

Does the BITE model possess adequate internal consistency?

### **Null Hypotheses 2**

The derived factors of the behavioral, information, thought and emotional (BITE) control model of mind control will not demonstrate sufficient internal consistency.

## **Data Collection**

I used an electronic way to collect data for this study. Participants were recruited online through several different social media and blog posts. I am the founder of a non-profit entity under DARE Associates which I run for research purposes called Freedom from Undue

Influence. An online anonymous SurveyMonkey link was published on its website FreedomfromUndueInfluence.org. In addition, a blog on the study with a link to this survey was put on the company's webpage: freedomofmind.com. The survey was available for less than two weeks when I reached a desirable participant response number. In addition to the two websites, the link was posted online to my Facebook pages, LinkedIn, Twitter, as well as on ex-member Reddit groups which included ex-Mormons, ex-Jehovah's Witnesses, ex-Scientists, and former members of multi-level marketing groups. A snowball sampling method was also used for distributing the link to friends and family members. Participants electronically consented to participate in the research study.

Subjects' were assured confidentiality and anonymity, as none of the IP addresses were recorded. Subjects' participation in this study was completely voluntary and they could withdraw at any time. Data were stored in a password-protected computer that was accessible by me.

## **Participants**

In this section, information regarding the targeted population, sampling frame, and demographic questions statistics are discussed.

### **Targeted Population**

Potential participants were members of a high control group living mainly in the U.S. and other parts of the world. A "high control group" is a polite term for a destructive cult. However, I did not exclude any participant. Likewise, I added some groups which I knew were not high control or destructive cults, for example the Boy Scouts. The study aimed to collect some demographic details of participants such as geographical location, gender, education, race/ethnicity, born and raised in a group, and so on.

**Table 3***Demographic Data for the Target Sample*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	32.78%
Female	67.22%

<b>Current Residency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
United States of America	79.32%
Other	20.65%

<b>Highest Level of Education</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Middle School	1.07%
Did not attend school	0.00%
High School	26.70%
College	41.17%
Graduate School	17.38%
PhD	3.59%
MBA	3.50%
Medical Degree	1.75%
Nursing	2.72%
Other	2.12%

<b>Employment Status</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Employed, Full-Time	49.42%
Employed, Part-Time	21.28%
Looking for work	5.13%
Unemployed, not looking for work	11.32%
Retired	7.25%
Disabled, not able to work	5.61%

<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
White/Caucasian	90.40%
Hispanic	3.01%
Black/African American	1.94%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.19%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.19%
Multiple ethnicity	4.27%

## Sampling Procedure

A convenience and snowball sampling method was used to recruit a total of 1,044 participants. They self-identified themselves as active, former members and nonmembers of high control groups or cults. All surveys that were completed were used. Only incomplete surveys were excluded. I applied to the Fielding University Institutional Review Board; an exemption approval was granted because the study was completely anonymous.

## Participants' Demographic Characteristics

Extensive demographic information for participants was collected for 1,044 participants. Less than 15% of the sample was incomplete. Participants were asked detailed questions regarding their involvement in the group, duration, if they are still a part of the group or have exited the group, and so on. Below are the some of the detailed demographic questions and their percentage.

**Table 4**

*Are You a Former Member of High-Control Group?*

<b>Former Member</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	82.75%
No	11.14%
Not sure	6.10%

**Table 5**

*Are You a Current Member of High-Control Group?*

<b>Current members</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	4.26%
Somewhat involved	14.26%
No	79.86%
Not applicable	1.26%

**Table 6**

*Were you Raised as a Child in the Group?*

<b>Raised in the group</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	70.59%
No	26.18%
Not Sure	3.24%

**Table 7***How Long Were You Involved in the Group?*

<b>Duration</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
0-7 days	5.55%
1-6 weeks	0.69%
1-4 years	5.05%
4-7 years	2.28%
7-10 years	3.87%
10-14 years or more	82.56%

**Table 8***At What Age Did You Enter the Group?*

<b>Age</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
0 – 4 years	59.41%
4 – 8 years	5.56%
8 – 12 years	4.49%
12 – 18 years	5.17%
18 – 24 years	10.83%
24 years or older	7.61%
Not Applicable	6.93%



**Table 9**

*How Did You Exit The Group?*

<b>Exit Group</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Was forced to leave by leadership	6.65%
Ran away without telling anyone	5.39%
Left the group through counselling intervention	1.58%
Left the group through influence from people who were not members	6.86%
Left the group through influence from people who were former members	5.91%
Left the group from reading a book	5.49%
Left the group by looking at information on the Internet	28.19%
Became disillusioned by being a member	39.92%

## **Instrumentation**

### **Item Development Process**

**Item creation:** The Item development process began with my BITE model of mind control (Hassan, 1988, 2000, 2012, 2015). The BITE model consists of four overlapping components: behavior, information, thought, and emotion control that together list identifiable attributes used in an undue influence or mind control situation, such as a controlling relationship or involvement with a controlling person or an authoritarian organization. Three of the components of BITE are taken from cognitive dissonance theory (CDT) that uses thoughts, feelings and behaviors (Festinger, 1957). Information control was added as a fourth component, as information is vitally important to how human beings learn, change, or are defrauded and controlled. The purpose is to

generate the items that could test this model scientifically. Items were created based on the operational definitions taken from the model.

**Expert review of item:** To establish face and content validity, the instrument was first sent to five expert reviewers. These scholars had varying expertise. Three of the five were university faculty members. Other reviewers included an expert in the field of high control groups as well as a behavioral and experimental psychology researcher who helped with the structure and design of the survey.

One of the reviewers helped examine each of the items and assisted in the development of the four (BITE) construct/elements. I added several new items based on the four dimensions. Two of the reviewers suggested reviewing the literature on “undue influence.” I reviewed the literature on undue influence and the BITE model and eliminated the extra items from the questionnaire. Reviewers provided feedback on the language used and encouraged the use of more descriptive words.

### **Preliminary Testing**

Before sending the instrument to experts for item review, the instrument was tested by a group of psychology research students. They looked at the face validity of each item and made some grammatical suggestions.

### **Instrument**

The Behavior Control, Information Control, Thought Control, and Emotional Control (BITE) survey was developed following Hassan’s BITE model (Hassan, 1988, 2000). The BITE

survey consisted of two sections: Demographics and BITE items. Each question for the survey was framed using the operational definition of four construct/elements of BITE.

### **Demographic Items**

BITE survey consists of 19 demographic items examining basic demographic qualities related to the respondent's race, gender, employment, highest level of education. In addition, the demographic items also gather specific information of the participant's involvement in a high control group, if they are or were a member, and for how long. Participants were also provided a list of 100 high control group names to make it easier to select an option. These demographic items are provided in the Appendix.

### **BITE Items**

In the current study, four instruments were used to measure the BITE model. The BITE survey consists of 132 items. It took approximately 30 to 40 minutes for participants to complete the survey. Out of 132 items developed from four instruments, 31 items were written to represent the element behavioral control, 33 items to represent information control, 29 items to represent thought control, and 39 items to represent emotional control. Numerous items of behavioral, thought and emotional control were adapted from the cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957). The items of information control were developed from my direct experience and reported over many years of interviewing hundreds of former members of high control groups. For example, deception done by recruiters, including outright lying, withholding vital information, and distorting information to make it more acceptable all undermine informed consent. Insider doctrine versus outsider doctrine, spying on members, instructing members to report deviations

from rules, and using confidential information to blackmail are addressed. The response format for these items was a 6-point Likert scale which ranged from 1 through 6 (1 = *Never*, 2 = *Rarely*, 3 = *Occasionally*, 4 = *Frequently*, 5 = *Usually*, and 6 = *Always*). The response labels were selected to access the frequency of control on each of these elements. These demographic items and the four instruments are provided in the Appendix.

### **Research Methodology - Introduction to Factor Analysis**

In this study, I used factor analysis: principal component analysis. The independent variables were the four dimensions of the Hassan BITE model: behavior, information, thought, and emotional control. In order to conduct factor analysis, the data are exported from Survey Monkey into a compatible IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences Software (SPSS) version (.sav) and uploaded on to SPSS to run the analysis.

### **Introduction to Factor Analysis**

Factor analysis is a statistical technique used to identify a relatively small number of underlying dimensions, or factors, which can be used to represent relationships among interrelated variables. Factor analysis is particularly helpful in developing and testing theories. The emphasis in conducting factor analysis is to identify the underlying factors that might explain the dimensions associated with data variability (Bartholomew, & Knott, 1999). Factor analysis can be best described as a tool to help identify the underlying factors that might explain the dimensions associated in large data variability.

Factor analysis is a traditional method of data analysis. It has been used extensively as a data analytic technique for the better part of the 21st century (Spearman, 1904). Social scientists

have used it for examining patterns of interrelationships, data reduction, instrument development, classification and description of data, data transformation, hypothesis testing, exploring relationships in new domains of interest, and mapping construct space (Rummel, 1995). Factor analysis provides a geometrical representation that allows for a visual portrayal of behavioral relationships.

### **Reason to Use Factor Analysis**

There are two main reasons I used factor analysis in this study. They are

1. To reduce the number of variables
2. To detect structure in the relationships between variables

In the current study I only used the principal component analysis type of factor analysis. principal component analysis (PCA) is a method that provides a unique solution, so the original data can be reconstructed from the results. It is a widely used method for dimension reduction of large databases in the presence of collinearity. It dates back to the works of Pearson (1901) and has been extensively analyzed for several decades (Anderson, 1958, 1963, 1984; Cattell, 1966, 1978; Jolliffe, 1982, 2002). Factor analysis (FA) is a construct that extends the features of PCA to a stochastic environment, and stems from the contribution of several authors especially in more recent times (Anderson & Rubin, 1956; Stock & Watson, 2002, 2005; Bai 2003; Bai & Ng, 2002, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010).

IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 was used to conduct all the analysis for this study.

In summary, in this chapter, I explained the methodology used to understand the BITE model construct of behavioral, information, thought and emotional control.” After explaining the

purpose and research questions guiding the study, I detailed information on data collection, sampling, participant demographics characteristics, instrumentation, and statistical procedure. Appendices are provided to review the demographic questions and the BITE instrument used in the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The raw data gathered from all the participants who completed the BITE model survey and demographic questions were exported from Survey Monkey into an IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) compatible format. All the raw data were cleaned and labelled and made ready for the analysis. The research questions, hypotheses, data cleaning, and description of findings for each of the research questions are included in this chapter.

### **Data Analysis**

As the current study wanted to understand the underlying dimensions, a factor analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS 27 for statistical analysis.

### **Data Cleaning**

The first step of the data analysis process was to screen the data to ensure it was all usable, to proceed with the statistical analyses. A total of 1,044 participants initiated the survey. All the missing, skipped participants were screened from the study (less than 15% missing data). Items that had missing values were replaced with the item mean scores.

A total of 132 items for BITE and 19 items for demographics were presented to the participant. There were no reverse coding items as I addressed it when I was developing items for the BITE questionnaire. Additionally, the recoded items were relabeled for clarification purposes. Descriptive statistics were computed to check the normality of the item distributions and to verify whether the items met the parametric assumptions underlying factor analysis.

## **Analysis of the Four Instruments**

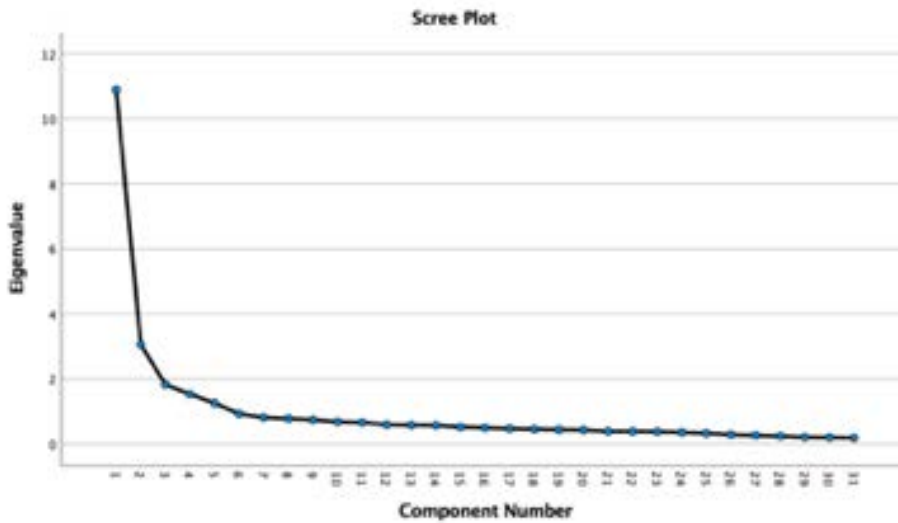
Factor analysis was first conducted on four instruments separately to indicate if they measured what they are supposed to measure. I wanted to see if each of these instruments were measuring different kinds of control. Originally, behavioral, thought and emotional control was developed from a theory of cognitive dissonance. Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory suggests that we have an inner drive to hold all our beliefs and behavior in harmony and avoid disharmony (or dissonance). When there is an inconsistency between beliefs or behaviors (dissonance), something must change to reduce the dissonance. There was something missing in Festinger's theory that completed control occurring in higher control groups. I was a part of the high control group and I understood that leaders used a four-part model to recruit—thinkers, feelers, doers, and believers. Potential recruits would be asked questions to ascertain which of these four models would be most effective. For example, a feeler would be love-bombed with effusive praise and flattery with an emphasis on the family aspect of the group commitment. Thinkers would be told about the science conferences with Nobel laureates and the effort to unify science and religion. People who were doers would be told how all were part of “The Family” that was working to fix the world problems. Believers would be prayed over with an emphasis on whatever religious orientation they had and the desire to purify and save all people in the world.

The Behavioral Control instrument consists of 31 items. Behavioral control is focused on controlling members' behaviors to enforce conformity and obedience to the leader, the doctrine and the ideology. This depends on rules and regulations, and praise or punishment is administered accordingly. For example, sleep, food, clothing, and sexuality were strictly monitored and controlled.



**Figure 3**

*Scree Plot of Behavioral Control Instrument.*



**Table 10**

*Behavioral Control Instrument's KMO and Bartlett's Test*

Kaiser – Meyer – Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.937
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	14040.80
	df	465
	Sig.	.000

**Table 11**

*Behavioral Control Instrument's Highest Item Loadings*

I felt forced to be obedient to leaders and group rules	.777
I felt pressure to obey even when I disagreed with the rules	.755
I was not allowed to publicly question any group policy	.746
I was kept so busy that I had little time alone to think	.737

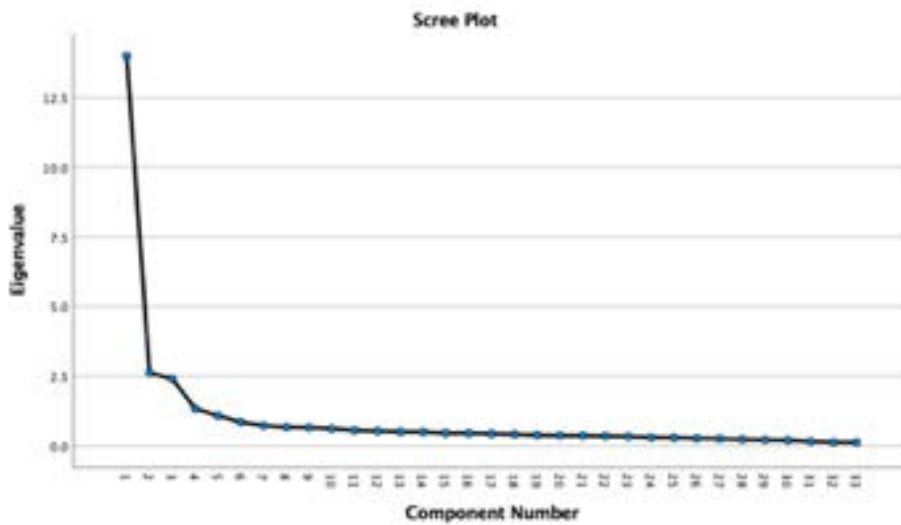
I was dissuaded from having relationships with outsiders	.728
I was isolated from people who were not members in good standing	.725

Figure 3 and Tables 10 and 11 present the results after conducting factor analysis on the Behavioral Control Instrument. Table 9 has the highest item loadings for the Behavioral Control instrument. Everything above .7 was selected to identify the most important behaviors. Looking at these items, descriptive words like “forced”, “pressured”, “dissuaded”, or “isolated” demonstrate the powerful social influence forces used to keep a person under control.

The Information Control instrument consists of 33 items. One major characteristic of destructive people and groups is the use of deception to rob people of their ability to make informed decisions regarding involvement. The law recognizes that informed consent is a universally acknowledged process for proper decision-making. Outright lying, the withholding of vital information, and the distortion of information to make it more acceptable are key features of undue influence. Information control includes other important behaviors such as denying people access to critical information and people, extensive use of propaganda to maintain loyalty, compartmentalizing information on a need-to-know basis, the policy of spying on other members, and using confidentially obtained information about a person’s past to manipulate and control them.

**Figure 4**

*Scree Plot of Information Control Instrument.*



**Table 12**

*Information Control Instrument's KMO and Bartlett's Test*

Kaiser – Meyer – Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.957
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	17238.034
	df	528
	Sig.	.000

**Table 13***Information Control Instrument's Highest Item Loadings.*

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Evasion, misdirection, changing the subject were used to avoid critical questions	.783
Lying, especially to outsiders, was necessary to advance group aims	.783
Not honestly answering critical questions was the norm	.777
Distorting information was necessary to make it more acceptable.	.772
The roles and contributions of former members were distorted	.769
Withholding information from a potential convert was necessary to help recruit them	.758
Positive stories were manufactured to reinforce commitment	.749
Telling lies was necessary to protect the leader and group	.736
Spying on other members was encouraged	.725
Information was compartmentalized into Insider vs. Outsider categories	.709
Leadership decided who should know what information	.709
Recruitment always involved lack of informed consent	.700

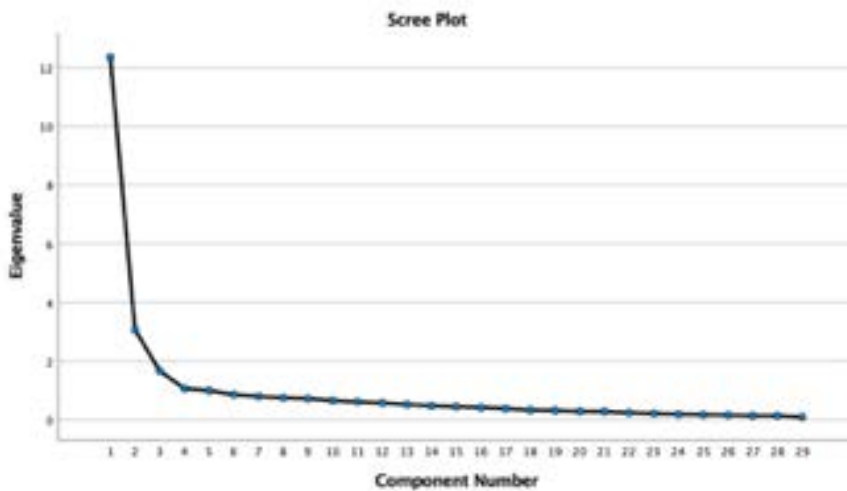
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Figure 4 and Tables 12 and 13 present the results after conducting factor analysis on the Information Control instrument. Table 13 has the highest item loadings for the Information Control instrument. Everything above .7 was only selected to retain high quality information. Looking at this instrument, I saw important patterns of information control used to recruit, indoctrinate, and control members into obedient subservience.

The Thought Control instrument consists of 29 items. Humans can be manipulated and controlled more easily when their thoughts are controlled. Ideologies are usually simplistic, offering black and white, us versus them, good versus evil stories that members internalize as truth. Change of identity might include change of name and primary affiliation. Words that are uniquely used by the group are often loaded, thought-terminating cliches. Actual behavior modification techniques of thought-stopping are often taught to members, so they shut down their questions and doubts. Memories are manipulated and sometimes false memories are installed. The ideology of the group becomes internalized as the master “map” for reality.

**Figure 5**

*Scree Plot of Thought Control Instrument.*



**Table 14***Thought Control Instrument's KMO and Bartlett's Test*

Kaiser – Meyer – Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.948
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	15450.638
	df	406
	Sig.	.000

**Table 15***Thought Control Instrument's Highest Item Loadings.*

Asking critical questions was viewed as rebellious	.840
The group's policy was us vs. them	.833
Alternative belief systems were wrong	.829
Critical thinking was rejected	.807
Critical questions about the doctrine were punished	.797
People who ask critical questions about policy were punished	.795
Alternative belief systems were considered evil	.793
The group's policy was good vs. evil	.789
Rational analysis was rejected	.784
The group had its own special words to explain doctrine	.776
Alternative belief systems were illegitimate	.773
The group's policy was polarized: either black or white	.771
Critical questions about the leader were punished	.734

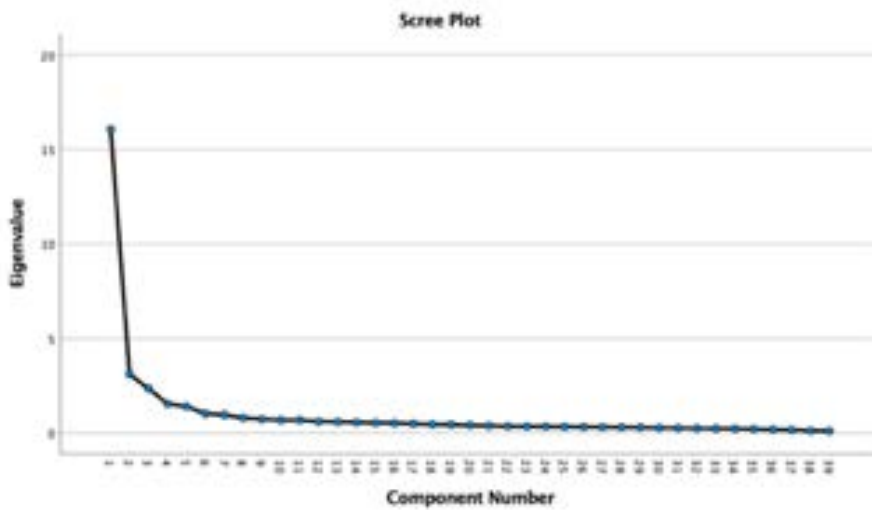
The scientific method was criticized	.730
It was important to keep my thoughts "pure"	.725

Figure 5 and Tables 14 and 15 presents the results after conducting factor analysis on the Thought Control instrument. Table 15 has the highest item loadings for the Thought Control instrument. This is so far the strongest instrument. Everything above .7 was only selected to retain high quality information. Analyzing this instrument, it may be that people can most clearly understand and identify policies used regularly during their membership.

The Emotional Control instrument consists of 39 items. Feelings are powerful drivers for human beings. Feeling special, elite, or chosen can be powerful motivators to get people to work hard for long hours for little or no pay, fundraise, and recruit others. People’s loyalty can be reinforced by alternating praise and criticism and always encouraging people to strive harder. Guilt and fear are the huge drivers of unethical influence. Phobia indoctrination about questioning the leader or group and the errant belief that exiting will cause horrible consequences is the universal mind control technique. High exit-costs are also employed which might include giving former members a huge financial bill for services such as Scientology uses for existing staff. It also might include shunning by family, friends, loss of employment, threats, and harassment. These are legitimate fears.

**Figure 6**

*Scree Plot of Emotional Control Instrument.*



**Table 16**

*Emotional Control Instrument's KMO and Bartlett's Test*

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Kaiser – Meyer – Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.957
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	20901.33
	df	741
	Sig.	.000

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**Table 17***Emotional Control Instrument's Highest Item Loadings*


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If you deviated from the group's techniques, you would suffer a terrible fate	.835
If you left the group, you would never be happy and fulfilled	.797
In the group, we were taught to block "improper" emotions	.782
Feelings of guilt for not reaching group goals was the norm	.777
I was made to be afraid of losing my spiritual salvation if I left the group	.765
In the group, we were made to feel superior to outsiders	.759
If you were not pure, you and your loved ones would suffer a horrible fate	.759
Whenever something went wrong, members were made to feel guilty	.745
Confessions once made, resulted in punishment	.719
In the group, we were made to feel that we should be perfect	.711
Feelings of unworthiness were encouraged	.711
I was afraid of being shunned by family and friends	.707
In the group, we believed we were chosen and elite	.707
There was no legitimate reason to leave the relationship and/or group	.703

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Figure 6 and Tables 16 and 17 presents the results after conducting factor analysis on the Emotional Control instrument. Table 17 has the highest item loadings for the Emotional Control Instrument. Everything above .7 was only selected to retain high quality information. Analyzing this instrument, I see that an important factor of emotional control is exerted by high control group leaders on members.

On the basis on the highest item loadings, factor analysis was run on the entire BITE instrument as a whole to find how many factors were identified and what those factors really mean. An overall analysis mainly focused on two research questions. In the following section I will be talking in detail about it.

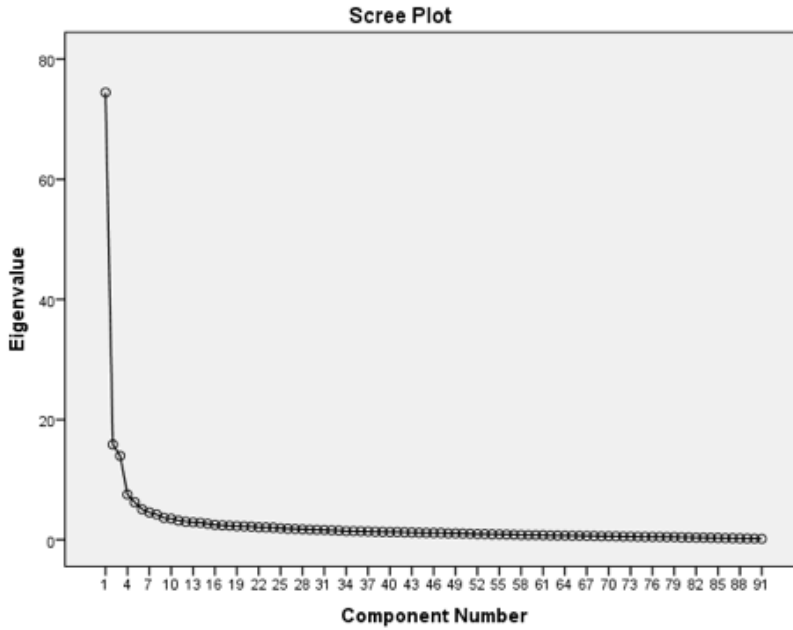
### **Research Question 1**

In this section, the results of the overall BITE instrument are discussed. Research question 1 states: What are the underlying dimensions of the items of the behavioral, information, thought and emotional (BITE) control model?

Factor analysis was conducted using the principal component analysis method and the following results were obtained: Scree plot, KMO and Bartlett's test, highest item loadings, and table of total variance.

**Figure 7**

*Number of Factors Plotted on the Scree Plot after Running the Overall Factor Analysis on All Four Instruments*



The scree plot is used to determine the number of factors to retain in principal components analysis. The procedures of finding statistically significant factors/components are shown in figure 7. This graph confirmed the decision to go with only one factor extraction.

**Table 18**

*BITE Instrument together KMO and Bartlett's Test*

Kaiser – Meyer – Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.970
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	64946.526
	df	8646
	Sig.	.000

The Bartlett's test examines whether the correlation matrix is an identity matrix. This condition just means that the variables are completely independent of each other, and thus the factor model is inappropriate. Identity matrix can be ruled out if the p-value of the test is less than 0.005. As seen in the above table, KMO value is .970 which is considered excellent as it exceeds 0.5. By that it ensures us that the study may conduct a factor analysis.

Researcher computed the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity which shows a significant sphericity of  $p = 0.000$  which is less than ( $p < .05$ ), suggesting that the factors that form the variable are satisfactory.

**Table 19**

*Selected Items with the Highest Item Loadings from the Entire BITE Instrument*

Items	Factor Loading Factor 1
1. The group's policy was us vs. them (T)	.843
2. If you deviated from the group's techniques, you would suffer a terrible fate (E)	.819
3. Asking critical questions was viewed as rebellious (T)	.814
4. If you left the group, you would never be happy and fulfilled (E)	.787
5. People who ask critical questions about policy were punished (T)	.786
6. Critical questions about the doctrine were punished (T)	.781
7. Alternative belief systems were wrong (T)	.780

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8. Critical thinking was rejected (T)	.773
9. I felt pressure to obey even when I disagreed with the rules (B)	.773
10. Feelings of guilt for not reaching group goals was the norm (E)	.770
11. Alternative belief systems were considered evil (T)	.765
12. I was not allowed to publicly question any group policy (B)	.763
13. In the group, we were taught to block "improper" emotions (E)	.755
14. I felt forced to be obedient to leaders and group rules (B)	.755
15. Whenever something went wrong, members were made to feel guilty (E)	.751
16. Positive stories were manufactured to reinforce commitment (I)	.748
17. Rational analysis was rejected (T)	.747
18. In the group, we were made to feel superior to outsiders (E)	.742
19. The group's policy was good vs. evil (T)	.741
20. The group's policy was polarized: either black or white (T)	.732
21. The group had its own special words to explain doctrine (T)	.729
22. I was required to attend many hours of group meetings every week (B)	.729
23. Evasion, misdirection, changing the subject were used to avoid critical questions (I)	.727
24. Critical questions about the leader were punished (T)	.722
25. I was made to be afraid of losing my spiritual salvation if I left the group (E)	.722
26. Not honestly answering critical questions was the norm (I)	.721
27. Spying on other members was encouraged (I)	.717
28. Alternative belief systems were illegitimate (T)	.709

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29. Confessions once made, resulted in punishment (E)	.707
30. I was required to spend many hours of studying group recommended texts weekly (B)	.707
31. If you were not pure, you and your loved ones would suffer a terrible fate (E)	.702
32. There was no legitimate reason to leave the relationship and/or group (E)	.701
33. The roles and contributions of former members were distorted (I)	.701
34. In the group, we believed we were chosen and elite (E)	.699
35. Distorting information was necessary to make it more acceptable (I)	.695
36. Love-bombing was used to manipulate newcomers (E)	.694
37. In the group, we were made to feel that we should be perfect (E)	.688
38. The scientific method was criticized (T)	.687
39. Withholding information from a potential convert was necessary to help recruit them (I)	.683
40. In the group, members were made to feel that any problem was their own fault (E)	.674
41. I was afraid of being shunned by family and friends (E)	.670
42. Information was compartmentalized into insider vs. outsider categories (I)	.667
43. It was important to model myself upon the leader (T)	.666
44. I was dissuaded from having relationships with outsiders (B)	.666
45. It was important to keep my thoughts "pure" (T)	.663

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46. Lying, especially to outsiders, was necessary to advance group aims (I)	.658
47. Feelings of unworthiness were encouraged (E)	.657
48. In the group, we were made to feel that nonbelievers will be destroyed one day (E)	.657
49. Confession of sins was encouraged (E)	.656
50. The history of the leader and the group was rewritten (I)	.655
51. No privacy of personal information was allowed: a good member had to confess everything (I)	.655

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Based on the visual representation of the scree plot, I decided to move forward with the most significant extraction. The pattern rotation matrix was selected under the principal component analysis as it provided the best interpretation of the factor structure with the least evidence of cross-loadings. Factor loadings were reasonably strong, ranging from about .84 to .65. The items were examined for high to low factor loadings. The minimum acceptable factor loading was set at .50. Items ranged in loadings from .84 to .65 (see Table 19). All the items below .65 were excluded.

Items number 9, 12, 14, 22, 30, and 44 were items selected from the Behavioral Control construct. Items number 16, 23, 26, 27, 33, 35, 39, 42, 46, 50, and 51 were selected from the Information Control construct. Items number 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 17, 19, 20, 21, 24, 28, 38, 43, and 45 belonged to the Thought Control construct, and items 2, 4, 10, 13, 15, 18, 25, 29, 31, 32, 34, 36, 37, 40, 41, 47, 48, and 49 were from the Emotional control construct of the BITE model. The highest number of items extracted from the questionnaire were from the Emotional Control construct.

As there was only one major factor that was derived from the analysis, I decided to name that factor “authoritarian control.” The principal definition of the word *authoritarian* is defined: “of, relating to, or favoring blind submission authority (Merriam-Webster online dictionary, 2020). Another definition which perhaps fits better is “Authoritarianism, principle of blind submission to authority, as opposed to individual freedom of thought and action” (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020).

**Table 20**

*Explanation of the Total Variance for the BITE Components*

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	46.303	35.078	35.078	46.303	35.078	35.078
2	9.070	6.871	41.949	9.070	6.871	41.949
3	6.479	4.908	46.857	6.479	4.908	46.857
4	3.273	2.479	49.337	3.273	2.479	49.337

Four components – BITE explained a cumulative total of 49.33% of variance. The first component factor explained a total of 35.07% of variance. The analysis of the remaining 65% variance yielded no concrete significant factor. It was low, insignificant, and mainly data “noise” and was disregarded. These data are represented in the scree plots by the long horizontal line at the bottom.



The content of the items in the first factor resembled those in the underlined literature review, model, and was labeled as control. In summary, a principal component analysis of the questionnaire's items produced an interpretable one-factor simple structure.

**Research Question 2**

In this section Research Question 2 results will be summarized. Does the BITE model possess adequate internal consistency?

**Table 21**

*Reliability Statistics*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.982	132

The results for RQ2 (Does the BITE model questionnaire possess adequate internal consistency?) are summarized here. Reliability of factors overall, the 130-item inventory generated a Cronbach's alpha of 0.93. Alpha coefficients were computed on the specific items comprising each derived factor. As I derived only one factor in this study, the Cronbach's alpha based on standardized items is also .93. The resulting factor structure demonstrated both acceptable internal consistency and factorial validity.

In summary, in this chapter, the results from the factor analysis were reported. PCA yielded a single significant factor called authoritarian control which accounted for 35.07% of total variance. By examining the scree plots, the factor analysis shows that the remaining 65.93% variance does not offer any significant factors and was mainly noise, therefore it was decided

that it was of no value to this study. Additionally, the BITE model of mind control items was found to have adequate scale of reliability score of .98. In the following section, the discussion, limitations of the study, implications for practice, and suggestion for future research are discussed.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This dissertation research and analysis offers a statistically valid new construct called authoritarian control. I conducted this study with 1,044 participants; the four components have statistically borne out that the BITE model of behavior, information, thought, and emotion control is nearly one factor: control. I have always known control was the central feature, and the individual identifiers overlapped with ones from other components. For example, the ideology being black and white, us versus them, good versus evil overlaps with information control and propaganda and disinformation against critics.

The use of the term Authoritarian requires mention of concerns that arose from Adorno's original Authoritarian Personality study with its f-scale of authoritarianism (Adorno et al. 1950, 2019; Altemeyer, 2004, 2007). Adorno used a psychoanalytic groundwork and focused on an individual's personality. The BITE model does not look at a person's susceptibility, although this is an important focus within the Schefflin social influence model. The BITE model offers a way to evaluate the social-psychological and behavioral forces exerted on people to recruit them and retain their membership.

Also, there was criticism that the Adorno research was aimed at politically right-of-center and not politically left-of-center people. The influence continuum and BITE models posit that there can be authoritarian control in any kind of relationship or political orientation: right, left, religious, psychotherapy, or multi-level marketing, as long as the group relies on using these components as policy.

Psychologist Robert Altemeyer has done extensive research regarding authoritarianism (Altemeyer, 1996, 2004, 2007). He writes that he found an overwhelming amount of right-

leaning authoritarianism. However, he uses the term “right” as meaning obeying authority or the rule of law instead of following conscience or compassion. Future research analyzing Altemeyer’s extensive research on authoritarianism might prove fruitful. This project was not to analyze people and their vulnerabilities to being swept into authoritarian groups.

The BITE model of authoritarian control is primarily a social psychological, behavioral construct that offers a unique way to analyze healthy and unhealthy influence.

I collected a sample of 1,044 participant; 79.32% belonged to the United States, and 20.68% belonged to other countries like Canada, UK, Australia, New Zealand, Spain, and so forth.

The maximum percentage of participants was female, 67%, and men were 32.78%. The majority of the participants were educated and employed, 41% went to college, and 30% had a master/medical or a doctorate. Seventy percent of people either had a full-time/part-time employment. And around 30% of the population were unemployed, retired, or disabled. The White/Caucasian population was the majority in answering the survey with a total of 90%; around 1.94% were Black/African Americans and 5% of Multiple ethnicities. Ninety-nine percent of people were comfortable answering the survey in the English language.

A large percentage of people, around 60%, were born or raised in a high control organization. Most respondents belonged to the Jehovah’s Witnesses, Latter-Day Saints, Mormonism, Scientology, Roman Catholic Church, People of Praise, humanist/atheist, Christianity, Boy Scouts, and multi-level-marketing groups. While multi-level marketing groups have BITE model issues, fringe members would not likely experience high control. However, a percentage of people become consumed. Then they will invest most of their time and money on recruiting and indoctrination seminars, audiotapes, and books. I added some demographics like

the Boy Scouts, Christianity, and Atheists, which have neither the pyramid structure nor concerning BITE model criteria.

I have seen over decades of clinical practice involving thousands of cases that fear of exiting (what Lifton termed “Dispensing of Existence”) was the universal control technique. Fear of loss of identity and punishment is both an emotional as well as a behavioral control component. I wrote a chapter on a three-step phobia intervention in the book, *Freedom of Mind: Helping Loved Ones Leave Controlling People, Cults, and Beliefs* (Hassan, 2012). However, some authoritarian people and cults do more than install irrational fears. Some threaten total shunning, ejecting people from groups where their family and friends are forbidden to see or interact with them forever (unless the leader allows them to repent and return). The actual loss of community and often gainful employment is a very real “exit cost.” Also, some groups harass, threaten, do violence, blackmail, and, in rare cases, even try to kill defectors. Sociologist and cult expert Benjamin Zablocki (1997) wrote a paper on religious cults entitled “Exit-Cost Analysis: A New Approach to the Scientific Study of Brainwashing” (Zablocki, 1998). He proposed that focusing on fear of punishment would be one of the most important components to understand why people stay in abusive, suffocating groups even when they are miserable. He saw brainwashing as what destructive religious cults do to maintain members. Dr. Michael Commons, external examiner on this dissertation committee, oversaw this research, and as a behavioral scientist has been predicting that the main factor for member retention would be the fear of punishment. I hypothesize that there is much more to the forces of undue influence. These fundamentally include lack of informed consent, hypnotic techniques, and other elements included in the BITE model, such as sleep deprivation and isolation. Phobia indoctrination and

shunning and threats and harassment of former members are significant forces that keep people in the authoritarian cult.

Although the BITE model has served people for over 30 years to exit controlling relationships and groups, this is the first quantitative study. Doing this quantitative study offers a scientific basis that might prove useful for examining undue influence in judicial settings. Interestingly, most respondents were raised in only two groups, the Mormons or the Jehovah's Witnesses. Because our sample was a convenience sample, the generalizability of the results is limited. Controversial groups like authoritarian cults are challenging to research due to the nature of the authoritarian control. Members are kept away from objective researchers. Otherwise, they are coached on how to respond to questions. Former members often do not even realize they left an authoritarian group. Even though they exit—either by running away, being kicked out, or through intervention counseling, they still carry the indoctrination.

BITE was first described as a model to ascertain destructive mind control. Rather than use the terms “brainwashing” or “thought reform,” the term “mind control” was more accurate and descriptive of the phenomenon. A person's mind is taken over and controlled by another person, ideology, or group. The term “mind control,” like the terms mentioned above, has proven problematic in its lack of preciseness and adverse reaction in some people. These terms were helpful for some and harmful for others.

The forensic think-tank members of the Program in Psychiatry and the Law at Harvard Medical School have warned researchers of the obstacle of using terms like undue influence to describe cult mind control, thought reform, or brainwashing. They advised using a new term, one that does not have strong associations in legal contexts. “Authoritarian control”, as a social psychological term, breaks vital new ground. The construct might be able to serve as an umbrella

term for evaluating a variety of undue influence such as trafficking, coercive control of a man over a woman, predatory alienation, parental alienation, and undue influence. Investigators can now scrutinize non-religious organizations of any type and size. “Authoritarian” has long been used in political science to describe governments that deny their citizens fundamental human rights. The Chinese government has refused to sign the 70-year-old United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights, saying it violates their culture. The BITE model of authoritarian control connects clinical, sociological, and social-psychological knowledge into one measurable construct.

The BITE model and the influence continuum have a more than 30-year history of helping people worldwide realize that they were not in a healthy relationship or group. Using the BITE model of authoritarian control in conjunction with Schefflin’s social influence model, expert witnesses can deliver a detailed, easy to understand analysis of social influence to judges or juries. The court can overcome the “slippery slope” objection. The authoritarian control construct can be utilized on a case-by-case basis and hopefully can help establish a new legal precedent. The social influence model offers this structure, which can be applied relative to many different cases. Of course, the jury or judge will decide if there was exploitation by an influencer over an influencee.

Lifton, Singer, and Schein’s models have been used to describe the phenomenon of political or cult thought reform, coercive persuasion, or brainwashing. All of the concepts and problematic behaviors are fundamentally anchored within the BITE and influence continuum models as I analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of the four models. Additionally, the California law regarding undue influence as it applied to the elderly was discussed and aligns

with the authoritarian control BITE model. The federal trafficking law criteria fit the BITE model and the U.K. laws against Coercive Control include the construct of the BITE model.

### **Open Questions**

One question concerns possible bias in the sample. The anonymous online study might have attracted respondents already exposed to the BITE model or those already familiar with my books or online media. Perhaps wary former cult members might not have responded at all to an unknown researcher or might have given different answers. What would be a viable approach to test falsifiability? It is also of great interest to take the results of this study and develop a more refined and robust psychometric, which will offer a numerical score for the level of authoritarianism.

Future research should include vulnerability factors that make people more susceptible. Are people with personality disorders like dependent personality disorder more vulnerable to recruitment by destructive people and groups? What about a history that includes childhood abuse, like corporal punishment or sexual abuse? Does this predispose people to be susceptible to undue influence? How about people on the autism spectrum? What about a dissociative disorder or anxiety disorders, including phobias? Are highly hypnotizable or highly suggestible people more susceptible?

Future research could examine the harms suffered by involvement with relationships or groups that exerted exploitative influence. Exit cost has long been a concept used to explain what keeps people in exploitative situations for many years. This cost could be the actual loss of contact with family and friends, loss of employment, loss of material wealth, and shunning (Zablocki, 1998. Engelman et al., 2020). However, phobia indoctrination is the imagined fear of



loss if one exits: loss of salvation, fear of demon possession, reincarnation as a lowly creature, fear of going insane, suicide, and a long list of negative imagined consequences.

Another research project doing deep data mining with keywords and phrases of a group or its leader might yield authoritarian control factors. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Reddit, Google, and other platforms could be a rich resource for research.

One possible obstacle to acceptance of the authoritarian control construct could be in the realm of religion. Destructive cults have always lobbied mainstream religious groups to keep the subject off-limits. They argue that if respected religious groups did not oppose all evaluation, they too might be vulnerable to having undue influence applied to their institution. This slippery slope concern, I contend, will be overcome by exact behavioral components. The United States affords religions special privileges, including the IRS's tax-exempt status. Justice depends on a balance of protecting fundamental human rights like religious freedom and free speech. The law has made decisions allowing the belief in the spiritual value of handling poisonous snakes, but the actual behavior was determined to be illegal because so many people died (LaBarre, 1962).

This social influence model framework is a robust way to capture the holistic system of influence. Instead of an evaluation done as a “moment in time,” it could investigate the influencee in terms of the individual’s family history, personality, interests, values, and goals prior to interacting with the influencer. Interviews with parents, siblings, childhood friends, and former teachers and coaches would allow a more full and fair representation that identifies both functionalities and limitations. By determining a baseline of identity and functioning, these same people can specify how the person has changed. A fair assessment will identify negative as well as positive changes. For example, a person might love to read and write. After the influencer got involved, the person stopped reading and writing and might even wish to throw out their past

writings or creations—a typically honest and transparent person, becoming deceptive, secretive, and isolated shows a negative influence. A person who was addicted to drugs before involvement and now has no more prolonged abuses is an example of a positive change. All changes in a person's behavior will need to be identified and reasonably evaluated.

### **Future Considerations**

Twenty-first century science concerning human psychology and behavior offers a much more accurate understanding of why humans do what they do. All areas of psychology, including social psychology, developmental psychology, neuroscience (Shane, et al, (2020), and developing technologies, need to be incorporated into any proper evaluation of any situation. Future research to be pursued can include investigating harm to victims of authoritarian control, such as dissociation, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), neurological damage, anxiety, and panic disorders. Future research into predisposing traits such as high hypnotizability, suggestibility, compliance to authority, and previous trauma will be essential to a fair analysis. These traits might render someone more vulnerable to undue influence (Santarcangelo, 2014; Roma et al., 2011).

If a set of analytic tools could be developed and applied systematically, I contend that it could significantly change the justice system in the United States and countries throughout the world. The influence continuum (from ethical to unethical) is used here as a frame for BITE model variables. This analytic framework can be utilized by expert witnesses to explain to judges and juries the relative healthiness or unhealthiness of any relationship, group, or country and the effects on human beings.

## **Powerful, wealthy forces who engage in undue influence will wish to keep it out of jurisprudence**

The quest to establish a scientifically valid way to evaluate exploitative influence acceptable to courts of law will be a herculean effort much greater than a single individual can deliver. There are powerful and wealthy religious and political forces in the United States which want to block such attempts. International bodies of the law may be more open to acceptance of authoritarian control as a legal construct of undue influence before the United States judicial system.

Many government intelligence agencies might not wish to have the public understand cult mind control techniques. I, myself, was involved with a cult that was “organized and utilized for use as a political tool,” the founder of the South Korean CIA said under oath (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978). The CIA was involved with mind-control research throughout the 1950s through 1970s, including the infamous MKULTRA efforts of Sidney Gottlieb (Schefflin & Opton, 1978; Kinzer, 2019). I am not aware of any intelligence service publicly admitting in recent times to researching mind control.

Another complicating factor is the current assault on science itself. Deliberate campaigns to undermine people’s faith in science and experts are ongoing. Fourth Generation Warfare is a psychological operation (psyops) program written about by American military strategist William S. Lind (Lind et al., 1989, 1994). It aims to delegitimize leaders and institutions to generate confusion, disorientation, and distrust of facts to make a population more vulnerable to influence. As I wrote in *The Cult of Trump*, Lind teamed up with Christian right powerbroker Paul Weyrich to advance the religious right political agenda (Hassan, 2019b). Donald Trump, while President has appointed an unprecedented number of federal appellate judges as well as three Supreme

Court Justices (Gramlich, 2020). Attorney and psychologist Mitzi White, a prominent member of the Program in Psychiatry and the Law, gave a presentation on the assault on the reputations of forensics experts. She persuasively argued that highly credentialed professionals were being attacked as part of the assault on science itself.

In this digital age of virtual influence, remote persuasion techniques are developed from robust online psychological profiles of targeted individuals. The Cambridge Analytica scandal showed just how easy it is to access and abuse supposedly private data on the Worldwide Web. British filmmakers discovered Cambridge Analytica used the data they illegally obtained to target vulnerable, mentally ill people to recruit to right-wing groups (DW, 2020). The documentary, *The Social Dilemma* (Orlowski, 2020), interviews many of the former top executives of major social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. They share how artificial intelligence (AI) is being employed to maximize profits and gather information about people to make them better targets for their advertisers without ethics. The goal is to make them addicted to screens (Orlowski, 2020). The BITE model and influence continuum will likely be essential tools for navigating the future digital world with artificial intelligence avatars programmed to protect universal human rights. There will be a need for many safeguards to protect people's personal information and privacy. "Deep fakes" (falsified videos and photographs), as well as propaganda and disinformation, will need to be identified for everyone's safety. We live not in a "post-truth" world, but the Age of Influence. Having a quantitative instrument to help humans and AI discern constructive versus destructive influence will be a key to survival from authoritarian governments and groups.

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**APPENDIX: (CONSENT DOCUMENT, INSTRUCTIONS & SURVEY)**

## Influence Survey

### Informed Consent Form

This is a questionnaire about different ways in which people think and feel about their experiences with groups about the issue of control. The group may be of any kind and size. Groups might include a country, religious group, political group, therapy group, business group or corporation, even a relationship or family. If you have been involved in multiple kinds of groups, pick one of most controlling. Participation is completely voluntary, and you have may stop at any time. We want to hear your feedback! Are there areas we have not considered? Are there thing missing, or other measures to consider? We are looking to gather raw data on aspects of the BITE model. Can it be developed as a way to measure undue influence?

### Demographic Questions:

1. Date: \_\_/\_\_/\_\_\_\_
  
2. In what country do you currently reside?  
USA  
Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Race:
  - American Indian or Alaskan Native
  - Asian / Pacific Islander
  - Black or African American
  - Hispanic
  - White / Caucasian
  - Multiple ethnicity/ Other please specify \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Which of the following languages would you feel comfortable completing a survey in?  
(Please select all that apply.)
  - Arabic
  - Cantonese
  - Mandarin
  - English
  - French
  - German
  - Korean
  - Russian
  - Spanish
  - Tagalog
  - Vietnamese
  - Hindi
  - Portuguese

5. Which of the following categories best describe your employment status?
- Employed, working full-time
  - Employed, working part-time
  - Not employed, looking for work
  - Not employed, Bot looking for work
  - Retired
  - Disabled, not able to work
6. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- Elementary School Student
  - Elementary School Graduate
  - High School Student
  - Graduate Student
  - Ph.D.
  - MBA
  - Medical Degree
  - Nursing
  - Other medical profession
7. What is your Gender
- Female
  - Male
8. What is your Profession?
- \_\_\_\_\_
9. Are you a former member of high-control Group?
- No
  - Yes
  - Not sure
10. Are you currently a member of a high-control group?
- No
  - Still involved somewhat
  - Yes
  - Not Applicable
11. How long were you involved in the group?
- 0 - 7 days
  - 1 – 6 weeks
  - 1- 4 years
  - 4 – 7 years
  - 7 – 10 years
  - 10 -14 years or more

12. Were you raised as a child in the group?

- i. No
- ii. Yes
- iii. Not applicable

13. At what age did you enter the group?

- i. 0-4 years of age
- ii. 4-8 years of age
- iii. 8-12 years of age
- iv. 12-18 years of age
- v. 18-24 years of age
- vi. 24 or older

14. How did you exit the group?

- i. was forced to leave by leadership
- ii. ran away without telling anyone
- iii. Left the group through counseling intervention
- iv. Left the group through influence from people who were not members
- v. Left the group from reading a book
- vi. Left the group by looking at information on the internet
- vii. Became disillusioned by being a member

15. Do you belong to any ex-member support groups?

- i. No
- ii. Yes

16. Have you helped others to exit the group?

- i. No
- ii. Yes

17. What healthy groups do you belong to? Please list

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18. How long have you been a member of healthy group?

- i. Less than one year
- ii. One-two years
- iii. Two-to-four years
- iv. 4-8 years
- v. 8-15 years
- vi. More than 15 years

19. Select all the groups that you belong to from the following list:

No	Group name	0-1 day	1 week	1 month	6 months	1 year	1 year +
1	Alcoholic Anonymous						
2	Agni Yoga						
3	Al-Qaida						
4	Ananda Marga						
5	Anthroposophy						
6	Ayn Rand Institute						
7	Avatar						
8	Apostolic Church						
9	Apostles of Infinite Love Michael Collin						
10	Art of Living Foundation						
11	Aum Shinriko, Aleph, Shoko Asahara						
12	3HO Yogi Bhajan						
13	Alamo Christian Foundation Tony Alamo						
14	Amway						
15	Brahma Kumari						
16	The Brethren Jim Roberts						
17	Bruderhof						
18	Buddhafield						
19	Chabad- Lubavitch						
20	Ramtha JZ Knight						
21	Channelers						



22	Christian Science Mary Baker Eddy						
23	Church Universal and Triumphant Elizabeth Clare Prophet						
24	Church of Bible Understanding Stewart Trail						
25	Church of Satan						
26	Emin						
27	Emissaries of Divine Light						
28	Falun Gong Li Hongzhi						
29	Fiat Lux						
30	Landmark (former est)						
31	Local Church Ministry Watchman Nee						
32	Lyndon LaRouche						
33	Kabbalah Centre Berg						
34	Branch Davidians David Koresh						
35	Greater Apostolic Faith						
36	House of Yahweh Bill Hawkins						
37	Herbalife						
38	ISIS						
39	Eckankar						
40	Kashi Ashram Joyce Green						
41	Church of Scientology						
42	Re-evaluation (Co-counseling RC) Harvey Jackins						
43	Sai Baba						

44	Elan Vital Divine Light Mission Guru Maharaj ji Prem Rawat						
45	Rajneesh Osho						
46	Ruhani Satsang or Thakar Singh						
47	Love Family Love Israel Paul Erdman						
48	Science of Happiness Ryuho Okawa						
49	Sahaja Yoga						
50	Soka Gakkai						
51	Sovereign Citizens						
52	Sri Chimnoy						
53	Subud						
54	Mahikari Sukyo Mahikari						
55	Supreme master Ching Hai						
56	Transcendental Meditation						
57	Iskcon- Krishna						
58	Moon organization						
59	The Way International						
60	The Family- Children of God: Berg						
61	Twelve Tribes Eugene Spriggs						
62	International Churches of Christ (discipline ministries)						
63	Ku Klux Klan						
64	MeK						
65	MSIA John-Roger Hinkins						

66	National Labor Federation (NATFED) Gino Parent						
67	Nazism						
68	Nxivm: Keith Raniere						
69	Nation of Islam						
70	New Age						
71	Nuwabian Nation Dwight York						
72	Multi-level-Marketing MLM						
73	Opus Dei						
74	Legionaries of Christ						
75	Ordo Templi Orientis						
76	Order of the Solar Temple						
77	New Acropolis						
78	Peoples Temple Jim Jones						
79	Potters House Wayman Mitchell						
80	Worldwide Church of God						
81	Watchtower Society- Jehovah's Witnesses						
82	Word of Faith						
83	Workers Revolutionary Party						
84	Fundamentalist Latter-Day Saints						
85	Latter-Day Saints						
86	Judaism						
87	Christianity Catholic Church						
88	Christianity Protestant						
89	Christianity Pentecostal						

90	Humanist /Atheist						
91	Islam						
92	Hinduism						
93	Buddhism						
94	Confucianism						
95	Folk religion						
96	Paganism						
97	Taoism						
98	Shinto						
99	Sikhism						
100	Shamanism						
101	Freemasons						
102	Kiwanis club						
103	Boy scouts						
104	Girl scouts						
105	Military training						
106	Medical School Training						
107	Graduate school						
108	Toastmasters						
109	CrossFit						
110	City councils						

20. Please specify the name of the group you will focus on when you answer all these questions \_\_\_\_\_

### Behavior Control [31]

This is a preliminary survey to begin to identify aspects of control which are most central to how high control groups operate and exert influence. At this early stage of developing an instrument, we welcome your feedback, questions, and especially suggestions. Please fill out the survey when considering your involvement was most influential on your life. For example, for some people it might be the beginning part was very mild and only got more extreme later. My hope to cast the net wide enough to capture key points with one-on-one controlling relationships or groups of all types.

No.	Item	1 Never	2	3	4	5	6 Always
21	Individualism was discouraged						
22	I was encouraged to change my name						
23	Psychological punishment was expected for disobedience						
24	Physical punishment was expected for disobedience						
25	I was directed where I should live						
26	I was directed with whom I could live						
27	I was not allowed two weeks of vacation per year						
28	I worked 7 days a week for the group for little or no pay						

29	I worked for more than 40 hours a week for little or no pay						
30	I was isolated from people who were not members in good standing						
31	I was unable to get the regular sleep I wanted						
32	I could not choose the clothes I wished to wear						
33	I was unable to choose how I wore my hair						
34	I was unable to choose if I had facial hair or not						
35	Strict rules and guidelines regarding sex and sexuality were in place						
36	I was required to spend many hours of studying group recommended texts weekly.						
37	I was required to attend many hours of group meetings every week						
38	I was required to do many hours of ritual practice every week						
39	I felt pressure to obey even when I disagreed with the rules						
40	I was not allowed to say anything negative to others, except a superior						
41	I was not allowed to publicly question any group policy						
42	Food and diet was totally regulated						
43	I was not allowed to make major decisions independently						
44	I felt pressured to reach fundraising quotas						
45	I felt pressured to reach recruiting quotas						
46	I felt manipulated financially						
47	I felt exploited financially						

48	I was kept so busy working that I had little or no time alone to think						
49	Regarding group actions, the “ends always justified the means”						
50	I was financially dependent on the group						
51	I was dissuaded from having relationships with outsiders						
52	I felt forced to be obedient to leaders and group rules.						

**Information Control [33]**

People reflect honestly back to your earliest memories of how you were recruited and just how much you knew before commitment. if you were born into a group, reflect back on key memories of influence.

No	Item	1 Never	2	3	4	5	6 Never
53	Facts were always less important than beliefs in the group						
54	Withholding information from a potential convert was necessary to help recruit them						
55	Distorting information was necessary to make it more acceptable						
56	Not honestly answering critical questions was the norm						
57	Evasion, misdirection, changing the subject were used to avoid critical questions						
58	Lying, especially to outsiders, was necessary to advance group aims						

59	Telling lies was necessary to protect the leader and group						
60	Keeping secrets was important, especially from family and friends						
61	Recruitment always involved lack of informed consent						
62	Access to the Internet was restricted						
63	Smartphones, tablets, computers were restricted or monitored						
64	No contact with critics and former members of the group was allowed without permission						
65	Any communication with designated 'enemies' or critics had to be reported						
66	Reading of any prohibited material was punished						
67	Leadership decided who should know what information						
68	Information was compartmentalized into Insider vs. Outsider categories						
69	There were secret teachings of the group available only to a select few						
70	There was extensive media production of propaganda						
71	Positive stories were manufactured to reinforce commitment						
72	Spying on other members was encouraged						
73	Internet search engine manipulation was used						
74	Front groups were created to mask the identity of the group						
75	Wikipedia information was manipulated						
76	There were threats of litigation for producing any critical information						



77	Private Investigators were used to find “dirt” on opponents to silence them						
78	Web sites and other social media were created to denigrate critics						
79	Spyware including listening devices, cameras were used to monitor people						
80	Extensive files on individuals and their lives were kept to control them						
81	Reporting any breach of rules was mandatory						
82	No privacy of personal information was allowed: a good member had to confess everything						
83	Personal history and memories were manipulated to reconstruct the past						
84	The history of the leader and the group was rewritten						
85	The roles and contributions of former members were distorted from the record						
86	The roles and contributions of former members were erased from the record						

**Thought Control [29]**

This describes the ideology, doctrine, policy, and how much purity of thought was valued and expected.

No	Items	1 Never					6 Always
87	The group’s doctrine was the “Truth”						
88	The group’s doctrine was polarized: either black or white						

89	The group's policy was us vs. them						
90	The group's doctrine was good vs. evil						
91	The group was God's instrument on earth						
92	The group had its own special words to explain doctrine						
93	My name was changed						
94	My identity underwent a radical change						
95	It was important to keep my thoughts "pure"						
96	It was important to model myself upon the leader						
97	I was encouraged to follow a senior person to make sure my thinking was in line with doctrine						
98	Critical thinking was rejected						
99	The scientific method was criticized						
100	Rational analysis was rejected						
101	Asking critical questions was viewed as rebellious						
102	Belief in mystical powers was used to control members						
103	Long periods of altered state of consciousness such as meditation, prayer, chanting was the norm						
104	Glossolalia was encouraged						
105	Hypnotic techniques were used—repetition, fixation and mimicry						
106	Memories were manipulated						
107	False memories of the past events were created [SEP]						
108	Thought-stopping techniques were taught and used to inhibit negative reactions						

109	Wishful thinking was encouraged <sup>[L]</sup> <sub>[SEP]</sub>						
110	Critical questions about the leader were punished						
111	Critical questions about the doctrine were punished						
112	People who ask critical questions about policy were punished <sup>[L]</sup> <sub>[SEP]</sub>						
113	Alternative belief systems were illegitimate						
114	Alternative belief systems were considered evil						
115	Alternative belief systems were wrong						
116	Alternative belief systems were not useful						

### Emotional Control [38]

Emotions include feeling happy, fulfilled, as well as feeling special and elite.

No	Items	1 Never	2	3	4	5	6 Always
117	In the group, we believed we were chosen and elite						
118	In the group, we were made to feel superior to outsiders						
119	In the group, we were made to feel special						
120	Love-bombing was used to manipulate newcomers						

121	In the group, we were made to feel that we should be perfect						
122	In the group, we were made to feel our self were evil						
123	In the group, we were made to feel the leader was perfect						
124	In the group, we were made to feel that non-believers will be destroyed one day						
125	In the group, there was a powerful emphasis on Armageddon						
126	In the group, we were taught to block “improper” emotions						
127	Confessions of sins was encouraged						
128	Use of information gained in confession was used to control						
129	Confession in front of others in the group occurred						
130	Confessions once made, resulted in punishment						
131	Whenever something went wrong, members were made to feel guilty						
132	In the group, emotion-stopping techniques were encouraged to block negative feelings						
133	In the group, members were made to feel that any problem was their own fault						
134	Taught that Armageddon was going to take place at any moment						
135	If you were not pure, you and your loved ones would suffer a horrible fate						
136	If you deviate from the group’s techniques, you would suffer a horrible fate						
137	There was no legitimate reason to leave the relationship and/or group						
138	If you left the group you would never be happy and fulfilled						

139	Feelings of unworthiness were encouraged						
140	Feelings of guilt for not reaching group goals was the norm						
141	I was made to feel guilty for my past						
142	I was made to feel guilty for my family's past						
143	I feared being excommunicated						
144	I was afraid of being shunned by family and friends						
145	I was afraid of anyone who left the group						
146	I refused communication with anyone who left the group						
147	I was made to be afraid of losing my spiritual salvation if I left the group						
148	I was afraid of going insane if I left the group						
149	I was afraid my family would be harmed if I left the group						
150	A range of phobias was used to keep people as members						
151	I was taught to believe I would go to hell if I left the group						
152	I was taught I would be possessed by demons if I left the group						
153	I was taught I would commit suicide if I left the group						

154	There were threats of harm to self if one left the group						
155	There were threats of harm to family if one left the group						