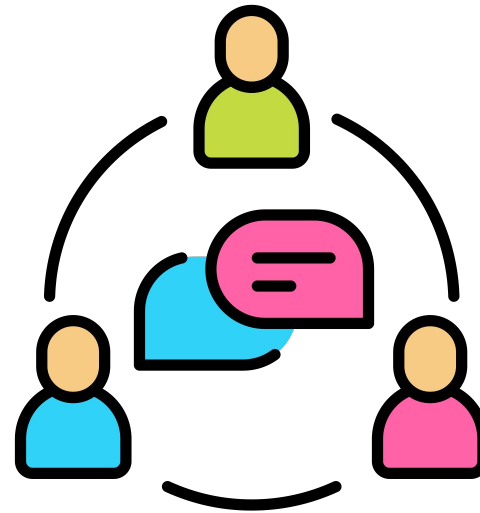


3.2

Some Techniques of Information Manipulation Campaigns

Note

- Interactive symbol: tasks for groups



Gamification in Manipulation Countermeasures

- **Serious games**

- **Gamification:** transforming or translating a learning object into a gaming experience
- **Serious games:** Games that offer a unique learning experience and thus have an educational function beyond entertainment
- Used in fields like health care, school education, sports, and engineering (Ullah et al., 2022)
- **Serious games in disinfo education:** Immunising the public against techniques applied to manipulate public perception and opinion (Roozenbeek & van der Linden, 2019)

Gamification in Manipulation Countermeasures

- **Serious social impact games**

- Freely accessible games where players slip into the shoes of a fake news creators
- Scenario-based game focusing on common strategies used in disinformation campaigns
- Players gain credibility and followers for using the disinformation strategies they learn in the game
- Players lose credibility and followers for choosing options in line with ethical behaviour
- At the end of each scenario, players earn a fake news badge for acquiring a new skill

The Games

- **Bad News**

- Roozenbeek and Van der Linden in cooperation with DROG (go to [BBC](#) for a summary)
- General disinformation game: Work up from “anonymous social media presence” to “running a fake news empire” (Roozenbeek & van der Linden, 2019)

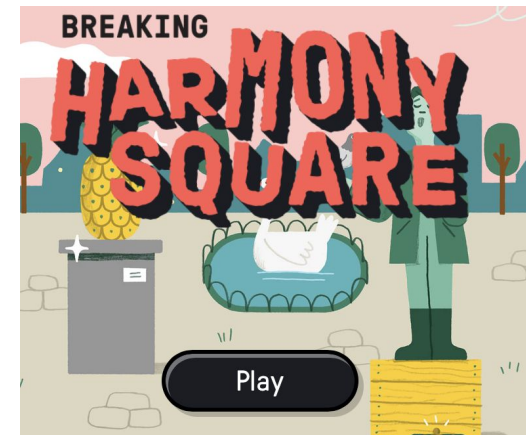


Source: getbadnews.com (link)

The Games

- **Harmony Square**

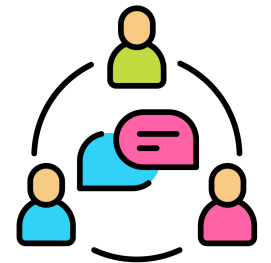
- Roozenbeek and Van der Linden in cooperation with DROG, Park Advisor, U.S. Department of State's Global Engagement Center, the Department of Homeland Security, Gusmanson design agency (Roozenbeek & van der Linden, 2020)



Source: harmonysquare.game (link)

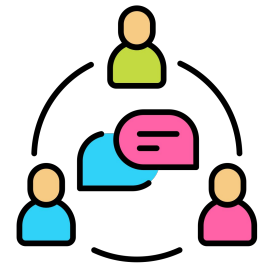
The Fake News Game

- Build groups: Play the disinformation game assigned to your team
 - How do you feel during the gameplay?
 - Take notes on the “badges” you win in each chapter for the plenary session afterwards
 - Try to optimise your gameplay: What did you do to score higher than the previous time?
 - Discuss, how close does this game resemble the execution of a real-life disinformation campaign?



The Fake News Game

- Which “Badges” or techniques did you encounter in the game?



The Badges

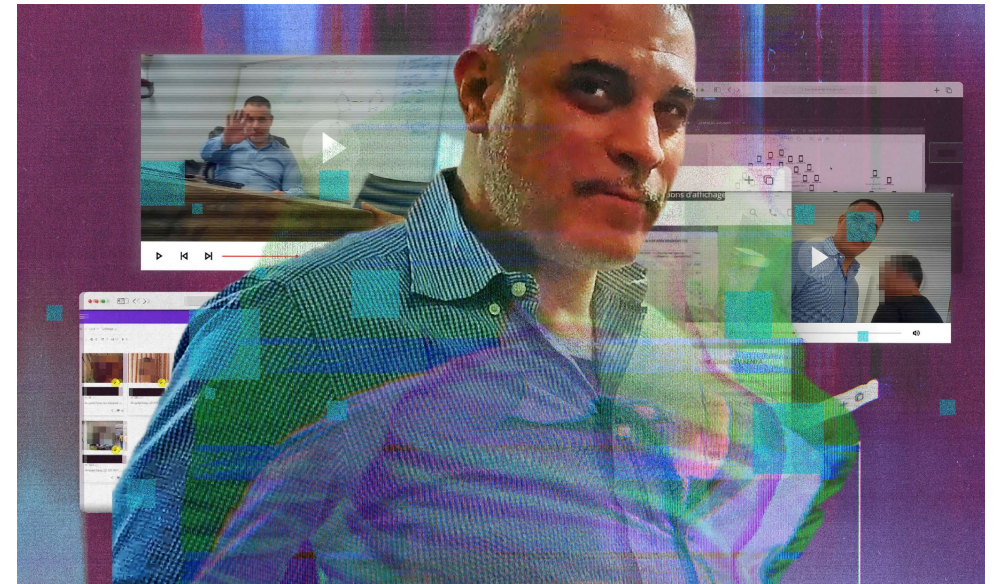
- **Impersonation**

- Mimicking the appearance of organisations and/or spoofing real people (e. g. politicians)
- Exploit their credibility and/or sow chaos via fake announcements. Damage is done before debunking and correction

The badges

- **Team Jorge**

- a for-hire underground agency located in Israel, specialised in malign cyber activities. Exposed in 2022 by investigative journalists. Head was Tal Hanan. (Kirchgaessner et al., 2023)
- “Jorge took control of the private messaging systems [...] Once inside [...], Jorge was then able to impersonate conversations with their contacts.” (Andrzejewski, 2023)



Source: theguardian.com (link)

The badges

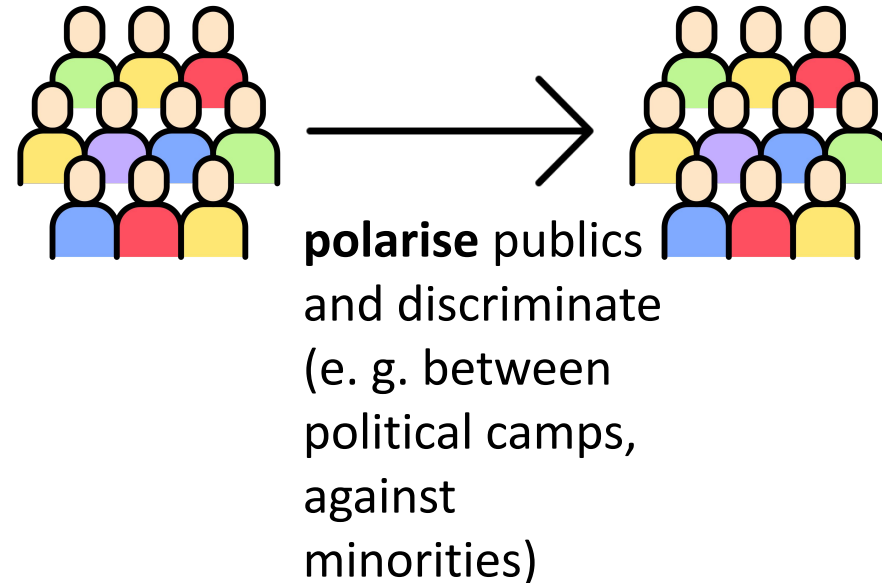
- **Emotional content**

- Content that evokes basic emotions, mostly with negative valence (e. g. fear, anger, empathy)
- Gain attention and frame an issue in a specific way according to desired ends
- Emotional content generates higher engagement than less emotional content

The Badges

- **Group polarisation**

- Exploit existing grievances and tensions in a society to foster inter-group division and conflict
- In politics: “garner support for or antagonism towards partisan viewpoints and policies”
(Roozenbeek & van der Linden, 2019)



Source: own illustrations

The Badges

- **Conspiracy theories**

- “Creating or amplifying alternative explanations for traditional news events which assume that these events are controlled by a small, usually malicious, secret elite group of people” (Roozenbeek & van der Linden, 2019)
- Explanations for events that “involve secret plots by powerful and malevolent groups” (Douglas et al., 2017)
- e. g. “Pallywood” conspiracy theory about allegedly staged Palestinian suffering

Some of the most viral posts targeting war-afflicted Gazans have used the term "Pallywood", a derogatory label blending "Palestine" with "Hollywood."

"This trend initially emerged in the early days of the war, with a video revealing the behind-the-scenes of a film set and alleging it portrayed Palestinians fabricating injuries," Yotam Frost, from the Israeli disinformation watchdog [FakeReporter](#), told AFP.

Source: [AFP Fact Check](#) (link)

The Badges

- **Amplification**

- To trick people into believing that you have large support, when there is not much actual support
- E. g., “astroturfing campaigns are initiated by a principal directly instructing a group of users who respond to extrinsic rewards – the agents” (Keller et al., 2020) who then disingenuously support a cause, making it appear as supported by many genuine people

The Badges

- **Discredit**

- Avert accusations by attacking and delegitimising the source of the allegations (Douglas et al., 2017)
- A common tactic is to discredit inconvenient voices as fake news or fabricate lies to make the opponent appear less trustworthy and dubious

The Badges

• Trolling

- Deliberately provoking reactions from a target audience, often by using offensive language, emotional content, exploiting existing polarisation, etc.
- Etymology: Dragging a trawl net behind a fishing vessel, i. e., a trawl, to catch fish (Roozenbeek & van der Linden, 2019)

Literature

Andrzejewski, Ć. (2023). “Team Jorge”: In the heart of a global disinformation machine. Forbidden stories.

<https://forbiddenstories.org/team-jorge-disinformation/>

Douglas, K. M., Sutton, R. M., & Cichocka, A. (2017). The Psychology of Conspiracy Theories. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 26(6), 538–542. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721417718261>

Keller, F. B., Schoch, D., Stier, S., & Yang, J. (2019). Political astroturfing on Twitter: How to coordinate a disinformation campaign. *Political Communication*, 37(2), 256–280. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2019.1661888>

Kirchgaessner, S. et al. (2023). Revealed: the hacking and disinformation team meddling in elections. *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/feb/15/revealed-disinformation-team-jorge-claim-meddling-elections-tal-hanan>

Roozenbeek, J., & Van Der Linden, S. (2020). Breaking Harmony Square: A game that “inoculates” against political misinformation. *The Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review*. <https://doi.org/10.37016/mr-2020-47>

Roozenbeek, J., & Van Der Linden, S. (2019). Fake news game confers psychological resistance against online misinformation. *Palgrave Communications*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-019-0279-9>

Ullah, M., Amin, S. U., Munsif, M., Yamin, M. M., Safaev, U., Khan, H., Khan, S., & Ullah, H. (2022). Serious games in science education: a systematic literature. *Virtual Reality & Intelligent Hardware*, 4(3), 189–209. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.vrih.2022.02.001>

This work was funded by the European Union Horizon Europe research and innovation program [grant number 101132444 – ADAC.io] and the UKRI under the UK government's Horizon Europe funding guarantee [grant number 10105669]. Views and opinions expressed are those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Commission or UKRI. The European Commission or the UKRI can be held responsible for them.

