

3-4-2019

# Popular Culture and the Psychology of the Insider Threat

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## Recommended Citation

Editor (2019) "Popular Culture and the Psychology of the Insider Threat," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*: Vol. 19 : Iss. 3 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol19/iss3/1>

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**Title:** Popular Culture and the Psychology of the Insider Threat

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Writings on intellectual history often differentiate between two perspectives—ideas in and of themselves, and ideas constituted, elicited, or constrained by; enabled; or afforded emergence by cultural context. An example of the latter perspective is the hyper-receptivity of psychoanalysis by psychiatry, the behavioral and social sciences, literary criticism and historiography, and critical theory within the United States, as opposed to the rest of the world in much of the 20th century (1). This hyper-receptivity is frequently understood and explained by cultural trends in family life, the meaning of social success, and products from low or pop culture (2).

A close reading of scientific and professional literature on the nature of the insider threat to groups and organizations suggest contextualization within pop cultural products. One example is the 1966 rock single “Over Under Sideways Down”—by the English group The Yardbirds (3) (and also covered as recently as 2004 by the New Zealander Alec Bathgate and 2016 by the English folk rock group The Stairs). The lyrics convey significant challenges for personnel security authorities dedicated to protecting organizations and significant opportunities for counterintelligence authorities dedicated to subverting them.

“Cars and girls are easy come by in this day and age/Laughing, joking, drinking, smoking/Till I've spent my wage”. In matters of morals, ethics, the law, and complying with social roles, money—the M of the insider threat acronym MICE—and, perhaps, ego—MICE’s E—are siren songs to transgression (4). [I is for Ideology, and C is for Coercion].

“When I was young people spoke of immorality/All the things they said were wrong/Are what I want to be”. There’s a significant body of psychological research supporting the hypothesis that labeling something as wrong increases that something’s attractiveness and the pressure to perform it (5).

“I find comment 'bout my looks irrelativity/Think I'll go and have some fun/"cause it's all for free”. Regardless of what I look like, am supposed to look like, or associated prescriptions and proscriptions, I’ll do what I want.

“I'm not searching for a reason to enjoy myself/Seems it's better done/Than argued with somebody else”. One infers the Nike slogan-“just do it” without the preliminary or antecedent calculation of organizational, authority figure, or superego dictate.

The refrain is “Over under sideways down/Backwards forwards square and round”. There are so many ways life can be construed, from so many different angles and perspectives. Personnel security and counterintelligence authorities alike may only be able to make educated guesses about what will influence whom.

So, Ba Maung et al. (2018) bemoan the task of identifying motivations to violate trust and of protecting a myriad of organizational vulnerabilities (6). Padayachee (2016) seems to split the difference between attending to motivations versus opportunities to betray trust (7). Healey (2016) identifies the sinister—e.g., grievance, malice and criminal intent—but much less so doing it because one just wants to or can (8). And the still classic Sarbin et al. (1994) *Citizen Espionage: Studies in Trust and Betrayal* captures The Yardbirds' sense of a disorientation of coming from all directions (9).

Among rock connoisseurs, The Yardbirds are characterized by defections, the coming and goings, of great electric guitar players—Eric Clapton, Jimmy Page, and Jeff Beck. In 1968, the band breaks up due to divergent musical interests, new music trends, and music business machinations. The inside and outside were conflated—“Over under sideways down/Backwards forwards square and round”. And so the insider threat.

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**Keywords:** Betrayal of Trust. Espionage. Insider Threat. The Yardbirds.

**Abstract/Description:** This article illustrates an identification between pop culture and an important intelligence, law enforcement, and security issue.

**Disciplines:** Other Psychology, Philosophy, Philosophy of Science. Political Science, Other Political Science, Psychology, Defense and Security Studies, International Relations

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