

MIND CONTROL



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GUMSHO
ZOOM



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GUMSHOE ZOOM: INTRODUCTION

Not everything can support a game of its own, or even a big sourcebook. For those things, we present the GUMSHOE Zoom, a sort of supplement focused on a key game mechanic and its possible applications. In general, Zooms are interesting potential hacks, or intriguing adaptations of the main rules. Some apply to one specific topic or sub-sub-genre. Others cross all manner of GUMSHOE turf; you can slot them in and adapt them to tales of Cthulhuoid investigation, mean superpowered streets, or alien colonies alike.

Zooms are experimental. That does mean that they haven't been playtested, necessarily. (If something in here is really really broken – and it's not, as this ain't our first rodeo – we'll fix it in post.) But that also means we encourage you to experiment with them. Changing the cost, or prerequisites, or point effect, or other mechanical parameters of a given Zoom changes how often it shows up and how much drama it drives. The dials are in your hands.

Zooms will change the focus of your play if you use them. Putting a mechanic on the table puts it into your game. Adding a Zoom means more actions, possibly even more scenes, using those rules. Since the Zoom mechanics are intended to encourage specific actions or flavors, to force a card in your storytelling hand, they aren't "balanced" against "normal" actions or rules. In general, if you don't want to see more of it, don't Zoom in on it.

Zooms are optional rules. You can and should ignore them if you don't want them, or change them at will. After all, if a given Zoom turns out to be crucial to an upcoming GUMSHOE game, we'll change it to fit that specific genre or form of storytelling.

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MIND CONTROL

YOU ARE GROWING VERY INTERESTED

The GUMSHOE Mind Control Zoom is intended to model the sorts of stories in which mind control – and especially the contest in and over human minds – takes center stage. This might be a single novel such as George du Maurier’s *Trilby* or Dan Simmons’ *Carrion Comfort*, or a film like *Scanners*, *Push*, *Inception*, *Videodrome*, or *Invaders from Mars*. Mind control is a powerful, core trope in science fiction, fantasy, and horror; specific aliens, wizards, or monsters might use these rules even if the player characters aren’t psionic. Individual mind-controllers might be malevolent, like Dracula or Rasputin, or heroic, like Dr. Xavier or Obi-Wan Kenobi.

If you plan to introduce mind control as a major plot element or theme in your GUMSHOE game, this Zoom will provide you a backstop and a guide, along with numerous possible applications of the subject.

To reiterate, you don’t have to be running a full-tilt psiberpunk campaign to use this Zoom. You can put these rules into any GUMSHOE setting, whether published or original to your campaign. The only requirement is a GM and players who want to move the action inside the characters’ minds.

For example:

- Mind control – both as unnatural seduction and as perceptual

manipulation -- is a natural component of the *Esoterrorists*’ blurring of the boundaries between our world and the Outer Dark

- Vampires are mind-controllers par excellence, making this a natural core power for the fiends in a *Night’s Black Agents* game
- Nyarlathotep, the Shan, and the Mi-Go are only a few of the mighty mind-controlling monstrosities potentially lurking along the *Trail of Cthulhu* – adding another entirely psionic race to the alien lineup seems inevitable
- Given the number of telepathic and otherwise psionic heavyweights in serial SF, mind control slots perfectly into an *Ashen Stars* or *Gaeen Reach* campaign
- Although *Mutant City Blues* has its own set of balanced mind control powers (see p. 12) you may want to escalate a Possession-using criminal into a major opponent, or send the cops after a psteroid ring building Emotion Controlled burnouts
- Present a single mind as the battlespace, using the Mental Battlefield system; this can be a one-off adventure or the campaign arc “dungeon” in a game based on *Inception*
- Eroding the minds of all the protagonists in *Fear Itself* could go some way to replicating the feel of Eli Roth flicks like *Hostel*, *Cabin Fever*, and their imitators

From enchantresses in the *Odyssey*

to mesmeric Svengalis in steampunk drawing rooms, to brain-bug parasites in Orion, you can add mind control to any story, any game, any where or when. If, you know, you do it of your own free will.

MIND CONTROL ABILITIES

In games focusing on psionic powers, it’s most likely that each psychic ability becomes its own separate skill: Clairvoyance, Telepathy, Dream Entry, Telekinesis, Pyrokinesis, etc. Mind Control becomes only one possible ability among many. By contrast, a setting in which all of the major characters are mind-controllers might break Mind Control into sub-abilities: Charm, Dominate, Puppet, Sleep, Trance, Memory Wipe, Sway Emotions, etc., much as GUMSHOE traditionally breaks Fighting up into Scuffling and Shooting and sometimes Weapons.

For this reason, this Zoom uses the single term “Mind Control” for any player ability used for mind control or any aspect thereof. Consider these rules to apply to broad Psi abilities or narrow Trance tests alike. Similarly, don’t take terms like “psychic,” “mentalist,” and so forth too literally: these rules work for mind-controlling sorcerers, wetware programmers, and so forth.

Even with multiple abilities on the character sheet, NPCs will likely have a single Psi pool for simplicity of bookkeeping and convenience in contests, although flavor can supersede this concern.

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For example, super-criminals in *Mutant City Blues* or enemy magnetizers in a game of mesmeric Musketeering should have dramatically satisfying specific abilities: “Jimmy Sandman can put you to sleep and somehow mess with your dreams” or “We face the Comte du Vergille, whose seductions are as legendary as his mesmeric armonica is entrancing.”

Like other GUMSHOE abilities, the “how” or “flavor” of a mind control ability is usually secondary. Whether it comes from honest-to-gosh telepathy, a magic gem, or demonic curses doesn’t affect the ability, although it might increase Difficulties to control minds across a Faraday cage, thaumaturgical ward, or baptismal font full of holy water.

GAINING MIND CONTROL ABILITIES

The GUMSHOE default for special abilities such as Mesmerism or Mind Control is as follows: you buy such abilities out of your pool of General ability build points. Buying the *first rating point* in a special ability costs a **premium**: usually 4 or 5 build points for the first rating point. After that, build points for that ability become rating points as normal. If you’re using Potential Psi, buy the actual powers straight, with no premium.

Jack wants to get Memory Alteration. He spends 7 build points, and gets Memory Alteration with a rating of 3. The first rating point costs a premium of 5 build points; the next two each cost 1 build point.

In some games, such as *Mutant City Blues*, every character has a pool of build points for special abilities such as psionics. In those games, assign points to the various special abilities as normal. In *MCB* specifically, the cost of each special ability depends on whether

it’s General or Investigative, and on its position on the Quade Diagram of superpowers. Larger point being: if you’ve already got special ability rules in your game, you don’t need these.

POTENTIAL PSI

Psionic abilities, especially in games like *Trail of Cthulhu* that don’t primarily focus on them, work quite well with potential points, a rules system initially introduced in *Rough Magicks*.

Some abilities are more abstruse, difficult, or complex than others, enough so that they can’t simply be bought “from scratch” during character improvement. They require a prerequisite: teaching by a master, learning from an ancient text, or some other specific in-game experience. That prerequisite experience conveys “potential points” in the ability; when the character spends build points from experience on that ability, she can only do so up to her “potential.”

In a near-future psiberpunk game, for example, downloading a specific neuroactive virus, being injected with experimental special-warfare drugs, or being caught in the backwash of an alien ultradimension rip conveys Psi potential; to actually use a psionic ability, a character must then buy Mind Control (or Telekinesis, or etc.) points with experience. The character can only raise her Mind Control rating to the level of her current Psi potential.

Awakened by conspiracy narratives in the Deep Web, Priya decides to pursue psionic research. She talks a street chemist into priming her with psteroids (1 Psi potential point), and sneaks into the psywar proving ground at HAARP to sleep there overnight (2 Psi potential points) for a total of Psi 3. Priya

gets 2 build points per adventure; after two adventures, she can raise her Mind Control ability rating to 2 and her Technopathy ability rating to 1. She can’t spend that last build point on any psionic ability until she figures out another way to increase her Psi potential – maybe Tibetan meditation is the secret?

As this example shows, it’s cleaner if a single Psi potential pool opens up all available psionic powers for purchase, just as a single Magic pool lets *Trail of Cthulhu* Investigators cast all manner of spells.

MIND CONTROL TESTS AND CONTESTS

Mind control contests work just like other GUMSHOE contests: with the amount of detail the GM thinks the scene requires.

When in doubt, apply the generic GUMSHOE test rule to mind control tests: for example, to re-roll a failed test, the psychic must spend more points on the re-roll than she spent on the previous test and give an in-game explanation of how this new attempt differs from the previous failure. It’s up to the GM whether such GUMSHOE standards as Piggybacking, Cooperating, and Continuing Tests apply to mind control: the last two seem reasonable under most circumstances, but the first might only apply to mind control tests inside dreams or mindscapes.

PLAYER-FACING MIND CONTROL

In player-facing mind control contests, the player is the mentalist using Mind Control on a target. The standard Difficulty of a mind control test, like any other, is 4, modified by the target’s Resistance modifier.

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Remember, most NPCs don't have Stability scores. (In some GUMSHOE games, *no* NPCs have Stability scores, or their scores exist solely to collapse for dramatic purposes.) An NPC (or monster, or other target) has a **Resistance modifier**, which functions like the Alertness and Stealth modifiers: it alters the *player's* Difficulty in a test of the PC's Mind Control ability.

PLAYER FACING RESISTANCE

Sometimes the player character is the target of a mind control attack, but the attack is not the dramatic centerpiece of the story or even of the combat – a quick Jedi mind trick or “psenior moment” amnesia attack. She makes a one-and-done Stability test to resist the attack. The Difficulty for that Stability test is the total of the mind controller's die roll plus her spend, if any.

Candace is on the other side of the door from Kurt Dollmacher. For now, the door is locked. The GM spends 2 points from Kurt's Puppet pool and rolls a 4 on the die, for a total of 6. He says, “You find your hand moving toward the lock, seemingly of its own free will.” The Difficulty for Candace's Stability test to resist Kurt's creepy power is 6.

If this is the first time the character has ever encountered mind control, she may just have to spend blind and hope for the best.

If mind control is going to be a common occurrence, however, players will want to have some idea of the Difficulty they have to beat. Thus, the GM should allow a spend to figure out the relative intensity of the mental attack. In the absence of a specific Investigative ability covering Psi Lore, a “psi-aware” if not necessarily psionic character can spend 1 point of Sense Trouble to

get an estimated Difficulty: within 1 point either way, perhaps. Spending 2 points of Sense Trouble (or Psi Lore, or what-have-you) should garner the exact Difficulty to beat.

Note that the Stability test in this Player-Facing Resistance system differs from the familiar “Stability check” in other GUMSHOE games – it doesn't have a fixed Difficulty, and doesn't result in extra Stability loss on a failure – but more closely resembles a normal ability test. Of course, in some games, the realization that you've been (or are being) mind-controlled may trigger another Stability test of the “fear check” type.

Keep in mind that for major Mind Control tests which might have longer lasting effects than one round of combat – Dracula's subversion of Lucy Westenra, for instance – players will almost always want to fight them out as full contests.

FULL CONTESTS OF MIND CONTROL

This type of contest matches a normal full contest in GUMSHOE: two characters roll against a Difficulty, and the first one to fail a roll loses. The character with the lower Mind Control rating always goes first. As with other full contests, the GM should only stage a full contest of mind control when such a showdown is dramatically interesting: introducing a major foe or “level boss,” or if victory or failure in this contest could potentially alter or set up a main throughline or story element (such as an NPC or a secret conspiracy) of the scenario.

As with other full contests, the GM and player should provide narration to match their rolls: “My veins are standing out on my forehead and the blood pounds in my temples” or “He's absolutely drenched with sweat, but he somehow remains awake” or the like.

NOTICING MIND CONTROL

To spot someone under the influence of mind control almost always defaults to a Sense Trouble test, whether it's a friend acting strangely or a guard who seems “zombified at his post.” This is especially true if the puppet is ordered to attack or otherwise impede the PCs.

That said, a 1-point spend of Bullshit Detector or Pharmacy, or a 2-point spend of any other Interpersonal ability or Medicine (or Diagnosis, etc.), while talking to a mind-controlled subject reveals their true state.

Detecting mind control after it has worn off (or if the GM feels the initial control was more subtle than immediately threatening) takes a Shrink or Psychoanalysis test or the equivalent, at a Difficulty of 4. A psychic who wishes to cover his tracks can spend Mind Control points to increase this Difficulty at the initial entrancement, or retroactively for 2 extra Mind Control points per increased point of Difficulty.

All of the above assume the PCs know mind control exists and are on the lookout for it. Otherwise, the above tests and spends only show that the target is acting strangely or seems drugged or otherwise out of character.

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PARAMETERS AND MODIFIERS

How far and how long your power extends depends on your Mind Control ability rating. (Note: In *Mutant City Blues*, power range at ability ratings of 1-3 is 25m.) The second duration, if available, is outside combat. In games with separate mind control abilities, more dramatic and “complete” powers (Dominate, Puppet, etc.) last half the normal duration (round down, minimum 1 round).

Mind control rating	Range	Duration
1	2m (Point Blank)	1 round; 5 minutes
2-3	10m (Close)	3 rounds; one scene
4-7	50m (Near)	5 rounds; one day
8	100m (Long)	8 rounds; one adventure
Each additional +6	+500m	+4 rounds; one fortnight

There is a virtually limitless number of possible modifiers to any given mind control test or contest. Consider these examples not the last word on the subject, but as sources for interpolation and extrapolation of your own numbers for your own campaign. Regardless of how many modifiers you pile onto a Mind Control test or contest, the Difficulty can never go lower than 3.

Condition	Difficulty Modifier
Target is willing	-4
Overt contact (e.g., gripping both sides of the head and full eye contact) Theatrical staging of attempt (spend of Performance, Occult Studies, Art, or similar ability)	-2
Flesh-to-flesh contact Target is drugged, drunk, etc. Target has been mind-controlled by you before Mentalist spends 2 Interpersonal ability points that reinforce the mind control command (max. 2)	-1
Target’s eyes are not clearly visible (sunglasses, back of head, darkness, etc.) Mentalist simultaneously using a non-combat, non-Interpersonal ability	+1
One range increment more than normal Target ordered to oppose her “core nature” (e.g., have sex with a stranger in a Victorian setting; kill family)	+2
For each additional mind to be controlled Mentalist engaged in combat	+3
Target is not clearly visible or audible (successful Stealth or similar test), assuming no “psychic location” or the like Target ordered to kill self or commit obviously suicidal action	+4

Flesh Contact: May require a successful Hand-to-Hand, Scuffling, etc. test.

Multiple Minds: A group of minds always resists using the highest Stability, Resistance modifier, etc. among them.

These Difficulties can, of course, be applied in reverse to Stability or other resistance tests: e.g., a Stability test to resist mind control is at +1 Difficulty if the PC has been drugged.

All that said, we urgently recommend keeping possible modifiers to a minimum, or better yet simply assigning a contest advantage of +1 or +2 to the obviously superior party and rolling away in anything but a full-scale mental battlefield contest.

MIND CONTROL

The specific contest ability varies depending on circumstances:

- Two psychics trying to control each other's mind: Mind Control vs. Mind Control
- Two psychics battling for control of a third party's mind: Mind Control vs. Mind Control

By dramatic fiat, once the battle is over, the third party is simply controlled. If the third party is a PC, she gets a Stability roll to resist against a Difficulty of 4 plus whatever the winning psychic spends to modify *this* test.

- NPC psychic trying to control non-psychic PC: Mind Control vs. Stability
- PC psychic trying to control non-psychic NPC: Mind Control vs. Target Ability

This last type of contest should be restricted to major NPCs with proven forceful characters, not just for thug-of-the-week types. The Target Ability is the ability most tied up with what the psychic is attempting to control: Shooting for an assassin the mentalist wants to redirect, or Surveillance if the psychic is trying to cloud the target's mind. The Target Ability should be a General ability – if nothing seems right, and the GM doesn't wish to provide a quick-and-dirty Stability rating, the Target Ability is Health. Spent Health points in this contest equal mental fatigue, not wounds, and heal completely by the next scene.

MENTAL BATTLEFIELD CONTESTS

This type of contest treats a single character's mind (the "host" or "host

mind") as a layered battlespace, to be controlled piece by piece – possibly by more than one mind controller at a time! Because they use up so much spotlight time and so many ability points, and because they're not quite compatible with the more unitary mind control contest rules, treat these contests as central, singular, even climactic events. A mental battlefield contest is more likely to be a story arc than

a single adventure, or even the focus of a whole campaign.

Such contests play out only for the highest stakes: almost always only for a major NPC or PC's free will. Even if the target mind is an NPC, the GM should create a full character sheet for her – the players will be spending a lot of time in her mind, and they should have plenty of scenery.



MIND CONTROL

GEOGRAPHY OF THE MIND

According to Freud, the human mind has three **levels**: the superego, the ego, and the id. While Freud is happily passé, his structural model of mind is hardly less evocative than vampires or Cthulhu. Thus, this Zoom adopts Freud's terminology with blithe disregard for its inventor's uses of it.

The three levels of the host mind are divided into **zones**. The host might personify each zone as a mentor or other positive figure in her life (parents most often in the Ego), or perhaps each zone holds a treasured core memory of the ability or other concept associated with it. The GM should flavor the contest with such memories or elements, as this is much of the fun of such long-form mind control arcs.

To take control of one zone requires a contest of Mind Control, usually against the host mind, who resists with Stability. (Even if she's a mind controller too.) The host mind has the "home field advantage," so the mind controller needs to be very powerful, bring Cooperating fellow mind controllers, attack while the host is distracted fighting off other mind controllers, or use some other combination of special equipment or modifiers to shift the pools in his favor.

THE SUPEREGO

This is the level of culture, rules, models, and intellect. The superego comprises one zone for each rating point the host mind has in Stability. For each zone, assign it one of the host mind's abilities. Start with Investigative abilities in which she has a rating of 3 or more, and with General abilities in which she has a rating of 8 or more. Each zone of the superego corresponds to one ability,

counting down from the highest rating until you run out of zones. (To compare Investigative to General ratings, multiply the Investigative rating by 3 for a "General-equivalent" rating.) The GM may skip abilities on the basis of tedium (Health) or point inflation (Fleeing).

The host mind may spend points from the zone's characteristic ability on her resistance roll, adding +1 to the roll for each 1 Investigative or psionic ability point spent or 3 (non-Stability, non-psionic) General points spent. Note that her Investigative ratings and pools are once again normal: the multiplier is only for the purposes of ranking the zones.

Once an outside mind controller controls any zone in the Superego, resistance rolls to that psychic by the host take a -1 modifier. That psychic may now control the host's use of that ability by spending 1 Mind Control point.

Once a single mentalist controls a majority of the zones in the Superego, she may attempt to control zones in the Ego. (In multiple-controller games, the GM may want to change this requirement to a plurality, instead.)

If an outside mind controller loses three contests in a row in the Superego, he loses all zones controlled within the Superego.

THE EGO

This is the level of the core human personality, both rational and emotional. Divide the host's Stability rating in half, rounded up: the Ego comprises that many zones. Each zone relates to some aspect of the host's personality or life, such as:

- Drive (*Trail of Cthulhu*, *Night's Black Agents*, *Ashen Stars*)

- A Pillar of Sanity (*Trail of Cthulhu*)
- A Source of Stability (*Night's Black Agents*, *Fear Itself*, *Trail of Cthulhu*)
- Risk Factor (*Fear Itself*)
- Personal Goal/Arc (*Fear Itself*, *Ashen Stars*, *Night's Black Agents*)
- MOS (*Night's Black Agents*)
- What Quandos Vorn Did (*Gaeen Reach*)
- Best superpower or other special ability (*Mutant City Blues*)
- Species History (*Ashen Stars*)
- Etc.

Each Ego zone also has abilities associated with it; those abilities used (or established in previous flashbacks) by the character during the game to advance that zone's goals: if a soldier had patriotism as a Pillar of Sanity, that zone's associated abilities might include Shooting, Outdoorsman, and so forth. Each Ego zone can have only one General ability and one Investigative ability, so the host player should pick well.

All resistance rolls by the host over a zone in the Ego are made at +2. The host mind may also spend points on her Stability resistance roll from any associated ability, with the same result as a spend in the Superego. Again, any psionic ability spend by the host counts at full value on the resistance roll.

Once an outside mind controller controls any zone in the Ego, resistance rolls to that psychic by the host take a -2 modifier. (This cancels out the host's advantage within the Ego.) That psychic may now control or alter that zone's corresponding aspect of the host's personality, decision-making, memories, etc. by spending 2 Mind Control points.

MIND CONTROL

Once a single mentalist controls a majority of the zones in the Ego, he may attempt to control zones in the Id. (In multiple-controller games, the GM may want to change this requirement to a plurality, instead.)

If an outside mind controller loses two contests in a row within the Ego, he loses all zones controlled within the Ego, and half the zones he controls within the Superego. (Host player picks.)

THE ID

There are always three zones in the Id: Survive, Trauma, and Mate.

Survive is the sheer survival instinct, Trauma is the worst thing that ever happened to you (or, in *Fear Itself*, the Worst Thing You Ever Did), and Mate is the procreative urge. If the host is married or has children, her spouse or children embody this last zone.

All resistance rolls by the host over a zone in the Id are made at +4.

Pick the host's highest General ability rating or 9, whichever is higher: that is the bonus pool the host can also spend on resistance Stability tests in the Id. Any psionic ability spend by the host on a resistance test in the Id counts *double*: e.g., spending 1 point of Mind Control adds +2 to the Stability test result.

Once an outside mind controller controls any zone in the Id, resistance rolls to that psychic by the host take a -4 modifier. (This cancels out the host's advantage within the Id.) That psychic may now make the host do, feel, say, or believe anything relating to that zone by spending 2 Mind Control points.

Once a single mentalist controls a two out of three zones in the Id, he may control anything the host mind

does, remembers, believes, and so on, without spending any Mind Control points. The host may have a fragmentary personality left in the remnants of her mind, or not, at the GM's discretion.

If an outside mind controller loses any contest within the Id, he loses all zones controlled within the Id, and half the zones he controls anywhere else in the mind. (Host player picks.)

SHADOW PLAYS

In some mind control media such as *Psychonauts* or *Inception*, more cinematic types of contests represent the mind control struggle: gunplay, fisticuffs, magical showdowns, snowmobile races, and so forth. To introduce such a sub-contest (usually a combat or similar full contest in its own right), take the total General points of the host character (except Stability) and use them to build the zone's defenders. An 80-point budget might produce 10 mooks with Shooting 8 or 5 mooks with Shooting 8 and Driving 8 for a chase-and-shoot or one deadly assassin.

The defenders' Health budget equals the host's total Stability rating – lots of 1-point foes are likely at first. Once the last Health point is "killed off" the

zone falls. Multiply the Health budget by 2 for zones in the Ego, and by 4 for zones in the Id. Remember to add +2 to defenders' rolls in the Ego (until an Ego zone falls) and +4 to defenders' rolls in the Id (until an Id zone falls). The GM may represent those bonuses dramatically as heavy cover, superior weaponry, etc.

The mind controller uses his own character abilities in these shadow battles, but his psionic abilities become a pool useable in any contest. This pool refreshes after each "scene."

The GM may want to add special bonuses for associated abilities in the zone, or set totals slightly differently to match a team of invading psionic heroes.

QUICK AND DIRTY MENTAL BATTLE DAMAGE

For games such as *Fear Itself* or *Trail of Cthulhu* Purist mode "one-shots" modeling the slow (or rapid) disintegration of the characters' minds, you can use the mental battlefield map to check off Stability damage to much more lurid effect. For every point of Stability lost to the supernatural (or to the specific flavor of terror characteristic of the scenario), one zone shatters.

CTHULHU ON MY MIND

For each rating point of Cthulhu Mythos the character has, one zone of his mind is infested with the horrid truth of the cosmos. Which zone is up to the Keeper, who is encouraged to add suitably horrid – or infectious – side effects to attempts to control that zone. At the very least, the mind controller must make a 5-point Stability test (Difficulty 5) for grasping these horrible concepts.

A truly cruel Keeper will add 1 rating point of Cthulhu Mythos to the mind controller's sheet for each 3 (or 2!) contaminated zones so entered.

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The player to the victim's left chooses the zone; if players are coddling each other, the GM chooses.

In the superego, that ability is Shaken, and using it requires a spend or a +1 Difficulty or both. Once over two-thirds (rounded up) of the superego zones are shattered, losses may be applied to the ego. Restoring a shattered superego zone requires a Difficulty 2 Shrink or Psychoanalysis test by another character; it cannot be done in combat.

In the ego, losing any zone requires the player to focus their attention on another PC or a major NPC ally as the cause of their problems. They cannot help that character, will keep secrets from her, lose her in the woods, and generally work to sabotage them; at the player's discretion, they may try to attack their fixation if left alone together. Once over half of the ego (rounded up) is shattered, losses may be applied to the id. Restoring a shattered ego zone requires a

Difficulty 4 Shrink or Psychoanalysis test by another character; it can only be done in a haven or during 8 hours of downtime or rest.

Losses to the id drive involuntary, extreme responses. Losing the Trauma zone means the character responds to the next stressor by attacking it in a berserk frenzy, with no caution or thought of self-preservation. Losing the Mate zone means the character responds to the next stressor by fleeing at top speed. Losing the Survive zone means the character freezes in place, folding catatonically into the fetal position but taking no other defensive measures. Restoring a shattered id zone requires a Difficulty 8 Shrink or Psychoanalysis test by another character; even at cinematic speeds, it takes three days of peace.

CUSTOMIZING MIND CONTROL

The Zoom mechanics above are designed to fit conceptually into the "standard game space" of GUMSHOE: capable characters, with action modeled on common storytelling conventions. But an individual GM may want to blow up or (comparatively) de-emphasize the role of mind control in her game. This section helps her customize the rules to fit exactly the kind of story she wants to tell.

DIALS

These options change the Zoom mechanics. The GM may want to tinker with these dials until the flavor fits the table as a whole, as well as her notions of genre and drama. Use as many or as few of these dials as you wish for your preferred, specific flavor.



MIND CONTROL

DIALING IT UP

The following changes make mind control **more powerful**, prevalent, or prominent in the game. A full-fledged covert psi wars game might wind up using all of them! In some games, the GM might restrict these dials to psis with ratings of 8+ in a psionic ability. Each additional 6 (or 4) points in the ability activates one more dial.

- *Each* Interpersonal point the psychic spends to reinforce his mental command lowers the Mind Control Difficulty by 1. To really amp up this effect, remove the 2-point maximum spend limit.
- Lower the premium for psionic abilities (or just mind control) from 4 or 5 to 2 or 3. This becomes especially powerful in games with more than one psionic or special ability, or where mind control is broken into several sub-disciplinary abilities.
- Normally, every potential pool point can only be “filled” by one specific ability point. But for a game with more powerful psis, a character can buy a number of abilities equal to her Psi potential. *Example: Priya has Psi 3: she could buy three separate psionic abilities as high as her experience points or saved build points can take her: after four adventures gain her 8 experience points, she could have Mind Control 4, Technopathy 3, and Astral Projection 1.*
- The minimum Difficulty for a Mind Control attempt is 2 instead of 3, making automatic success possible without a spend.
- Lower the modifier for multiple minds controlled to +2 per mind.
- Move all durations up one row; for example, Mind Control 3 now lasts for 5 rounds or one day.
- At Mind Control 14+, you can control a mind permanently.
- By spending 6 points of Mind Control after a successful test, your control of that mind (or part thereof) becomes permanent, unless broken by another mind controller of equal or higher rating.
- Mind Control abilities can refresh after 24 hours, or after 8 hours of rest, or after an hour in a haven.
- Mind Control includes perception, memories, and beliefs.
- In the Mental Battlefield System, losing two battles in a row (instead of just one) in the Id ejects the mind-controller from the Id (with the consequences noted on p.9).

DIALING IT DOWN

These changes, by contrast, make mind control **less powerful**, or less useful for players. They don’t make it worthless – if you don’t want mind control in the game, don’t use this Zoom at all! – but they do raise the cost of mental meddling.

Once you’ve chosen which dials to use, the GM might remove one of them for a psi with a rating of 8+ in a psionic ability. Each additional 6 (or 4) points in the ability removes one more dial.

- Every use of mind control requires a 3-point Stability test.
- After using a paranormal ability, you must make a Difficulty 5 Health test or immediately lose 2 Health *and* become Hurt for the rest of the scene. (If you

are already Hurt, you become Seriously Wounded.) This represents a profound, bone-deep exhaustion approaching shock, not an actual injury.

- Ranges and durations are halved.
- To use mind control, you *must spend* at least 2 points from your ability pool if you can. If you have insufficient points in that pool, you must spend points from your Stability pool instead. Points spent from your Stability pool do not add to the die roll, however.
- While using mind control, you cannot use any other ability, except possibly Interpersonal abilities. You cannot use mind control while in combat or in immediate physical peril.
- Mind control can *only* work on a sleeping subject, or a helpless subject, or a subject with a heart rate under 70 beats per minute, or a subject with a specific cocktail of drugs in his system. This makes it less a tactical skill to use in fights, and more a subtle ability to introduce as part of a larger stratagem – or as in *Inception*, the really important fight that happens *after* the kidnapping-heist.
- Mind control only includes short-term actions and memories.

PRE-EXISTING GUMSHOE MIND CONTROL

As a general rule, where an existing GUMSHOE rules set introduces mind control or something similar, that game’s rules take precedence over this Zoom unless the GM explicitly rules otherwise. All page numbers in this section refer to the corebook referenced in the subheader.

MIND CONTROL

MUTANT CITY BLUES

Classic mind control in **Mutant City Blues** falls under the Possession ability (p. 59) and to a lesser extent Emotion Control (p. 46). In some games and with some rules sets, some GMs will allow mind control to also function as Endorphin Control (Others) (p. 47), Induce Aggression (p. 53), Induce Fear (p. 54), Memory Alteration (p. 57), or Sexual Chemistry (p. 63).

Less usually, mind control might include a "cloud men's minds" ability or ability complex, allowing the controller to override or rewrite the subject's current sensory input. This power or power set might grant any or all of Invisibility (p. 55), Illusion (p. 52), Impersonate (p. 53), Light Blast (p. 54), Nondescript (p. 57), or Alter Form (p. 39).

Other less usual mind control abilities include the various animal Command powers (pp. 40-42); Detect Influence (p. 44); Induce Mental Disorder (p. 54); Psionic Blast (p. 60), in combat, a mind controller might manifest Lightning Decisions (p. 56) by suppressing the attack impulse of your foe for that critical second or Reflexes (p. 61) by confusing the shooter, or generalize both as Threat Calculus (p. 69).

Even more of a stretch: a mind-controller might be able to get lots of other minds working in parallel to give him the equivalent of Cognition (p. 40), or trigger biofeedback or other mesmeric conditions for Healing (p. 51).

Even if you're not using **Mutant City Blues**, consider all of the above the spectrum of possible effects of mind control in your game.

NIGHT'S BLACK AGENTS

Vampiric mind control counts as a Mental Attack (pp. 131-132), usually

powered by Aberrance instead of by a specific ability. Vampires and other monsters resist mind control using Aberrance. (Mesmerism, Terror, and other possibly mind-controlling Mental Attacks all use the same rules.) Other vampiric powers that might "actually" come from particularly bloodthirsty mind-controllers include Anaesthetic Venom (p. 138), Cloud Men's Minds (p. 130), Distortion (p. 135), Dominance (p. 129), Memory Haze (p. 129), Mimic Form (p. 136), Mimicry (p. 138), Possession (p. 134), Stealth (p. 136), or a purely illusory Turn to Creature or Turn to Monstrous Form (both p. 136)

Less usually, the unnerving or panic-making results of Infrasound and Howl (both p. 138), Necromancy (p. 134), or the Summoning and control of animals and vermin (p. 138), might be psionic effects.

Damage from a bane might disrupt, or at least add negative modifiers to, vampiric mind control efforts.

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Mind control in **Trail of Cthulhu** divides sharply between normal human Hypnosis and the various horrid techniques of the Mythos.

Hypnosis (p. 43) includes post-hypnotic suggestion and false memories, both fairly classic mind control powers. In some cases, recovering memories might incorporate mind control (forcing the subject's mind to confront what happened, and his mouth to tell you), as might the trance, easing of pain, and even psychoanalytic rapport also covered by the Hypnosis ability. In very Pulp games, Hypnosis might include various mesmeric effects mentioned in this Zoom; points in Hypnosis should at least count as

Mind Control for all purposes *except* mind control, such as resisting exterior commands. Deep One and hybrid Hypnosis includes simple commands; Serpent Folk likely have the same potential with this ability.

Strangely enough, there are few explicit mind-controllers in Lovecraft's bestiary. The Colours out of space drain human will (p. 128), K'n-Yani use psychic illusions (p. 139), Lemurians have a mental overload ability (p. 140), Iloigor send victims to sleep before draining their Health (p. 141), and the shan simply erode their victims' Stability out of sheer sadistic puppetry (p. 149). The Xothian spawn of Cthulhu may share his telepathic gifts; if so, they might be able to blank and command weaker beings' minds. Less canonically, the buzzing hypnosis and enforced lassitude used by the mi-go appear in **Hideous Creatures: Mi-Go**; the ghouls' Daze (and a possibly psionic Paralyzing Grasp) appears in **Hideous Creatures: Ghouls**.

Yithians switch bodies without even needing to roll, but that's not mind control precisely, as the human mind has a new, conical and rugose body in Pnakotus.

In between humanity and horror are the Mythos spells Mind Exchange (p. 123) and Dominate (**Rough Magicks**, p. 19).

In general, the special psionic powers in **Trail of Cthulhu** are customized for Lovecraftian horror, not general applicability, and should stay that way. This Zoom might well power a Yithian or Elder Thing psionist, a Xothian spawn, an NPC mentalist driven mad by communion with Nyarlathotep, or an entirely original psychic race of aliens.