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## Group and Social Collective Manipulations

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### Abstract

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This study is circumscribed to the field of ontology of the persuasion and aims to clarify what kinds of manipulations can be identified a) in the manipulation group type and b) in the social collective manipulation type. The ontology is understood as a coordinate of all knowledge, in which it clarified about the concepts, categories, terminology, taxonomies (classification) and dictionaries (lexicons). This research takes into account manipulation as a form of persuasion and aims to achieve a taxonomy of manipulation on the target criterion manipulation.

Used method is a mix between meta-analytic method and comparative method. Meta analytical method is used to synthesize the literature about the classes and the types of manipulation. The comparative method is used in particular to distinguish the different specific kinds of manipulation.

The paper is a continuation of a previous research and take into account the existence of three types of manipulation: interpersonal manipulations, group manipulations and social collective manipulations. Then, there are analyzed two forms of group manipulations (collusion and role playing) and six forms of social collective manipulations (dehumanization and demonisation, de-individualisation, institutional manipulation, political and journalistic manipulation).

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**Keywords:** Persuasion; manipulation; interpersonal manipulations; group manipulation; social-collective manipulations.

## **1. Introduction**

Manipulation is a form of persuasive influence. According to the criterion of the influence type, persuasion is interpersonal, group or collectively-social. By derivation and according to the criterion of the target, in our opinion, manipulations may be of three types: interpersonal manipulations (when the target is one individual), group manipulations (when the target is a group) and social-collective manipulations (when the target represents a large community). We consider as interpersonal communicational manipulations: foot in the door, door in the face, and law-balling. Group and social collective manipulations are done within some actions the projects of which use as a basis the situational seduction and message lie. The field of manipulative engagement is first situationally arranged. The control of the physical reality has an indicative impact on the individuals' life scenarios. Man is „controlled” by a type of accommodation, is controlled by a way to dress, is „controlled” by the great manipulator which is the totalitarian state. Man does not dress, does not sleep and does not feed by command, but ordered to and on command (Schedler, 2002: 36-50). Man's work is also controlled, the rituals and customs are strictly and consistently channelled. The manipulative situation reflects on the thinking of this man-object of manipulation. In the manipulated context, the authority also influences by message. The submissiveness and conformism, as forms of influence, are called on the closed stadium, with mandatory entrance tickets. The manipulative ideas are easily translated. The situation makes the individual permeable to manipulation. Moreover, it makes them available and open to being manipulated. By situation and message, manipulation has the means of reproduction at hand. The language of the manipulative message is a „wooden language”. The wooden language rejects any cogitation that would disrupt the peace and balance of manipulation. The vocabulary of this manipulated language serves an ideology where absolute truth is told. The criterion of truth is not in the personal thinking of the situation and message, but in the decision of the leader. The authority induces the submission by solving all practical problems in simple and simplistic terms of good or bad. To isolate any reflection from the manipulative path, the action of manipulation brings any disturbing thought to the level of reflex. The situation and the message are those that solve doubts, uncertainties, discrepancies that could remove the individual from the manipulative process. Language manipulation focuses on the intervention on the lexical elements in developing the speech: change in the semantic register and slides, use of isotopes, games of opposition, procedures of dissociation. The social structure is manipulatively oriented and arranged. The reproduction of manipulation in the rigidity of manipulated thinking and the wooden language shall prevent the individual to have an opinion, meaning an opinion other than the one induced structurally. The manipulative reproduction involves manipulatively. What could get out of control does not escape in the case of discretionary manipulation. Individual's sentiments are not left out of control either. Placed in restrictive-manipulative situations, under the pressure through manipulative messages, spectrum of thinking, the individuals' language and emotions is drastically reduced. Restricting their emotional range makes people easier to control. The system traces a corridor form them, emotionally delimited by fear and guilt. On the interval between fear and guilt, all the other affective „functions” are redefined. In other words, the situation and the message redefine the sentiment through a rigorous relation to fear or guilt. Any unconfirmed sentiment shall be vitiated by fear and / or guilt. It is in this regard to acquiesce to an

appreciation concluded by Professor Ion Dafinoiu from the studies of some experts in the field, in the sense that „the relation of fear induced by the persuasive messages and the change in attitude can be graphically expressed by an inverted U” (Dafinoiu, 1996). Thus, the likelihood of attitude change increases as the fear grows from the low level to the moderate one, because anxiety can positively influence the processing of the persuasive message. However, as the fear grows, reaching very high intensities, it can interfere with people's ability to adapt to that problem, leading to reactions of avoidance or denial of information (Voinea, 2013: 121-130; Căprioară, 2009). They can understand what is presented to them, but refuse to believe it is also true for them.

## **2. Group manipulations**

Collusion and role playing are classified in the category of group manipulations.

A. Collusion is a manipulative strategy, consisting in the agreement between two people to manipulate a third one. The mechanism consists of two interventions: first a secret agreement between two individuals to manipulate a third one, then in the action to prejudice the manipulated. Collusion is an indirect aggression (Garandeanu & Cillessen, 2006: 612-625) and indirect manipulation.

B. Role playing consists in the self-manipulative integration into a group with the purpose to change the attitude. Role playing focuses on an attitudinal change. The psychological basis of transformation is, according to Ion Dafinoiu (1996), “the concession which we make to others or to ourselves to engage in a counter-attitudinal behaviour”. In fact, the sequences of role playing on the huge stage of life are not always in concordance with our attitudes. People have self-confirmative and counter-attitudinal behaviours. In the case of the first ones, the roles played are in full accordance with the attitudes. For counter-attitudinal behaviours, the specific feature is that the individual is seen engaged in behaviours inconsistent with their attitudes. When performing such behaviours, we find serious motivations in pleasing someone, meeting the obligations of a professional role, acting according to the objective needs, etc. The effect of roleplaying has been made visible for the first time by an experiment of Janis and King (Apud Boncu, 2002). A group of subjects has been asked to passively listen to a message, which was intended to challenge an attitude to a given theme. The members of another group were asked to read themselves the message and to make a summary. It was noticed that the subjects changed even more when they read the message themselves. It results from here that manipulation by engaging in a role play has effect. The role play leads to putting into practice an implicit manipulation. Being involved in a counter-attitudinal role, the individual comes to think and act in compliance with the counter-attitudinal instructions: the role play manipulates. The explanation of counter-attitudinal changes which we render the manipulative feature to was based on two theories: the theory of cognitive dissonance (L. Festinger) and theory of self-perception (A. Bem). The two theories are applied in different situations. When people behave in a striking manner and different in relation to their attitudes, they shall be under the pressure of a dissonance and shall change their attitudes in order to reason their actions. However, when their conduct is not in a flagrant conflict with their own way of thinking, people shall be under a lower pressure; in this case, they shall model their attitudes through self-perceptive influence. The striking discrepancy manipulates by dissonance the calm discrepancy

manipulates by self-perception (Cheney, Seyfarth, 1985; Jacobs, Jacobs, Dawson & Brashers, 1996; Botan, Novaro & Endriss (2016).

### 3. Social collective manipulations

There are six definite forms of social collective manipulations: dehumanisation and demonisation, de-individualisation, institutional manipulation, political and journalistic manipulation (Vlăduțescu, 2015, Bauman, 1991; Smarandache & Vlăduțescu, 2014; Izuma & Adolphs, 2013).

A. The dehumanization (Costello & Hodson, 2009; Lammers & Stapel, 2011) and demonization of victims (Bar-On, 2000; Flinders, 2012) aim at sterilising the among the enemies of any human trait. To manipulate the community, the individuals unduly or abusively transformed into victims shall be dispossessed of any human characteristic. The victims shall be presented as dangerous monsters. Those individuals shall be „expropriated” of any human trace. Only existence is allowed to the victims. They are particularly identified by nicknames and labels that do not preserve any human trace anymore. This type of manipulation is both a strategy of defence and a strategy of attack. According to B. Ficeac, “the techniques to dehumanise the enemy are used to make possible their extermination, without remorse from the performers” (Ficeac, 1996). A revealing example for what this form of manipulation means is provided by the psychologist Elliot Aronson (Apud Ficeac, 1996). He, by calling a painter to renovate his house, found in the discussions they held that he had been a combatant in the Vietnam War. The painter considered that the war had been just and was to make the world safer for the democracy in full development. The psychologist contradicted him, showing that the battles had been dirty and provoked the death and mutilation of thousands of innocent men, women, children and elderly who had no connection with that war whatsoever. The painter replied: „Damn, Doc, those are not people, those are Vietnamese!”

B. De-individualisation is a form of manipulation aimed at inducing feelings of loss of anonymity (Caras & Sandu, 2014; Bock, 2013; Borbély, 2014). The society, institutions, all forms of social organisation require the compliance with standards, rules and regulations. They constrain to a behaviour that may become burdensome. In this context, freedom may be achieved, by evasion into the anonymity. The immersion into the anonymity brings with itself the liberation from the responsibility to comply with the obligations of the consciousness. The „liberation” from the identity makes the individual permeable to aggressive ideas and actions. In order to de-identify themselves, thieves put glasses on and when going to steal, they dress clothes of the anonymity and lack of identity. Hiding the face under masks makes the individual less responsible for their actions. Satanic sects disguise their members in the idea to isolate them from any internal moral. By deindividualisation, people become less responsible for what they do, and their aggressiveness increases. Manipulation by de-individualisation valorises the dissipation of responsibility in the idea of an aggressiveness in a direction where the manipulation project places it among the main objectives of the manipulative message.

C. When at the institutional level leverages of collective manipulation are created, those interested shall not hesitate to use them. For a power to render a totalitarian character, the individuals must be „fully” manipulated. The totalitarian, dictatorial regimes have at hand all the tools the necessary for

large scale manipulation. Thus, thinking, feelings and behaviour are manipulated. The main means of inducing the submission and conformism is to institutionalise the manipulative influence. The individual is manipulated both by message and situation. The individual thinks what they did not want to think, they feel what they would have preferred not to feel and does something completely different than they would have liked to do, without the pressure to do so. As in any type, kind or form of manipulation, in this institutionalised manipulation, the primary stake is to create the first appearance of total freedom of expression. Within this freedom, the manipulated shall be guided to bring into accord their actions which they are constrained to by the thinking which tends to remain balanced. Manipulative pressure shall cause them to sincerely believe in the manipulatively implanted ideas by their leaders.

D. In the institutional manipulation, happiness is redefined as the individual's joy to integrate in the group that was subordinated to them and to adulate their leader (Voinea, Opran & Vlăduțescu, 2015; Ficeac, 2012). Taking into account that adulation is a form of seduction, one can say that the manipulated individual is also allowed to manipulate. Acknowledged as a member of a group, even though this their behaviour is censored. The group is a unit with fewer claims than the free individual. Apart from the situation and message, in institutionalised manipulation, man is also manipulated in the subsidiary by the group. Dishonest manipulations of behavioural technology are on the field of seduction and also use the lie. In other words, one may say, as we also assert in another ratiocination, that manipulation draws into its operational technology the seduction and deception as major operations. Manipulation is situated between convict and persuasion. It insidiously valorises the reason-feeling, conscious-unconscious, lucidity-imaginary dichotomies. In media production systems focused on image, a saturation of persuasion oriented on the fields well monitored by reason may be observed. It may be said that man is not entirely rational. This allows the infiltration of persuasion. What is generally considered myth, lie, fundamentally persuasive fiction, meaning the fabling pillar of negative journalism, is called magical thinking. On the path of this ex-rational thinking, meaning persuasive, a cleverly selected image is fructified to wake abysmal pulsations, which it would subsequently valorise. The manipulated does not have the perception of the bad intention of the message, so that the picture is secretly insinuated and returns to the communicational space as being the profound voice, the voice of the deep ego. It forces the manipulated to believe and then to do. It imperatively asks them to perform a certain behaviour manipulatively induced in a subtle way.

D. Journalistic manipulation discovers in the weakly structured part of rationality a channel of permeability, makes the unconsciousness an ally. The suffocating pressure of manipulative negativity brings the manipulated in a position to be a puppet in an unknown scenario (Pătraș, 2007; Stepanov, 2008). Methodologically, manipulation consists in substituting the tendency to convict (based on reason), through the compulsive power of persuasion (based on passion). Manipulation does not refuse reason, on the contrary, it even acclaims it. It does not excommunicate it, it adulates it, but does not respect it, it despises it. This is normal, because manipulation is a form of persuasion, and persuasion is, as we have defined it, a seductive contemptuous flattery. It is worth showing that the use of manipulation in negative journalism is in some cases outside the option. The journalist sometimes has no choice they must become the manipulator. One such case is that where a monopoly settles on the

media structures where people endure the captivity and physical dependence. In these situations, manipulation is infallible. Totalitarian and dictatorial regimes make the manipulation a procedure consisting of two phases: obscuring the informational benchmarks and inducing the manipulating opinions (Motei, 2008; Ionescu, 2013). Obscuring the informational benchmarks occurs by suppressing the information that could create an authentic reference system, which would enable the comparison and critical sense expression. In the absence of the possibility to relate to reality and on a background of informational emptiness, each of the opinions induced is a manipulative opinion. Totalitarian regimes are havens of propaganda and manipulation. Under the conditions of democratic societies, negative journalism loses from its vastness, but not from its validity. It falls in magnitude, but does not disappear. Democracy lets the interests and economic goals to also generate manipulation. Negative journalism is also generated by the persuasion of the competition between media structures, the tension between nationalised information and information broadcast by private media operators. The confrontations of parties, especially during election campaigns, also trigger manipulation. Negative journalism of manipulative type reaches the limit of danger when it becomes informational (Vlăduțescu, 2006). In our time, there are two resources to increase the harshness of manipulative informational aggressions: the use of the results of scientific researches to prepare the messages in a most penetrating form on the processors of targeted information and to speculate the possibilities of manipulation generated by the establishment of press structures.

E. In democracy, political manipulation received the most vehement retort (Riker, 1986; Jacobs & Saphiro, 2000; Stănciugelu, 2010; Drămnescu, 2014). For example, Umberto Eco (1993) ironically, but realistically, makes the some commandments of political manipulation by television: to comment the political event that is expected or must be commented; it is not needed to explain the favourable information, it must only be qualified by suitable epithets and by the ability of contrast relations; to understand the management of silence: information that is unsuitable shall be elided; awkward news must be broadcasted when there is a guarantee that no-one else watches it; understanding the information shall be avoided, by using a sophisticated language, some specialised jargons (commercial, political, economic, sociological etc.); important events must be broadcasted only if they occurred abroad.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Manipulation is a more powerful tool than the use of force, being increasingly used in resolving some situations of crises and war, due to its effectiveness at different levels: defining the goals; information; establishing the action plan; meeting of participants; leader of the action; adopting the decision. Efficient manipulation involves minimising or annihilating the sources of information sources and independent press. The fight against manipulation must be given at the level of this sector, of the independent media, because this individual's and entire society's „surrender” can be determined.

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