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## INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATIONAL MANIPULATIONS

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# Interpersonal Communicational Manipulations

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## Abstract

*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.*

## Keywords:

*persuasive communication, manipulation, interpersonal communicational manipulation*

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## 1. Introduction

Manipulation is multiform. In relation to the criterion of the amplitude of changes generated by manipulation within the social situation, Philip Zimbardo and M.-R. Leipe (1991), classification also taken over by Bogdan Ficeac (2001), show that there are three types of manipulations: small, large and medium. Small manipulations are the result of a minor change in the social situation. The procedure of "foot in the door" and the procedure "door in the face" are among them. Medium manipulations lead to important changes in the configuration of the social situation. Medium manipulations are considered to be those procedures of submissiveness to authorities and techniques of triggering the protests. The manipulations intended to arouse and amplify the aggressive spirit are also medium manipulations, which consist either in dehumanisation, or deindividuation of aggressors and subsequently of victims. Large manipulations are acquired by fundamentally modifying the situation where the target-group lives.

Persuasion is a form of influence. In relation to conviction, it is individualised as an insidious influence achieved through procedures where in falsehood, seduction, the myth or fiction are operationally used. Manipulation is a form of persuasive influence. When it comes to interpersonal influence, it may be interpersonal convictive influence or interpersonal 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).

Foot in the door, the door in the face and law-balling are grouped within the interpersonal manipulations.

According to Ștefan Boncu, persuasion is an area "adjacent" to social influence (Boncu, 2002, p. 12). On the other hand, the specialist from Iasi speaks of "manipulating valences of interpersonal influence" (Boncu, 2002, p. 354). If persuasion and influence were autonomous, we could not talk about such valences. In our opinion, interpersonal influence has "manipulating valences" only when it is persuasive. According to Ștefan Boncu, in the area of interpersonal influence there are "techniques" with manipulating valences. These "techniques" (foot in

the door, door in the face, low ball etc.) with "manipulative valences" should be called more accurately standard forms of interpersonal manipulation.

In a dense study, "Mechanisms and strategies of persuasion", Professor Ion Dafinoiu (Dafinoiu, 1996, pp. 296-306) admits that persuasion also includes other forms of social influence, as well as those based on simulation, reward and "role playing". It means that persuasion would be supraordinated to social influence. What Ștefan Boncu calls "techniques of interpersonal influence", and we call "type-forms of interpersonal manipulation", Ion Dafinoiu calls them in bulk "behavioural mechanisms" (mechanisms of persuasion), and when he enumerates the elements of this category of mechanisms, he identifies them as "techniques" (foot in the door, door in the face, throwing the ball to low height) (Dafinoiu, 1996, p. 301). Calling them now "techniques", then "strategies", Joule and Beauvois consider that foot in the door, door in the face and priming are, generically, "the daily manipulations." (Joule & Beauvois, 1997, p. 127). Concerning the explanation of the operation of interpersonal manipulations, several opinions were expressed and several theories were used. L. Festinger (1957) shows that to the extent where people find a discrepancy between their attitudes or between their attitudes and behaviours and the extent where they live the discrepancy as a tension and a psychic discomfort, they strive to solve these discrepancies. Discrepancies, inconsistencies which they become aware of mean cognitive dissonance.

It was also appealed to the theory of A. Bem (self-perception theory). According to Bem, cognitive dissonance is not indifferent to the motivational states. In reality, the self-perception lacks a serious motivational support: the simple self-observation of the behaviour itself is sufficient to explain the self-change (Coman, 2011). As an outside observer, the individual wants to determine their internal states. In relation to the internal states, they observe themselves from the outside: they draw conclusions from examining their own behaviours.

R. Cialdini and his collaborators believe that the effects occur because the individual is involved in a decision to engage in the previously taken action. Burger and Petty consider that the experience of the target-subject of a sense of responsibility to that who prepared the demand underlies the generation mechanism. C.-A. Kiesler says that, in the cases of interpersonal manipulation, people feel involved in the acts

they perform and that, consequently, even those behaviours compatible with the initial attitude develop a sense of engagement.

## 2. Foot in the door

The idea of a mechanism of interpersonal influence *of the type* "foot in the door" appears the first time at Schein in 1958. The procedure shall be named afterwards by the economist F. Greene, author of the article "The foot in the door technique". The first ones who shall scientifically study the procedure of influence shall be J.-L. Freedman and S.-C. Fraser. Underlying the operation of the "automatism", Freedman and Fraser set the proverb "let them have one finger, they take your whole hand." The two performed the following experiment (Freedman & Fraser, 1966). Some housewives were asked to answer several questions about the types of soap they prefer. After three days, the same housewives were asked to allow a team to make the inventory of household products they used. On the other hand, there was a group which only the second request was addressed to. Freedman and Fraser found that 52.8% of those who responded to the first request also gave in to the second. The experimental group which only the second request was addressed to accepted only in a ratio of 22.2%. They concluded that the first intervention has a positive impact on the efficiency of the second one and that a causal factor in a request is the complaisance to a previous request. We must say that further researches confirmed the power of the manipulative phenomenon "foot in the door". Thorough investigations performed by Cialdini and Ascani (1976) showed that an essential condition for producing the phenomenon is the time elapsed between the two requests.

The mechanism of interpersonal manipulation of the type "foot in the door" is to valorise an inexpensive behaviour in order to perform an expensive behaviour. In the case of this type of manipulation, we are dealing with, as shown by R.-V. Joule and J.-L. Beauvois (Joule & Beauvois, 1997, p. 71) two behaviours. The first aroused behaviour is a good deed and is the acceptance of doing a small favour to someone. The subsidiary objective of the strategy is to exploit the engagement triggered by the good deed in order to obtain a more consistent subsequent advantage. Informatively, this use of the good deed as argument for a uncomfortable second commitment is a cognitive inertia, the effect of a sophistic logic. On the other hand, from a psychological

point of view, the use of the good deed is considered an evidence of behavioural consistency and of integrity of the commitment to their own identity. People make the effort to provide their actions with a level of identification as elevated as possible. By protecting an elevated identity, the manipulated is left with the impression that they were free to know and to decide. In fact, the good deed is not in the tactics of manipulation other than a means of acquiring a costly behaviour which the person concerned would not have performed if this had been required of them even without intermediating the good deed. After all, according to Joule and Beauvois (Joule & Beauvois, 1997, p. 7) must to manipulate means to obtain "from someone to adopt a conduct which they would have preferred not to follow and which they would have adopted by a simple request."

The effect of "foot in the door" expresses a perseveration in a previous decision. The topic involved by the first behaviour decides freely, more easily than in other conditions, to accept a subsequent request which follows the same course, but which is more expensive. The good deed, the inexpensive behaviour represents a preparatory behaviour, an also unproblematic behaviour (Burger, 1999; Țenescu, 2009; Unguru & Sandu, 2014; Opran, 2014).

Depending on the preparatory behaviour, "foot in the door" has two subspecies. The classical "Foot in the door" benefits from an explicit preparatory behaviour: the manipulated is directly requested to perform the behaviour. The "Foot in the door" with implicit request is based on a behaviour which is required only implicitly to the manipulated, being especially provided with the opportunity to achieve it. The superior efficiency of the "foot in the door" with implicit request comes from avoiding the suspicion of the manipulated. The latter shall only notice with a great waste of energy that the expensive request relates to an implicit request. The implicit request makes the expensive request occur as random, that which is basically aimed at by the manipulation project.

Of the "feet in the door", the commercial feet in the door prevail. They have not reached a professional level. Home sales provide occasions to achieve successful "feet in the door". It must be said that the "foot in the door" and the finger in the gear of mutual-aid are just one step apart.

### 3. Door in the face

The interpersonal manipulation of the type "door in the face" operates according to "a principle reverse to that of the technique "foot in the door" (Joule & Beauvois, 1997, p. 72). The mechanism of intervention is also bi-sequential. In relation to a small, inexpensive and unproblematic original request, in the case of "foot in the door", "door in the face" they come with an exorbitant demand. Bogdan Ficeac (Ficeac, 2001, p. 34) states that "by means of this technique, people are determined to accept a certain concession, a much greater demand having been previously presented to them, of the same kind, which is very likely to be refused. Only afterwards they come with the demand taken into account since the beginning."

The first request is exaggerated, but not ridiculous, disrespectful or improper. Thus, even by refusing the request, the applicant remains a reliable person.

The second request is much smaller than the first, representing a request for consolation. Compared to the first, this is reasonable and affordable. Therefore, it has all chances to be resolved. With the "door in the face," say Joule and Beauvois (Joule & Beauvois, 1987, p 129), the manipulated finds themselves in front of "two successive possibilities to choose, of which the first one is illusory".

The explanation for the success of the interpersonal manipulation "door in the face, the "psychologist Robert Cialdini and his collaborators find it in the reciprocity which governs our social relations. People tend to return the favours that have been made to them. If we start by asking someone an extreme favour of a certain refuse and then descend to a lower demand, that person may feel a normative pressure to make a concession to our concession; mutual concessions shall result from here. The most clear way in which reciprocity can be demonstrated is the transition from the initial position of refusal to that of acceptance. The success of a good "door in the face" is provided by mutual concessions, perceptive contrasts, dignity and respectability of the manipulator. R. B. Cialdini, J. E. Vincent, S. K. Lewis, J. Catalan, D. Wheeler, and B. L. Darby (1975) have imagined an experiment meant to emphasise the effect of this manipulative strategy. They have asked the students of a college if they were willing to accompany and supervise a group of disabled children for two hours, in a visit to the zoo. Only 16% of the students accepted. A more simple proposal has been previously

presented to another group. The experimenter told them that volunteer-students are recruited normally to work without being paid as advisors at the juvenile detention centre, the service consisting in two hours of work per week for two years. Then they asked who would offer. An engagement for such a long period is a very costly matter, so nobody accepted. The refusal in block was followed by a new intervention from the experimenter. He proposed to them to accompany and supervise a group of disabled children for two hours at the zoo. 50% of the students accepted. The effect of the strategy was an increase of more than three times of the number of the "manipulated" (Dunca, 2013).

#### **4. Low-balling**

Another form of interpersonal manipulation is priming or "low ball", throwing the ball at low height (low-balling). The idea behind the low balling-type manipulation is that the balls thrown at low height are easier to catch. Priming represents an obvious configurative similarity with the "foot in the door". Within these forms of persuasion, the manipulator aims at acquiring the conformation in relation to a request, previously obtaining the approval with a less costly request. The similarity of manipulative message goes to the extent that "foot in the door" first acquires a conformation with a minor request, keeping the real demand hidden, while priming does the conformation upon a real request, but keeping the costs hidden. Both strategies are insidious: the "foot in the door" hides a greater demand and priming hides the costs subsidiary to the request.

According to Joule and Beauvois (Joule & Beauvois, 1997, p. 93) priming consists in determining an individual to take the decision of achieving a behaviour the real cost of which is currently hidden from them. The vast majority of priming is registered in the commercial field. The seller leads the customer to take a decision to buy, either by hiding some inconveniences, or by waving before them fictive advantages. The industry of advertising and publicity uses this strategy. It is worth recalling here the example of some car dealers who, after the customer has accepted the price, they inform the customer that the respective price does not include a number of accessories and that, if the customer wants them, an additional amount must be paid.



The priming message involves the gear of two decisions: the first decision is taken by knowing the “displayed” or presented costs, the second one must be taken after the real costs are known.

In order to be involved in taking the second decision, the subject is seduced by aspect and illuded by the price. In the case of the second decision, the “lie” intervenes: now the customer is told that the real price is higher. People tend to be consistent with themselves and persevere in a decision. Moreover, they also persevere within the decision which comes after a first decision. In case of priming, we are dealing with an inertial perseveration in a decision the validity of which has been contested by the very fact it is required to take a second decision. Many processes of priming start by an innocent and insignificant question which the manipulated responds to, without feeling any pressure with “yes”: “Do you want to do me a small favour?” Once the commitment is accepted, the next step for completing the priming is already started. A costly service can be requested from the manipulated, which should the request have been made to them without the small step, they would have refused to do it. The primed individual has the impression they would have no longer the possibility to return on the decision of the original “yes” after they see the inconveniences which their affirmative answer carries. Saved from priming is that who has the lucidity to take two different decisions, and not two decisions of which the second one appears as mandatory in relation to the first one (Carrington, 2010).

Priming and the other forms of interpersonal manipulation could be avoided by isolating the two decisions which the manipulative message forces to, a message launched in a situation of behavioural manipulation. Classical priming means that the “lie” refers not to the product (this is real and valid), but to the cost: in relation to a seductive original cost, the real cost in the second sequence is higher. The real product is placed on two prices: a first seductive price and a second false price.

When the product does not exist actually, then we are dealing with a bait. The most frequent example is that of the window or ad. Let us say very cheap and quality shoes are displayed. The seduced enters the shop, determined to buy. They are told that in fact there is only the pair displayed in the window, which has faults, but in case purchasing the faulty pair is not an option, there are shoes just as good in stock. The manipulated sees the shoes in stock, they like the pairs and want to buy;

then they learn those shoes are the double cost of those in the window: much more than what they expected. Most probably, after entering into the shop to buy “those” cheap shoes, the manipulated shall exit the shop with “other” shoes: expensive ones. The seduction is followed by lie (Sandu, Cojocaru, Gavrilovici & Oprea, 2013).

The classical priming has as object a real, an authentic and available product, the bait is aimed at a real product, which is vitiated, or unavailable, or both vitiated and unavailable. When priming, one gets the object for another price, as for the bait, one gets an object other than the desired one (Cojocaru, 2005; Sandu & Unguru, 2014).

The mechanism of priming works because the manipulated feels compelled to inertially accomplish an undertaking in which they involved through the first decision. The manipulated inadequately responds to the manipulator’s progressive requests by an inertial decision. The manipulated provides the manipulator’s low balling a response of “hanging” on an initial decision. The perseveration in the initial decision has also been called escalation of the commitment (Ciuchi & Sandu, 2010; Strunga & Bunaiasu, 2013; Opran, 2014).

Besides the bait, another form of priming is the hidden trap or useless expenditure. Here, the original request appears as implicit. The individual is engages in a strategy or approaches a line of conduct. Along the way, it may be noticed this is inefficient. The individual should give up, but the fact they invested money, time and energy in that strategy or line of conduct makes them persevere in the bankruptcy project. For example, after the individual purchased the ticket and finds out the movie is bad, the individual does not give up, they remain till the end, instead of meeting their friends. People tend to persevere in an ongoing action, even when they have signs, signals and clues it is about to fail or becomes extremely expensive and, moreover, it does not allow the achievement of the objectives. This tendency intervenes in investing the money and in gambling. The one involved in the useless expenditure is incapable to stop. The solution in these cases is to establish a limit (Smarandache, 1991).

Another form of priming is priming with original involvement consisting in the time investment. The fact that someone tries on several clothes in a shop or the fact that sellers assign time to this with advice or explanations makes the customer feel forced into buying them. In fact, the seller has the duty to provide explanations and ensure the possibility

of trying on. The seller, as manipulator, is inclined to indebted the customer, so the latter would take the “amiability” as primer originated from an “implicit duty”. Other forms of priming are individualised by the original part of the message which focuses either on the invitation to pity, or on the invitation to fear, or on the invitation to pride (Pascual, A. & Guéguen, 2005; Teodorescu, 2007). Pity is an implicit request motivating people to engage in voluntary actions. The invitation may consist in please for helping the poor or people in need: poverty and need being actually fictive in the case of this form of manipulation. In the invitation to pride, seduction operates as flattery or blandishment (Sandu, Ponea & Unguru, 2010; Sandu, 2014; O’Brien, 2014). By seduction, the sympathy of the manipulated to that who manipulates them is amplified and any decision to consult the others concerning the object of blandishment is inhibited to the maximum.

### **5. Conclusions**

Persuasion is a form of influence. In relation to conviction, it is individualised as an insidious influence achieved through procedures wherein falsehood, seduction, the myth or fiction are operationally used. When it comes to interpersonal influence, it may be interpersonal convictive influence or interpersonal persuasive influence. The manipulative intervention covers the entire culture, wholly the system of values and set of rules and regulations. Such large manipulations are the privilege of dictatorial and totalitarian systems.

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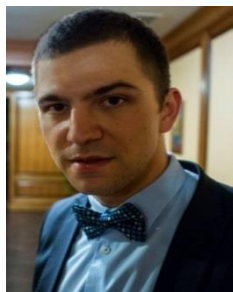
## Biodata



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