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PERSONALITY CONFORMITY IS A TOOL FOR MEDIA MANIPULATION

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This article describes the essence of the concept of conformism and conformity. The author analyzed close relationship between the fact of the manipulations of public opinion and the phenomenon of conformism. The role of conformism in the social life of the individual is determined. The article traced interdependence between the phenomenon of conformism, which is one of the most important mechanisms of social adaptation of the individual in society and the mass consciousness. The author outlined mechanisms of influence and manipulation of the media, using the psychological features of conformism. Also, made conclusion about the importance of knowing the mechanisms of conformism and critical thinking.

Key words: conformism, conformity, mass media, mass communication, manipulation.

The formulation of the problem. The media offer us a perfect life, show norms and standards whose importance cannot be denied. After all, «a leader makes the right decisions», «fashion introduced by a recognized designer cannot be absurd,» and people «should not put themselves above the team.» These are conformal statements that millions of people agree with, and which used by the media as a manipulation tool (MP).

Modern MP offers the same amount of information, both as a true and false, and it is quite difficult to classify it. Every day we are stand by a choice and do not always lean towards what we would consider true when making our own decisions. Sometimes a stranger can easy to manipulate by our thoughts and actions, even if we are strongly disagreed with this. All people are inclined to conformism (when we make our decision under the influence). The difference will be only in the degree of personal conformity of each of us. This fact makes us an easy prey to the manipulator than is being used by the mass media (MM).

«No one says that it is forbidden to think or one's own thoughts are undesirable. But desirable thoughts are produced to such an extent that their own thinking is immersed in their mass, and these desirable thoughts are so subtly introduced into people's minds that people accept this strange thinking as a result of their own thought and, above all, their own personal ideological heritage», says Johannes Becher¹. Today, when mass communication becomes

an integral part of our lives, the issue of manipulation of thought through the media and the possibility of avoiding it comes to the first place.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Conformism, as a social phenomenon, as well as the objective reason that gave rise to it analyzed by E. Fromm, G. Marcus and P. Tillich. Conformism as a phenomenon of large social groups studied by G. Tard, DV Olshansky, S. Moskovichi.

I. S. Kon, G.M. Andreeva and other social psychologists saw in conformism a necessary aspect of socialization of personality, and its role as one of the conditions of adaptation studied by T. Shibutani and A. Maslow².

The subject of conformism as a mean of manipulation in mass media, covered by R. Merton in his work. He also noted, «Using conformism and minimization, we offer to show a critical mood in society and commercial media support, but we do away with the development of a real, critical worldview»³.

Methodological method of the research. In the course of the research, the following theoretical methods applied:

- Analysis and synthesis (to determine the problem of search, summarizing work, formulating conclusions);
- Induction and deduction (to find out the causal relationships between methods of psychological influence and reaction of society);
- Classification (for a better understanding of the concept of conformism and its types);
- Abstraction (for a deeper study of the effect of conformism as a tool of media manipulation).

The main material. The interaction between the individual and the group characterized by their mutual influence. The conditions, in which it occurs, its specificity and character, determine the power of influence and the possibility of its avoidance. A person cannot always capable of defending his or her own position and opposing the opinion of society. Each member of society is subject to the requirements of the social system largely, for the sake of maintaining his or her own safety or meeting personal needs. The interest in the mechanisms underlying the change in human behavior under the influence of the group became much higher with the advent, in the second half of the twentieth century, of a new social phenomenon – conformism⁴.

The concept of «conformism» describes as a change in the behavior or beliefs of a person because of real or imagined pressure from the group⁵. This is a passive acceptance of ready standards of behavior an unspecified recognition of the existing state of things, laws, rules and regulations.

Conformism is classified as an adaptation of the individual: to the requirements of another, a more authoritative person (personality-authoritarian); to the requirements of a large, medium or small social group (intragroup); to the requirements of society, the state (social).

² Rosinberg, N. B. & Ushkina I. A. (2014), «Conformism as social phenomena...», pp. 142–150.

³ Nazarov, M. M. (2004), *Mass communication and society. Doing Theory and Research*, Avanti Plus, 428 p.

⁴ Rosinberg, N. B. & Ushkina I. A. (2014), «Conformism as social phenomena...», pp. 142–150.

⁵ Kiesler, C.A. & Kiesler S. B. (1969), *Conformity*, 114 p.

It is also regarded as a function of three different types of influence:

- informative (when the group's point of view is considered to be an adequate reflection of reality);
- regulatory (when a person is interested in getting a group rating);
- normative conformism to the leader (when the interests of the personality are directed by his assessment by the group leader).

The essence of conformism as a social phenomenon is quite difficult, as in many aspects, it faces other concepts. Very often it is mistakenly identified with the conformity of the individual, while conformism is a social phenomenon, and conformity is a psychological feature, which in a lot of cases extends in everybody⁶.

The individual's level of conformity is influenced by several factors. First of all, age of the person: in the adolescence and early adulthood, it reaches the highest value. After 25 years, he has a constant individual indicator. Personality conformity also depends on gender (women are more conformal than men) and on a person's professional activity.

A strong influence, which determines the level of conformism, is the relationship between the individual and the group. If an individual needs acceptance by a group, he will most often concede to their decision before the group thinks. If he doesn't feel the sympathy to the group, he can more strongly resist group pressure⁷.

Disputes about the positive and negative of conformism continue in our time. What is this, a «herd reflex» that prevents people from making decisions on their own, or a «defense mechanism» that helps to avoid conflict? «Is it bad or good to be conformal?» Is a question that science does not give a clear answer to. But, based on the moral values that most of us share, we can say the following: «sometimes conformism is bad (when it causes someone to drive in alcoholic intoxication or become a member of racists), sometimes - well (when it prevents a person from behaving in public inappropriately) and sometimes not bad and not good (for example, when we are wearing a white suit when we are going to the tennis court)»⁸.

As the French philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre rightly points out: «What we, the people represent depends first of all on the situation. We cannot be separate from the circumstances in which we find ourselves, because they shape us and determine our capabilities»⁹.

The scientist in this question has opposite opinions. Someone calls conformism «yielding and submissive», others – «social sensitivity», «responsiveness», «the ability to collaborate and work in a team». In fact, we choose the labels according to our moral values and judgments. «The two opposite sides of one coin» is an undeniable feature of conformism.

The media to present information both positively and negatively use understanding such psychological characteristics of the individual and the group. Mass media plays a key role in creating and supporting conformism or its illusion. This method of manipulation

⁶ Rosinberg, N. B. & Ushkina I. A. (2014), «Conformism as social phenomena...», pp. 142 – 150.

⁷ Stoliarenko, L. D. (2016), «Social-psychological influence: conformity, suggestion, submission» ...

⁸ Myers, D. (2002), *Social Psychology*, Prime Eurosign, 512 p.

⁹ Myers, D. (2002), *Social Psychology*, Prime Eurosign, 512 p.

describes by «The spiral of silence» – the theory of German political scientist Elizabeth Noel-Neumann. According to it, people believe they become in the minority when they risk publicly expressing their views when they see that their decision is contrary to the opinion expressed by the media. If only a small minority supports the view, then the person is unlikely to have the incentive to openly talk about own beliefs. In this way, the mass media are capable of presenting almost any viewpoint as dominant, thereby stimulating the conformal majority to accept that viewpoint as personal or, as a last resort, to oppose it. «Everyone is against this system individually, but all are voting in favor» – this paradox of the times of the Soviet Union, through the manipulation of the media, made the unconscious conformism of the majority into the basis and resistance of the authorities¹⁰.

It is worth noting that in any situation, contrary to the majority opinion, the opposition appears. Statistics show that the share of non-conformists in society ranges from 3 % to 20–25 %. Three percent is a non-conformist core who, in all circumstances, in spite of its small size, defends the opposite interests. Nevertheless, there is an opportunity to manipulate even this fact. Alternative thoughts have access to the media, also exist alternative media, but practice proves that it does not destroy the system, but only strengthens it, makes it stronger. The source of such a paradox lies in the evolution of human: the new search threatened with the mortal risk. The individual at the level of instincts avoid change, keeping already well known and familiar. That's why to accept nonconformity decision even modern human needs considerable willpower¹¹.

«The crowd,» wrote G. Lebon, «never longs for the truth; he turns away from an obviousness which he does not like, and prefers to bow to illusion if only that illusion attracts him»¹². In this case, the ability to manipulate gives the property of the psyche, according to which the individual is inclined to believe information that does not contradict his inner self. Nevertheless, with the support of the group, this information is many times more meaningful¹³.

The principle of social proof is another way of applying the properties of conformity in the media. Turning to the history of the Soviet Union, we can mention the next paradox: people first occupied the queue, but only then wondered what they stood for. Time changes, but human consciousness reproduces reality in a similar, programmed way. This statement based on herd instinct is to imitate the majority and is a protective function of our brain, freeing it from the need to process unnecessary information. It works most effectively when a person finds himself in a confusing situation and does not have time to elaborate on it. «In any difficult situations just do like everybody» – an expression that characterized social behavior of most people. Modernity offers us a huge amount variety of goods and services, but the reviews and ratings still remain for us as the main criteria. It is no longer necessary for the media to prove to what extent or other information is true enough to convince the majority.

¹⁰ Solovey, V. D. (2017), *An absolute weapon. Basics of psychological...*, EXMO, 320 p.

¹¹ Solovey, V. D. (2017), *An absolute weapon. Basics of psychological...*, EXMO, 320 p.

¹² Lebon, G. (2011), «Psychology of nations and masses» ...

¹³ Belov, Y. (2017), «18 Methods of Media Manipulation and Propagation» ...

The method of manipulation of «group reinforcement» has common features with the principle of social proof, but in contrast, it focuses on changing the conviction of the individual, not the behavior. According to it, if repetition one idea within a group time-to-time, its members will eventually accept this statement for truth. The American academic and writer Robert Carroll emphasizes that the idea itself need not be true. If the person identifies himself as a part of a group, the effect of this method increased. This is a psychological phenomenon and a manifestation of conformism called «indoctrination» – the uncritical acceptance of a person's ideas^{14 15}.

The bright example of the method of group reinforcement becomes a stereotypes, myth and legends that have come to us from ancient generations. It is also widely used in the mass media and become an effective tool of waging information wars. The media, easily manipulating the facts by systematically repeating the same thoughts, imposes certain beliefs on us. In order to fight such trends, curricula in some countries complemented by a media literacy course that helps people develop critical thinking³.

Results and possibilities of further studies of the meaning. In the process of studying the meaning of conformism as a way of manipulation in the mass media, we conclude that this phenomenon is the basis in understanding the behavior of society. Further study and analysis of conformism, and in particular its application, allows developing a model of effective protection of the individual from the influence of the media.

Conclusion. Such an evolutionary phenomenon as conformism not only preserves society by introducing rules and regulations but also capable of playing an evil joke, a historical example of which is the ideological current of racism.

«Human are naive as sheep and conformal as wolves», noted American critic Carl Van Doren⁵. It is difficult to disagree with this statement, understanding all the versatility of conformism and its possibilities of application. We tend to trust the majority's decision, avoiding responsibility for our own thoughts and actions. Exactly this psychological feature used by the mass media to convey information that comes to us already in the «right» light.

We don't ask «Why?», we do as the rules tell us. But, understanding incoming information, checking sources and analyzing different perspectives is the key to avoiding fatal errors. In times of information war, critical thinking become our weapon.

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**КОНФОРМНІСТЬ ОСОБИСТОСТІ –
ІНСТРУМЕНТ МАНІПУЛЯЦІЇ ЗМІ****Коструліна Юлія**

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У статті схарактеризовано сутність поняття конформізму та конформності. Проаналізовано тісний взаємозв'язок між фактом маніпуляції суспільною думкою та феноменом конформізму. Визначено роль конформізму у соціальному житті особистості. Простежено взаємозалежність між феноменом конформізму, що є одним з найважливіших механізмів соціальної адаптації індивіда у суспільстві та масовою свідомістю. Окреслено механізми впливу та маніпуляції ЗМІ за допомогою використання психологічних особливостей конформізму. Зроблено висновок про важливість знання механізмів конформізму та критичного мислення.

Сучасні засоби масової комунікації пропонують однаковий обсяг як достовірної, так і викривленої інформації, і класифікувати її буває доволі складно. Кожен день ми стоїмо перед вибором та не завжди схиляємося до того, що, приймаючи рішення самостійно, вважали би вірним. Усі люди схильні до конформізму (прийняття рішення під впливом), відрізняється лише міра конформності особистості. Кожен член суспільства по-різному підпорядковується вимогам соціальної системи заради збереження власної безпеки або задоволення особистих потреб. Цей факт робить нас легкою здобиччю маніпулятора, чим користуються засоби масової інформації. Сьогодні, коли масове спілкування стає невід'ємною частиною нашого життя, питання маніпулювання думкою через ЗМІ та можливість уникнути її виходять на перше місце.

Ключові слова: конформізм, конформність, засоби масової комунікації, засоби масової інформації, маніпуляція.