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CONSEQUENCES OF MANIPULATION IN ORGANIZATIONS: TWO STUDIES ON ITS EFFECTS ON EMOTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS

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Summary.—This investigation analyzes the correlates of manipulation in organizations with respect to employees’ emotions and interpersonal relationships. In Study 1, twelve tactics were identified as manipulative from a set of 115 tactics. For example: “steer the other person subliminally in a certain direction by using clever arguments,” “form covert networks or coalitions,” “pretend to build trust and to help the other person with work,” “withhold, filter, or falsify information,” and “interpret the existing rules in own way, exploit ambiguity.” In Study 2, manipulative cases (N = 208) were analyzed. Factor analyses showed three factors of post-manipulation emotions (evaluation, potency, activation). Results showed that the evaluative emotions were significantly more negative and activated emotions were less negative among manipulated employees than among manipulators, whereas the potency emotions in both groups were not significantly different. The deterioration that manipulation caused in relationships was perceived less by manipulators than by the manipulated employees. Conclusions about interpersonal mistrust’s resistance to change after manipulation are explained.

In these times of increasing corporate decentralization and employee empowerment (Seibert, Silver & Randolph, 2004), many scholars call for the transition from an organization of mistrust to one of trust (Brockner, Siegel, Daly, Tyler, & Martin, 1997; Lewicki, McAllister, & Bies, 1998). Greater employee autonomy, network structures, and virtual organizational structures expand the freedom of action for employees but simultaneously reduce the possibilities for control. Trust is necessary for ensuring loyalty, innovativeness, and quality (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002)—the building blocks of modern forms of an organization. Trust means increasing one’s vulnerability to a person not under one’s own control, with the expectation that the costs of exploiting the vulnerability are greater than the utility of exploiting it (Deutsch, 1962). Trustful behavior predicates an expectation of trust, an expectation that arises when the behavior of the interaction partner is perceived as reliable, fair, and consistent (Zaheer, McEvily, & Perrone, 1998) and therefore ultimately predictable.

In contrast, mistrust has its roots in an escalated expectation of negative outcomes that steadily intensifies over time by reciprocal processes of reinforcement. Repeated confirmation of negative expectations makes mis-

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trustful behavior resistant to change. Mistrustful relationships in working life can often be characterized by skepticism, reservations, and the expectation that the other person could resort to manipulative tactics. Relationships based on mistrust in the work context will contribute to organizational inefficiency because the likelihood of open communication and cooperation diminishes; the quality of problem-solving process declines, as perceived intra-organizational justice declines (Cropanzano & Rupp, 2009). Ultimately, if mistrust is common, the use of creative and innovative potential is blocked, jeopardizing the ability to cope with organizational change (Krause, 2004).

For these reasons, any factor causing intra-organizational mistrust and making it resistant to change should be studied. Interpersonal manipulation is one of those factors, with specific effects on the emotions of and relationships among the manipulating and the manipulated employees which increase intra-organizational mistrust. This study addresses three gaps in the literature on manipulation within organizations. First, manipulation will be distinguished from other forms of influence. Second, manipulation tactics in organizations will be identified and frequencies of use in organizations will be assessed. Third, the effects that manipulation in organizations has on emotional reactions and the relationships between employees who are manipulating and manipulated will be empirically documented.

**Manipulation as the Covert Exercise of Power**

This study is concerned about situations in daily work life, in which two employees are working together and therefore face and interact with each other on a regular basis. Manipulation between employees in an organization is related to social power but also differs from the use of power. According to Max Weber’s classical definition of power, “Power ... is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests” (Weber, 1922, 1978, p. 53). Power becomes possible only within a relationship in which one employee captures certain resources or bases of power (French & Raven, 1959; Aguinis, Ansari, Jayasingam & Aafaqi, 2008) that are sought by the other actor. The exercise of power is tied to the employees’ diverging interests (Moore, Tetlock, Tanlu, & Bazerman, 2006), so the use of power is related to the intentional and open assertion of one’s own interests (Krause, 2006). In contrast, when manipulation is involved, the manipulated employee would not even recognize the existence of a power relation with the manipulator, attempts to influence him, or the methods being used to do so. Importantly, the manipulator’s intention and manner of using power, as well as his desired and anticipated outcomes of interaction, are not understood by the manipulated employee.
Therefore, manipulation is defined as a goal-oriented, covert use of power of which the manipulator is aware but of which the manipulated employee is not conscious at the time of the occurrence. With manipulation, the social impact of the action occurs inconspicuously through techniques serving the covert interests of manipulator and contradicting those of the manipulated employee. Characteristically, the use of manipulation changes the manipulated employee’s interpretation of the situation and/or his perception of his own options for action. According to this definition, manipulation is an action in which particular situational interpretations suggested to the manipulated employee are consistent with the manipulator’s objectives, without the former recognizing the latter’s actual intentions. The manipulator’s true objectives for the interaction are covert because he anticipates that, were the manipulated employee to learn of those objectives, he would elude, or at least resist, the attempted influence and would therefore seek to avoid the interaction (Lewicki, 1983, p. 70). Manipulation thereby consists in a controlled distortion of the appearance of reality (Gilman, 1962, p. 107). The manipulated employee’s behavior is controlled in such a way that his assessment of reality is calculated to be the one desired by the manipulating employee. The manipulated employee is often unaware of having been influenced, at least not at the moment when influence was being exerted, but often can recognize the manipulator’s approach in retrospect. The manipulative behavior can also be seen as the opposite of what Ferris and his colleagues call “apparent sincerity” (Ferris, Davidson, & Perrewe, 2005)—one form of political skill or unethical behavior (Brown & Treviño, 2006) in the workforce.

**Effects of Manipulation on Emotions**

The effects of manipulation on emotions are different for the manipulated and manipulating employees. After a successful manipulation, the manipulator may be presumed to feel a mixture of triumph and superiority (due to confirmation of superior status) as well as guilt and shame (stemming from violation of norms), whereas the manipulated employee presumably experiences strong, but negative, emotions. Manipulative behavior can also be a result of a personality trait (e.g., high Machiavellianism or low agreeableness), so that the manipulator engages in manipulative action consistently and does not experience any guilt or shame after manipulation. In contrast, the manipulated employee will react (Brehm, 1966) with strong and negative feelings such as rage, anger, disappointment, aversion, irritation, hate, aggression, or loathing if he recognizes the manipulation.

Cross-cultural research during the past 50 years has shown consistently (Wundt, 1902; Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957; Russel & Mehrabian, 1977; Plutchick, 1991; Mann, 1999) that the variety of human emotions has
three dimensions: evaluation, potency, and activation. These three dimensions are defined as pleasantness-unpleasantness (happy, glad vs sad, upset), dominance-submission (strong vs weak), and arousal (excited, active, tense vs sleepy, relaxed, bored). With manipulation being directed against the manipulated employee’s interests, the discovery of manipulative behavior is likely to trigger negative evaluation which will intensify as the extent of perceived exploitation increases. Emotions such as aggression, hate, anger, and loathing lie on the negative pole of the evaluative dimension (pleasant-unpleasant) of human emotions; they lie on the strong pole in the dimension of potency (strong-weak). For this reason, the manipulated employee will experience strong, dominant emotions rather than weak emotions such as humility or timidity upon discovering manipulation. Moreover, one can presume that the two employees’ emotions will differ on the activation dimension (active-passive), with the manipulator feeling less activated than the manipulated employee after the manipulation has been discovered. These considerations lead to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: After manipulated employees discover manipulation in their organization, (a) the emotions they feel in the dimension of evaluation will be more negative than those felt by manipulators, (b) the emotions they feel in the dimension of potency will be as strong and dominant as those felt by manipulators, and (c) the emotions they experience in the dimension of activation will be less activated than those of manipulators.

Effects of Manipulation on Relationships

The theory of exchange relations posits that individuals enter into and maintain relationships entailing maximal benefit and minimal costs. The cost-benefit ratio is a function of comparing accessibility and relevance of a relationship relative to alternative relationships (Thibaut & Kelly, 1959). Relationships in a work context are characterized by a relatively long duration. This fact has consequences for the relationship of the interaction partners. The more positive the partners’ experiences with the interaction, the higher the potential benefits of the relationship and the greater the mutual expectations. Moreover, the mutual trust and/or dependency, and hence both parties’ potential power, increase with the length of interaction (Krause & Kearney, 2006).

It can be assumed that the manipulating and manipulated employees perceive differently the changes that manipulation brings about in their relations (Farmer & Aguinis, 2005). Manipulation could lead to drastic deterioration in relations from the manipulated employee’s point of view: because of the adverse affects on his interests, the relationship is no longer as rewarding. He could come to the conclusion that its costs are greater than its benefits. For reasons of selective perception, however, the manipulator intended to assert his interests and reap the anticipated gain from
the manipulation; thus he would devote less attention to the relationship than to the anticipated gain. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 2: In organizations, manipulators take less notice of deterioration in relations than do manipulated employees after manipulation has been discovered by the latter.

Due to a lack of knowledge about manipulation tactics in organizations, it was necessary to conduct Study 1. The hypotheses will be examined in Study 2.

STUDY 1
IDENTIFICATION AND MEASUREMENT OF MANIPULATION TACTICS

Method

Suitable instruments for measuring tactics of manipulation in organizations do not yet exist. There are only instruments for measuring intra-organizational tactics for exerting power and influence [e.g., Profiles of Organizational Influence Strategies (POIS) by Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980, and Influence Behavior Questionnaire (IBQ) by Yukl & Falbe, 1990], and organizational politics (Ferris, Davidson, & Perrewe, 2005). These inventories gather information on both overt and covert tactics for asserting one’s own interests. The reason for unavailability of measurements on manipulative tactics lies in the fact that previous research has focused on influence tactics (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1990; Howell & Higgins, 1990; Van Knippenberg & Steemsma, 2003; Yukl, Fu, & McDonald, 2003) or political tactics (Ferris, et al., 2005), but few studies exist on manipulative tactics (Buss, Gomes, Higgins, & Lauterbach, 1987). For instance, Yukl and Falbe (1990) verified the following influence tactics: inspirational appeals, consultation, personal appeals, exchange, ingratiation, rational persuasion, coalition building, pressure, and legitimating. However, one can assume that most of these influence tactics (e.g., persuasion) can be used either overtly and covertly. Only covert tactics are salient to manipulation. The concept of manipulation presented above therefore precluded the adoption of these extant instruments.

Items for identifying and measuring covert tactics of manipulation were generated by means of an expert rating. Tactics for asserting power and influence have been empirically and inductively substantiated in various studies (e.g., Kipnis, et al., 1980; Schriesheim & Hinkin, 1990; Dubrien, 1991; Savard & Rogers, 1992; Yukl & Falbe, 1992). The purpose of the expert rating was to identify the extent to which tactics occur covertly or overtly, to distinguish meaningfully between manipulative and non-manipulative assertion of social influence. Initially, 115 tactics were compiled, arranged in a forced-choice format. The instruction provided for the experts was, “Please rate if the following tactics can be used overtly or covertly.” The rating scale used was 0: overtly, 1: covertly.
The list of tactics was then presented to six experts on social power who were recruited from six universities in the U.S. and Europe; they were asked to rate each tactic according to whether it represented overt or covert action. The six panelists were professors of human resource management and organizational behavior and were considered experts because they had conducted several studies in the field of social power and influence. The experts sent the questionnaires back to the university. They later received the descriptive results of the study.

**Results**

As a whole, the experts rated 12 of the 115 tactics as covert actions:

- Item 1, “Interpret the existing rules in your own way, exploit ambiguity.”
- Item 2, “Steer the other person subliminally in a certain direction by using clever arguments.”
- Item 3, “Pretend to build trust and to help the other person with work.”
- Item 4, “Ignore the other person, say nothing, and reduce friendly behavior.”
- Item 5, “Obscure the effects of one’s intentions, not inform the other person about opportunities in a timely fashion.”
- Item 6, “Pretend to be weak and helpless, elicit the ‘helper syndrome’.”
- Item 7, “Form covert networks or coalitions.”
- Item 8, “Withhold, filter, falsify information; deceive.”
- Item 9, “Pretend to give the other person various advantages.”
- Item 10, “Let previously prepared concessions be bargained away in negotiations.”
- Item 11, “Put the other person in a positive mood by creating a friendly atmosphere.”
- Item 12, “Pretend to let the other person decide on his or her own and ensure that what comes out of it is what was intended.”

**STUDY 2**

**EFFECTS OF MANIPULATION ON EMOTIONS AND ON RELATIONSHIPS**

**Method**

Participants

The participants of Study 2 were recruited in the following ways: letters were sent to randomly selected employed persons whose addresses were in a database; individuals were asked for their participation directly at leadership training sessions and at various team development training courses. Each potential participant received written or oral information about the study and was informed about confidentiality. Participants were offered the aggregated descriptive results of the study if they expressed interest in them. These strategies ensured that employees from different organizations and industrial sectors participated.

Of the 180 individuals who were willing to participate in the study, 71 sent back the questionnaire (response rate 39%). Consequently, the study involved 71 gainfully employed persons (40 men, 31 women) from 37 in-
Consequences of Manipulation in Organizations

Participants ranged in age between 20 and 62 years. The age breakdown by sex shows the following frequencies: 7 male and 4 female respondents were between 20 and 29 years old, 18 male and 14 female respondents were between 30 and 39 years old, 6 male and 8 female respondents were between 40 and 49 years old, 8 male and 4 female respondents were between 50 and 59 years old and 1 male and 1 female respondents were older than 59. The education of the participants (30 were economists, 15 were engineers, 14 were natural scientists, 6 were lawyers, and 6 unknown due to missing data), their affiliations (31 came from HR departments, 17 came from marketing, 7 came from sales, 6 came from finance and accounting, 5 came from R&D, and 5 were miscellaneous), and their function within the organization (32 were specialists in different areas, 9 were general managers, 9 were department heads, 9 were managers, 9 were group leaders, and 3 were unknown due to missing data) were heterogeneous. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents (63%) had leadership responsibility. In terms of the size of the employing organizations, most of the participants came from small organizations (33 came from organizations with up to 100 employees, 28 from organizations with 101 to 2,000 employees, 5 from organizations with 2,001 to 5,000, 1 from an organization with 5,001 to 20,000, and 4 from organizations with more than 20,000).

The survey and the attached letter were either handed to the participants directly along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope after a brief personal communication concerning the topic and goals of the study, or they were sent via regular mail.

Design and Procedure

The intention of Study 2 was to investigate from the active perspective (manipulator) and passive perspective (manipulated employee) the effects that manipulation in organizations has on the emotions of and relationships between the individuals concerned. A quasi-experimental field procedure was chosen in order to record the use and impacts of manipulation in real settings as purely as possible. It was assumed that the course and consequences of manipulation in the workforce differ greatly from artificially induced laboratory situations. Having higher external validity than laboratory studies, field studies are superior for recording the selected effects of manipulation in organizations.

Survey

The survey had three parts. Part 1 comprised manipulation cases, tactics used, and the relationships between the manipulating and manipulated employees before the manipulation occurred. Part 2 measured indicators of emotional reactions after a manipulation. Part 3 measured aspects
of the relationship between the manipulating and manipulated employees after the manipulation.

Part 1, manipulation scenarios.—All participants were asked to recall four experienced instances of manipulation in their everyday world of work—two situations in which they asserted their interests covertly against the interests of another person in their work unit (scenarios $A_1$ and $A_2$) and two situations in which they were manipulated by another person in their work unit (scenarios $B_1$ and $B_2$). Thus, each respondent was twice in the role of the manipulator and twice in the role of being manipulated. The respondents described all four scenarios from their point of view in an open-end (essay) type answer.

Directly after the open-end description of each scenario (manipulation instance) provided by the respondents, the list of 12 manipulation tactics was presented as described below. The participants were supposed to select from the list of 12 manipulation tactics those used in the scenario they had described. The wording of the tactics was varied according to the perspective—manipulator or manipulated employee—using an active perspective for the former and a passive perspective for the latter.

For example, in the scenarios where the respondent was the manipulator (Scenarios $A_1$ and $A_2$), the following instructions were given: “Think of your everyday world of work and recall a problem situation in which you wanted to assert your interests covertly against the interests of another person. In order to achieve your objective, you proceeded indirectly. First, note key words that express what kind of problem was involved. Please judge each of the following actions according to whether and how much you used them in order to deal with this problem. In addition, indicate the main tactic you used.” The items were cast in past tense, for example: “In dealing with this problem, I steered the other person subliminally in a certain direction by using clever arguments.”

In contrast, in the scenarios where the respondent was manipulated (Scenarios $B_1$ and $B_2$) the items were worded from the respondent’s point of view rather than from the manipulator’s, e.g., “Think of your everyday world of work and recall a problem situation in which another person wanted to assert his or her interests covertly against your interests. In order to achieve the objective, this person proceeded indirectly. First, note key words that express what kind of problem was involved. Please judge each of the following actions according to whether and how much the other person used them in order to deal with this problem.” Because the term “manipulation” is negatively loaded as a rule, and because this negative connotation can lead to distortions in the responses to items in the survey, the expression used was “hidden assertion of interests.”

In addition to the 12 tactics presented after each situation, a free-re-
response category, “miscellaneous,” was included in order to ensure response alternatives even when none of the presented tactics were used in the scenario. A research assistant rated these free-response descriptions \textit{a posteriori} according to the extent of covertness expressed. The questionnaire was administered in four separate sequences, with the order of the situations to be recalled by the respondents—$A_1$, $A_2$, $B_1$, and $B_2$—counterbalanced in order to avoid effects that could distort memory and recall. Unlike the method of presenting fictional situations (see Koslowsky & Schwarzwald, 1993), the method selected for this study has the advantage of drawing on the respondent’s own recalled situations, which correspond to the subjective reality of the respondents and thus hopefully elicited more accurate conclusions about their behavior. The participants’ descriptions of manipulation scenarios were content-analysed by a research assistant with respect to the kind of situation described, manipulative or non-manipulative.

In order to test whether the independent variable “covertness” had been manipulated successfully by the instructions, for each scenario, the respondent also answered two more items. Items for scenarios $A_1$ and $A_2$ were “Did the other person notice what you actually had in mind at the time of the occurrence?” and “Did you make your objectives completely known right at the beginning of the event?” (reverse scored), and for scenarios $B_1$ and $B_2$, “Did you notice what the other person actually had in mind at the time of the occurrence?” and “How clear were the objectives of the other person to you at the beginning of the event?” These questions were rated on a 5-point scale with anchors 1: Not at all and 5: Completely. Spearman’s rank-order correlation coefficients between the items’ ratings were significant: $r = .41$ ($p < .001$) in Scenarios $A_1$ and $A_2$, where the respondent was the manipulator and $r = .45$ ($p < .001$) in Scenarios $B_1$ and $B_2$ where the respondent was manipulated.

The check of whether the situations of manipulation recalled by the respondents did in fact have to do with manipulative action served as a criterion for exclusion in the statistical analysis of the data. The only situations considered valid were those in which the action definitely occurred in a covert manner and therefore required a score of at least four on the 5-point scale for both questions. All situations lacking an unequivocal case of manipulation were excluded from the data analysis. These situations were excluded on a case-by-case, not a subject-by-subject, basis. Elimination of the invalid situations left 208 cases of manipulation out of 284 recalled situations for analysis.

\textit{Part 2, measurement of emotions.}—Emotional reactions were measured \textit{indirectly} so that the answers given to items in the survey would be less subject to distortions due to memory or self-presentation bias. The ques-
tionnaire was developed for Study 2 using standardized procedures. It was constructed as a semantic differential scale (Osgood, et al., 1957) as an indicator of the emotions. The instruction was “Please describe your emotional reactions after this situation using the following adjective pairs.” The participants were asked to rate 12 pairs of adjectives on a 9-point bipolar scale ranging from −4 to +4 (a 9-point response range), meant to yield high variability of ratings. The assumption that the diversity of emotions after manipulation is based on the three dimensions was tested by means of two principal component analyses with oblique rotation (i.e., separate analyses for Scenarios A and B). The oblique rotation was used because there was reason to believe that the emotional dimensions are not mutually independent and that orthogonal factor solutions would therefore not be appropriate for describing them.

Principal components analysis congruently and consistently extracted the same three factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 (eigenvalues for Scenarios A₁ and A₂ were 4.58 for the first factor, 2.45 for the second factor, and 1.07 for the third factor; eigenvalues for Scenarios B₁ and B₂ were 4.31 for the first factor, 2.32 for the second factor, and 1.25 for the third factor). Scree tests supported the three factor solutions in both conditions. Following Wundt (1904), Osgood, et al. (1957), and Plutchik (1991), one can call these three factors evaluation (factor loadings for the bipolar adjective pairs were understanding–lack of understanding .85, agreeable–disagreeable .82, considerate–inconsiderate .79, tolerant–intolerant .75, attractive–repulsive .74, pleasant–unpleasant .74; Scenarios A₁, A₂: Cronbach’s α = .88; Scenarios B₁, B₂: Cronbach’s α = .87), potency (factor loadings for the bipolar adjective pairs were superior–inferior .85, powerful–powerless .84, strong–weak .77, Scenarios A₁, A₂: Cronbach’s α = .79, Scenarios B₁, B₂: Cronbach’s α = .79), and activation (factor loadings for the bipolar adjective pairs were diligent–lazy .78, informed–uninformed .68, agitated–calm .57, Scenarios A₁, A₂: Cronbach’s α = .66, Scenarios B₁, B₂: Cronbach’s α = .62). The first factor explained 38% of the variance in Scenarios A₁ and A₂ and 35% of the variance in Scenarios B₁ and B₂. The second factor explained 20% of the variance in both Scenarios A and B. The third factor explained 9% of the variance in Scenarios A₁ and A₂ and 12% of the variance in Scenarios B₁ and B₂. In both conditions, the three factors were weakly correlated, showing that oblique rotation was appropriate.

Part 3, measurement of relationships.—Perceptions of changes in the relationship between the respondent and the other employee in the reported scenarios were measured through comparison of the “pre-manipulation” and “post-manipulation” scores for the relationships. In all four situations the pre-manipulation quality of the relationship between the employees was measured by asking, “How was the relationship between you and the
other person before this problem?” Relationship quality after the reported incident, in Scenarios B_1 and B_2 (respondent was manipulated), was measured by the item “What was the relationship like between you and the other person after you became aware of that person’s hidden action?” In Scenarios A_1 and A_2, the item was, “What was the relationship like between you and the other person after the other person noticed your indirect action?”

To avoid effects stemming from the order of the questions, the items assessing the quality of the relationship before and after manipulation were not presented in direct succession but rather at the beginning and end of each situation, respectively. Seven-point response scales had anchors 1: Very poor and 7: Very good. To assess how much the relationship quality had changed because of manipulation, the post-manipulation score for the relationship was subtracted from the corresponding pre-manipulation score. The absolute value of the difference increased linearly with the extent of change in the relationship. A positive score indicated deterioration in relations and a negative score an improvement. The pre- and post-manipulation measurements were significantly correlated in both Scenarios A \( (r = .44, p < .001) \) and B \( (r = .50, p < .001) \).

**Results**

**Frequencies of Manipulative Tactics Used**

The descriptive analysis of the main manipulative tactics used yielded the frequencies reported in Table 1. From both the perspectives of the manipulator and manipulated, the favoured tactic for manipulation was “steering the other person subliminally in a certain direction by using clever arguments.” Presumably, expert knowledge and information—this tactic’s corresponding power bases (French & Raven, 1959)—play a more significant role in the workplace than attractiveness or punishment. Expert knowledge and information are more available and their use is therefore regarded as opportune. On the whole, the other manipulation tactics employed were “forming covert networks or coalitions” and “pretending to let the other person decide on his or her own and ensuring that what comes out of it is what I intended.” Through forming covert coalitions, positional power is used. It also pre-structures the situation to one’s own advantage. The second tactic, too, involves the attempt to pre-structure the situation to serve one’s own interests. Both tactics are based mainly on the function of stacking the deck in one’s own favour, an approach that Cartwright (1965) called “ecological control.” It seems that ecological control, information, and expert knowledge are the preferred tools for manipulation in organizations. In frequency of use, they are followed by “pretend to build trust and to help the other person with work” and by “withhold, filter, [and] falsify information; deceive.” The manipulation tactics used in
Table 1

Manipulation Tactics Reported in Scenarios, by Descending Order of Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manipulation Tactic</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Steer the other person subliminally in a certain direction by using clever</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arguments.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Form covert networks or coalitions.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Pretend to let the other person decide on his or her own and ensure that</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what comes out of it is what I intended comes out of it is what I intended.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Pretend to build trust and to help the other person with work.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Withhold, filter, falsify information; deceive.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Obfuscate the effects of one’s intentions, not inform the other about</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opportunities and dangers in a timely fashion.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Interpret the existing rules in your own way, exploit ambiguity.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Put the other person in a positive mood by creating a friendly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>atmosphere.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Pretend to be weak and helpless, elicit the “helper syndrome.”</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Ignore the other person, say nothing, and reduce friendly behavior.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Let previously prepared concessions be bargained away in negotiations.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Pretend to give the other person various advantages.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* — A = Scenarios A, wherein the respondent was the manipulator; B = Scenarios B, in which the respondent was manipulated.

With regard to distinction between the perspectives of manipulated and manipulator, two phenomena are particularly striking. Firstly, two tactics—“obfuscate the effects of one’s intentions, not inform the other about opportunities and dangers in a timely fashion” and “withhold, filter, [and] falsify information; deceive”—were cited more often in Scenarios B₁ and B₂ (where the respondent was manipulated) than in Scenarios A₁ and A₂. These tactics coincide with an especially conspicuous adverse change in situational interpretations for someone who is manipulated and hence in their basis for decision-making. This effect explains why these tactics might have been particularly easy for respondents to recall. In these Scenarios, respondents reported being the recipients of a relatively strong or negative form of manipulation. Secondly, two other tactics—“steer the other person subliminally in a certain direction by using clever argu-
ments” and “pretend to let the other person decide on his or her own and ensure that what comes out of it is what I intended”—were cited more often for Scenarios A₁ and A₂, in which the respondent was the manipulator. Possibly, respondents were not as aware of these tactics as of more negative ones when they were manipulated. However, it is also plausible that respondents indicated using soft and more socially acceptable forms of manipulation compared to harsh manipulation tactics reported for others (e.g., ignore the other person, say nothing, and reduce friendly behavior). As shown by Kipnis (1976), one metamorphic effect of power is that power-holders believe that they deserve power and when they use strong influence tactics they have to rationalize that use. This rationalization process might also have occurred when respondents used harsher forms of manipulation.

Effects of Manipulation on Emotions

To test Hypothesis 1, a summary score was calculated for each emotion factor. The means and standard deviations for the three factors for Scenarios A₁ and A₂ were: evaluation $M = 1.21$, $SD = 1.31$; potency $M = 1.17$, $SD = 1.18$; and activation $M = 2.32$, $SD = 1.11$ ($n = 101$; six cases were randomly excluded from the inferential statistics so that the number of scenarios (A and B) would be the same, as required by the $t$ test for dependent samples, with a bipolar scale ranging from −4 to +4). For Scenarios B₁ and B₂, the means and standard deviations were: evaluation $M = −0.58$, $SD = 1.54$; potency $M = 1.10$, $SD = 1.79$; and activation $M = .73$, $SD = 1.52$ ($n = 101$).

As predicted in Hypothesis 1, the $t$ test for dependent samples revealed a significant difference in the mean values of evaluative emotions in Scenarios A and B ($t_{100} = −8.97$, $p < .001$, Cohen’s $d = .32$). Hypothesis 1a was thereby empirically supported: the respondents who were manipulated reported significantly more negative emotions than did those who were manipulators after discovery of the manipulation. Hypothesis 1b predicted that in both Scenarios A and B, respondents would experience strong, dominant emotions after discovery of the manipulation; indeed, there was no significant difference between the means on potency ($t_{100} = −0.32$, ns). Hypothesis 1b was thereby also empirically confirmed. In Hypothesis 1c, it was predicted that feelings would be less active in the manipulated than the manipulator after discovery of manipulation; there was a significant difference between the means on activation ($t_{100} = −8.80$, $p < .001$) supporting Hypothesis 1c.

Fig. 1 shows the mean emotional profiles of respondents in Scenarios A and B across all 12 pairs of adjectives as well as the three emotion factors—evaluation, potency, and activation. The figure is based on the average ratings of the 71 participants (208 scenarios) in Study 2. The distinction
between the three emotion dimensions implies managerial consequences: given the differences in evaluation and activation emotion ratings of the employees who were manipulated and manipulating, the strategies for appropriate conflict management and for measures to reduce the likelihood that manipulations occur might vary depending on the target.

**Effects of Manipulation on Relationships**

In order to test Hypothesis 2, the means and standard deviations of the scores on the pre-manipulation and post-manipulation relationship
quality items were computed for Scenarios A and B. The results and the calculated difference between the scores for the quality of the relationships before and after manipulation are shown in Table 2. The greater the difference, the more the relationship had deteriorated. Levene’s test showed homogeneity of variance for the two sets of scores and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated normal distributions. Two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with two repeated factors was used to test the main effects and their interaction. The first main effect was the “perspective” (manipulator vs. manipulated); the second, the assessment of the relationship quality before and after the manipulation. The results indicated that both the main effect of perspective ($F_{1,100} = 18.33, p < .001$) and relationship quality ($F_{1,100} = 83.83, p < .001$) were significant. The interaction of the factors was equally significant ($F_{1,100} = 14.60, p < .001$). Hypothesis 2 is thus empirically confirmed: as manipulators, the respondents took significantly less notice of the deterioration in the relationship quality after discovery of manipulation—or they minimized it—than they did when they were manipulated.

| TABLE 2 | ASSESSMENT OF THE RELATIONSHIP QUALITY BY MANIPULATORS AND MANIPULATED EMPLOYEES BEFORE AND AFTER THE MANIPULATION |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------------|----------|---------------|
| Manipulators (Scenarios A) | | | |
| Relationship quality before manipulation (pre-manipulation) | 4.87 | 1.36 | 107 |
| Relationship quality after Manipulation (post-manipulation) | 4.26 | 1.44 | 107 |
| Difference between pre- and post-manipulation | 0.61 | 1.50 | 107 |
| Manipulated Employees (Scenarios B) | | | |
| Relationship quality before manipulation (pre-manipulation) | 4.56 | 1.31 | 101 |
| Relationship quality after Manipulation (post-manipulation) | 3.22 | 1.57 | 101 |
| Difference between pre- and post-manipulation | 1.34 | 1.45 | 101 |

Note.—7-point Likert-type scales were used (1: Very poor, 7: Very good).

**DISCUSSION**

The discussion is organized as follows: firstly, consequences of manipulation for the formation of trust/mistrust in organizations and uncertainty in organizational life are discussed. Secondly, managerial implications are offered. Finally, study limitations and directions for future research are addressed.

**Stabilization of Mistrust Due to Manipulation**

The results have shown that manipulation leads to specific emotions: among manipulators, the expected success at asserting one’s own interests seems to be coupled with an increase in positive emotions such as feelings of triumph or superiority. Whereas manipulators get what they want
through manipulation, those who are manipulated experience a breach of trust that leads to negative and less active emotions. The breach of trust consists in the fact that the manipulator has abused the good faith of the manipulated employee and maximizes his own interests at the expense of the one who was expected that his or her vulnerability (trust) would not be exploited. This breach is experienced as a violation of reciprocity. Consequently, the manipulator will feel less bound to the relationship than before the discovery of manipulation and will initiate activities that make it possible to exert control over the one they manipulated, possibly setting in motion a spiral of increasing mistrust and negative feeling (Zand, 1972). Because trust was exploited, the manipulated employee’s implicit obligation to provide quid pro quo is cancelled. The breach of trust makes the situation threatening for those who were manipulated and intensifies their inclination to mistrust the manipulator in the future. In keeping with their negative expectations, they presumably activate negative strategies (see also Brebels, De Cremer, & Sedikides, 2008), that is, behaviors characterized by mistrust. They may engage in manipulative behaviors such as withholding information, forming covert coalitions, eluding THE MANIPULATOR’S control, or acting with increased skepticism and self-protection in order to regain subjective control. Mutual mistrust may continue to increase because both employees feel their negative expectations were confirmed by the perceptions of each other’s behaviors. If mistrust seems justified, the negative expectation may be generalized to parties beyond the original interaction partner. This generalization may arise through the accumulation of negative experiences in similar situations over time and can increase intra-organizational mistrust—a dynamic that threatens both individual and organizational goals.

Increased Social Uncertainty Due to Manipulation

As shown, manipulation leads to a deterioration in the quality of relationships but this process is not perceived by manipulators with as much clarity as by those manipulated. A threatening situation now arises in many respects for the manipulator as well. From the manipulated employee’s perspective, the outcomes of the relationship have shifted in a negative direction, jeopardizing the relationship. In the long run, therefore, the manipulator loses the basis that good relations gave him or her to exert influence. Moreover, the manipulator’s ability to predict the manipulated co-worker’s future behavior is also diminished because the latter has modified assessments of the relationship. Accordingly, mistrust leads to increased social uncertainty. Manipulative assertion of one’s own interests could thereby initiate and ultimately entrench intra-organizational mistrust.
Managerial Implication

Managers are advised to be alert to manipulative strategies. If manipulators lack sufficient awareness of the problems they are creating, they will forfeit their chances for corrective intervention. Once mistrust has become established, it will be difficult to correct. Two ways of intervening against manipulation in a timely fashion are offered. First, manipulators should be given a perspective of the high interpersonal costs of their actions. Second, manipulative actions should be reduced proactively; because the tendency to manipulate varies and probably intensifies in times of increasing distributional conflict, it is advisable to strive for legitimacy through mutually accepted organizational procedures. Following Rawls (1993), one could have the two employees jointly agree on rules for, and verification of compliance with, an approach to conflict management by which the “loser” of the resource conflict experiences the outcome of the conflict as fair and consequently has greater acceptance than would otherwise be the case.

Study Limitations and Direction for Future Research

The conclusions made here should be interpreted with certain limitations in mind. The method chosen for Study 2 posed problems, including the inability to control certain forms of bias. One of those factors was the retrospective nature of the survey. When people assess past behavior, be it their own or that of others, extenuating judgments of events slip in, something ascribable to idealized role identities, attributional tendencies to enhance self-esteem, or reduction of cognitive dissonance. Because manipulation is a behavior that carries negative social connotations, people do not want to admit to having resorted to manipulation to assert their interests, nor do they like acknowledging that others have manipulated them. These processes can lead to socially desirable responses. The extent of this bias in Study 2 cannot be estimated.

Furthermore, the hypotheses in Study 2 were tested on the basis of a within-subjects design (cross-sectional study with the potential for common method variance) that had key advantages but also two decided disadvantages. The advantages are that a priori differences between groups were eliminated and that each respondent likely used the response scale in a consistent manner. The two disadvantages are that the respondents were able to see through the experimental manipulation and could answer according to their own implicit theories, which by no means necessarily matched the actual quasi-experimental design. The responses were thereby cognitively controlled in an unpredictable manner.

For these reasons, future research on manipulation in organizations should use an approach that controls the aforementioned potential tendencies to reduce attributional and/or cognitive dissonance. It could be
beneficial to use a between-subjects design in a longitudinal study. To increase knowledge of manipulation in the workplace, one could consider analyzing a specific manipulative episode from both perspectives (Scenarios A and B) at the same time, to see if the results from this study can be reproduced using a different methodology.

REFERENCES


Consequences of Manipulation in Organizations


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