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ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Intimidation, Versatile Wide-Coverage Taints, Semantic Polarity and Semantic Association as Elements Facilitating Religious Persuasion

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Fear occupies an undeniable portion of our lives and in most cases represents an incentive and driving force underlying our acts. The paper examines discursive practices of generating fear through direct intimidation and by overemphasizing and/or fabricating *versatile wide-coverage taints* (reader's/listener's imperfections and flaws) deployed for the purpose of inducing feelings of guilt and insufficiency. It also tackles the issue of *semantic polarity* (juxtaposing two stylistically more or less identical but semantically opposing blocks of text) discussing its impact on the message recipient and the concepts it endeavors to establish in them in order to influence their future choices and conduct. Attention is also paid to *semantic association,* which proves to be another intimidating technique frequently utilized in religious discourse to supercharge selected lexical items with the meanings the writer/speaker purposefully attaches to these, thereby exploiting excessive *signification* (in the Saussurean sense) to achieve their intended persuasive effect. The paper, which is based on the author's research and analysis of a corpus of religious texts, illustrates the individual phenomena by presenting examples selected from sources used by several denominations and religious movements (Christians, Latter-Day Saints, Jehova's Witnesses, Satanists, Scientologists, etc.). Besides, it statistically maps the distribution of direct intimidation and versatile wide-coverage taints segments across these sources and points out the recent trends in persuasive mechanisms deployed to induce a change of individual's opinion and/or behavior.

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INTRODUCTION

Fear, "an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat" (The New Oxford Dictionary of English), occupies an undeniable portion of our lives and in most cases represents an incentive and driving force underlying our acts. The importance of fear in the process of persuasion, "the process of inducing a voluntary change in someone's attitudes, beliefs or behavior through the transmission of a message" (Bettinghaus, 1968), was emphasized as early as Antiquity when Aristotle presented one of the earliest models of persuasion stating that *pathos* of the listener (involving subjectivity and emotionalism) represents, besides *ethos* of the author (objective characteristics) and arguments themselves, a fundamental key to persuasion. This fact partly explains the reason why, as Alexander et al. (2001) contend, rhetoricians and philosophers inquiring into how aspects of the message can stimulate or stifle persuasion process (Chambliss (1994); Toulmin (1958) also focus on (apart from whether the author's premises are clearly stated and their arguments and counter-arguments well developed) whether the author evokes the emotions of the audience. Damasio (1994) also stresses the role emotions play in processing information claiming "certain aspects of emotion and feeling are indispensable for rationality" (Damasio quoted by Foolen (1997:19)).

Similarly, Sargant (1957) (quoted by Snow & Machalek (1984:170)) views a sufficient disturbance of brain function by accidentally or deliberately induced fear, anger or excitement as a facilitator of implanting beliefs in people.

> *Induced physiological dysfunctioning of the brain is thus seen as the key to conversion. When this proposition is combined with psychoanalytic theory, we have a picture of the convert as an individual who has been made receptive to new ideas because his or her critical facilities and ego strength have been eroded by informatik control, overstimulation of the nervous system, forced confessions, and ego destruction, among other factors.*

Yourman (1939) sees the efficiency of any propaganda in life conditions of people where fear represents one of them:

> *Propaganda has no meaning and hence no effectiveness except in terms of life conditions of people – their needs, fears, hatreds, loves, aspirations, prejudices, and traditions. These affect propaganda as much as propaganda affects people.*
> (Yourman (1939:160))

Buck et al. (2002) stress the importance of emotion in the realm of persuasion focusing on the interaction of *affect* and *reason* based upon MacLean's triune theory of the brain. They draw on Tucker (1981) distinguishing two sorts of cognition (*syncretic*, which is "hot", direct and immediate, and *analytic*, which is "cold", sequential and linear) and Le Doux's (1994) distinction between cortico-cognitive processes (based on hippocampus and neocortex) and emotional processing involving the amygdala. Le Doux showed that "emotion-related structures associated with the amygdala receive input about events that is

earlier than and potentially independent of input to relevant neocortical sensory systems" (Buck et al. (2002:2)). Buck et al. also mention the ARI (affect – reason – involvement) model which explicitly considers emotion/affect to be a type of cognition (syncretic) and does not view it as in any way incompatible with the analytic cognition. Concluding that the ARI conception is quite unlike traditional cognitive models of persuasion, the authors stress it is compatible with the new evidence of importance of emotion in persuasion.

As the preceding brief overview of the importance of emotion in persuasion process insinuates, the role fear induction plays in communicating a message and getting it accepted by its recipients should by no means be underestimated. As the author has identified segments whose *intended perlocutionary effect,* i.e. the intended impact of a segment (or an utterance) on the message recipient (for more details on *intended perlocutionary effect*, see the Methodology section), fear induction as a feature recurring in all the samples making up the research corpus (as well as religious texts), he decided to map the segments and track their distribution in these.

METHODOLOGY

The first aim of the analysis this paper describes was to locate and describe the workings of those segments of religious discourse whose *intended perlocutionary effect* (Kurzon, 1998) is fear induction as well as semantic operations contributing to fear induction (*semantic polarity* and *semantic association)* in texts of several denominations, i.e. qualitative analysis. The second objective was to map the distribution of the former, namely *direct intimidation* (INT) segments and *versatile wide-coverage taints* (VWCTs)*,* across four samples (altogether making up the 23.000-word research corpus) of the texts produced and utilized by five different denominations (Judaism and Christianity, Heaven's Gate, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (also known as Mormons), and Scientologists), i.e. quantitative analysis.

When mapping the segments identified as inducing or contributing to the emotion of fear across the samples, the author based his approach on the theory of speech acts (Austin, 1976), chiefly the category of *perlocutionary object,* or *intended perlocutionary effect* (Kurzon, 1998), i.e. the effect the writer/speaker wants his/her utterance to have on the message recipient. The author decided on this criterion rather than that based on *perlocution,* i.e. the effect an utterance has on the message recipient, as the latter is not only a product of the utterance itself, but gets affected by multiple contextual factors (the text surrounding the utterance, context of situation, recipient's cultural context, etc.). In this respect, the *intended perlocutionary effect* proves to be easier to identify than *perlocution* when one only analyzes the text as such, i.e. without, for instance, having its intimidating effect assessed by a group of readers.

As for the corpus, the segments identified during the qualitative analysis stage as those inducing fear were tagged in each sample, counted and, subsequently, their occurrence averages were compared (calculated per 1.000 words). The tagging was carried out as follows:

1) A segment was tagged as the one with *intended perlocutionary effect* of *intimidation* provided it referred to a negative event(s) or plight the denomination believes to involve or affect the reader/listener in the future as well as direct threats. Examples: "The end of a civilization is accompanied by spading under, refurbishing the planet ..." (Heaven's Gate); "... fear and tremble ..." (Mormonism); "(I will let) all the beasts of the earth gorge themselves on you ..." (Judaism and Christianity)

2) A segment was tagged as the one with *intended perlocutionary effect* of inducing *feelings of guilt* or *insufficiency* provided it encapsulated an element the author coins and describes in the following section as *versatile wide-coverage taint*. Examples: "... every human being born has at least one engram ..." (Church of Scientology); "...lower forces do *everything they can* to keep those individuals from ever knowing the Kingdom of God." (Heaven's Gate); "...Our offenses and sins weigh us down ..." (Judaism and Christianity)

ANALYSIS RESULTS

Qualitative Analysis

Intimidation and Versatile Wide-Coverage Taints – Means of Generating Feelings of Guilt or Insufficiency in Message Recipient

Satan has been the best friend the church has ever had, as he has kept it in business all these years! (Anton Szandor LaVey - The Satanic Bible)

In the religious discourse, there seems to be a wide range of threats that are utilized for the purpose of fear induction in message recipients. The most common ones appear to be those which rely heavily on the individual's punishment which comes indiscriminately unless they keep to the instructive code promoted. In his respect they are directly aimed at the discourse recipient or their closest kindred and range from the withdrawal of prosperity and health to death and eternal damnation following it. What should by no means be left unnoticed is the deployment of *devil* (*Satan*) and *hell* concepts in Judaic and Christian discourse.

The terms of *devil* (or *Satan*) usually get associated with everything a particular denomination considers unfavorable or adverse to the principles it promotes. Hence, these two lexical items often become semantically supercharged with a lot of extra meaning attached to them such as that of treason as in

[68]*Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*[69]*We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."* [70]*Then Jesus replied, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!"*

> *[71](He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)* (The Bible, NIV, John 6)

and deceit or trickery as in

> *[8]But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. [9]Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said,[10]You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?* (The Bible, NIV, Acts 13).

The concept of *devil* or *Satan* as something discourse recipients ought to beware of is reinforced by stressing *his* propensity to treachery and readiness to take action the primary objective of which is to lead the believer astray any time *he* is given a chance to. In other words, *he* is portrayed as omnipresent, virtually impossible to avoid and ready to strike anytime. This portrayal contributes to the image of everyone being exposed to *him,* regardless of age, gender, beliefs, etc. In this respect, the semantic concept of *devil* becomes a semantic archetype, for which the author uses the term *versatile wide-coverage taint* for its versatile application and the great number of those who are assumed to be exposed to it.

Versatile wide-coverage taints do not represent a semantic category deployed merely by long-established denominations such as Judaism or Christianity, but also those that have come into existence comparatively recently. That is, these new religious movements display brand new concepts which seem to have their roots in the tendency towards rationalism and logic these movements attempt to promote. Thus, such groups often appear to steer away from the traditional long-established *devil* concept and bring up their own "evil" constructs whose unfavorable workings or impact they promise to undo and diminish. This necessarily leads not only to an extensive augmentation of the semantic arsenal the groups utilize but also to lexical expansion consisting in devising new terminology specific to their religious notions and purposes. A point in case is, for instance, the statement Ron Hubbard, the founder of the *Church of Scientology*, makes in his book of *Dianetics*:

> *There are no demons. No ghosts and ghouls or Tohs. But there are aberrative circuits.* (Hubbard, Dianetics: The Evolution of Science)

In Hubbard's terms, *aberrative circuits* are responsible for the person's anxieties, disorders and other problems they suffer from. What reinforces the intimidating nature of the phenomenon is the claim the *red-tab memory bank* (Hubbard's term for the part of brain which is accountable for all the individual's ailments and factors inhibiting his/her progress and development since it contains data related to the painful situations the individual has gone through in their life) cannot be accessed consciously and he/she is therefore unaware of it. The portrayals of malign characteristics of the *aberrative circuits* and *red-tab memory*

bank, including their negative manifestations as well as their dormancy, thus seem analogous to the depiction of *devil* or *Satan* in the texts mentioned in the previous section.

> *So this bank remained hidden and unknown. And that is a sad thing because unless one knows about this bank the entire problem of man's imperfection, his insanity, his wars, his unhappiness, can go begging or get into the files of a shaman or a neurosurgeon. Much more widely, the hidden character of this bank can be said to be responsible for irrational conduct on the part of all mankind. And how many lives has that cost in the last four thousand years?* (Hubbard, Dianetics: The Evolution of Science)

Hubbard also demonstrates the "wickedness" and detrimental impact of the *red-tab memory bank* by using the following simile:

> *The red-tab bank could cause circuits to be set up which looked and sounded like demons. ... It could command and order a person about like a moron might control a robot.* (Hubbard, Dianetics: The Evolution of Science)

The overall intimidating effect gains in its intensity when one considers the fact that, in Hubbard's opinion, virtually everyone is in danger and everyone can be affected. This idea, amply utilized a long time before the foundation of the Church of Scientology, e.g. in Christianity, where it could (and still can) be found in the form of *original sin* (e.g. "*Therefore just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned*"(The Bible, Romans 5:12) or "*If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.*" (The Bible, John 8:7)), can also be found in the book of *Dianetics*:

> *Who is an abarree? Anybody who has one or more engrams. And since birth itself is an engramic experience – every human born has at least one engram!* (Hubbard, Dianetics: The Evolution of Science)

When it comes to practice, the discourse-generated taints such as the Biblical *original sin*, the man's innate propensity to sinful conduct or the Scientological *engrams* and *aberrated circuits* seem to serve as vigorous intimidation boosters. That is, besides being depicted as constantly inhibiting the individual's progress towards salvation and personal or other success, the *versatile wide-coverage taints* appear to be anything but easy to evade. They get portrayed as an inherent part of every human and causes of their failure, unhappiness and damnation. They play the role of those unfavorable elements and phenomena the religious groups aspire to purge everyone of by means of their rituals, sessions or by adjusting their members' lifestyle the way that is supposed to aid such a process.

The excerpt below has been taken from the article titled *Should the Zodiac Influence Your Life?* posted on the *Jehova's Witnesses* website (www.watchtower.org) where the author gives an account of reasons why reading horoscopes, even for entertainment

purposes, is dangerous and may consequently lead to the degradation of the reader's life. In this respect, a link between the popular culture of horoscopes and astrology is drawn condemning both.

> *The simple truth is that astrology is one of "the machinations of the Devil," which he uses to control and influence people to serve his purpose. Thus, it is hardly surprising that the Bible exhorts Christians to "stand firm" against Satan's clever devices—which include astrology. (Ephesians 6:11) But does this mean that we are left without any guidance as to the future? ... Thus, it is for good reason that genuine Christians do not consult horoscopes, even for entertainment or out of curiosity. Instead, they wisely heed the warnings in God's Word against all demon influence, including subtle forms.* (Should the Zodiac Influence Your Life?)

Although *horoscopes* do not initially represent a *versatile wide-coverage taint* (VWCT) in the true sense of the word, for they lack the humanly innate feature (*cf.* the Biblical idea of *original sin* or Scientological *engram*, which every individual invariably bears with themselves), their inescapable nature, provided we take into account the high number of those who read popular magazines and tabloids, grants them a far-reaching potential that is not a long way off from the one of the VWCT. In addition, not unlike in the case of VWCTs, the undesirable impact of the presence of and encounter with *horoscopes* can be neutralized or lessened through the adoption of the behavior promoted by the group.

As regards the notion of "noxious exposures", it is also apt to note the fashion in which religious groups approach newly occurring representations of "the evil" or "moral corruption". The Internet age brings with itself a lot of religious adversaries, which some groups do their utmost to change into sworn enemies and various "Satanic" manifestations the exposure to which can lead to a significant degradation of life quality. Thus, for instance, the *Jehova's Witnesses'* article titled *Internet Pornography – What Harm Can It do?* contains the following:

> *Like this man, many initially become involved in pornography out of curiosity. Anxious to avoid discovery, they log on late at night or early in the morning. If they are caught, they often try to cover up what they are doing by lying, as this man did. Can anyone reasonably claim that a "hobby" that causes "a man of his word" to sneak around in the middle of the night and to lie to loved ones is harmless? ... Some have admitted that watching pornography has prevented them from developing close relationships with others. ... Can a pastime that alienates people from those who care the most about them be truly innocuous?* (Internet Pornography – What Harm Can It Do?)

The use of VWCTs is similar to what Yourman (1939) coins as *name calling*. As he observes, *name calling* represents a technique used to "make us form a judgment without examining the evidence on which it should be based" (Yourman 1939:149) for the purpose

of appealing to our hate and fear. Although Yourman explains this technique in the political context of Nazi Germany, one can find parallels between its discourse at that time and that of most denominations. That is, he gives an example of the technique being used by German National Socialists to destroy trade unions and all liberal democratic institutions by making the Germans believe that these were devilish institutions designed to ruin the nation. They portrayed these as similar in structure and mood to the institutions of communism. Yourman (1939) further claims this picture was widely accepted and was supported by a complete mythology in which the Jews, communism, and liberalism were looked upon as major evil influences from which the National Socialists saved Germany.

One might come to the conclusion that Yourman's *name calling* in Nazi Germany, portrayal of devil's atrocious influence and other *versatile wide-coverage taints* are one and the same thing. Moreover, not unlike the German National Socialists, the denominations always have a salvation scenario readily available. In most cases this involves depictions of bright or promising future lying ahead of those who chose to do as required.

Semantic Polarity

Semantic polarity represents another element the author has identified in religious discourse as a supplementary element intensifying fear induction, thereby facilitating persuasion. The phenomenon is usually based on *juxtaposition,* i.e. placing two semantically opposite utterances or blocks of text next to each other. Such an arrangement consequently presents message recipients with the limited number of options (usually two) steering the readers/listeners in the author's intended direction. Besides, the semantic dichotomy of such juxtaposed segments does not provide any space for any other alternative. That is, juxtaposing two stylistically more or less identical but semantically absolutely opposing blocks of text and leaving no room for anything other than the two perforce induces the discourse based on the logic of no more than two semantic poles.

The instances of the aforementioned phenomenon, which, by narrowing the range of possible alternatives to choose from, leave the reader with an either-this-or-that choice, materialize regularly throughout the Bible. Thus, for example, a part combining sections of *opposite semantic polarity* can be run into in Mathew 24 and reads as follows:

> [44]*So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.* [45]*"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time?* [46]*It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.* [47]*I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.* [48]*But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,'* [49]*and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards.* [50]*The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of.* [51]*He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* (The Bible, NIV, Mathew 24)

The *polarity principle* poses the question of whether it is put into operation in order to only simplify the selection procedures it exhorts the reader to undertake or whether it also strives after the exclusion of some less clear-cut or less favorable alternatives which might enter the scene but turn out to be somewhat less intimidating or less guilt-engendering. That is, if such alternatives occurred, the instructional gravity of the text would, in all probability, lose in some of its intensity and persuasive force, thereby resulting in less intensive feelings of guilt in the event of real "transgression".

The *semantic polarity* achieved by black-and-white portrayals seems to result in one more effect, which Cialdini (1993) defines as *contrast principle* and which influences the way we tend to see differences between two things that are presented one after another. That is, the presentation or juxtaposition of strikingly different or opposite alternatives necessarily leads to accentuation of the features of both of them that would not normally occur to be so conspicuous were the alternatives presented separately.

Therefore, one can logically conclude that if some religious text juxtaposes an account of disastrous consequences of one's failure to abide by the principles the text projects as favorable and that of rewards awaiting the obedient, not only does this result in narrowing down the choice of behavioral patterns by mentioning nothing in between, but also rendering the horrifying account even more horrifying and that of rewards even more rewarding.

The deployment of polarity principle can be encountered in the discourse of multiple religious groups. Here comes one more example taken from Anton Szandor Lavey's *Satanic Bible:*

> [1] *Blessed are strong, for they shall possess the earth-*
> *Cursed are the weak, for they shall inherit the yoke!*
> [2] *Blessed are the powerful, for they shall be reverenced among men-*
> *Cursed are the feeble, for they shall be blotted out!*
> [3] *Blessed are the bold, for they shall be masters of the world-*
> *Cursed are the righteously humble, for they shall be trodden under cloven hoofs!*
> 4 *Blessed are the victorious, for victory is the basis of right-*
> *Cursed are the vanquished, for they shall be vassals forever!*
> 5 *Blessed are the iron-handed, for the unfit shall flee before them-*
> *Cursed are the poor in spirit, for they shall be spat upon!*
> (Lavey, 1969:34)

Semantic Association

As pointed out in the previous section, the terms of *devil* (or *Satan*) usually get associated with everything a particular denomination considers unfavorable or adverse to the principles it promotes. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that these two lexical items often become semantically supercharged with a lot of extra meaning attached to them such as treason, deceit and trickery, lies, and all kinds of sin.

Like other religious texts exploiting the concept, the Book of Mormon attaches to the lexical item of *devil* the label of lie (*Ether 8:25* – "devil is father of all lies"), sin (*Helaman 6:30* – "devil is author of all sin"), deceit (*Alma* 30:53 – "Korihor confesses that devil deceived him), wickedness (*Mosiah 16:3, 5* – "devil has power over the wicked"), evil (*Omni 1:25* – "that which is evil comes from devil"), temptation (*Alma 34:39* – "pray continually that ye may not be led away by temptations of devil"), enticement to non-belief (*Moroni 7:17* – "whatsoever persuadeth men not to believe in Christ is of devil") and general enemy of God (*Moroni 7:12* – "devil is an enemy to God"). The item thus gets charged with an immensely wide range of *signifieds* (Saussure (1966)) making up an alterable and extensible set of morals and behavioral patterns the church disfavors and endeavors to suppress.

However, it is not only the lexemes referring to old concepts that get semantically supercharged, but also those referring to the concepts the groups resent. A point in case is the lexeme *tattoo* in the article titled *Should I Get a Tattoo?* (obtained from the Jehova's Witnesses' Web site at www.watchtower.org), where it is gradually furnished with the meanings of paganism and false worship, ill health, pain, nuisance, criminality, risk, obstacle, foolish deception, being unappealing, future regret and finally, as the closing paragraph suggests, embarrassment felt in presence of others in congregation insinuating the possibility of condemnation and abandonment by the group. The texts like the one discussed above appear to serve the purpose of assigning certain additional characteristics to chosen lexemes or collocations denoting things, activities, or whatever the discourse community want to promote or, on the contrary, exhort the recipients to avoid. Thus, through this operation, semantic complexes get elaborated within lexemes and, in ideal cases, incorporated in an individual's universe of discourse.

Quantitative Analysis

Distribution of Intimidation and Versatile Wide-Coverage Taints Segments across the Samples

All the samples analyzed are of approximately the same length, i.e. 5.000 words with the exception of Haven's Gate one, which is somewhat longer. However, the author has decided not to shorten it in order to preserve it as a self-contained section (as the other three samples). Table 1 and Table 2 below give averages per 1.000 words calculated for each sample.

The analysis of INT segment distribution across the four analyzed samples shows the highest INT occurrence rate (19,18 words per 1.000) in the *Ezekiel* sample, followed by Mormons (4,25 words), Haven's Gate (1,38 words) and the Church of Scientology (0,65 word per 1.000). As for the VWCT segments, the averages have turned out to be as follows: the Church of Scientology (4,58), Haven's Gate (1,38), the Ezekiel text (0,21). No VWCT segment has been located in the Mormon text.

Table 1

Distribution of Intimidation (INT) Segments across the Samples

Text	Denomination	INT - Occurrence Rate	Average
Ezekiel	Judaism, Christianity	95	19,18
Doctrine and Covenants	Latter-Day Saints	25	4,25
The Last Chance to Evacuate Earth	Heaven's Gate	13	1,38
Dianetics: the Evolution of Science	Scientologists	2	0,65

Table 2

Distribution of Versatile Wide-Coverage Taints Across the Samples

Text	Denomination	VWCT - Occurrence Rate	Average
Dianetics: the Evolution of Science	Scientologists	14	4,58
Last Chance to Evacuate Earth	Heaven's Gate	13	1,38
Ezekiel	Judaism, Christianity	1	0,21
Doctrine and Covenants	Latter-Day Saints	0	0,00

DISCUSSION

As the *Table 1* indicates, the *Ezekiel* sample leads the others in the number of segments whose intended perlocutionary effect is *intimidation* (INT). The Mormon *Doctrine and Covenants* follows with the occurrence rate representing a fifth of the *Ezekiel* one. The *Heaven's Gate* and *Church of Scientology* texts manifest comparatively low *intimidation* segments occurrence rates. In the latter, the average occurrence rate per 1.000 words even amounts to less than 1 (0,65).

The author assumes the aforementioned results point not only to the fact that different texts (and thus possibly denominations) deploy *intimidation* in their persuasion process to varying degrees – a fact manifest in the frequency at which the segments conveying it appear in them, but also, and that is what the author considers the main cause of the phenomenon, to somewhat *waning* persuasive efficiency of this element over time. That is, while a psychological impact of an authority's *intimidation* (be it political, social, or even spiritual) of masses may have been immense at around 200 B.C. (the time the sample was written) and during the Middle Ages – the eras of serfdom and no respect for human freedom, it presently seems to lose its grip as a result of growing social emphasis on individual's liberties and provision of legal means for defending them.

Being founded comparatively recently (1954), the Church of Scientology represents a special type of denomination in that it lays great stress on its members' self-improvement rather than promotion of a deity or spirituality. The text seems to reflect both the facts not only through its low occurrence rate of *intimidation*, but also the highest number of *versatile wide-coverage taints* (of the four samples). The Church of Scientology's discourse seems to lay great stress on diminishing the impact of versatile *wide-coverage taints* and also offers ways of completely eliminating them – a phenomenon worth focusing on in the future research. The same can be said about Heaven's Gate whose discourse revolves around human imperfections and ways of overcoming these. The low occurrence rates of VWCTs in Ezekiel and Doctrine and Covenants point to the tendency of deploying direct intimidation for the purpose of fear induction rather than intimidating message recipients via exposing their imperfections in the form of VWCTs (and subsequently offering ways of eliminating them).

CONCLUSION

The quantitative analysis the paper describes has revealed two types of segments that religious groups utilize in order to induce fear in its message recipients – those whose intended perlocutionary effect is *intimidation* (INT) and those in which this effect is induction of feeling of guilt and insufficiency, i.e. *versatile wide-coverage taints* (VWCTs). Apart from these, two operations working on the semantic plane and facilitating the fear induction process have been identified and described: *semantic polarity* and *semantic association.*

The segments were identified on the grounds of their *intended perlocutionary effect* – a type of analysis that has not, to the author's knowledge, been conducted yet. The analyzed texts show quite large differences in INT and VWCT segment frequencies among the groups as well as the tendency towards a less frequent use of INT segments and a more frequent use the VWCT ones in the discourse of young denominations.

As the intended perlocutionary effect (the intended effect of a message) and perlocution (the real final impact of the message) may differ, the author considers it appropriate to focus future research on to what extent these correlate, particularly in relation to different types of audience (e.g. religious vs. non-religious). Besides, since some of the analyzed texts manifest numerous occurrences of segments depicting ways of eliminating VWCTs, mapping their distributions across the samples and comparing these in terms of the overall persuasive charge of the texts might provide more clues as to, for instance, what configuration of the segments proves to have the most persuasive effect on the audience. As the operations of semantic association and expansion contribute to the generation of new religious metaphors, it might prove fruitful to conduct further research in these and their linguistic realizations in a corpus of religious texts using information technology (for details on linguistic metaphors and their identification in corpus data, see Deignan (1999) and Deignan (2005)).

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