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## THE IDENTITY DOPING: A NEW CONCEPT IN SPORT SOCIAL SCIENCES

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### Abstract

*Purpose.* The national and ethnic minorities were represented in every sport communist system. under the political influence, sport stars from these minorities suffered an identity doping during the nationalism-communism. I define this concept as a mechanism which transform the identity of sport stars and it is composed by many elements. this phenomenon follows the sport stars from his first days as performer. the identity doping has the mission to build an agreeable image for sport stars and to legitimate with their medals the efficiency of a national system. this mechanism is present during the communist regimes of Romania, Bulgaria or Albania.

*Methods.* I utilize the qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze this concept and the derived phenomenon.

conclusions. having many examples from Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria or Albania we can explain a mechanism or a phenomenon called identity doping.

*Key words:* identity doping, communism, minorities, nationalism, sport star.

### Introduction

The communism had an important influence in sport and this fact generated some phenomenon like the “identity doping”. I propose a concept which could explain the transformation of sport stars into national heroes during the communism. It is not a phenomenon which characterizes just the Romanian case, but it is visible also in Bulgaria, Soviet Union or Albania. I try to impose a simple representation for a complex mechanism, with political, social, economic and ethnic value. In such approach I want to respect some criteria proposed by John Gerring (1999). A very old interpretation sees the signification of a concept like a triangle (Ogden, Richards, 1923). The concept name and his dimension are necessary to have a connotation and a denotation (Dumez, 2011).

The first step is to take a word or many words from a dictionary and to make a research in order to give them a conceptual meaning. Another strategy is to combine these words to have a more suggestive comprehension. I chose to utilize an expression formed by two words and its role is to create a new effect. Another step is to present the definition of this concept. The terminology is essential in social sciences and for this reason I propose a suggestive term with a polyvalent approach. The third criterion for the

existence of this concept is the extension of identity doping, which has to present an empiric correspondence.

In addition to the triangle rule, this concept is ready to respond to other criterion of validation. It is why I consider necessary to utilize the argumentation of John Gerring (1999), who considers that they are no rules to formulate an original concept. Gerring offers some complementary rules for the triangle theory. He proposes eight criterions which help the realization of a concept, after a complex mechanism.

The first criterion is the “familiarity”, which supposes the combinations of terms, that can reveal a phenomenon possible to define. I have chosen the notion “identity doping” because is a simple construction. This concept is formed by usual words, findable in the current language and it does not complicate the interpretation of this phenomenon.

The second criterion is the resonance of this concept. Gerring affirms that this propriety of the concept comes frequently in conflict with other criterions, and more often with the familiarity. From this point of view, this concept has to present a force of diffusion and impact in the academic literature and for the public. The resonance of the concept is connected with the substantiality of the term.

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The parsimony is the third criteria and this is about the moderation of the concept. The parsimony of the identity doping is trying to be precise and to limit a phenomenon, by defining its start and its ending. One of my objectives was to realize a correct framing for this concept, with definite attributes. In fact, I speak about a balanced notion, with an accurate orientation.

The coherence is the fourth criterion, and maybe the most important. Gerring appreciates that the internal coherence is essential in the same measure as the characteristics and appurtenance of the concept with the described phenomenon. In my case, the coherence consists in the detailed way that describes the identity doping in the sport world. The visible transformation is present in the case of non-Romanian sport stars. It is known that there are concepts with problems of coherence, such as ideology, but its refinement is accepted. I propose a concept which is perfectible, but in the same time I consider it is necessary in this type of discussions. My concept exemplifies more easily a complex phenomenon, specific for the sport studies, which wasn't analyzed very much by the social sciences. In the same time, I consider that it is possible to utilize this concept for other domain of the society, not just for sport.

The differentiation is a "must" in my concept and it is also a criterion mentioned by Gerring. From this point of view, the identity doping is different from other concepts which bring in discussion the idea of doping or the concept of identity. Usually, the term "doping" is utilized more in his biological sense and the concept of identity manifests many directions of interpretation. These two notions have common points, but the word doping makes the difference between the identity transformations. We could define the "identity doping" in relation to what it is not; compared with other concepts and we could find his free space in theorisation. We affirm here the spinozist principle „omnis determinatio negatio est”, which means that to define a concept is to oppose to something to another thing.

The depth is another characteristic for every concept, in Gerring opinion. This depth means in fact the properties which define the phenomenon represented by the concept. The criterion offers in this context a rich list of expressions. The concept has to be expressive and to generate an implication. The term must be descriptive and strong in his capacity to speak about this subject.

The theoretic utility is essential for the identity doping. This concept could serve to build theories and to explain a historical mechanism. This concept creates a theory itself and describes a phenomenon. It has a methodological endurance (Gerring, 1999). In the same direction we can affirm another quality necessary for this concept, its utility for the semantic field. Gerring wrote that every time a word is redefined, this aspect transforms the semantic field with other redefinitions for other words. This type of activity makes the

semantic field a very active territory, but in the same time with many restrictions and necessary debates.

In this tentative to define the identity doping we have the risk to commit many errors, identified by Hervé Dumez and Ludwig Wittgenstein. It is not recommendable to reduce artificially this concept to a simple definition. In the moment when you propose a concept it is a question of language, because a concept like this couldn't have a precise and rigid definition. I affirm this because the "identity doping" is an interdisciplinary result. Wittgenstein says that the borders of language are fragile and for this reason it is hard to have an untouchable concept and this generates discussions (Wittgenstein, 1996). The perfect definition does not exist, says the same author.

**Definition.** The ethnic tensions and the problems provoked by the nationalism-communism determined the phenomenon of "identity doping". The political influence and the forced integration of ethnic and national minorities are to the origin of identity doping. I have identified many common elements which create a mechanism for the identity change. The communist regime has a problem with the ethnic groups in many states, like Romania during the time of Nicolae Ceausescu. The internal realities of many countries with a nationalism-communist regime influenced the life of sport stars. In a state like Romania, where the groups of minorities had an important role in sport development, sport stars from these communities are promoted like national heroes utilizing the mechanism of "identity doping".

I propose a concept starting from the Romanian case, but which is useful for the social sciences in other ex-communist countries, like Soviet Union, Bulgaria or Albania. Here the nationalism is present and the ethnic presence in sport was regarded as an essential problem. It is a specific attitude for the ideology of the Romanian Communist Party towards the sport stars from Hungarian, German, Russian or Jewish groups.

The practical realization of this concept is simple and logic. The linguistic construction is the result of a two words stick. The concept of identity doping is formed after putting in the same formula the substantive doping and the adjective identity. Their alliance suggests very well the fact the identity suffers a transformation. This alliance of words explains the existence of a political system with an interest towards the sport stars and their role in the society. Behind this artificial construction stands a structure of ideas, different significations, actions and emotions.

The identity doping is a problem of ethnic-social engineering, represented by a sum of actions which modify the sport star identity during the totalitarian regime. The identity dimensions (family, school, social relations, politic passions) were under the pressure of the communist regime.

The identity doping concept has like central subject the identity, but in the same time the term of



doping is important. The word doping comes from the English notion „to dope”, meaning to take an exciting. This term has appeared in 1903 and his first references were about the animals. After the 30s it becomes a procedure for the athletes. In the 50s definition, the words from the doping family mean stimulate, modifiable or exciting (Larousse, 1950). The law for the French doping from 1 June 1965 characterizes the doping like a process „designed to increase artificially” different parameters.

Sport is an instrument for the progress cult and for the desire of success in communist countries and this type of approach is creating the opportunity to utilize the doping. It is not just a chemical doping, but also an ideological one and here we place the „identity doping”. The concurrence between countries imposes the necessity to expose sport heroes. The high performance sport implies some needs for the East-West rivalry and the doping facilitates these performances. For this reason in the communist case I propose the concept of identity doping, starting from the physical type of doping. In fact, the chemical doping and the identity doping suggest the idea of perfection, starting from the fact that „the high performance sport put on the scene the secular dream for the „perfection of the species” and the doping comes to complete the palette of technics available”. The identity doping is a larger comprehension of this phenomenon in a figurative way. The political system claims in this sense the unity of the nation.

The doping is not just a problem of public health and its meaning is becoming larger. The identity doping indicates in fact a variety of connotations which suppose some mutations on personal and professional plans. In sportive context, the doping is defined like the utilization of substances or methods used to increase artificially the practical capacity of a person. Doping is a social attribute, a problem for the society, a phenomenon perceived like a social malfunction (Spector, Kitsuse, 1987). In the same time, doping implies a mobilization of resources (material, sentimental, ideological).

Patrick Laure says that the doping behaviour is observable. This activity is defined by the consummation of a product for facing or passing a real obstacle (Laure, 2000). Translated and transferred on the field of political competition, where the problem of ethnic and national minorities is a reality, the communist chiefs apply a doping tactic for the identity of sport stars with an origin in these minority communities. The goal is to have the image of national champions and to claim their national origin and the efficiency of a national sport system of preparation.

This concept wants to reveal the preoccupation of communist regime to impose the type of a new identity in sport, regarding the social aspects. I chose as an example the Romanian case and in a particular aspect the Nicolae Ceausescu period (1965-1989). In the same time, after Patrick Laure opinion,

the chemical doping has an important level of intensity and specialization (Laure, 2004). This period is similar with the most obvious identity doping in Romanian sport during the communist regime.

Regarding the phenomenon in general we can affirm that the sport star is a victim in this mechanism. The identity doping like the other kind of doping, the physical one, provokes a discomfort sensation (Van Hilvoorde, Vos, de Wert, 2007). The sportive authorities are also responsible for the existence of this mechanism and they are assuring the deployment of these actions determined by the political orientation. Like the chemical doping, the identity doping is eliminating some obstacles utilizing media, the essential factor of information. The obstacles could be the name of the sport stars in their intrinsic sense, the ethnic origin, their social potential or their economic rights. This concept describes in the same time the attitude of political regime as against the possible starization or the influence of some sport heroes in their communities. The idea of appurtenance to a group was regarded with circumspection by the regime, and the fact that one sport star is a hero for his ethnic community is stimulating his consciousness and their unity creates this reaction integrated in the idea of identity doping. The identity doping has like objective the cancellation of this type of feelings. Like the principle „divide et impera”, every sport star from minorities is susceptible to be implied in this mechanism described by my concept name.

Like the chemical doping, the identity one is applied for all the type of sport stars, not just the champions, but also for representative athletes to the regional level, members of national teams with a good impact in public eyes or even some coaches. Doping realizes the transformation of that we call „natural” in „artificial”. In the same direction of speaking, identity doping contributes to the „artificialization” of the sport star identity. The athlete suffers a transformation under the influence of the political regime constraints. In the Romanian case, the system tries to impose an artificial identity and to create the type of „new sport star”, extending the idea of „new man”.

How does the identity doping work? How do the sport stars react? These are some essential questions for this concept. Like the physical doping, the identity doping is difficult to identify. In this direction is important to mention an observation of Bird and Wagner, who consider that „doping is an incoherent practice, difficult to define and to observe”. The only hope in this case is the honesty of the sportive (Bird, Wagner, 1997). The same principle is valuable for the identity doping, but in this case the honesty is not a proper solution, because the sport star depends on the system, which takes action against him. The pressure which exists in the political space and the ideological dimension action in sport and the administration is forced to respect the line of nationalism-communism.



In this context, the identity doping offers the image of inferiority for the sport star. Many athletes are accepting this situation and are embracing the new political system without any doubts. The patriotic attitude solicited by the political regime is obligatory, but in the same time, many sport stars show excessive zeal and they contribute to this identity doping phenomenon.

How does this concept function in a visible way? First of all, the sport star is born in his ethnic community, where he comes in contact with traditions, conceptions and he take some attitudes. In the same moments he is capable to utilize his ethnic language and he forms a perception related with the majority. Then, he enters in the sportive system, where he starts to make performances. From this moment, he is under the influence of sportive homogenization. Every performance is related with the communist merits and its efficiency. From this moment on the identity doping wears a bureaucratic aspect. Confusions between nationality, ethnic belonging and citizenship are regular in the official papers. Many sport stars are presented like Romanians, even their ethnic origin is not Romanian. This aspect is more visible, in the Romanian case, in the Nicolae Ceausescu period. The Yugoslavian case is more special and these consequences in sport are visible after the fall of communism and the separation in many countries. For example, the Croatians were unable to express their attachment for the sport stars that evolved under the Yugoslavian flag during the communism, but in these days they are trying to compensate that aspect (Sack, Suster, 2000).

I have to add that the identity doping concept is large and for this reason is difficult to impose an ideal-type definition. I will try to calibrate and to frame it in some conceptual limits. I suppose that for its existence it is necessary for sport to be under the surveillance of the state politic. This phenomenon is synonymous with a forced integration but in a special manner. The sport stars are the main target in this process and the need of the communist regime to legitimate their performances in its politic.

The level of nationalism is fluctuating in the communist countries, but this aspect doesn't block the similarities of identity doping in these cases. From Stalin regime, to Tito or Ceausescu, all of them had imposed a style of nationalism and a type of homogenization, even in sportive field. The importance of sport and the necessity to expose its own national heroes put the communists in a position to interfere the performance purpose with the identity of the sportsman. In this sense the so-called sportive nationalism appeared a phenomenon which proclaims the supremacy of a nation in sport.

The identity doping codifies an entire process of transformations, social pressure and political influence in a society dominated by history of present, where the heroes are in the service of nation and her

leaders. The sport star is a symbol and for this reason, the media and all the other channels of communication are focused to create a proper image for the ethnic minority's champions. This is not an official procedure, and for this reason it is hard to precise all the limits of the identity doping. The sport star that doesn't belong to the ethnic majority is embellished and his image and speech has to be for the interest of the country and its tradition. In this direction we can analyse the expression of „temporary” national identities (Hunter, 2003), where the sport stars or the coaches accept themselves to represent another country and they identify with the new situation.

### The Romanian Case

The first days of communism bring a multicultural perspective over the Romanian sport. The sport stars are from different ethnic minorities and their concentration is in the most important city of the country: Bucharest, Timisoara, Oradea, Arad, Cluj, Iasi, Constanta, etc. Many ethnic groups have their own clubs. The Romanian communist regime copies the soviet system regarding the sport and in several years these ethnic clubs disappeared. Even the Communist Party is affirming the internationalism politic and the ethnic and national groups are considered equally important as the Romanian population. The idea of “cohabitant nationalities” is function until the middle of the 50s.

In general lines the identity doping is visible from the 60s. Even in that period sport stars from national minorities are presented like national heroes. An example is the table tennis player Angelica Adelstein Rozeanu, with a Jewish origin. She was many times world champion in her domain, but her origin was omitted constantly. In fact the Jewish community had an important number of table tennis players before the communism and Angelica Adelstein Rozeanu was a sport star in that period. She was presented in press just like Angelica Rozeanu, because Adelstein was too Jewish. The communist regime imposed a constant pressure on her shoulders and forced her to make propaganda for the regime. Having a problem with her identity and being impossible for her to adapt to the situation after the retirement. She will go illegal in Austria and then in Israel, where she lived until her death.

The same context was built for the gypsies. Their statute is hard to be observed during the communism, because their nomadism was treated in silence. We know just few names for sport stars from gypsy community: Mihai Niculescu and Necula Răducanu. The first one is known for his ethnic origin, just from CNSAS Archives, because in other contexts he is known as Romanian. It is very difficult to make the difference between gypsies and Romanians. Necula Răducanu is an exception, because he recognizes his ethnic origin. More than that, he succeeded to speculate this aspect in his favour. Necula Răducanu represented



the image of „good gypsy” during the communism and he was the goalkeeper of national team of Romania for more than 60 matches.

Another case of identity doping is the biography of Kati Szabo, the Romanian gymnast from a Hungarian family. She was presented in competitions with a more Romanian name, Ecaterina Szabo, even in her identity card was the name Katilin Szabo. More than that, the political chiefs proposed her and her mother to change the gymnast family name from Szabo to Sabău. Like gymnast she was forced to accept a military system of preparation. Kati Szabo speaks Hungarian just with her family and after every victory she is obliged to praise the communist merits.

All of them are presented like national heroes and their identity suffers transformations under the politic pressure. The ethnic origin of these stars was seen like an obstacle for the national identity. For this reason, these sport stars are forced to integrate in some parameters. They are seen like Romanian citizens, but in the same time, they have to accomplish the standards for „Romanianess”. The success of this process reveal the fragility of the ethnic identity during the communism, even we refer to sport stars. Paul Ricoeur says that this fragility is vulnerability exploitation for a rigid system like the communism (Ricoeur, 2000). The Romanian communism demand a total dedication from these sport stars and their identity doping in their cases is synonymous with the promotion of national value in every moment, not just for 60, 80 or 90 minutes, during their matches.

Nicolae Ceausescu period is marked by an effervescent nationalism and a clear attitude beside minorities (King, 1980) and for this reason the identity doping provokes the tendency of escaping from the country. Many sport stars put their life in danger and leave their family in Romania. Some important sport stars are staying in other countries and demand political asylum. They find proper to complete their identity in other countries. Many Germans from Romania chose to remain in West Germany, some sport stars with Jewish origin arrive in Israel or France and the examples can continue. These are some consequences of identity doping action in Romania.

### Conclusions

The identity doping is an artificial construction, but in the same time very suggestive if we take in discussion sport and its ethnic implication during the communism. A consistent increase of the population implication in this domain provoked many problems and when a political regime wants to promote national values, this mechanism of identity doping starts to function. The political discourse suggest some hidden actions against sport stars, revealed later by

these athletes or which can be identified studying the secret services archives.

Changing names, integration through marriage or the compulsoriness to promote the idea of „Romanianess” are just few elements and steps that help us to understand better the phenomenon of identity doping. This concept can open a large champ of debates about the necessity of its existence in the social sciences sport literature. The presented ideas can be an important sign that this domain could have its own concepts regarding the communist zone and could explain better the nationalistic influence in these countries and the influence over the sport.

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