

Good research paper on the psychology of racism

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Psychology of Racism

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There is hardly an ideology, more discredited than racism. But there is hardly an ideology or, at least, the mindset, that is more common than racism.

Racial discrimination in the United States has deep historical roots and, in fact, is the same age as the country. Society, founded by white people, has always had negative attitude towards people with different skin color:

Indians - Native Americans and blacks.

Racial segregation in the United States has officially existed since 1865, with the adoption of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, abolishing slavery. As examples of racism can serve such flagrant situations as segregation in public transport and schools. According to the laws of Montgomery (Alabama), the first rows of seats on the bus were destined for white passengers, and if they were all occupied, black people had to give up their "black" sites. This policy resulted in a boycott of "Walking in the name of freedom", which lasted for 381 days. During this time, African Americans accounted for 70% of all passengers who did not use public transport. Bus companies suffered significant losses. On December 20, 1956, segregation in public transport was canceled.

Segregation in schools led to armed conflict. The most famous incident relates to 1957, when racists did not want coeducation of white and nine black children who received the nickname "Nine from Little Rock" (Arkansas). When things finally escalated, President Eisenhower was forced to send troops to the city in 1200 Airborne Division. They accompanied their children to school and protected them in the corridors. In 1941, racial

segregation was formally abolished, but in fact it remains today. Racism practiced today has evolved significantly compared to its classical samples. It is considered that psychologists, especially those who deal with racial and ethnic minorities can do a lot to change the situation with racism (Mays et al., 2013). In the first half of the 19th century the main stronghold of racist theories were the United States, as the result of intensification of the struggle between slaveholders and abolitionists – advocates of the black people emancipation. Seeking to strengthen their economic and political position, slaveholders-planters from the southern states adopted reactionary racial theories, the ones that were transformed into an inhuman ideology of National Socialism. It is no secret that after the Second World War and the Holocaust, racism learned to disguise masterfully. Its ideas are expressed primarily through euphemisms and metaphorical shifts, which, however, does not change the inherent problems.

The driving force of racism lies not in intellectual and political plane; its arguments are drawn not in science, but in the ideological sphere. The motive of racists' activities is legitimation of domination, moral and, if possible, theoretical justification of the status quo that emerged in the course of colonization. On the one hand, immigrants (most favored target of racist attacks), first are identified with a particular culture (religion, ideology) that is incompatible with European. Second, in accordance with the anti-Semitic logic, immigrants are credited with plans for worldwide domination, or the concept of foreigners is associated with the term Islamism (as a neutral term Jew was identified with the term Zionism). On the other hand, contemporary globalization – after the collapse of the former "western" and

" eastern" units - did not offer the world any new models of relations at the global level between states, peoples and cultures, relationships that develop randomly and unpredictably. And it sometimes gets such dire shape as total extermination of the Jews by the Germans and the development of chemical weapons in South Africa having deadly effects on the Negros, but harmless for white people. That favors the followers of the theories about racial differences between people.

Racism effects are often experience by difference people in various settings, namely legal, public and work, which is identified as especially salient (Cunningham & Paradies, 2013). In the context of the global capitalist system at the nation-state level racism acts as a mechanism for distribution of the social hierarchy employment and wages by ethnic grounds.

Ethnicization of labor occurs, which leads to class racism. Outbreaks of contemporary racism can be observed in many countries: Russia, USA, Germany, France, England, Israel - this is not a complete list of countries where racism is rampant.

So, what is the psychological basis of such phenomena as racism? Perhaps to the base of racism there can be attributed the phenomenon of ethnocentrism. It is the tendency of people to perceive and evaluate the phenomena of life through the prism of traditions and values of their own ethnic group, serving as a kind of reference. However, most likely, racist ideas may ripen in the bosom of the structure of the national psyche, and as well be a reflection of national feelings and moods.

National psychology reflects what is common in representatives of the whole nation in the worldview, sustainable forms of behavior, psychological traits,

speech and language, relationships to other people and nature, in the stereotypes of behavior in extreme situations.

National psychology exists as specific traits of national character, national consciousness, national feelings and moods, national interests, attitudes, traditions, habits, manifested in the form of national characteristics of an ethnic community.

National feelings and moods are emotively colored attitude of people towards their ethnic community, their interests, other nations and values .

National feelings can have both positive and negative connotation. Positive is expressed in a sense of national pride, patriotism and love for its people, a sense of friendship and brotherhood towards other nations. Negative is expressed in nationalism and chauvinism, national and racial prejudices, the state of alienation in relation to other peoples, humiliated feeling of national self-esteem, dissatisfaction with their nation.

Among the peculiarities of racism expression there should be noted that overweight people feel its consequences much more than others (Bucchianeri, Eisenberg, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2013). Around the world racism is based on xenophobia of the indigenous population. Dissatisfaction is usually caused by migrants who are " the source of all evils": unemployment, high taxes, rising crime. Xenophobia is a fear of stranger and hostility to stranger. Still, xenophobia is spontaneous and sporadic, while racism presupposes a connected set of views.

Racist theory has never concealed its instrumental nature: it served the racist practices. Contents of this practice was primarily created by connubium – a ban on marriages between members of the " superior" and "

inferior" races. Behind the scenes, this ban has not been canceled yet. It operates in America, where interracial marriages make up slightly more than one percent of the total number of marriages, and in Europe, where such marriages involve more trouble.

Therefore, at this stage of the study, we have found out that each person has an unconscious mechanism that captures the attitude of "mine - stranger". Thus, based on the foregoing, it can be concluded that xenophobia is the basic engine of racism.

Wilhelm Reich approached this problem study in more detail. According to him, the surface layer of individual is not in contact with the deep biological base of identity, it relies on the second intermediate layer of character, which consists exclusively of impulses of cruelty, sadism, lust, greed and envy. This is what Freud called unconscious. In the language of sexual energy unconscious is the collection of all the so-called secondary drives. One has only to throw off the mask of education, and you will see not natural sociability, but only perverted, sadistic layer of character.

Reich sees the causes of racism in repressed sexual drives, converting the energy of libido in the form of rampant violence. Due to the process of displacement, sexuality does not reach natural satisfaction and therefore seeks to meet various substitutes. For example, as a result of perversion, natural aggressiveness is expressed in the form of rough sadism, which takes significant place in mass psychological basis of imperialist wars fueled by a small group of persons.

Under pressure from an authoritarian state ethics with its natural dictate of patterns and stereotypes of sexual behavior there arises internal ethical

conflict of the individual and, as a result of misinterpretation of natural sexuality as something obscene and carnal, there is irrational content of racial theories.

In this regard, it is characteristic that in the minds of the fascist there is no difference between a Jew and a Negro. This relates also to the American fascism. In America, racial struggle with blacks is mainly in the field of protection of the sexual interests. Blacks are often viewed as lascivious beasts, raping white women.

Thus, as shown above, the psychological roots of racism are manifested in at least two ways – xenophobia and repressed sexual desire, misrepresentations and understanding of sexual function is converted into destructive and antisocial actions against members of other races. Violence expressed in racism affects not only the actual victims, but also family members and close environment of people (Ullmann et al., 2013).

The theory of ethnic field should also be highlighted, which was proposed by Russian ethnographer and historian L. Gumilev. He certainly was not involved in the problems of racism, as the scope of his research was in a slightly different plane, but this theory is still worth a look. Thus, according to the theory of ethnic field, the feeling of mutual sympathy that unites people of one nation is caused by the process of energy exchange. Thus, ethnicity becomes a system of a particular field oscillations generated by biogeochemical energy of living matter of the biosphere. Ethnic groups differ from each other by oscillation frequency of the field, i. e. special rhythm of different ethnic groups. Therefore, following the formal logic, we can conclude that racial intransigence, or racial precaution and xenophobia,

according to Gumilev, has a profound biological basis. Certainly, acts of racism have a deep destructive nature – it is a proven fact! However, it should be noted that without the kernel of so-called "healthy" protective racism, people might dissolve and lose their cultural values during ethnogenetic mix. Loss of ethnic identity can lead to negative consequences for identity of the person as a whole, when there is a feeling "I am no one, faceless and nameless." If there is a violation of the unity of culture in relation to the lack of a clearly defined social norms, then there is disintegration of moral values, and anomie arises (ancient Greek "anomie" means "lawless", "having no norms", "unmanaged") – destruction of the sense of belonging of the individual to society. Person is not constrained by the moral attitudes, for him there is no moral norms, but only disconnected urges, he lost a sense of continuity, of duty, a sense of the existence of other people. Anomie is the rise of deviant forms of behavior, i. e. increase in crime, increase in the number of divorces, sexual promiscuousness, increased drug abuse and suicide, mental disorders. It is vividly expressed in modern society with penetrated democratic-cosmopolitan spirit leveling higher values and ideals, which arise only when a healthy racial cultural identity. Today there is a topical need in physicians who are fluent in cultural and social tensions (Metzl, 2012). It should be noted that the chaos and destruction of traditional ties and collective institutions cause a backlash – the desire of stability, order and a clear demarcation.

It is worth noting that for modern society there is a difficult task to find the golden mean in the policy, under which in the state there is no rampant racism. At the same time, if open democratic politics that is criminally

pursuing all manifestations of racism, would not take away those outlined above national enforcement mechanisms, would not have led to a culture recession and anomie phenomenon that is now clearly observable. Anomie is the tendency toward social death and in its extreme forms it means the death of society.

Etienne Balibar once expressed paradoxical idea: racism is a kind of universalism. In fact, racism in a broad sense is a hierarchical division of the human race. This division of people into types and subtypes, between which there is subordination, is a hierarchy. In this sense, the Greeks were racists - and in particular, Aristotle. He, like racists, had a perfect image of a person. The person itself or person in the strict sense, with respect to which all others are subhuman, not quite human. This, in essence, is the same attitude that Nietzscheans in the past and modern times called a relation between *Übermensch* and *Untermensch*.

It is usually assumed that racism is nationalism put to its logical limit, its radicalization, and thus restriction. According to Balibar, on the contrary, it turns out that nationalism is a narrower against racism ideology, racism narrowing. Nationalism is primarily the creation and strengthening of borders (ethnic, cultural, political). Racism, while being associated with the search for the ideal - a supra - community overcomes and abolishes state-political and ethnic boundaries.

Perfect humanity can be drawn differently. As the union of true believers who oppose " infidels". As a union of white Christians against " black" and " colored". As the union of " blacks", designed to prove the " white" degenerates the primacy of the " black" race. Asia as a union, or the "

yellow" race, designed to make the rematch after centuries of domination of the "whites". As a community of "Europeans", necessary for protection against "Asiats". But no matter what images would the ideal humanity appear in, it is resettled in the vast, not fitting within the narrow boundaries of the national states.

In all these cases, there is one and the same intellectual gesture – bringing people together by some ideal model. No matter that this pattern is not matched by everyone. Not all of humanity is perfect. Its differentiation, of course, is inevitable. However, it is no longer based on the narrow confines of the national communities and areas of common giant civilizations. Racism manifestations can also harm people when we talk about doctors. Blair et al. found that bias of clinicians affects the quality of their work with patients (2013).

A lot speaks in favor of the fact that the coming century will be determined not by nationalism and racism (albeit in sublimated form). With the blurring of the boundaries of national states, national (state) loyalty is weakened. In the foreground, there come regional, cultural, confessional, stylistic loyalties. In accordance with the new types of loyalty, the new types of identity. Supporters of the Nord League in Italy consider themselves to a greater extent "northerners" than "Italians"; adherents of "Scandinavianism" in Sweden in their own eyes look more "Scandinavian" than "Swedish". There occurs fragmentarisation and segmentization of society. Moreover, its division into various "we-groups" is carried out not so much by social class, but rather stylistic grounds (comprising, among other things, religious and ethnic components). Insiders distinguish themselves from outsiders,

primarily on the basis of their practiced life style. What church they attend (or not attend), what music they listen, what kitchen prefer - such " subjective-cultural" criteria of identity - and, accordingly, detaching from others - are more important than " objective-structural" criteria like income level or attitude to means of production. What separates the groups from each other is no more superiority and inferiority of others, but the difference as such. Society is no longer divided into higher and lower, but just different. Whence comes so amazing vitality and attractiveness of racism? It seems that the reasons for this lie in the political (or rather, political and ideological), and socio-psychological plane. Racism is one of the strategies of exclusion. Exclusion mechanism is a fundamental social mechanism, and for the exemption must be supplied with one or another ideological justification. Racism offers quasi-natural social discrimination and justification in this regard it is the same order phenomenon with such practices and ideology as sexism. Women for centuries have been denied basic rights on the natural basis, namely due to the fact that they are physically weaker and more irrational than men. It is noteworthy that one of the last bastions of quasi-natural legitimation of social exclusion in Europe was Switzerland. Women gained suffrage in there in 1971.

With regard to the socio-psychological plane, here racism found sizable resources, and, as we have already noted, the potential of racism is higher than that of nationalism. Racism meets the same fundamental human needs as nationalism - the need for collective solidarity.

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