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Toward Psychological Operationalization of the Hate Concept: an Interpersonal or Intergroup Phenomenon?

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Toward Psychological Operationalization of the Hate
Concept: an Interpersonal or Intergroup Phenomenon?

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The running head:
Operationalization of the Hate Concept

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Abstract

In psychological studies the discussion of the life-long role of *hate* was previously substituted by the discussion of *anger*, *hostility* and *aggression,* or of *prejudice* and *social discrimination*. The main source of human destructive activity was ignored. Hate can be considered to be the basis of prejudices, hostility and many forms of destructive behavior, especially enemy aggression and violence, and can shape motives of social isolation, domestic violence and violence against out-groups. Empirical data reveal two main components of hate: passive (avoiding) and active (aggressive), representing two main strategies in social interaction with aversive persons and groups. Hate cannot be viewed similar to love in the framework of the three-dimensional structural model (Sternberg, 2005b; Sternberg & Sternberg, 2008).

On the Definition of Hate

It would be an overstatement to say that hate, a strong and widespread passion, was ignored by European and world literature and philosophy. All great philosophers from Empedocles to Spinoza and Kant discussed hate. For example, Spinoza wrote in the third part of his famous Ethica in the comments to theorem 13: "…love is nothing else but pleasure accompanied by the idea of an external cause: Hate is nothing else but pain accompanied by the idea of an external cause. We further see that he who loves necessarily endeavors to have, and to keep present to him, the object of his love; while he who hates endeavors to remove and destroy the object of his hatred." (http://home.earthlink.net/~tneff/build3.htm?/~tneff/ethcnt3.htm).

But a passion so topical in the life of society was ignored by the science dealing exactly with human mind – psychology. Just recently the first psychological book aimed specifically at the understanding of hate was published (Sternberg, 2005a), despite the existence of the forensic term „hate crimes" (Lawrence, 1999) implying violence against a person committed only for the reason of his/her belonging to a hated group. This does not mean that the topic was ignored in psychoanalysis (Blum, 1997; Kernberg, 1990; 1995; Parens, 1992; Winnicott, 1949). But the classical hermeneutic tradition of psychoanalysis rejected the nomothetic empirical research, the leading one in scientific psychology since the 1930-ies.

In the first book on hate we can find very general definitions of hate as „a response to threats to freedom, life, or values" and „a compound affective construct that results from repeated aversive experiences" by Midgley (Opotow, 2005, pp.123, 125), or

more specific ones, such as Shand's „a boundle of episodic dispositions united by a common emotional object or a common category of such objects", more original ones, as „a negative identification", described as „a tendency to emote in a number of ways to a number of situations involving the object of hatred" and „inhibited defiance phenomenon" (Royzman, McCauley, & Rozin, 2005, pp. 5, 6, 21).

The crucial point in the latter definition seems to be the acknowledgment that this tendency "depends on the fortunes of those hated" (Royzman, at al., 2005, p. 23). Similar ideas have been proposed by Berkowitz, namely, haters "may be especially aroused by stimuli having to do with the relationship between this disliked out-group and their own in-group" (Berkowitz, 2005, p.159).

Judging by self-report descriptions, hate includes such emotions as anger (Fitness, & Fletcher, 1993; Russell, & Fehr, 1994), revenge (Fitness, 2000), depression (Davitz, 1969), "intense hostility and aversion" (Berkowitz, 2005). Phenomenological, hate, as distinct from anger but similar to jealousy, involves the feeling of incompetence, weakness, and discomfort (Davitz, 1969). Some researchers view hate as the readiness to feel all these emotions (Wellek, 1970). It should be emphasized that all these emotions have the same target. Some researchers consider hate to be a combination of emotion, readiness to act, actions, and worldview (Opotow, & McClelland, 2007).

Obviously, the target of hate is viewed by the hater as socially superior (power asymmetry) and is perceived as an abuser (Fitness, 2000; McKellar, 1950). Power asymmetry means that the hater has no "successful defense" against the target of hate and against humiliation, physical pain and threat to values caused by the target.

It should be emphasized that abuse and/or threat should be long-term or repeated for hate to develop. One attack of a bystander can arouse only anger or another short-term emotion. Repeated attacks or conflicts can be decisive in the development of hate to a particular person or group (Baumeister, & Butz, 2005). Terrorism is not an exception because we hate persons and groups who threaten our life permanently, but not for just one attack (Greenberg, Pyszczynsky, Solomon, Rosenblatt, Veeded, & Kirkland, 1990). It follows that the use of scenario method when wrong and unjust behavior supposedly arouses hate is inappropriate for hate assessment (Sternberg & Sternberg, 2008).

It is possible to give an integral definition of hate based on the descriptions of hate in the book: **hate is a compound negative emotional construct described more particularly as a long-term set of negative attitudes, motivation, emotion, and dispositions against a human or nonhuman target** (Sternberg, 2005a). The target of hate emphasized in all definitions can be a person, a group, animals or a more complex object (landscape, weather, city, country, something supernatural, etc.). Hate always has a particular target but this target is sometimes displaced and/or mythologized ("Enemies of democracy", "Agents of imperialism", "Axis of Evil" , "Enemies of Allah", etc.).

This definition is in coherence with the prototypical approach to the description of hate (Fitness, & Fletcher, 1993), but not with the search for a single psychological category for the description of hate as a motive (Rempel, & Burris, 2005). Obviously, for psychologists the most important targets of hate are humans because for them its consequences are the most tragic. The events of the 21st century show us a huge amount of hate crimes and these sequences of mass violence acts seem to continue.

Some researchers used for *hate* the seldom-used term *sentiment* to describe its multifaceted structure and long-term guiding role in human life, similar to that of the impact of love (Allport, 1950; Frijda, 1994; Shand, 1920), but not so socially constructive. The term seems to be adequate since it connotes something fundamental to the structure of personality, something that can explain to us the emergence of many emotions, motives, tendencies and actions.

Hate, Violence, Aggression, Anger and Hostility

As discussed in the book, all forms of violence can arouse and develop *hate* in both parties of conflicts, despite it being an instrumental aggression, a reaction to a threatened self-image or „threatened egotism", ideological repressions or sadistic activities (Baumeister & Butz, 2005; Staub, 2005). It seems to be easier to shape and increase hate in victims rather than in perpetrators, but in long-term conflicts both groups perceive themselves as victimized by the other group (Bar-Tal, 2002). Palestinians hate the Israelites, Europeans, and Americans as threatening to Muslim values and lifestyle. They celebrated all terrorist actions in Israel against Jews, and the tragic terrorist act of September, 11, 2001 in the USA, when thousands of innocent people from different countries were killed. The event provoked the biggest celebration in Palestine shown by all the world television channels. Perhaps, most of Israelites hate Palestinians too, but their enemy aggression is mostly directed against the guerillas, not civilians (Pedahzur, & Yishai, 1999).

In their turn, psychoanalysts consider hate to be a primary condition of aggression (Kernberg, 1990; 1995). It seems to be mainly enemy, but not instrumental aggression. At the same time, enemy aggression and violence could be provoked by envy or jealousy (Buss, & Shackelford, 1997; De Weerth & Kalma, 1993), as well as by a threat to our Self-conception or social identity (Baumeister, & Butz, 2005), or by thrill-seeking and defending one's turf (McDevitt, Levin & Bennett, 2002). In all cases repeated acts of aggression could lead to the development of hate for the victims of this aggression.

The same two-way interaction is present in the link between *anger* and *hate*. It seems that *anger* can be one of the main reasons for or elements of *hate* and *aggression* (Berkowitz, 2005), but at the same time a target of *hate* provokes more frequent and strong *anger* reactions of a hater (Bar-Tal, 2002). The necessity to differentiate these concepts springs from many cases when experienced *anger* does not lead to *hate* (Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O'Connor, 1987). For example, family conflicts may arouse children's anger and other externalizing and internalizing problems, but very seldom *hate* (Formoso, Gonzales, 2000). On the other hand, *anger* can be produced more or less automatically in a mass violent event through emotional contagion (Hatfield, & Rapson, 2004). Anger is generally a response to specific, personally felt offense, while hate can arise without offense (Gaylin, 2003).

Recent studies of anger as a personality trait (Spielberger, 1999) and proneness to aggression (Griskevicius, Tybur, Gangestad, Perea, Shapiro, & Douglas, 2009; Robinson, Wilkowski, 2010; Tremblay, Dozois, 2009; Wilkowski, & Robinson, 2010; Zillmann, Weaver, 2007) should be discussed in more detail, because trait anger, aggressiveness and hostility constructs are very close to the hate construct. Wilkowski and Robinson

proposed an integrative cognitive model of trait anger and reactive aggression, which includes the processes of *hostile interpretation* (as primary) and *ruminative attention* and effortful control (as secondary). It is argued that *hostile interpretation* and *ruminative attention* intensify trait anger and proneness to aggression, while effortful control decreases anger and aggressive intentions. As the primary process, *hostile interpretation* recruits effortful control and captures *ruminative attention,* but at the same time effortful control can minimize *hostile interpretation* by re-appraisal and ruminative attention by self-distraction (Wilkowski, & Robinson, 2010). This seems to be important for hate, too.

A specific version of *hostile interpretation* in the understanding of hostile envy and resentment was proposed by Feather in his Deserving theory (Feather, 1996; Feather, & Nairn, 2005). According to this theory, haters, just as envious people, should have strong beliefs that the hated person's advantages or benefits are undeserved and are unfair. However, this interpretation is insufficient – an appraisal of harm from hated for me or a social group is necessary for the arousal of the hate.

Hostility could be not only an enemic style of relations with a particular group or individuals based on the hate (envy or jealousy) but a permanent personality trait or a more general attitude to society or to out-groups without hate to particular target.

Hate and Prejudice

Some authors reduce the *hate* construct to the *prejudice* construct with the same factors and tendencies, viewing *prejudice* as a precondition of *hate*: "the seeds of hatred are present in even subtle contemporary forms of prejudice" (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Pearson, 2005, p.213). While it can be accepted that social prejudices involve negative attitudes and emotions to definite out-groups, and hate involves some prejudices, this does not mean that these constructs are identical.

Children very easily assimilate most prejudices from their social environment, but they very seldom lead to the development of hate. At the same time, *prejudice* can be generalized as a primary component of *hate* (Mane, 1993) and as a type of biased stereotypes that haters can assimilate easily from their environment, because they strengthen and justify the existing negative attitudes to a target group. Later the cognitive biases can be over generalized – the transgression of specific members of the enemy group may be seen as characterizing all the members of the group (Beck & Pretzer, 2005). Sometimes particular negative labels (ethnophaulisms) are used for this devaluation. In Latvia the popular label for ethnic Russians - "occupants" - and the one for ethnic Latvians - "Fascists" – were xenofobically distorted overgeneralizations of real events of the past.

A deeper similarity between prejudice and the hate can be traced. Both constructs are mostly directed to a group target. A hated group seems to a hater to be more or less responsible for harm done to him/her and/or to other people, especially to those belonging to the in-group. Such assignment of responsibility for harm-effect results in the hated group's devaluation, derogation or „moral exclusion" (Burris, & Rempel, 2006;

Opotow, 2005). „Moral exclusion" means that all humanstic principles, human rights, freedoms and rules are do not apply to the hated group. The same effect can be achieved through real and symbolic threats to values, norms and well-being or through a threat to *self-esteem* or *self-image* from the out-group (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996; Fein, & Spencer, 1997; Stephan, & Stephan, 1996).

It is important to emphasize the social identity factor in the choice of hate targets. According to the Identity theory of intergroup behavior (Tajfel, & Turner, 1986), belonging to a group automatically creates a preference to one's own group, which, in turn, hypothetically prevents the choice of in-group representatives as a target of hate even in cases of in-group competition. Particular cases of close partners' transformation into hate targets will be discussed below. We may dislike the representatives of our group, cheat and ignore them, but we do not hate them until they are not distanced by sub-typing or sub-grouping (Richards & Hewstone, 2001).

Equally important can be the social belonging of a victim of violence. People's moral outrage or anger is weaker if a victim of abuse or torture belongs to an out-group, not to an in-group (Batson, Chao, & Givens, 2009). It minimizes the probability to develop hate to a perpetrator from one's own group who tortures out-group representatives.

Racial prejudices combined with social justice and equality values can be represented not by direct aggression, but by avoidance of or lack of support to a disliked group (Dovidio, Gaertner & Pearson, 2005). The same outcomes can characterize hate performance: avoidance of contacts and indirect (relational) aggression (for example, conveying biased information about the target of hate: gossip).

It is difficult to imagine xenophobic or racial prejudices in adulthood without hate. In Allport's opinion (1954), the main reason for the rigidity of prejudices and resistance to changes is based on their emotional aspect. It seems that hate ensures the emotional basis of most human prejudgements and prejudices. The core of xenophobia is hate to out-groups. Our studies showed significant positive covariation between hate and ethnic intolerance parameters in ethnic Russians and ethnic Latvians in Latvia (Breslavs, Ābele, Derjabo, Pišinska, & Roze, 2008). The essential consequence of intolerance is social discrimination. The Russian citizens of Latvia strike off Latvian surnames from the voting bulletins of their favourite ('pro-Russian') party during parlamentiary or municipal elections. Latvian citizens prefer to vote for 'pro- Latvian' parties, despite being greatly disappointed in their previous activities. The majority of ethnic Latvians are against granting full citizen rights to Russian-speaking residents, even the right to vote in municipal elections, despite the fact that all European Union citizens who live in other countries have these rights.

Hate and Love

Many contemporary authors, following Spinoza, traced some links, mainly by opposition, between *hate* and *love* (Alford, 2005; Rempel, & Burris, 2005; Royzman et

al., 2005) as the two strongest human passions that have an impact on a person's behavior

throughout his/her life. For example, Rempel & Burris attempted to find single-category

definitions of love and hate by a reformulation of Spinoza's ideas in their integrative

theory of love and hate. They described love as a motive based on the valuing of the other

and associated with the goal of preserving or promoting the other's well-being, while hate

represents a motive based on the devaluing of the other and is associated with the goal of

diminishing or destroying the other's well-being (Rempel, & Burris, 2005, p.297). At the

same time they „suggest that there are multiple forms of the love and hate motives, with

distinctions among their associated goals" (p.301).

      This interpretation of sentiments is understandable because a huge impact of *love*

and *hate* on human motivation and behavior is known from many studies and

observations (Baumeister, 1997; Hatfield & Rapson, 2004; Kleg, 1993; Sternberg, 2005;

Sternberg, & Weis, 2006). Indeed, we cannot start any serious activity without a

sentiment because it is impossible to find a personal sense or meaning outside it (Breslav,

2004). Our curiosity is not universal – it is directed to particular topics and fields. Usually

we explain our interests only by our likes or dislikes that represent our emotional

priorities. All Holliwood movies show theirs characters' strongly goal-directed activities

motivated by sentiments only – love, hate, revenge, envy, and jealousy.

      At the same time the popular opinion that the love in an intimate relationship can

be easily transformed into hate seems doubtful. Mostly we find the displacement of the

complex of positive emotions with the complex of negative emotions (anger, irritation,

and frustration), conflicts and aggression to partners. The reasons for these performances

can be very different: jealousy, short-time or long-time offences, disappointment, but

comes last hate and only after some stages of the destruction of intimate relationships: differentiating, circumscribing, stagnating and avoiding (Knapp & Vangelisti, 1992).

However, the main reason for few studies in the field is the complex nature of sentiments. They cannot be studied directly but only through a variety of their manifestations including emotion, attitudes, and goal-directed actions (Breslav, 2004; Sternberg, & Weis, 2006). Given that love is one of the main values in Christian culture and a very important issue in contemporary family relationships and partnerships, a breakthrough in the studies of *love* in the last decades is understandable (Breslav, 2004; Sternberg, & Barnes, 1988; Sternberg, & Weis, 2006). The focus on the topic of *love* in psychological studies contrasts to the relative negligence of *hate* in spite of the latter having dangerous and destructive social consequences (Kleg, 1993; Staub, 2005; Staub, & Bar-Tal, 2003).

The availability of the *hate* for investigations is especially obstructed because, in contrast to *love,* it is tabooed in contemporary European cultures, similarly to the prohibition of blatant prejudices (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). Research participants very often refused to acknowledge such feelings as socially undesirable. Conducting structured interviews on ethnic stereotypes and interrelations between two main ethnic groups in Latvia: ethnic Latvians and Russians, we revealed a denial of strong negative attitudes and feelings to the out-group (as own feelings), especially in the ethnic Latvians' sample (Breslavs, Abele, Derjabo, Pishinska, & Roze, 2008). The overwhelming majority of participants attribute such feelings to the arousal and stimulation by politicians and mass media.

Until recently only Parish attempted to measure both passions (*love* and *hate*)

empirically (Parish, 1988). At the same time, Parish's Love/Hate checklist represents 45

negative and 45 positive adverbs' list applied to the assessment of parents' interaction

only, but was not an assessment scale for love and hate (Parish, 1988). In this case it is

impossible to assess a particular contribution of love and hate in a partnership.

Indeed, the discussion of the important life-long role of *hate* was previously

substituted in psychological studies partly by *anger*, *hostility,* and *aggression* issues

(Berkowitz, 2005), or by *prejudice* and *social discrimination* issues (Dovidio, Gaertner,

& Pearson, 2005). But a similar substitution is observable in previous marriage and close

relationships' studies from which the *love* concept was absent (Berscheid, & Walster,

1977; Byrne, 1971; Kiesler, & Baral, 1970). At the end of the 1980-ies many

psychologists shared Bernard Murstein's opinion that the *love* concept is like the former

Austrian-Hungarian Empire consisting of many, sometimes incompatible, parts

(Murstein, 1988, p.33), however, this did not prevent subsequent studies in the field,

including his own. Today the view on love construct's availability to study in

mainstream social psychology and other branches of psychology became more optimistic

(Sternberg, & Weis, 2006). **It is high time to start investigating the *hate* construct as**

well.

From Triangular to Two-factor Structure of Hate

Sternberg's model of hate based on his earlier *love* model was chosen as the starting point of measure development (Sternberg, 2003; 2005b) as the first psychological model of hate. His duplex theory of hate comprises two aspects: a) hate, like love, has its origin in stories that characterize the target of the emotion; b) the triangular structure generated by these stories. In this triangular stucture, hate comprises three elements: *negation of intimacy*, *passion*, and *commitment* (Figure1). The first one involves the *seeking of distance* and comprises *repulsion* and *disgust* to the hated. The second involves *anger* and *fear* as a reaction to a threat. The third involves the cognitions of devaluation and diminution through *contempt* for the targeted group (Sternberg, 2005b, pp.38-39).

Figure 1. Three-dimensional structural model of Hate by Sternberg (Breslavs & Tyumeneva, 2008).

The 45-item Likert scale *My antipathies* with a 9-point range from *does not apply to me* (1) to *strongly applies to me* (9) was developed according to Sternberg's three-dimensional structural model of hate (Breslav, 2004; Sternberg, 2003) and the second version of his inventory on love (Sternberg, 1997). The scale consists of three subscales

on Negation of Intimacy, Passion (Fear + Anger), and Commitment (Devaluation). Four

stages of data collecting and component factor analysis of these data were conducted in

Russia and Latvia.

At the third stage of the study only 18 items showed good psychometric features

and the second factor – Passion - was split, because the surviving „fear items" had good

loadings on the Negation of Intimacy subscale, but „anger items" – on the Commitment

subscale. The forth stage of the study confirmed the two-factor structure of hate: the first

factor was labelled *passive hate* and second – *active hate* (Breslavs & Tyumeneva, 2008).

The former is characterized by the fear of the target and the tendency to avoid contacts or

to increase the distance, while the latter is characterized by condemnation, anger and the

desire to punish the target. (See Figure 2). More often not an individual but a group was

considered by participants to be the target of anthipathies, which seems to be a

confirmation of the intergroup nature of the hate. This two-factor structure is in

accordance with Beck's theory who held that the fight-flight reaction can be an integral

part of hate, haters feel compelled either to escape or eliminate the threat by

incapacitating or killing the enemy (Beck, 1999).

Figure 2. Two-factor model of Hate (Breslavs & Tyumeneva, 2008).

At the same time, we should take into account that hate research is at the initial

stage of its development and we should be cautious when discussing the difference,

overlapping or similarity of the constructs involved. For example, intergroup *anger* and

fear seem to be very different in participants' behavior, which does not rule out that they

are different outcomes of the same sentiment in different situations (Mackie, Devos, &

Smith, 2000).

We should take into account the substantial differences between the target of love

and that of hate. Hypothetically it could be assumed that the former is more particular and

individual, while the latter – more diffuse and oriented on out-groups. Romantic love

exists primarily in the framework of interpersonal relations (Furman, & Wehner, 1997),

but hate, like prejudice, exists primarily in the framework of intergroup relations. This

does not exclude that hate can be directed toward a particular person, but this is not a

rule.

Conclusions

Our analysis shows that the construct of hate cannot be understand in the studies

of aggression, violence, prejudices, hostility and anger. The study of all these

constructs cannot substitute the study of hate as a very important mechanism of

destructive behavior. The study of hate will help understand many links between

'good' values and attitudes and 'bad' behavior and explain such phenomena as hate

crimes, social discrimination, escapism and domestic violence.

The obtained empirical results show that hate cannot be considered to be an

opposite to love in the framework of the three-dimensional structural model

(Sternberg, 2005b). One of the main reasons is the difference between these

sentiments' targets and contexts of social relationships.

It would be more promising to differentiate two main components of hate: a) *passive*

hate, including fear, distancing, and avoidance; b) *active hate*, including

condemnation, anger, desire to punish, directed at the struggle with the hated target.

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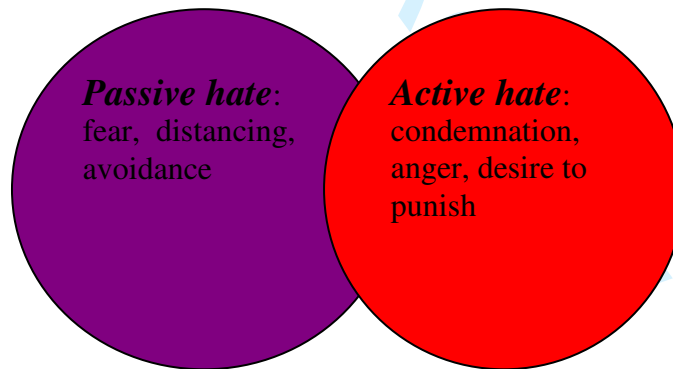Figure 1. Three-dimensional model of Hate by Sternberg (Breslavs & Tyumeneva, 2008).

Figure 2. Two-factor model of Hate (Breslavs & Tyumeneva, 2008).