

The Application of Social Psychology in Addressing Racial Discrimination

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Abstract: This paper aims at explore the application of social psychology in addressing racial discrimination. Racial discrimination is a global social issue that has profound impacts on individual and community mental health. Through the lens of social psychology, we can gain a deeper understanding of the roots of this issue, identify its impacts, and find solutions. This paper will elaborate on the application of social identity theory and group conflict theory in the phenomenon of racial discrimination, and discuss how social interventions can be used to change negative racial perceptions and behaviors. Furthermore, we will examine how the understanding of racial discrimination from the perspective of social psychology can promote changes in public policies, thereby addressing racial discrimination at a more macro level.

1. Introduction

Racial discrimination is a global problem, which exists in all societies and cultures and has a far-reaching impact on individuals and groups. Racial discrimination stems from stereotypes and prejudices about different races, which is formed by our cognition and attitude. Therefore, if we want to change racial discrimination, we first need to change our cognition and attitude towards different races^[1].

However, it is not easy to change our cognition and attitude towards different races. Our cognition and attitude is formed by our experience and environment, which are deeply rooted in our psychology and behavior, and are the way we look at the world and process information. Therefore, to change our cognition and attitude towards different races, we need to adopt some effective strategies.

In this paper, I will discuss how to change our cognition and attitude towards different races through cognitive remodeling, direct contact and educational intervention, so as to change racial discrimination. These strategies are based on the theories and research of psychology and pedagogy, and they have been proved to be effective^[2].

2. Define racial discrimination

2.1 The explanation of racial discrimination by social psychology theory

2.1.1 Social identity theory

The theory of social identity was put forward by Tajfel and Turner in 1979, which explains how individuals form their self-concept by identifying with specific social groups. This process of identification involves treating oneself as a part of a group and classifying people inside and outside the group. This classification process may lead us to hold a more positive attitude towards people belonging to our own group and a more negative attitude towards people belonging to other groups, which is called "inner group prejudice".

Under the background of racial discrimination, social identity theory can help us understand why people hold different attitudes and behaviors towards people of different races. For example, if a group identified with a person holds negative ideas about a certain race, then the person may also hold negative attitudes and behaviors towards people of this race ^[3]. This is a form of racial discrimination.

2.1.2 Group conflict theory

Another theory is group conflict theory, which was put forward by Sherif and others in 1961. The theory holds that when two or more groups compete for limited resources, it may lead to conflict and hostility.

This theory can explain a form of racial discrimination, that is, when people of different races compete for limited social resources (such as jobs and educational opportunities), hostility and discrimination may occur. For example, if a group thinks that people of another race are threatening their job opportunities, they may have negative attitudes and behaviors towards people of this race.

3. Causes of racial discrimination

The word racial discrimination is very common in modern society, however, its understanding is not always clear. Racial discrimination stems from the cognitive bias towards racial differences, cultures and customs, and the biased attitude caused by it ^[4]. This cognitive injustice and attitude deviation come from many factors, including inherent cultural differences, socialization process, and inequality in social, political and economic structure. According to social cognitive theory, people shape and update their cognitive concepts according to past experiences and environmental stimuli, which in turn determines individual behaviors, attitudes and emotional reactions ^[5].

However, in the world around us, the problem of racial discrimination still exists obviously. For example, according to the statistics of the National Advisory Council of the United States, in 2018 alone, more than 30% of Americans reported that they had experienced racial discrimination in public life (National Advisory Committee, 2018). On the other hand, racial discrimination is still a universal problem in the world. This is not only reflected in the problem of prejudice and discrimination, but also includes the systematic oppression and injustice of race and the inequality of social and economic status ^[6].

Although we have made a lot of efforts at the individual and social levels, this problem has not been fundamentally solved. Part of the reason is that there are still misunderstandings and deficiencies in public understanding of racial discrimination. Many people regard racial discrimination as a personal problem, but ignore the systematic and structural causes of racial discrimination. They understand that racial discrimination is the prejudice and discrimination of specific individuals, rather than the key role played by unfair social systems and policies ^[7].

4. The importance of social psychology in solving racial discrimination.

Therefore, to solve the problem of racial discrimination, we need to make changes in several aspects. First of all, we need to improve the public's understanding of the phenomenon and causes of racial discrimination and help them see the systematic, structural and historical nature of racial discrimination. In addition, we also need to change the cognition and attitude of individuals and society towards different races. At this point, cognitive intervention strategies, direct contact strategies and educational intervention strategies all have great potential.

5. Social and psychological impact of racial discrimination.

Racial discrimination refers to the unfair treatment or discrimination of an individual or group based on the difference of race or skin color. This kind of behavior can be obvious, such as apartheid and racial violence; It can also be hidden, such as racial prejudice and racial stereotypes. Whether it is obvious or hidden, racial discrimination has a far-reaching impact on individuals and groups.

First of all, racial discrimination has a serious impact on individual mental health. Many studies have found that racial discrimination will increase individual stress and anxiety, reduce individual self-esteem and self-efficacy, and lead to individual mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety^[8].

Secondly, racial discrimination has also affected the social and economic status of individuals. Many studies have found that racial discrimination will limit individual education and employment opportunities, reduce individual income and wealth, and increase the risk of individual poverty and social exclusion.

Finally, racial discrimination has also affected social harmony and stability. Many studies have found that racial discrimination will aggravate social division and conflict, destroy social harmony and stability, and hinder social development and progress^[9].

Therefore, racial discrimination is a serious social problem that needs everyone's attention and efforts. In order to solve this problem, we first need to understand and change our cognition and attitude towards different races, which is the key to change racial discrimination.

6. The application of social intervention in solving racial discrimination.

6.1 Definition of social intervention

Social intervention refers to actions taken by individuals, groups or institutions to modify or change social conditions, social relations patterns or social behavior forms in communities or societies. The purpose of these interventions is to improve the social environment and promote the overall well-being of individuals.

6.2 How can social intervention change negative racial attitudes and behaviors?

Social intervention can play a key role in changing negative racial attitudes and behaviors. It can take many forms, including educational projects, community initiatives and policy changes.

First of all, the design of educational projects can challenge stereotypes, promote understanding and empathy among different ethnic groups, and cultivate a common sense of identity. These projects can be implemented in schools, workplaces and other social environments. They can include activities such as group dialogues, role-playing exercises and diversity training, which can help individuals understand and question their prejudices and prejudices.

Secondly, community-based initiatives can also help to change negative racial attitudes and

behaviors. These initiatives can provide opportunities for people from different ethnic backgrounds to interact and cooperate in a meaningful way. By creating shared experiences, these initiatives can break down barriers, build trust and promote mutual understanding and respect.

Third, policy changes can also promote changes in negative racial attitudes and behaviors. Policies to promote racial equality and prohibit racial discrimination can send a strong message about social norms and expectations, which can influence individuals' attitudes and behaviors.

6.3 Examples of successful social intervention

A successful example of social intervention is the "contact hypothesis" experiment conducted by psychologist Gordon Allport in 1950s. This experiment involves bringing people from different ethnic backgrounds together and making them work for a common goal. The results show that under appropriate conditions, this kind of contact can reduce prejudice and promote understanding and cooperation between different ethnic groups.

Another example is the "blue eyes/brown eyes" exercise conducted by teacher Jane Elliott in 1960s. This experiment includes dividing students into several groups according to the color of their eyes, and treating them differently according to this random feature. The purpose of this exercise is to simulate the experience of racial discrimination and teach students the irrationality and harmfulness of this discrimination. This exercise is very effective in raising students' awareness of racial issues and promoting sympathy and understanding.

In a word, social intervention can be a powerful tool to solve racial discrimination. By changing social conditions and patterns of social relations, social intervention helps to challenge stereotypes, promote understanding and sympathy, and cultivate a common sense of identity among different ethnic groups.

7. The application of social psychology theory in understanding racial discrimination.

7.1 Social Identity Theory

7.1.1 Introduction of social identity theory

Social identity theory is a psychological theory put forward by Henry Tagifier and John Turner in 1970s. The theory holds that people's self-identity partly stems from the social groups they identify with, and people often hold positive prejudice and discrimination against the groups they belong to.

7.1.2 How does social identity theory explain racial discrimination?

Social identity theory explains the psychological mechanism of racial discrimination. According to this theory, people tend to classify themselves into certain social groups and have a sense of identity with these groups. This sense of belonging also leads to people's exclusion and discrimination against other groups. Under the background of racial discrimination, individuals may have an excessive sense of identity with their own ethnic groups, while at the same time being hostile and demeaning to other ethnic groups.

7.2 Group Conflict Theory

7.2.1 Introduce the theory of group conflict

The theory of group conflict was put forward by sociologist Lewis Kessel. The theory holds that when resources between different groups are limited and demand conflicts, competition will occur,

which will lead to conflicts. This conflict may manifest itself as prejudice, discrimination and hostility.

7.2.2 How does group conflict theory explain racial discrimination?

The theory of group conflict provides another perspective to explain racial discrimination. When the resources between different ethnic groups are limited, such as employment opportunities and educational resources, competition will occur, which will lead to ethnic conflicts. For example, if one ethnic group thinks that another ethnic group is threatening their resources, they may be hostile to this group, which may lead to racial discrimination.

Generally speaking, social identity theory and group conflict theory provide us with two different perspectives to understand racial discrimination. Social identity theory emphasizes the individual's pursuit of self-identity and rejection of others, while group conflict theory emphasizes the influence of resource competition on group relations. Both of these theories provide an important theoretical basis for us to understand and solve racial discrimination.

8. The influence of social psychology on public policy.

8.1 How does social psychology provide an understanding of racial discrimination?

Social psychology provides us with profound insights into racial discrimination by studying individual behavior and psychological changes in social interaction. For example, both social identity theory and group conflict theory reveal the psychological mechanism of racial discrimination. The former emphasizes the individual's pursuit of self-identity and rejection of others, while the latter emphasizes the influence of resource competition on group relations. These theories provide a theoretical basis for us to understand the emergence and persistence of racial discrimination.

8.2 How does this understanding promote the change of public policy?

The theory and research results of social psychology can provide scientific basis for public policy making and help policy makers identify and solve social problems more accurately. For example, after understanding the psychological mechanism of racial discrimination, policy makers can formulate more precise policies to reduce the occurrence of racial discrimination, such as improving education level, strengthening multicultural education, and promoting laws on racial equality.

8.3 Give examples to illustrate how public policies can solve the problem of racial discrimination at a more macro level.

In the United States, a series of public policies after the civil rights movement are examples of solving racial discrimination at the macro level. For example, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited discrimination based on race, color, religion, or sex. The passage of this bill marked that the US government officially recognized and began to solve the problem of racial discrimination.

In addition, education policy is also an important means to solve the problem of racial discrimination. For example, many countries and regions have implemented inclusive education policies, requiring schools to reflect social diversity in curriculum and teaching activities, and cultivate students' cross-cultural understanding and respect.

Generally speaking, the influence of social psychology on public policy is mainly reflected in providing scientific basis for policy making and helping policy makers to identify and solve social problems more accurately. On the issue of racial discrimination, the understanding of social psychology can promote the change of public policy, thus solving the problem of racial discrimination at a more macro level.

9. Conclusion and future research direction

Racial discrimination is a worldwide problem, which greatly affects the quality of life and opportunities of different ethnic groups. However, through the intervention strategy of social psychology, we can effectively change racial discrimination. These strategies include cognitive remodeling, direct contact and educational intervention, which all provide us with effective methods to change racial discrimination^[10].

First of all, cognitive remodeling can help us change our cognition of different races, thus changing our attitude. For example, we can change our understanding of this race by learning and understanding the history and culture of different races. This process requires our active participation and reflection, and we need to constantly check and challenge our prejudices and stereotypes in order to achieve cognitive changes.

Secondly, direct contact strategy can help us to establish positive interpersonal relationships with different races, thus changing our attitudes. For example, we can directly communicate and cooperate with people of different races by participating in multicultural activities. This process requires our active participation and openness, and we need to be willing to contact and accept people of different races in order to establish positive interpersonal relationships.

Finally, educational intervention can help us to change our cognition and attitude towards different races through education and training. For example, we can understand and respect the cultures of different races through multicultural education. This process requires the active participation and innovation of educators, who need to design and implement effective multicultural education to achieve the educational goals.

Although these strategies provide us with effective ways to change racial discrimination, we need to do more research to understand the actual effects and possible improvements of these strategies. For example, we can conduct empirical research to test the effects of these strategies in different environments and groups. We can also conduct theoretical research to explore the theoretical basis and possible improvement of these strategies.

Generally speaking, changing racial discrimination is a long and complicated process, which requires the joint efforts and sustained efforts of each of us. However, through the intervention strategy of social psychology, we can effectively change racial discrimination and achieve the goal of racial equality.

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