

Inter-minority Racial Prejudice and Anti-White Bias: an Underestimated Phenomenon

Naima HARBI
University of Skikda. Algeria

Abstract: Race has been a problematic issue for the United States since the beginning of its existence. The issue of race relations between the white majority and the different minorities, particularly the White- Black divide, is subject of wide debate. In this paper, we will shed light on an unusual aspect of race relations, which is the existence of racial prejudice between the minorities themselves. Indeed, racial prejudice is not the exclusivity of Whites and even minorities are guilty of what they reproach to the white majority. The ignorance and denial of such phenomenon inhibits the acknowledgement of such problem. This is deteriorating the race relations in general, and is further sinking the minorities into their subordinate status. By using the descriptive and analytical methods, our aim is to shed light on the phenomenon that is dangerously underestimated. This article examines first the causes of the ignorance and denial of the phenomena. Next, it ponders on the indications of the existence of the phenomenon. It concludes that inter-minority racial prejudice further spoils race relations and unless it is also acknowledged, a post-racial society would remain a myth.

Key words: race, racism, prejudice, discrimination, ethnic minorities, white majority, inequality.

Résumé: La question de race a été problématique pour les Etats-Unis depuis l'aube de leur existence. Les relations raciales entre la majorité blanche et les différentes minorités particulièrement le schisme Blanc-Noir font l'objet de vifs débats. Dans cet article, nous nous efforcerons d'éclaircir un aspect inhabituel des relations raciales : l'existence de préjugés raciaux entre les minorités elles-mêmes. En effet, le préjugé racial n'est pas l'exclusivité des blancs et même les minorités sont coupables de ce qu'elles reprochent à la majorité blanche. L'ignorance et la dénégation de ce phénomène entravent la reconnaissance de ce problème. Ceci non seulement détériore les relations raciales en général mais il fait aussi sombrer les minorités dans leur positions subordonnées. En utilisant les méthodes descriptives et analytiques, le but de travail est examiner ce phénomène qui est dangereusement sous-estimé. Cet article examine les causes de l'ignorance et de la dénégation du phénomène. Après cela, les indications de l'existence du phénomène sont ensuite analysées. Finalement, ce travail conclut que le préjugé racial entre les minorités gâte encore plus les relations raciales et à moins d'une reconnaissance, la société post-raciale restera un mythe.

Mots clés : race, racisme, préjudice, discrimination, minorités ethniques, majorité blanche.

Introduction

The American experience is undeniably deeply linked to the race problem and one inexhaustible matter of debate among ordinary people and scholars is the extent of racism in today's American society. One reason accounting for the persistence of racism is the depth of racial prejudice. Racial prejudice is a form of racism and it represents the invisible part of the iceberg; racial discrimination, another form, symbolizing the visible part. This aspect is highlighted in the definition of racial prejudice. It is a pre-formed personal opinion about individuals on the basis of their race (Ricker and Warren). It has also been defined as pre-judgments that are generally negative and biased that one group feels against members of another racial group (The Am. Heritage Dictionary). As for racial discrimination, it is preferential treatment of individuals on the basis of their belonging to a given racial group (Pager and Shepherd 182). Thus to sum up, racial prejudice concerns thoughts and attitudes while discrimination refers to actions. As for the terms of "minority" and "majority", generally what is implied is a numerical connotation, the majority group being more numerous than the minority group. In addition, to that sense of numerical superiority of the majority group is the essential implication of domination; hence the majority is in a dominant position while the minority is in a subordinate status (Schaefer). In the case of the United States, the racial majority is the whites and the racial minorities include the Blacks, the Hispanics, the Asian-American, the Natives When we think of racism or racial prejudice what comes immediately to our mind is the white majority as the responsible for this flaw. Nevertheless, in this work, we will strive to evaluate a less familiar aspect of the issue which is inter-minority racial prejudice and anti-white bias i.e. racial prejudice between the minorities themselves as well as prejudice towards the white majority. After a brief overview of the causes of ignorance and denial, we will peer into two unusual aspects of the topic which are racial prejudice between the minorities as well as racial prejudice towards the white majority.

1- Inter-Minority Racial Prejudice: the Causes of Ignorance and Denial

Inter-minority racial prejudice and anti-white bias are two phenomena that are difficult to evaluate. This is due to several reasons. First and foremost, racial prejudice is pre-formed personal opinions or attitudes; thus, it pertains to the mind. Assessing the mentalities is by excellence a difficult if not impossible task. This is why the extent of racial prejudice has been historically difficult to evaluate. One way often used to prove the existence or persistence of

racial prejudice has been to tackle racial discrimination which is as said before the visible part of the iceberg. Indeed, generally speaking, prejudiced opinions may lead individuals to discriminate. Thus, one can have an idea of the persistence of prejudice through providing evidence of racial discrimination. Nevertheless, two hurdles emerge here. First, having been outlawed, racial discrimination has become less overt, more subtle thus more difficult to prove (National Research Council 15). Secondly, racial discrimination may not for a minority of cases be caused by prejudice but as one sociologist, Francis Eppes, noted: "it may also result from ethnocentric feelings that are devoid of animus (343)." As a consequence, in face of insufficient evidence of the existence of such phenomenon, people prefer to ignore or deny its very existence.

Second, there exists a lack of information on the issue. This can be explained by the fact that it is difficult to provide satisfactory evidence of attitudes or opinions. The most common methods to evaluate mentalities are polls. Nevertheless, polls often lack reliability and validity. Indeed, the interviewee may hide the truth, distort it or lie altogether. This tendency is the rule for that issue in particular. Indeed, the United States claims to have entered a post-racial era in which race does no longer matter and in which it became taboo to even refer to it. Third, this phenomenon is underestimated because racial prejudice is viewed as less harmful than racism or racial discrimination. In the latter, the majority uses its power to subordinate and deny rights and opportunities to the minorities. As it is generally acknowledged by scholars among them P. A. Bidol in *Developing New Perspectives on Race*, racism is a combination of power and prejudice (qtd in "Definitions of Racism.") Accordingly, Dr Delmo Della-Dora asserts that: "Racism is different from racial prejudice, hatred, or discrimination. Racism involves having the power to carry out systematic discriminatory practices through the major institutions of our society (qtd in "Def. of Racism".) These two elements- prejudice and power- are essential for racism to occur. Indeed, a group which is powerless cannot discriminate against another; it can just breed its prejudices in silence. It is also true that without prejudice power does not systematically lead to racism. Many people in power, because they have no prejudice, implement and support just and non-racist policies discriminating against no other group on the basis of its race. Following this reasoning inter-minority racism or anti-white racism do not exist, the minorities failing to have sufficient power in society. This assumption is confirmed by the National Education Association according to which:

"In the United States at present, only whites can be racists, since whites dominate and control the institutions that create and enforce American

cultural norms and values... Blacks and other third world peoples do not have access to the power to enforce any prejudices they may have, so they cannot, by definition, be racists” (qtd in Conrad 201).

On the contrary, prejudice concerns “only” feelings or expressions of hostility as it is explained by Gordon Allport: “Prejudice is an antipathy based on a faulty and inflexible generalization. It may be felt or expressed”(qtd in Mills and Polanowsky 11). Generally, the impact of words or even thoughts is underestimated even though we know that sometimes words may be more destructive to the personality or self-confidence of an individual than any discriminatory or racist act. Thus despite the general tendency to ignore or deny that problem, inter-minority racial prejudice is a reality as the following indicates.

2- Indications of the Existence of inter-minority racial prejudice and anti-white bias

Even if this phenomenon is largely ignored; its significance should not be overlooked. The existence of hostility between the different races or towards the white majority may prove that the minorities themselves are guilty of what they reproach to the whites. So how can racial minorities condemn the white majority for a defect that they have themselves?

First, episodic confrontations between the different racial minorities as well as intermittent aggressions perpetuated against either minority individuals or white persons reflect a certain degree of intolerance. One famous example given in the scholarly literature is the Los Angeles Riots which occurred in 1992. That event illustrates the clashes that may happen between members of minorities. In this case, the confrontations concerned two minorities in particular: the Blacks and the Koreans. This is an event of large scale and of rare violence. Discussing the black-Koreans clashes that occurred within the larger scale of the riots should not make us forget the real motives behind that violent demonstrations and protest. Indeed, these mass outbursts of anger occurred after the acquittal of police officers in a trial for undue violence against an Afro-American pursued for excessive speed (McDonald). Several policemen in fact were seen to beat severely the young Black. On the margin of this massive protest against anti-Black discrimination and court subjectivity towards white offenders, several confrontations occurred between the Blacks and the Koreans. The underlying causes for these incidents is, according to many sociologists, the rapidly-acquired business success of the Koreans who came to the United States after the Blacks but who made better than them.ⁱ This created resentment on the part of the Afro-Americans especially since the Koreans tend to down-look and exploit Black workers at their service (Chin). Even if the major cause of the clash between these two minorities seems to be in relation to their socio-economic status,

racial prejudice is undoubtedly the underlying factor behind those conflicts. Other examples may be cited as daily clashes between the Hispanics (the Mexicans especially) and the Blacks in the ghettos.

Second, even if that is a largely underestimated phenomenon, numerous episodes exist corroborating the existing prejudice between minorities. The animosity seems to be the most violent between two particular groups: the Asian-Americans and the Afro-Americans and the Afro-Americans and the Latinos. Accordingly, two stories illustrate that prejudiced attitude. In 1999, soon after her wedding, Farook Batcha, an Afro-American woman, is believed to have committed suicide because her husband, of Asian descent, repeatedly called her Black (Figueroa). In 2008, a 68 years-old South Asian hired a professional killer to murder his daughter-in-law simply because she was Afro-American. Though such episodes may not be frequent, they reflect the reality of inter-minority animosity.

Third, hate crimes perpetrated on minority members on the basis of their appurtenance to a particular group may provide good insight at the existence of prejudice between minorities. Generally speaking, the exact rate of hate crimes is seldom accurately known since the majority of these crimes are not reported. Nevertheless, a growing number of associations, organizations and entities assert the will to get these crimes out of silence and oblivion. Accordingly, the Federal Bureau of Investigation reports every year the rate and nature of hate crimes. The F. B. I. describes different degrees of hate crimes ranging from “simple assault, intimidation, aggravated assault, rape to murder” (“Hate Crimes statistics”). According to it, for 2011, almost half the hate crimes were motivated by racial bias, and then in order, we have sexual orientation, religion, national origin and last disability as motives for committing hate crimes. Provided that 46.9% of the hate crimes were racially motivated, this shows us the persistence of racial bias and prejudice as significant factors influencing the relations between Americans (“hate crime statistics”). Among the crimes motivated by racial bias, the majority of the victims were Black in 72% of the cases. Notably and of importance to this paper, 16.7% of the hate crimes resulted from anti-white bias. The rest of the victims are Asians and Native Americans. Thus, anti-white prejudice is a reality since almost 1/5 of the victims of racially- motivated hate crimes target whites simply on the basis of their whiteness (“hate crimes Statistics”). The importance of hate crimes as indicators of the inter-minority relations is of significance since generally, hate crimes illustrate the presence of prejudice between minority groups. Happening most of the times between a limited number of individuals, the hate crime once committed gains ground and may deteriorate the existing relations between given groups.

Fourth, polls generally show that minority groups hold racially prejudiced attitudes or opinions towards other minorities. This tendency is clearly demonstrated through some polls that are considered as somehow reliable. A national poll commissioned by the National Conference of Christians and Jews reveals the adoption of stereotypes by minorities towards other minority group. Indeed, according to that poll, 46 % of Hispanics and 42% of Blacks view the Asians as “unscrupulous, crafty and devious in business (“Polls of minorities”). Secondly, generally people believe that Hispanics “tend to have bigger families than they are able to support.” 68% of Asians and 49% of blacks hold that view. Lastly, 31% of Asians and 28% of Hispanics think that Blacks “want to live on welfare” (“Polls of Minorities”). What can be deduced from that survey is that minorities widely share prejudiced opinions towards other minority groups. In fact, they tend to be even more prejudiced than the whites themselves which is an alarming reality. This survey also highlights the presence of other types of prejudice held by minorities towards other minorities such as religious prejudice or prejudice motivated by ethnicity. To begin with, 48% of Hispanics and 41% of whites believe that the “Muslim religion supports terrorism(“Polls of Minorities”). Here, almost half the Hispanics share the association of Islam with terrorism that is normally a predominately white-held overgeneralization. Secondly, that “Catholics are too controlled by Church” is a belief shared by 57% of the Asian-Americans as well as by 49% of the Blacks. In addition, the widely held stereotype concerning the excessive love of money by the Jews: “Jews choose money over people” is a belief shared by 54% of the Blacks and 43% of Hispanics (“Polls of Minorities”). Even if these stereotypes concern religion or ethnicity, they shed light on the existence of prejudice among minority groups. In addition to that and as mentioned at the beginning of this paper, an amalgamation is often made in people’s mind between prejudice caused by race or ethnicity or religion. For common people, all these are associated with racial prejudice which in fact enlarges the scope of this phenomenon.

3- The Extent of Inter-minority Prejudice

When describing inter-minority relations, scholars diverge on how to depict the general trend for inter-minority relations: are the relations between minorities more conflictual or are they more characterized by consensus? Most scholars (such as John Lie, Carol C. Gould, Robert G. Lee; Nancy Abelman) actually agree that the general trend is solidarity between the different minorities. According to them media exaggerate the extent of inter-minority conflicts and animosity (qtd in “On the Sociology of Inter-minority Conflict”). As historian William Chafe asserts: “Although it was true that the minorities had strikingly different problems, they

suffered from modes of oppression that in some ways were similar” (330). Indeed, it is their subordinate status and their common suffering at the hand of the white majority which unite the different racial minorities and bind them together in a common front. Sociologist Robert Figueroa corroborates this tendency: “the common experiences with race will push people of colour together and in conflict with whites [...] People of colour generally identify with each other through common political goals” (Figueroa). This political solidarity is due, according to the same author, to “shared experiences of racism (Figueroa).” In fact what is expected is that the different minorities are all disadvantaged in different degrees in a white dominant society, and so they should logically unite against a common foe to enhance their position and status in the American society. Examining inter-minority relations more closely, one can denote a fragmentation of the inter-minority cohesion that characterized the civil rights movement era and the subsequent decades. Thus, the general solidarity is dwindling and the relations between minorities are increasingly characterized by prejudiced attitudes and animosity. This deterioration of the relations between the different minorities is highly deplorable since as Manisha Gupta noted this animosity between the minorities serves the interests of the white majority (“Coalition or Competition”). Indeed, while divided, minorities are weaker and thus the white majority can continue to enjoy its supremacy.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, we can say that inter-minority prejudice and anti-white bias are two phenomena that are largely underestimated in the American society. Generally, people tend to ignore or deny the existence of these phenomena. Accordingly, few researches exist on the topic and as a result, few data can be found on this subject. Nevertheless, the different researches existing on the issue corroborate to conclude that these phenomena are on the rise. Thus, their significance should not be overlooked for several reasons. First, it proves that even minority members may be guilty of prejudice, a defect generally and exclusively attributed to the white majority. Even if the minority members cannot be racists since lacking power, they do nevertheless hold prejudiced attitudes towards members of other minorities. According to surveys, they tend to be even more prejudiced than the white majority itself. Second, it also denotes the continuing significance of race in affecting social relations in a so-called color-blind American society. Lastly, the fact that even the minorities may feel racial prejudice towards other minorities or towards the white majority further undermines the struggle against racial prejudice.

What if, as estimations reveal, the whites will no longer be majoritarian in the following few decades? Will the whites lose their supremacy together with their numerical superiority or

will they continue to dominate even in numerical inferiority like what happened with the South African case? What would be the relations between the different minorities? What if the minorities lack only the power to be racists? The whole centuries-old racial structure may crumble because of this prevision. For the moment, one cannot deny that the United States have not as they pretend reached a post-racial era yet and the denial of the continuing significance of race cannot lead to an eventual eradication of racial prejudice. One cannot make a problem disappear by ignoring it. This is the case also for the increasing prejudiced attitudes between the minorities themselves.

References

1. BAUMESTER, Roy F. & EPPES F, eds. 2010. *Advanced Social psychology: the State of the Science*. USA: Oxford UP.
2. CHAFE, WILLIAM H. 1986. *The Unfinished Journey: America since World War II*. New York: Oxford UP.
3. CHIN, KU- SUP. 2008. "On the Sociology of Inter-minority Conflict: a Conceptual Framework." American Sociological Association (31 July 2008). 6 June 2013. <http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p241404_index.html>
4. CONRAD, MARK T., ed. 2011. *The Philosophy of Spike Lee*. USA: UP of Kentucky. "Definitions of Racism." Clarke University, n. d. PDF File. 3 May 2013. <www.clarke.edu/media/.../definitionsofracism.pdf>
5. FIGUEROA, R. 2012. "Black, Brown, and Between: a Study of Interminority Relations between African- Americans and south-Asians." 11 Dec. 2012. Web. 6 May 2013. <<http://ryfigueroa.blogspot.com/2012/12/black-brown-and-between-study-of.html>>
6. GUPTA, M. 2012. "Coalition or Competiion?: the Effects of Category Salience on Inter-minority Prejudice." Diss. University of massachussetts. 10 May 2013. <http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/2/4/1/4/0/pages241404/p241404-3.php>
7. MARGER, MARTIN N. 2012. *Race and Ethnic Relations, American and Global Perspectives*. Ed. Linda Schreiber-Ganster. USA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
8. MILLS, JON & JANUSZ A. POLANOWSKY. 1997. *Ontology of Prejudice*. The Neverthelands: Rodopi B.V.
9. National Research Council. 2004. *Measuring Racial Discrimination*. Ed. Rebecca M. Blank, Marilyn Dabady, and Constance F. Citro. Washington, DC: The National academies Press.
10. PAGER, DEVAH & HANA SHEPHERD. 2008. "The Sociology of Discrimination: Racial Discrimination in Employment, Housing, Credit, and Consumer Markets." Princeton University, 2008. Web. 2 July 2013. 181-209. <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2915460/>>
11. SCHAEFER, RICHARD T. 1993. "What is a Minority Group?" Richard T. Schaefer. 1993. Web. 13 Jun <http://racism.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=280:minor0101&catid=15&Itemid=118> 2015
12. RANGE MC DONALD, PATRICK. " LA Riots- Then & Now." *Laweekly.com*. LA Weekly, 26 April 2012. Web. 10 August 2015. <www.laweekly.com/microsites/la-riot>

13. RICKER, BRIAN. D, and KELLY WARREN "Racism." University of Cincinnati, 2006. Web. 20 Dec. 2012. <<http://www.psc.uc.edu/SH.racism.com/>>
 14. The Federal Bureau of Investigation. 2011. *Hate Crime Statistics*. FBI. 2011. Web. 20 June 2014. <<http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/hate-crime/2011/resources/about-hate-crime-statistics>>
 15. Associated Press. 1994. "Poll of Minorities Finds Bias, Anger towards Whites: Survey:National Conference Uncovers a Yawning Gulf in Perceptions of Equal Opportunity." *Latimes.com*. Los Angeles Times. 28 June 2013. <http://articles.latimes.com/1994-03-05/local/me-30253_1_national-conference>
 16. "Racial Prejudice." 2012. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. 5th Ed. 2011. Web. 13 Oct. 2014.
-