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Becoming 'Objects of Fear' and Relationships to Racist Thinking
Determining the "Perching and Flights" of the Perceptions of Race Series

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ABSTRACT

In recent years it seems that violence against black folks has exponentially increased. However, the case is that this ‘exponential increase’ is really bringing to the fore historically persisting results of Jim Crow beliefs, laws, and practices. The ability to record such events so readily paints a façade of some increase in such racial violence. When the excesses of violence and discrimination against black folks has persisted for centuries. And the sociohistoric residue of folks’ attitudes and practices has perdured through the generations of individuals. How many times have we heard the phrase, “I’m not racist, I have black friends”? Or “I feared for my life, so I shot in self-defense”? This manuscript, as a continuing series of working hypotheses, contends that these events are related. Toward gathering the knowledge about individual reasoning processes, these events are related by either supporting or thwarting that racist thinking is a product of fear.

Keywords: racism; unconscious awareness; conscious awareness; fear; semiotics

1. INTRODUCTION

Kihlstrom (2019) advises that ‘fear’, in association with racist reasoning, transcends awareness of the perceiver. An essential material quality of ‘fear’ is that it transmutes, or ‘becomes’ a variation of, formed phenomena as it transcends a perceiver’s thresholds of awareness (Kihlstrom, 2019). Peirce’s semeiotic utilizes the term ‘object’ as a part of his systemic of logic, but not in terms of ‘conscious’ and ‘unconscious’ cognitions (Houser & Kloesel, 1992; Houser et.al., 1998). However, he did score the term ‘transcendental object’, meaning an object that “occurs outside of consciousness,” is used to represent those ‘objects’ as they exist among the phenomena of the unconscious realm of awareness (Houser & Kloesel,

1992, p.12). More knowledge of this phenomenon of ‘becoming’ is needed by all psychological and physical phenomena that are our existences and automation.

So, what are relevant societal needs for such knowledge? Immediately coming to mind are potential options to diagnose, and to counter, racist reasoning, and the mechanisms of systemic racism. And the phenomena of *becoming* (Kihlstrom, 2019); *motivation* (Glaser and Knowles 2007; Giacolini and Sabatello 2019); *thresholds* (Kihlstrom 2019; Myers, 2002); and *fear by association* to matters of ‘race’ through those thresholds (Giacolini and Sabatello 2019; Richins et.al. 2019). In sum, this work is grounded in providing knowledge that either supports or thwarts the working hypothesis of fear being a basis for racist thinking.

2. FEAR BY ASSOCIATION to MATTERS OF RACE

Richins and et.al. (2019) explain that “it is important to be cognizant of how fear [, in association to prejudice thought,] can bias perception and encourage discrimination of the socially distant” (pp. 1-2). DiAngelo (2018) contributed to their association among fear, prejudice, and discrimination by explaining that these phenomena represent a hierarchical process through prejudicial reasoning and behaviors. Said differently, fear is also an object of ‘transawareness’. In other words, an object of ‘fear’ exists as a sensation and thus may do so among both realms of consciousness an impending proposition that transmutes through its representing representamen. These transmuting forms effect the representamen, and in-turn effect ‘fears’ representation of its symbol and overall proposition. The perceiver is now becoming conscious of a proposition, or conclusion, as a reaction to the presented ‘association to race.’ In other words, simultaneously as the perceiver reacts to, say, being presented with an unknown black person quite unexpectedly.

Fear is introduced through intuition and then instinct, eidetically and from primal sources into the perceiver's awareness. The intuition and then instinct transcends, unconscious awareness and 'into' and among their conscious awareness, as a product of reaction to prior conclusions when encountering a black person (DiAngelo 2018). Clearly, it is among this portion of the cognitive process wherein the devolution into racist thinking instantly comes to be from the human need to 'categorize' present as transcendental objects and therefore call for a 'judgement of difference' cognitively. And thus a threat to the perceiver's survival merely because they have perceived 'something outside' of themselves. Among this process, the representation as 'discriminatory thinking' occurs, and the presentation of race becomes 'racist thinking'. Simultaneously calling upon 'fear' resulting in intuition among the unconscious. Phenomena such as 'fear' is adopted and drawn upon from previous cognitions, i.e. outside the perceiver's awareness (Houser and Kloesel 1992), but then simultaneously transcending into and among conscious awareness (Paulson et.al. 2017).

Over time, the perceiver has transmuted what was once a product of primal associations of difference with being a potential threat to them. In association with fear coming-to-be unconsciously, as part of a perceiver's reaction to some association to race, the perceiver's unconscious is stimulated, and fear is produced in association to their primal survival senses (Myers, 2002; Richins et.al. 2019). Houser and Kloesel (1992) represent a material quality of fear occurring when "*attention is drawn to not be able to predict one's fate*" (p.43, italics added). Said another way, fear occurs as a perceiver engages a phenomenon associated to race, a black person for example. An occurrence that simultaneously calls upon a perceiver's primal survival instinct (Brosnan-Watters 2019). Houser and et.al. (1998) would add that for human beings, "instincts are remarkable present the character of the being chiefly, if not altogether, directed to

the preservation of the stock” (p.33, emphasis added). Brosnan-Waters (2019) provides further material qualities of fear that links consciousness, both psychical and physical, conscious, and unconscious, among exposures to associations of race. She identifies the *peripheral nervous system* (PNS) as a potential ‘freeway’ of transcendence among unconscious and conscious awarenesses.

The PNS [moreover,]is further divided into two parts: the skeletal (also called somatic) system, which controls voluntary muscle movement for the most part, and *the autonomic nervous system*, which for the most part mediates involuntary activity in the body. The autonomic nervous system is divided further into the parasympathetic division, which is what maintains homeostasis, operating to keep the body, including internal organs. (Brosnan-Watters 2019: 2, italics added)

Brosnan-Watters (2019) provides mechanisms for transcending consciousness here. And the statement emphasizes relevancy through including the function of the *autonomic nervous system*. As the perceiver is exposed to external phenomena, both voluntary and involuntary reactions by the perceiver occurs. Motivations develop as reactions and the balance of the reasoning process, synonymous with Peirce’s semeiotic development of a proposition (Houser and Kloesel 1992; Houser et.al. 1998), occur among both voluntary/involuntary and conscious/unconscious phenomena. Moreover, motivation occurs among the unconscious realm of awareness. And self-determination occurs as the conscious version of motivation (Houser and et.al. 1998; Ryan and Deci 2017).

Motivation, as a transmuted representation of self-determination, in-turn transmutes among the perceiver’s cognitive capacities including the influence of fear that effect behaviors (Ryan and Deci 2017). However, certain material qualities must exist as self-determination

among folks' motivations in order for it in order, ultimately, to manifest as an action of the perceiver. Whereas *motivation* is represented as “concerning what ‘moves’ people to action (through) energizing and giving direction to behavior” (Ryan and Deci 2017, p.13). The question now becomes whether ‘a sense of fear’ ‘energizes’ and ‘provides direction’ for perceivers’ behavior.

And Ryan and Deci (2017) represent *self-determination* as the psychical phenomenon occurring as “social conditions that facilitate or hinder human flourishing” (p.3). As stated, Ryan and Deci (2017) are advising that self-determination exists only among the conscious realms. And moreover, self-determination is a product of perceiving some social condition. An implication, then, is that self-determination originates as a result of some ‘condition’ perceived externally. More will be said of this implication later within the conclusion.

3. THE TRANSMUTATIONS OF FEAR

The degree to which folks' motivations produce racist thinking is a wonderment that this author has. Merriam-Webster (n.d.) represents the root of motivation, *motive*, as “of or relating to motion or the causing of motion [and] moving or tending to move to action.” In the case of this work, motion and motive pertain to both external phenomena and internal phenomena among ‘psychical’ or transcendental objects, for example. Similarly, this wonderment contains the degree to which perceivers’ need to satisfy basic psychological needs, as a representation of self-determination theory, is affected as they are experiencing fear (Ryan and Deci 2017). Glaser and Knowles (2008) provide intriguing links among the phenomena of self-determined motives, objects of prejudice, and the unconscious and conscious realms of awareness. But first, a grounding for self-determination in relation to fear should be established.

Threatening perceptions give way to a perceiver yielding ‘fear’. That ‘fear’ results from it, as a sense, coming-to-be among the *reaction* to that perceiver encountering some racial phenomenon (Houser and Kloesel 1992). The genesis of that sense of fear has been classically linked to human psychology and biology. And the mutual link of these natural sciences in-turn are produced from not only an innate drive to survive; but human-beings also have basic psychological needs (Giacolini and Sabatello 2019; Ryan and Deci 2017). The level of satisfaction for these ‘needs’ are affected by a sense of fear, and ultimately the perceiver’s psychical and physical behaviors (Kihlstrom 2019). And as presented earlier, Ryan and Deci (2017) have developed *self-determination theory* (SDT) as a stimulating phenomenon for human motivation.

SDT presents that folks feeling that ‘a project’ can be initiated successful if three criteria are realized to some satisfactory level. If a perceiver feels that they are *autonomous* to complete a project; the project has *relatedness* to basic psychological needs of that perceiver; and feel that they are *competent* to complete the project (Deci and Ryan 1985; Ryan and Deci 2017). And then there are the externally stimulating phenomena that affect a perceiver’s ‘internal’ portion of their reasoning process. These stimulating phenomena also affect their levels of self-determination and motivations (Lukes 2005; Ryan and Deci 2017). Kihlstrom (2019) provide support for distinguishing internal and external stimuli. He exclaims a more precise distinction among internal and external perceptions, as well as internal and external thinking and emotions. That said, situational cues are reacted to and initiate a perceiver’s perceptions (internal and external) among their reasoning processes (Houser et.al. 1998; Kihlstrom 2019). Whereas situational cues are contextual phenomena in the environment that signal folks that an action or event may occur (Kihlstrom 2019: p.4).

Kihlstrom (2019) continues with additional relevance to these cues. Additionally, this work has the situational cue that presents a race associated phenomenon. He argues that “Although conscious control of an unconscious process would seem to be a logical impossibility, Glaser argues that an initially conscious countervailing process can be automatized so that it, too, is evoked unconsciously by situational cues” (p.4). Of course situational cues may also affect a perceiver’s sense of satisfaction and thus their motivation to act. What Kihlstrom (2019) seems to be implying is that folks can consciously control the unconsciously birthed sensations of fear or manifestations of prejudice, for example. However pursuing his implication would take us from the road that this work is currently traversing, and so it is left to another work.

4. CONCLUSION:

THE THRESHOLDS OF CONSCIOUSNESS: INTUITIONS, INSTINCTS, and BECOMING

With this knowledge distinguishing a conscious from unconscious awareness, it is this author’s position that the term ‘distinguishing’ is fallacious and must be made clear. Peirce’s laws of continuity and semeiotic ascribe that there would be no distinction ‘between’ conscious awareness and unconscious awareness (Houser and Kloesel 1992; Houser et.al. 1998). If indeed true, then there is no ‘between’, rather there is an ‘among’. And thus a kind of ‘blending’ of what folks *are* aware of and what they *are not*. Additionally, with similar’ phenomena of which we *are* aware and ‘similar’ phenomena of which we *are not* aware of. And there is transcendence among the ‘portions’ and ‘connected’ by thresholds among the realms of awarenesses (Kihlstrom 2019).

As introduced previously, transcendence via the thresholds occurs as an involuntary phenomena predominately among the unconscious realm (Kihlstrom 2019). I mention this phenomenon again here to bring our focus to the material qualities of fear. Specifically, as fear

transmutes while transcending as a transcendent object, and ultimately identified as an object, or as a phenomenon detected by a perceivers' awareness. Simultaneously this is as perceivers 'feel' fear and 'react'. Biologically, the thresholds seem to also serve as a phenomenal 'bridge' among the autonomic nervous system (involuntary muscle movement) and the somatic systems (voluntary muscle movement). A point at which a perceiver is presented with a proposition associated to racial matters, including when "attention is drawn to not be able to predict one's fate," fear presents and transmutes among the perceiver's reasoning process (Houser and Kloesel 1992: p.43, emphasis added). And how does fear 'present' or 'become known' by the perceiver? Intuitions and instincts.

4.1 Intuitions and Instincts

Intuition and instinct represent various transmutations of 'fear' as stored in the perceiver's memory from prior experiences associated to matters of race. Each is a kind of tip to the conscious awareness and reasoning processes of perceivers' from their internal perceptions and unconscious awareness. An interpretation of the deductions of Giacolini and Sabatello (2019), Houser and Kloesel (1992), Kihlstrom (2019) pertaining the thresholds among the realms of awareness contributes to a working hypothesis for this author. The hypothesis keys in on the roles of intuition and instinct seem to act as doorbells for objects such as fear, and their transcendences of consciousness.

Intuitions and instincts are the mechanisms by which 'fear' makes itself known to perceivers, among their awareness. DiAngelo (2018) exemplifies the products of such occurrences as a 'need' of white folks to sidestep discussions associated to race as a covert way of maintaining racist social conditions and cognitive processing. Houser and Kloesel (1992) represent *intuition* as "signifying a cognition not determined by a previous cognition of the same

object, and therefore so determined by something out of the consciousness” (p.11). For this author, Houser and Kloesel’s (1992) statement and the context within which it sets interprets like this: intuition is a resemblance, or image, that is a different material quality of a previously represented object of ‘fear’. Moreover, given the differing material qualities, intuition ‘means’ something different about fear (i.e. any object) each time it is called upon and transmutes through perception and the balance of the reasoning process (Houser and Kloesel 1992; Houser et.al. 1998; Kihlstrom 2019).

Resuming the introduction of the phenomenon of instinct, Houser and et.al. (1998) are grounded in being what they identify with insight or its “general nature” (p.217). That general nature in-turn being *perceptual judgments* of the perceiver, or a guess made immediately upon reacting to the presentation of ‘the racial matter’. The instinct or insight transmutes from unconscious awareness and among the perception and reasoning processes toward completing the triad’s states of reasoning given the object of ‘fear’.

Peirce places credence to the ‘instinctual guesses’ equivalent of that afforded to reason for human beings (Houser and et.al. 1998). These “guesses” are transmuting resemblances of material qualities presented from the perceiver’s memories unconsciously. This author’s position is that at least three material qualities of a ‘transcendent object of instinct’ given a perceiver’s basic psychological needs (i.e. their feeling of *autonomy* to address the racial matter; the *relevance* of the transmuted sense of fear’s support or thwarting of the perceived threat; and the perceived *competence* to overcome the perceived threat). Next, their internally perceived need to potentially defend against the threat of the presented ‘racial matter’. And the level of difference attributed among the prejudicial perceptual judgment. This ‘level’ referring to a proportion of the

‘prejudice to racist continuum’ transmuted by the perceiver’s internally processed perception (Bronson-Watters 2019; Houser and Kloesel 1992; Myers 2002).

At this point the author adds that as processes of transmutation are represented, they also represent the process when forms of the term ‘becoming’ is used in this work. And these phenomena of ‘becoming’ consist of that which contributes to the motivation of folks’ “energizing and giving direction to behavior” as introduced earlier by Ryan and Deci (2017: 13). As for the question of whether ‘a sense of fear’ ‘energizes’ and ‘provides direction’ for perceivers’ behavior, it seems that the answer is ‘yes’. But this work lacks an analysis and determination of what ‘fear’ as a ‘sense’ is meant to represent as an energizer and provider of direction toward a perceiver’s behavior.

Houser and Kloesel (1992) convey that fear has a material quality of being a *sensation* while also being the material quality of a representation (p.106-107). They explain that sensation “is an object of consciousness, and therefore, the capacity for it implies no intuitive recognition of subjective elements of consciousness” (p.22). Moreover, they contend that sensation is a form of belief. And belief occurs as two phenomena: *active* belief and *sensational* belief (p.22). The sensation produced as a result of an inference made by a perceiver. And an active belief is a result of an observation of some external phenomenon. Referencing the purpose and object of this work, fear could be the result of some internal inference also. An example being *active fear* as the conclusion of the reasoning process concerning some racial phenomenon, on one hand. On the other hand, a *sensational fear* occurs upon a perceiver’s reaction to being presented with some phenomenon of race, which occurs at the initiation of the reasoning process.

So, a surface level interpretation suggests that a sensation of fear could be represented as either a phenomenon of pre-reasoning (an immediate reaction; sensational fear) or of post-

reasoning (a result of the completed reasoning process; active fear) of a perceiver. A pre-reasoned fear is a sensation, similar to and as transmuted form, of the material qualities that consist of an intuition. That intuition and sensation of ‘fear’, as some previous cognition, transmutes, while transcending, the thresholds of consciousness among the unconscious and into the conscious realm. That ‘previous cognition of fear’ presents as the icon of the presented racial phenomenon., ‘object’, or index of the perceiver’s perception and reaction to that phenomenon. And as Kihlstrom (2019) explains, the situational and contextual cues from the societal condition (i.e. the object or index) ‘energizes’ and ‘provides direction’ for the perceiver, ad infinitum.

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