

## Hostility as a Psychological Phenomenon and Object of Scientific Research

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### ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the problem of carrying out distinctions between hostility, dislike and aggression which have a considerable variety of forms of behavior among the population of various typological groups in the conditions of geopolitical changes. Special attention is paid to the questions connected with the peculiarity of approaches and the degree of readiness of this perspective within various scientific traditions. Particulars of representation of concepts are analyzed in the historical and chronological, scientometric and conceptual plan. The qualitative originality of the interpretation of concepts in the approaches of the representatives of the leading scientific schools exerting the impact on modern research of this phenomenon taking into account the changing geopolitical conditions is shown.

### KEYWORDS

Geopolitics, psychology, category, aggression, hostility, scientific research, methodological approach

### ARTICLE HISTORY

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### Introduction

The change of geopolitical conditions involves the increase of tension in all spheres of social practice. Expansion of interest in the concepts which fix these processes is a consequence of it. The concepts *hostility* and *aggression* are being included into modern scientific lexicon more actively. These concepts, fixing harmful social interactions, aren't synonyms. There are significant differences between them. Aggression is shown openly and frankly. It is, as a rule, intentionally harmful social interaction with the purpose to cause damage or other trouble to some persons or group of people. Hostility exists in the latent form and is often defined as an aggression basis. It is irregular emotionally charged shape of behavior. The terms *hostility* and *aggression* are used and

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studied in the psychological (Ermakov, Skirtach & Kovsh, 2015a; Ermakov & Fedotova, 2015b), political (Fedotova, 2013), sociological (Abakumova, Ermakov & Kolesina, 2016b), ideological (Fedotova & Chigisheva, 2015), cultural (Abakumova, Boguslavskaya & Grishina, 2016a), psychogenetic (Kryuchkova, Ermakov & Abakumova, 2016; Kovsh, Skirtach & Bunyaeva, 2015) and pedagogical contexts now.

In the world of scientific literature, the term *hostility* didn't receive the fixed definition. So far it is treated by various authors differently. In the works devoted to the discussed problem the term *hostility* is used, as a rule, along with other closely related in meaning words: dislike, aggression and anger.

Interest in researching the problem of hostility and perspective, close to this subject, is uneven in the chronological plan. It is characterized by the increase and recession of interest of researchers and, respectively, take-off and falling of publication activity. Problem statement: What subject – dislike or hostility – caused primary interest of researchers during various periods of development of science and why?

### Methodological Framework

To solve the problems, predominantly theoretical research methods were used: comparative analysis, content analysis, interpretation, generalization, statistical methods and multiple comparison method. As a form of quantitative data analysis content analysis was applied. This method allowed to note the intensity of the distribution of the publications in various information sources. During the procedure of content analysis all steps of content analysis including coding, categorizing as creating meaningful categories into which the units of analysis can be placed, and comparing were used.

Research was held in two stages in August 2016.

1. The first stage was devoted to a meaningful analysis of the content of the scientific publications represented in the Scopus database [<https://www.scopus.com/>];

2. The second stage was devoted to the analysis of the dissertation works on problems of dislike or hostility performed in Russia and in the republics of the former USSR. They are presented in the electronic catalogue and electronic library of the Russian State Library [<http://www.rsl.ru/>].

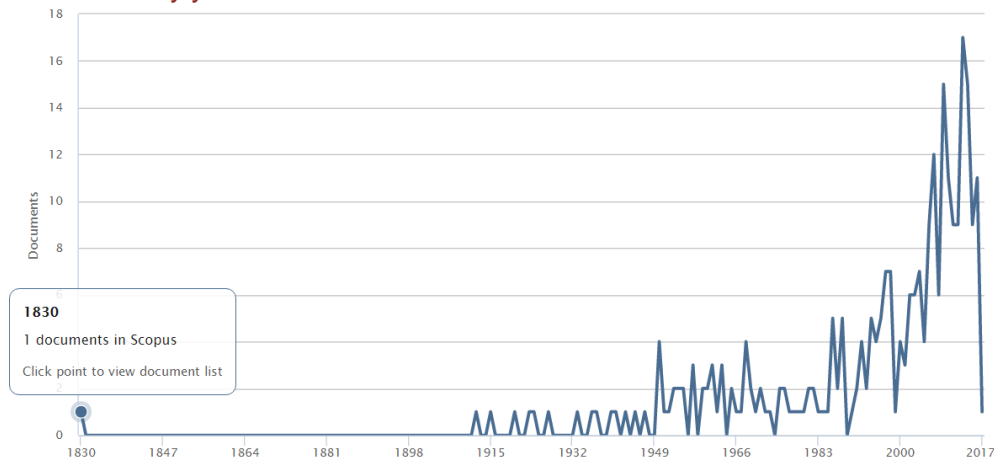
The semantic category of the analysis and tally were specified in relation to each stage of the research when carrying out the content analysis. EXCEL was used to calculate and create the histograms.

### Results and Discussion

*The first research stage.* Research of publishing activity of foreign authors, on the basis of the content analysis of the works presented in the Scopus database was made. In the first series of research the task to define, what subject – dislike or hostility – caused primary interest of researchers during various periods of scientific development was set. Empirical basis was perceived as information resource – the scientific publications recorded in the Scopus database. **Categories of research** were concepts of *dislike* and *hostility*. **The tally** was the publication which title contained this category. The tools which are available in the electronic Scopus resource allowed making calculation of the

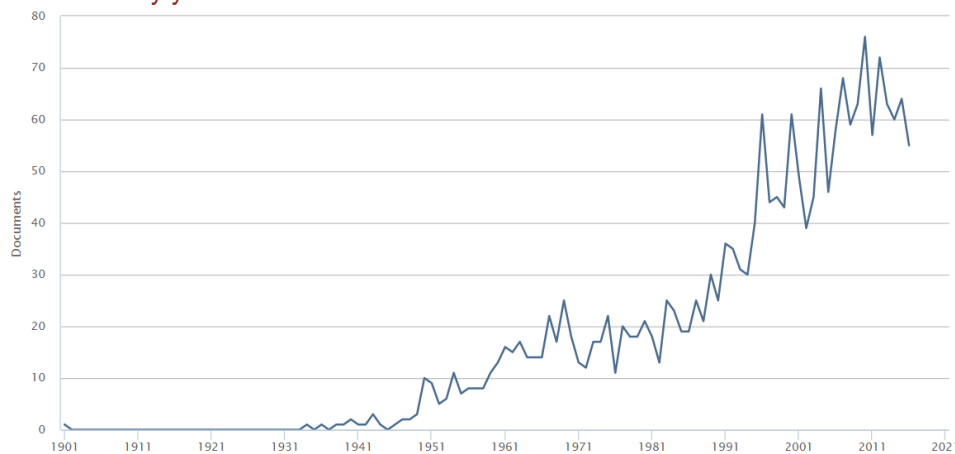
rate of representation of publications and reflecting the results of calculation graphically (Fig. 1, Fig. 2).

### Documents by year



**Figure 1.** The range of distribution of publications in the thematic cluster *dislike*. Source: Scopus database

### Documents by year



**Figure 2.** The range of distribution of publications in the thematic cluster *hostility*. Source: Scopus database

Comparison of the data presented graphically showed that interest in the problem of dislike was shown earlier: the publications noted in the works from the Scopus database appeared in 1830. At the same time the problem of hostility as a form of emotionally-charged behavior got to the center of research interests much later, only in 1934. Printing activity in all directions has the pronounced rising trend. It was also noted that earlier appeal of researchers to the problem of dislike didn't define its further domination in the scientific context. The

perspective of hostility as a form of emotionally-charged behavior was developed further very intensively. The number of publications with threshold value is 15 in 2008, maximum for the perspective dislike, was overcome by the researchers of the problem in 1960.

A question concerning the interest of Russian scientists in the hostility problems appeared. As to make a comparative research of data on the basis of the resource similar to Scopus was impossible in view of its absence, another source was chosen - a generalized base of dissertations of Russian researches which contains data on all theses submitted for defence.

*The second research stage.*

Having chosen the category of the analysis of the concepts *dislike* and *hostility*, the following ground of distributions of the executed Russian theses was received (Fig. 3).

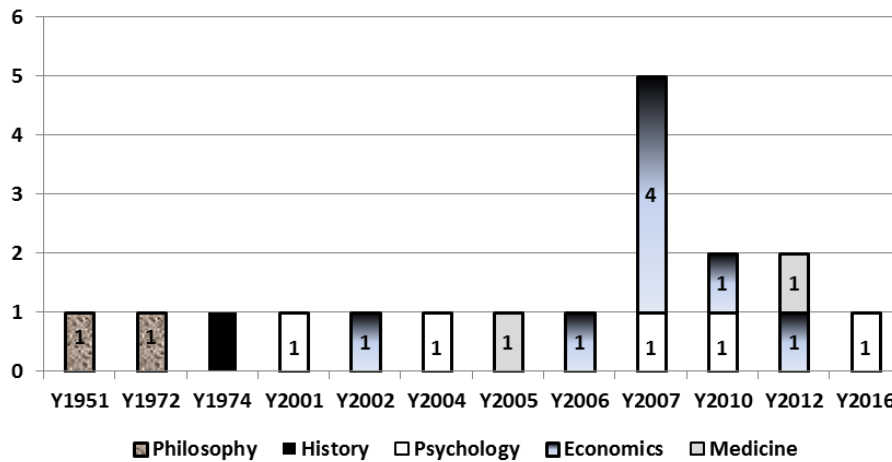


**Figure 3.** The range of distribution of the total number of Russian dissertations devoted to the *hostility* and *dislike*. Source: Russian State Library

As it is shown in the graph, the problem of hostility became a subject of dissertation discourse only in 1952. The trends characterizing the dynamics of activity of developers of this problem were directly opposite to those observed in the Scopus database. The subject dislike was not shown after 1966, the problem of hostility showed positive dynamics and was in the rising trend. In this regard the distribution of the Russian dissertation researches in different scientific fields seems interesting (Fig. 4).

As it's shown on Figure 4, economic sciences considering this perspective in the context of the competition of economic subjects prevail. Psychological aspects of the problem of hostility are investigated equally with its medical aspects and have a big prospect of further development.

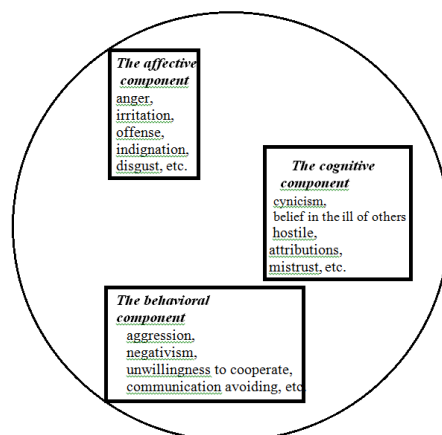
Returning to the problem of definition of the term *hostility*, the authors who researched this problem were addressed. According to the Scopus resource, 15 authors were the leaders of researches.



**Figure 4.** The range of distribution of the total number of Russian dissertations devoted to the *hostility* and *dislike* on clusters of scientific disciplines. Source: Russian State Library

The first in the number of publications was R.B. Williams (1987, 2003) and his colleagues (Williams et al., 2010). He is the most quoted author, considering mainly medical aspects of this problem. The author established the following facts in his works: chronic hostility (vigilance, concentration of attention on a danger source) is characterized by the raised content of testosterone in blood plasma. Testosterone, in turn, plays a large role in atherosclerosis disease. In this case hostility is a medical diagnosis.

The works of J.C. Barefoot et al. (1993, 1994) are well-known in Russia and worldwide. He is the highly-quoted author. Therefore his approach to the definition of hostility is certainly interesting. He analyzed psychological problems of hostility. According to the data of the Scopus resource, his popularity, including in Russia, is not accidental. He analyzed psychological problems of hostility. According to J.C. Barefoot et al. (1994), hostility is the antagonistic attitude towards people including cognitive, affective and behavioral components (Fig. 5).



**Figure 5.** The structure of the concept *hostility* according to J.C. Barefoot's theory. Source: J.C. Barefoot et al. (1994)

The affective component includes a number of interconnected emotions, including anger, irritation, offense, indignation, disgust, etc. The cognitive component includes a negative belief concerning a human nature in general (cynicism) and belief in malevolence of other people in relation to the subject (hostile attributions, mistrust). The behavioral component includes various forms of manifestation of hostility in behavior, often hidden-aggression, negativism, unwillingness to cooperate, communication avoiding etc. All three components of hostility, according to J.C. Barefoot et al. (1994), are necessary to study separately for those reasons that they are connected with mental and physical health by means of essentially various mechanisms. This definition covers both steady, so-called personal hostility, and various situational complexes of hostile installations or predisposition to specific people in specific conditions. The most valuable in the approach of J.C. Barefoot et al. (1994) is that they went beyond a triad of hostility-anger-aggression and described a rather wide range of behavioral and emotional correlates of hostility.

The third on quoting and significance of research results is T.W. Smith et al. (2014a, 2014b). T.W. Smith (1992) defines hostility as a complex of negative attitudes, beliefs and estimates applied to other people, i.e. perception of other people as a probable source of frustration, deception, provocation, etc. T.W. Smith (1992) revealed the influence of hostility on the perception of conflict situation in the married couple. Hostile people attached a bigger significance than not hostile. Thus, the interrelation of hostility with anger and concern was noted.

In the psychology of hostility other names are also known. A.H. Buss (1961) tried to define the concepts hostility and aggression through the prism of the analysis of cognitive mentality components. In his opinion, hostility corresponds to the exclusively cognitive component of mentality, at the equal basis with anger and aggression which are emotional and behavioral components respectively. J.P. Chaplin (1982) defines hostility as a tendency to have a desire of infliction of harm to other people or a tendency to endure the affect of anger in relation to other people. Hostility, thus, is understood as a personal trait. Such determination of hostility allows to identify it empirically quite easily, however complicates the explanation of the mechanisms of its emergence and communication with other psychological categories.

There is a question how the Russian theorists and researchers define the concept hostility. Coming back to the representation of their positions in the publications from the Scopus database, it may be noted that the popularity abroad was gained only by the position of the Russian researcher S. Mikhaylova, K. Husted & D.B. Minbaeva (2012). They touch upon the original aspect: how an exchange of knowledge in business environments occurs and how it influences the relations between employees and hostility manifestations and the ways of their theoretical fixing.

A famous Soviet psychologist V.N. Myasishchev (1893-1970) notes that hostility is formed in the course of interaction with object and then sets partiality of perception of new objects. His theory is based on the psychology of the relations. V.N. Myasishchev (1995) considers the concept hostility as a result of educational influences. Education represents the process of interaction of the tutor and pupil. In this bilateral process the tutor can express exacting, indulgent, lovely, unfriendly and attentive, scornful and fair or biased and so

forth attitude towards the pupil, and the pupil – answers him/her with respect, love, fear, hostility, mistrust, reserve, frankness, sincere or ostentatious relation. Thus, V. N. Myasishchev (1995) refers hostility to the emotional relations.

A.V. Okhmatovskaya (2001) and S.N. Enikolopov (2007) define hostility as a negative attitude to any objects. As the system of the relations of the person represents a way of reconstruction in the individual consciousness of the model, or "picture" of surrounding reality, it is advisable to consider the concept "hostility" within the ideas of the picture of the world. A. Sadovskaya (2000) understands hostility as a specific picture of the subject's world where negative characteristics are attributed to the external objects.

### **Conclusion**

Hostility, thus, can be one of the basic characteristics of objects of our subjective world. It is interesting to consider hostility within the ideas of the world picture of the person which are actively developed at various psychological schools. According to these theories, in the course of accumulation of subjective experience by the person his inner world of ideas from the surrounding reality about himself and other people is gradually formed.

The ideas of the world around us about hostility are formed from the first days of child's life under the influence of a number of factors. Among them are hereditary, family and social factors.

The problem of hostility was investigated by many Russian researchers. Thus, the Russian psychologists are united by the position according to which hostility is first of all a relation to certain objects. It should be noted that according to the position of the Russian scientists, hostility as the psychological relation cannot be observed directly in the behavior of the individual, but it will be shown in various mental processes and phenomena. When studying the sphere of personal relations, in particular, hostility, it may cause an acute methodological problem.

Thus, hostility is a very difficult and multidimensional mental unit. As a steady, common feature hostility means devaluation of motives and personal qualities of other people, feeling oneself in opposition to people around and wish them evil (active form - to do harm or passive form - to observe harm-doing). In the field of psychology, it should be noted the need of development and improvement of diagnostic methods allowing to carry out exact and differentiated hostility assessment, and also effective methods of its psychotherapy. Nowadays much attention is paid to the medical aspects of hostility research. At the same time the relevance of understanding of hostility essence in the context of ideological, social and political processes is increasing.

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