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Blaming, praising, and protecting our humanity: The implications of everyday dehumanization for judgments of moral status

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Being human implies a particular moral status: having moral value, agency, and responsibility. However, people are not seen as equally human. Across two studies, we examine the consequences that subtle variations in the perceived humanness of actors or groups have for their perceived moral status. Drawing on Haslam's two-dimensional model of humanness and focusing on three ways people may be considered to have moral status – moral patiency (value), agency, or responsibility – we demonstrate that subtly denying humanness to others has implications for whether they are blamed, praised, or considered worthy of moral concern and rehabilitation. Moreover, we show that distinct human characteristics are linked to specific judgments of moral status. This work demonstrates that everyday judgments of moral status are influenced by perceptions of humanness.

The qualities that make us human are also those that give us moral status (Opotow, 1993). Foetuses may be afforded moral concern to the extent they are seen as having the human capacity to experience pain and offenders are only seen as morally responsible if they are seen as possessing the human capacity for intentional action. Hundreds of hours and millions of dollars are spent in courtrooms and policy meetings determining where the boundaries of humanness lie. However, recent research has demonstrated that attributions of humanness can be affected by everyday social perceptions and motives (Haslam, 2006; Leyens *et al.*, 2001), indicating that people need not be foetuses or offenders to have important aspects of their humanity denied. What is less clear is

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whether these commonplace denials of humanness also hold implications for the extent to which people are considered to possess moral status.

Humanness (or personhood) and moral status are tightly bound in philosophical and legal scholarship on moral rights and responsibility (e.g., Sapontzis, 1981; Universal Declaration of Human Rights). There is also evidence within psychology that perceived humanness and moral status are associated. Denying others their humanity has been linked to reduced empathy for victims (Cehajic, Brown, & Gonzalez, 2009) and helps to justify their immoral treatment (Bandura, 1999; Castano & Giner-Sorolla, 2006). This work connects perceptions of humanity to perceptions of moral worth. However, it is limited in its focus on intergroup atrocities and justifications for past behaviour, providing little insight into whether forms of subtle and everyday dehumanization are associated with reductions in a person's perceived moral status.

Recent research has found that the extent to which humanity is attributed to the self and others is surprisingly flexible. People have a tendency to attribute more human characteristics to themselves than to others (Haslam & Bain, 2007; Haslam, Bain, Douge, Lee, & Bastian, 2005), yet they see themselves and others as less human when engaged in interpersonal conflict (Bastian & Haslam, 2010). Other work has shown that even group stereotypes are sufficient to elicit mild forms of dehumanization (Loughnan & Haslam, 2007). A question that this research will address is whether these forms of dehumanization also have implications for perceptions of moral worth, moral agency, and moral responsibility.

Forming impressions of people's moral status occurs constantly and rapidly (Wojciszke, Bazinska, & Jaworski, 1998; Ybarra, Chan, & Park, 2001). Morally relevant traits have been linked to perceptions of warmth (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2006; Wojciszke, 2005), the capacity for inhibition (Alicke, 2000), and responsibility for good or bad behaviour (Fincham & Jaspars, 1980; Knobe, 2003; Pizzarro, Uhlman, & Salovey, 2003; Shaver, 1985; Weiner, 1995). This work highlights the fact that perceptions of moral status can be influenced by the kinds of characteristics that a person is believed to possess. How these characteristics are related to humanness has yet to be determined, but may be clarified by recent work which distinguishes two basic conceptions of humanness (Haslam, 2006; Haslam & Bain, 2007; Haslam *et al.*, 2005).

According to Haslam and colleagues' framework, Human nature (HN) refers to characteristics that are seen as essential or fundamental to all humans, such as openness, emotionality, vitality, and warmth. Human uniqueness (HU) refers to characteristics that are believed to distinguish humans from (other) animals, and involve refinement, civility, higher cognition, and other socially learned qualities. Previous research has provided evidence for the distinctiveness of each dimension (e.g., Haslam, Bastian, & Bissett, 2004; Haslam *et al.*, 2005). When HU attributes are denied to people they are explicitly or implicitly likened to animals, and seen as immature, coarse, irrational, or backward. When HN attributes are denied to people they are explicitly or implicitly likened to objects or machines and seen as cold, rigid, inert, and lacking emotion. These oppositions are evident within peoples' explicit and implicit cognition of social targets (e.g., Haslam, Kashima, Loughnan, Shi, & Suitner, 2008; Loughnan & Haslam, 2007). Together, this framework implies that people can be ascribed or denied humanness in two distinct ways, and that these dimensions may have different implications for judgments of moral status.

A review of the literature on morality suggests at least three different ways that people may be viewed as having moral status. People may be perceived as having the capacity to be responsible for immoral behaviour (e.g., requiring inhibition and self-control) and therefore deserve blame for bad deeds (Alicke, 2000; Knobe, 2003; Shaver, 1985). They may be perceived as having the desire to actively engage in moral behaviour (e.g., desire to act prosocially; Bandura, 1999) and therefore deserve praise for good deeds (Pizzarro *et al.*, 2003), or they may be perceived as having the capacity to be recipients of morally relevant actions (e.g., the capacity to experience pain) and therefore the right to be protected from harm (Gray, Gray, & Wegner, 2007; Gray & Wegner, 2009). We use the terms inhibitive agency, proactive agency, and moral patiency, respectively, to refer to these different ways people are viewed as possessing moral status.

Across two studies, we tested the hypotheses that the extent to which people are viewed as possessing human characteristics is associated with judgments of their moral status. Specifically, we predicted that qualities associated with HU (e.g., civility, refinement, rationality) are primarily associated with attributions of inhibitive moral agency, due to an emphasis on reason and restraint. On the other hand, we predicted that qualities related to HN (e.g., emotionality, warmth) are primarily associated with attributions of moral patiency and proactive moral agency, due to an emphasis on basic emotionality and communality.

We make our prediction regarding proactive moral agency based on Pizzarro *et al.* (2003), who found divergence in peoples' attributions of blame and praise. People afford praise for good deeds when actors are viewed as possessing the desire to do good and these judgments are not affected by perceived control. Thus, praise should be associated with HN qualities providing people with empathy and warmth towards others, rather than HU qualities providing for self-control and inhibition. However, this is in contrast to the Kantian model of moral agency. According to this model, truly praiseworthy acts are performed out of a sense of moral duty rather than empathy or warmth. Judgments of praise should therefore be associated with qualities that make us morally responsible and, like blame, should be associated with HU. Of course, people may not be Kantian in their perception of moral actors and we test this possibility in the current research. We also note that Gray and Wegner's (2009) work has demonstrated an inverse relationship between moral agency and patiency. On this account, qualities that make us moral agents may detract from our perceived moral patiency, and therefore agency may be inversely related to HN and patiency negatively related to HU. We also examine this alternative possibility in the current work.

We investigated the association between perceptions of humanness and judgments of moral status across two studies. In Study 1, we explored how the perceived humanness of social groups was related to moral judgments (e.g., blame, praise, and protection) and punishment (e.g., retribution vs. rehabilitation). Study 2 extended this analysis by examining the relationships between moral status and the dimensions of humanness experimentally rather than correlationally, demonstrating distinct patterns of association between humanness and moral judgments and broadening our focus to include individuals as well as groups.

STUDY 1

In the first study, we aimed to demonstrate that people form moral judgments (e.g., blaming, praising, and protecting) on the basis of the perceived humanness of actors. As

we argue, judgments of blame tend to be associated with the perceived intentionality of peoples' actions (requiring reason and restraint associated with HU), whereas judgments of praise are made when people are attributed with the desire to act morally towards others (requiring emotionality and communality associated with HN). In addition, when a person is considered to have high levels of experience, and therefore moral patiency (requiring emotionality associated with HN), this should increase people's willingness to protect them from immoral actions. As noted, it is also possible that people praise others based on their capacity to carry out moral duties, rather than their empathy and warmth. Moreover, moral agency may be inversely associated with moral patiency (Gray & Wegner, 2009), and blame and protection may show negative associations with the corresponding dimension of humanness. We also test these alternative possibilities in Study 1.

A feature of our first study was its focus on stereotypes of real-world groups. If stereotypes predict the amount of blame, praise, or protection (patiency) that a person is afforded then social group membership would have important implications for a person's moral status, illustrating a potentially important departure from the supposed universal application of moral principles. We aimed to address this possibility by establishing a link between stereotype content and moral judgments. The dimensions of humanness have been shown to differentiate between-group stereotypes (Loughnan & Haslam, 2007) and stereotype content associated with HN or HU may also influence the moral judgments people make about group members. Importantly, these dimensions have been demonstrated as empirically independent of warmth and competence in peoples' perceptions of social groups (Haslam, Loughnan, Kashima, & Bain, 2008; Vaes & Paladino, 2010). HN not only refers to interpersonal warmth, but also to the tendency to be emotionally reactive, unrestrained, and open. HU also extends beyond competence (e.g., intelligence or conscientiousness) to include other uniquely human qualities such as civility and refinement (e.g., Leyens *et al.*, 2001).

Study 1 also examined people's correctional strategies, examining the extent to which they would endorse punishment or rehabilitation for wrongdoing. Desire for retribution has been linked to perceptions of intentional action (Alicke, 2000; Darley & Pittman, 2003). Agents who are not perceived to have high levels of inhibitory control should receive less blame and therefore less retribution but the human qualities that influence perceived deservingness of rehabilitation are less obvious. Specifically, we predicted that people's perceptions of humanness may be linked to preferences for different correctional strategies. HN has been theorized as a treasured and deeply human characteristic (Haslam, 2006). Thus, people who are seen to possess HN qualities, are likely to be judged as worthy of rehabilitation rather than retribution. On the other hand, HU is associated with the capacity for self-control and intentional action, suggesting individuals seen to posses this kind of humanness will receive harsher punishment.

Method

Participants

Participants were 76 undergraduates (65 women) who participated in the study for course credit. Their ages ranged from 16 to 52 years ($M = 20.29$, $SD = 6.35$).

Materials

Participants completed a questionnaire that required them to rate a list of 24 social groups (mixed order of presentation) on a set of characteristics and moral judgments. Groups

were sampled from previous research on stereotype content (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Haslam *et al.*, 2008). We excluded some on the basis they would confound our ratings of morality (e.g., illegal immigrants, white collar criminals), and selected those that best represented the Australian context (e.g., aboriginals), aiming to provide a broad array of social categories. We also included the categories of girls, boys, men, and child akin to the targets used by Gray *et al.* (2007). Participants were required to complete all ratings for all groups. Ratings were made according to how much participants thought that 'people generally' viewed the groups as having certain qualities or being attributed moral blame, praise, or concern. All responses were provided on a scale from 0 to 100% with increments of 5% points.

Humanness ratings

Participants rated the social groups on aspects of HU: the extent to which group members were viewed as 'culturally refined', 'rational or logical', or 'lacking self-restraint' (reversed). They also rated the groups on aspects of HN: the extent to which group members were viewed as 'emotionally responsive', 'warm towards others', and 'rigid and cold' (reversed). Reliabilities for each dimension were calculated for all groups across all participants ($N = 76$; HU, $\alpha = .82$; HN, $\alpha = .84$). These ratings were combined to form a score for each group on HU and HN.

Moral behaviours

Participants were asked to imagine that a member of each social category had performed a series of behaviours in a fixed order of presentation. Behaviours were sampled from the index of specific moral behaviours developed by Chadwick, Bromgard, Bromgard, and Trafimow (2006). Immoral behaviours were 'making a promise and not keeping it' and 'pushing someone out of the way so [they could] be first'; moral behaviours were 'lending a hand to a person with a flat tire', 'returning a lost wallet or purse with the money intact', and 'not cheating on a test even if you have the answers in front of you'; and maltreatments were being 'pushed out of the way by someone else who wants to be first' and '[they asked] a simple question and [are] given a rude response'.

Moral judgments

Participants were required to make moral judgments in relation to each of the behaviours listed above for each social category. Specifically, they were asked to judge whether people generally would hold members of each social category 'morally responsible' for performing immoral behaviours; would give 'personal credit' for performing moral behaviours; and would feel like 'intervening' or taking a 'moral stand' on behalf of the members of each social category in situations where they were treated immorally. Reliabilities for each moral judgment were calculated for all related moral behaviours for all groups across all participants ($N = 76$; Blame, $\alpha = .92$; Praise, $\alpha = .97$; Patiency, $\alpha = .97$). These ratings were combined to form a score for each group on moral praise, moral blame, and moral patiency judgments.

Correctional strategies

Participants were asked to think about how much people generally would endorse 'punishment' (withholding desirable rewards or enforcing undesirable consequences)

for dealing with the wrongful behaviour of members of each group. They were also asked how much people would endorse 'rehabilitation' through education programmes that aim to make clear the reasons the conduct is inappropriate. Participants completed the task in small groups (< 15) in a laboratory. The task took 20–30 min to complete.

Results

For each of the 24 social groups, the HU and HN ratings were averaged across participants, yielding HU and HN scores for each group. According to these means, the 24 groups were arrayed on a two-dimensional space (see Figure 1). We first investigated the relationship between the two dimensions of humanness, showing a non-significant negative association between them ($r = -.20$, $N = 24$, $p = .355$). Next, we investigated the relationships between the humanness ratings and the moral judgments (see Table 1). Findings supported our predictions. Moral blame was positively correlated with HU ($r = .89$, $N = 24$, $p < .001$) but negatively and non-significantly with HN ($r = -.34$, $N = 24$, $p = .109$). Moral patiency correlated positively with HN ($r = .66$, $N = 24$, $p < .001$) but marginally and negatively with HU ($r = -.35$, $N = 24$, $p = .09$). Moral praise was marginally associated with HN ($r = .37$, $N = 24$, $p = .077$), but not with HU ($r = -.18$, $N = 24$, $p = .394$). All of the significant effects remained so when the judgments were simultaneously regressed on HN and HU.

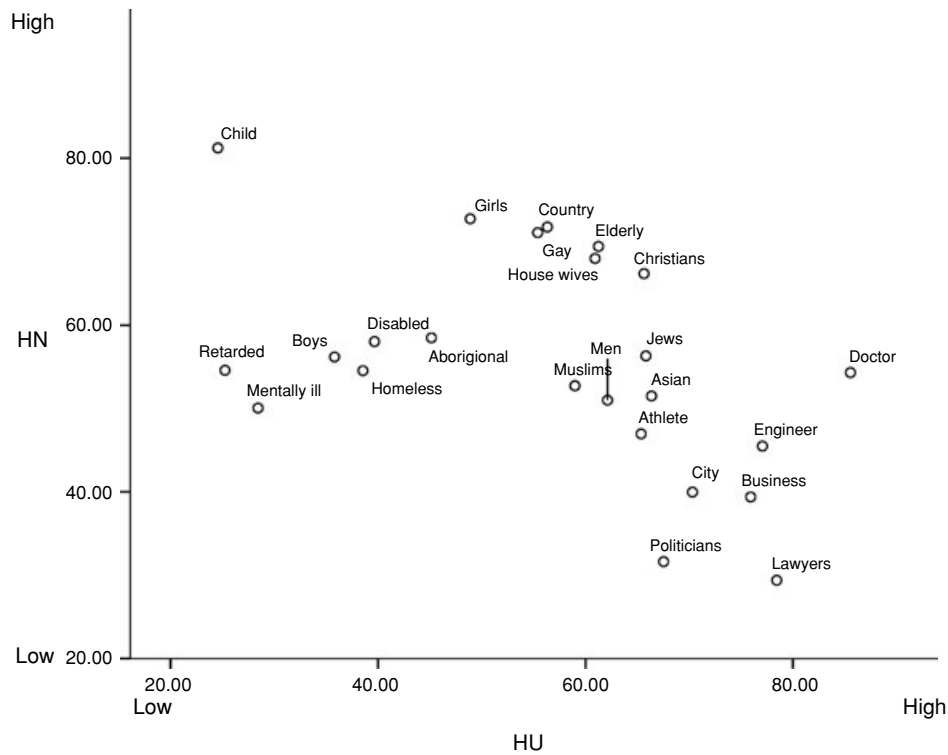


Figure 1. Two-dimensional plot of social categories according to mean scores on HU and HN, Study 1.

Table 1. Correlations between moral judgments and humanness ratings, Study 1

	HU	HN
Group-level		
Moral blame	.89***	−.34
Moral praise	−.18	.37†
Moral patiency	−.35†	.66***

†$p < .10$; ***$p < .001$.

Finally, we investigated the relationship between participants' preferred correctional strategies and the humanness dimensions (see Table 2). Punishment was positively correlated with HU ($r = .60$, $N = 24$, $p = .002$) but was marginally and negatively associated with HN ($r = -.37$, $N = 24$, $p = .075$). Rehabilitation was positively correlated with HN ($r = .54$, $N = 24$, $p = .007$) and was marginally and negatively correlated with HU (group: $r = -.35$, $N = 24$, $p = .096$). Again, all of the effects remained unchanged when regression analyses were conducted. Table 2 also shows the relationship between correctional strategies and moral judgments, indicating that punishment was positively associated with blame ($r = .86$, $N = 24$, $p < .001$) and negatively with patiency ($r = -.80$, $N = 24$, $p < .001$). Rehabilitation was associated with patiency ($r = .57$, $N = 24$, $p = .003$), although showed a negative association with blame ($r = -.47$, $N = 24$, $p = .021$) and a positive association with praise ($r = .73$, $N = 24$, $p < .001$).

Table 2. Correlations between correctional strategies and humanness ratings, Study 1

	HU	HN	Blame	Praise	Patiency
Group-level					
Punishment	.60**	−.37	.86***	−.33	−.80***
Rehabilitation	−.35	.54**	−.47*	.73***	.57**

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

Discussion

The findings of Study 1 provide support to our main hypotheses and show that group stereotypes play an important role in determining a person's moral status. Ratings of HU and HN meaningfully differentiated between 24 different social categories and showed predicted associations with moral judgments. The extent to which a social category was judged to have HU qualities predicted judgments of its members' moral responsibility and blameworthiness. The extent to which the group was seen to possess HN predicted the extent to which its members were assigned moral worth (patiency) and protected, and marginally predicted the extent to which they received personal credit for their moral behaviour.

Study 1 also incorporated correctional strategies. The extent to which a social category was viewed as possessing HU qualities predicted the extent to which punishment was endorsed as an appropriate response to immoral action by its members. Similarly, the extent to which a category was viewed as possessing HN qualities predicted the

extent to which rehabilitation was endorsed for its members. These findings support the notion that individuals who are perceived as having the capacity for inhibition and self-control are expected to act according to moral norms and are blamed and punished when they transgress. However, when individuals are viewed as possessing emotionality and warmth, they are perceived as morally worthy, deserving of praise, and suitable for rehabilitation. It is those characteristics that we cherish, protect, and praise which we believe can be rehabilitated. Importantly, judgments of punishment and rehabilitation may be affected by the likeability of particular groups, and we did not control for likeability in the current study. However, the notion that punishment is linked to qualities which make us morally responsible, and rehabilitation to qualities that make us morally valuable is plausible and would likely contribute to these judgments independent of valence.

Study 1 also provides for reflection on previous work. First, although blame was most strongly associated with HU and patiency with HN, there is evidence that possessing HN reduces blame, and possessing HU reduces patiency, supporting the inverse relationships found by Gray and Wegner (2009). Second, praise was most strongly associated with HN, however it was also negatively related to HU. These findings support the notion that people are non-Kantian in their ascription of moral praise, viewing actors as being more praiseworthy when they possess emotionality and warmth, and less praiseworthy when they possess civility, refinement, and rationality – qualities necessary for the fulfilment of moral duties.

STUDY 2

Study 1 demonstrated that HN and HU qualities are associated with moral judgments of blame, praise, and patiency. These findings suggest that the way people apply moral judgments is in part linked to the kinds of human qualities that actors are perceived to possess. However, it is not clear from Study 1 how the dimensions of humanness are causally linked to each moral dimension due to its correlational design. In Study 2, we aimed to rigorously test our predicted associations between the two dimensions of humanness and the different kinds of moral status. Specifically, we employed an experimental design which allowed us to isolate the effects of one dimension of humanness while controlling for the effects of the other. To this end, we used comparative ratings allowing us to explore relative differences in moral judgment between targets high on the dimension of interest compared to targets low on that dimension, while controlling for the presence of traits either high or low on the other dimension. In addition, Study 1 did not control for valence. We sought to remedy this shortfall in Study 2 to ensure that the relationships we report cannot be accounted for by how much a social target is liked.

Method

Participants

Participants were 120 undergraduates (86 women) who participated in the study for course credit. Their ages ranged from 17 to 56 years ($M = 19.73$, $SD = 4.99$)

Materials

Participants completed a questionnaire asking them to compare two characters on the extent to which the participant would blame them for immoral actions, praise them for

moral actions, or take a moral stand on their behalf if they had been treated immorally. Four pairs of characters were created such that a character denied one dimension of humanness (i.e., high HN/low HU or low HN/high HU) was compared with a character who was either high on both dimensions of humanness or low on both.

Character descriptions

Four character descriptions served as experimental manipulations of HN and HU qualities. Each description drew on trait terms loading high or low on the humanness dimensions (Haslam *et al.*, 2005). Characters were Benjamin (High HN/Low HU), Christopher (Low HN/High HU), Andrew (High HN/High HU), and David (Low HN/Low HU). Each character description was constructed using 15 traits (10 positive and 5 negative) and was exactly 83 words in length. In alternative versions of the questionnaire, Benjamin was compared to David (different in HN, same in low HU), Andrew to Christopher (different in HN, same in high HU), Christopher to David (different in HU, same in low HN), and Andrew to Benjamin (different in HU, same in high HN). The order in which the characters were presented was varied, yielding eight versions of the survey. In employing this comparative approach, we replicated the work of Gray *et al.* (2007), using a more controlled set of comparative judgments. This also achieved two important aims; (1) it allowed for a direct comparison of characters low on one dimension versus characters high on that dimension. Participants were therefore forced to consider the importance of traits (high vs. low) on the target dimension in forming their moral judgment. (2) It controlled for the influence of traits (high and low) on the other dimension, as these remained constant between characters within each comparison. This therefore allowed us to rule out the influence of the other dimension on moral judgments.

Moral behaviours

For each survey, participants were asked to imagine that each of their two characters had performed or been the recipient of a series of behaviours again sampled from Chadwick *et al.* (2006). Behaviours included: four negative behaviours (e.g., 'Making a promise and not keeping it'; 'Cheating on a significant other and never telling them'; 'Refusing aid to a parent when they are in need'; 'Pushing someone out of the way so [they] can be first'), 4 positive behaviours (e.g., 'Returning a lost wallet or purse with the money intact'; 'Supporting parents when they are in need'; 'Being nice to your co-workers even under stress'; 'Not cheating on a test even if you have the answers in front of you'), and 3 maltreatments experienced by each character (e.g., 'You heard someone bad mouthing the person behind their back'; 'You saw someone refusing aid to the person when they really need it'; 'The person goes out to dinner with a friend who refuses to pitch in for dinner because it's not their favorite restaurant').

Moral judgments

After reading each of the behaviours participants were asked to compare the two characters on a series of moral judgments. For the negative behaviours, participants were asked which character they would hold 'responsible', 'reprimand', or 'blame' more (three-items: $\alpha = .65$). For the positive behaviours they were asked which character they would 'praise', 'give credit' to, or 'respect' more (three-items: $\alpha = .54$). For the

maltreatments, they were asked which character they would 'intervene' on behalf of or feel 'indignation' for (two-items: $\alpha = .78$). Responses were provided on six-point comparison scales (between 1 and 6) with one character name at each end of the scale (e.g., 1 = Christopher, 6 = Andrew). Responses for each of the positive behaviours, negative behaviours, and maltreatments were combined to form indices of moral praise, moral blame, and moral patiency judgments.

Manipulation check

Characters were also compared on their perceived HU and HN qualities to ensure that each description had activated the relevant humanness concepts. Participants were asked which of the two characters was more 'culturally refined' and 'rational or logical' to assess HU related qualities, and 'emotionally responsive' and 'warm towards others' to assess HN related qualities. In addition, we controlled for the extent to which the characters were liked. Participants responded to the statement 'I like [characters name]' using a non-comparative seven-point scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*; 7 = *Strongly agree*).

Participants completed the task in small groups (< 15) in a classroom setting. The questionnaire took 20–30 min to complete.

Results and discussion

Our aim in this study was to investigate the influence of one dimension of humanness on moral judgments, while controlling for the presence of the other. To achieve this, we reversed comparisons of the target dimension made in the context of traits high on the controlled dimension and added them to comparisons made in the context of traits low on the controlled dimension. This provided an independent test for each kind of humanness while controlling for the effects of both high and low traits on the other dimension. In this way, to test the influence of having high versus low HN traits on judgments, ratings for Andrew versus Christopher were reversed and combined with ratings for Benjamin versus David ($N = 60$). To test the influence of high versus low HU on judgments, ratings for Andrew versus Benjamin were reversed and combined with ratings for Christopher versus David ($N = 60$). This resulted in two scales: a test of having HN (holding HU constant) and a test of having HU (holding HN constant). For all analyses, the scores on each scale were then compared to the mid-point (i.e., 3.5) using single-sample *t* tests.

Manipulation checks supported the effectiveness of the character description manipulations. The presence of HU in character descriptions was associated with higher ratings of refinement ($t(59) = 3.67$, $p < .001$) and rationality ($t(59) = 6.29$, $p < .001$), and lower ratings of emotional responsiveness ($t(59) = -3.12$, $p < .01$) and warmth ($t(59) = -3.16$, $p < .01$). Similarly, the presence of HN in character descriptions was associated with higher ratings of emotional responsiveness ($t(59) = 13.01$, $p < .001$) and warmth ($t(59) = 10.00$, $p < .001$) and lower ratings of rationality ($t(59) = -9.32$, $p < .001$) and (non-significantly) refinement ($t(59) = -1.51$, $p > .05$). The *t* tests also demonstrated that the presence of either kind of humanness was associated with liking for the characters to a similar degree (HU, $t(59) = 2.80$, $p < .01$; HN, $t(59) = 2.61$, $p < .05$).

To test our main hypotheses, we examined the extent to which the dimensions of HU and HN were associated with being blamed for immoral actions, praised for moral



Figure 2. Mean scores for HU traits on moral judgments, Study 2.

actions, and protected when treated badly. As predicted, the presence of HU in character descriptions was associated with greater moral blame ($t(59) = 2.89$, $p < .01$) but not with moral praise ($t(59) = -0.34$, $p > .05$) (see Figure 2). We again found that HU was also associated with lesser protection ($t(59) = -3.00$, $p < .001$); characters with more HU traits were afforded less moral patiency. Also as predicted, the presence of HN in character descriptions was associated with more moral praise ($t(59) = 4.55$, $p < .01$) and moral patiency ($t(59) = 2.24$, $p < .05$), and was unrelated to moral blame ($t(59) = -0.71$, $p > .05$) (see Figure 3).

The findings provided direct support to our hypothesis, and demonstrated the causal and independent role of each dimension in moral judgment. People seen as high in HU received more moral blame for immoral acts, and people seen as high in HN received more moral praise for moral acts and were viewed as deserving protection from immoral behaviour (moral patiency). Furthermore, HU and HN qualities were equally liked, indicating that participants' tendency to differentially assign moral praise, moral blame, or moral patiency was not reducible to general evaluation of the characters. We again found support for the inverse relationship reported by Gray and Wegner (2009) between agency and patiency, with diminished protection afforded to characters high in HU.



Figure 3. Mean scores for HN traits on moral judgments, Study 2.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Across two studies, we demonstrate links between perceived humanness and multiple aspects of moral status. People may be subtly ascribed or denied varying degrees of humanness and this has implications for whether they are thought to be deserving of

blame or punishment and worthy of praise, protection, or rehabilitation. The findings demonstrate that people viewed as high in HN are judged to merit personal credit or praise for their moral behaviour and to have relatively high moral worth, whereas people viewed as high in HU are seen as morally responsible or blameworthy for immoral behaviour. Study 1 focused on stereotypes of social groups, demonstrating a link between stereotype content and moral status. People were judged to have different praise- and blame-worthiness, and different moral worth, according to their group membership. Furthermore, Study 1 showed that humanness dimensions predict the kind of correctional strategies people recommend: HU was associated with a preference for punishment, and HN was associated with rehabilitation. Finally, Study 2 experimentally demonstrated the same associations between the humanness dimensions and the three kinds of moral judgment.

Our findings make two important contributions to previous work in this area. First, work by Gray and Wegner (2009) has identified an inverse relationship between moral agency and moral patiency. Our findings provide some evidence for this hypothesis however also demonstrate that each judgment is primarily related to independent dimensions of humanness. Our work also extends on this research by focusing on two forms of agency; highlighting that both proactive agency and moral patiency are associated with HN and suggesting that characteristics which make us morally valuable (patiency) can also contribute to our perceived (pro-active) agency. Second, our data highlights that people are non-Kantian in their attributions of moral praise and afford it on the basis of empathy, emotionality and warmth and to some extent deny it on the basis of rationality, civility and refinement. We are not arguing that moral duty is not important in peoples' moral judgments, but in the context of commonplace moral transgressions people appear to be attuned to praising those qualities which give us the desire to do good, rather than the capacity to fulfil moral obligations.

These findings also highlight a potentially important consequence of subtle denials of humanness to others, such as those embodied in stereotypes or traits ascribed to individuals. Viewing others as lacking important elements of their humanness has implications for whether they will be seen as deserving protection from harm and whether rehabilitation or blame and punishment will be seen as appropriate responses to their misdeeds. Our findings indicate that denying people HN leads to perceptions that they are less deserving of moral treatment and rehabilitation and less capable of proactively contributing to the moral community. Denying people HU leads to perceptions that they are unable to inhibit immoral behaviour and are therefore less deserving of punishment.

An important implication of this work is that subtle differences in perceptions of humanity may have powerful implications for our perceived moral status. Moral standards, in theory, are universally applied on the basis of basic human mental capacities (e.g., The Universal Declaration of Human Rights). However, the current research shows that subtle differences in the attribution of human characteristics predict variations in people's moral judgment of others. People may be considered less morally valuable or less able to act according to moral principles depending on their individual traits or group memberships. Indeed, stereotypes have been shown to have important implications in jury decision making (Bodenhausen & Wyer, 1985; Dane, 1992). The current work implies that stereotype content associated with humanness may play an important role in the course of justice.

Finally, our findings provide insight into the different ways that our humanity is considered valuable. It is the core, essential, and universal aspects of our humanity that

are believed to make us worthy of moral treatment and moral praise, and make us worthy of rehabilitation. On the other hand, characteristics that distinguish humans from animals are those that are believed to underlie our moral responsibility, ultimately allowing for social harmony and the smooth functioning of social relations. Yet these qualities are also viewed as making us more deserving of punishment and potentially reduce the extent to which we are afforded the right to moral treatment.

Limitations and future directions

There are a number of limitations to the current work that also provide promising research directions. First, we have argued that subtly denying humanity to others has important consequences for the extent to which they are perceived to have moral status. However, our studies have focused on identifying a positive relationship between two kinds of humanness and judgments of moral value, agency, and responsibility. Although our theoretical model allows for interferences from humanness attributions to their denial (Haslam, 2006), future work could aim to demonstrate a direct relationship between the different ways that others can be dehumanized and a consequent loss of moral status. Second, we have focused on how humanness perceptions influence moral status however it is equally conceivable that this relationship is bidirectional. For example, perpetrators who deny moral responsibility may be punished less, but also seen as less human. Future work could begin to explore this reverse direction of effects. Third, although Study 1 critically draws on stereotypes of real world groups, our work largely relies on experimental stimuli. While this approach is adequate for theory building, future research could examine these implications within real-world contexts. For example, government interventions aiming to address social problems, either through education and rehabilitation or punishment and deterrence, may be as much guided by the perceived humanness of their constituants as by well-informed policy decisions.

Conclusion

Overall, our work has demonstrated that just as being human is tightly bound to moral status in philosophical and legal understandings, this relationship is also evident within people's everyday thinking. Moreover, it demonstrates that different elements of our humanity are tied to different ways we can be afforded moral status. Subtly denying these qualities has implications for whether we are viewed as being morally responsible, morally praiseworthy and deserving of protection from harm, demonstrating that our moral status is perhaps less stable, and more easily undermined, than we would like to believe.

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