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Report

Excluded from humanity: The dehumanizing effects of social ostracism

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ABSTRACT

Humans have a fundamental need to form and maintain relationships. Social exclusion frustrates this need and has devastating psychological effects. The current research examines the relationship between social exclusion and the experience of dehumanization from the target's perspective. When people were ostracized they judged themselves and those who ostracized them as less human (Studies 1 and 2), and believed they were viewed as less human by the perpetrators (Study 2). In both studies, essential 'human nature' was the dimension of humanness most sensitive to social exclusion.

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The need to belong is a fundamental human motive whose frustration has destructive consequences. Social ostracism undermines people's sense of belonging, control, self-esteem, and meaningfulness (Zadro, Williams, & Richardson, 2004), increases aggression (Twenge, Baumeister, Tice, & Stucke, 2001), reduces pro-social behavior (Twenge, Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarrocco, & Bartels, 2007), and impairs self-regulation (Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarrocco, & Twenge, 2006). The impact of ostracism is profound, and it is also surprisingly general. Ostracism is highly aversive even when it is perpetrated by distant or despised others (Gonsalkorale & Williams, 2007; Williams, Cheung, & Choi, 2000), or even by inanimate objects (Zadro et al., 2004). By implication, social exclusion is painful in itself, and not only in the contexts of particular relationships.

If the effects of social ostracism extend beyond particular relationships, what do people feel excluded from when they are ostracized? If belonging is central to our experience of being human, then ostracism may disrupt our sense of ourselves as members of an interconnected human community. Just as many early civilizations equated exile with death, ostracism may be experienced as exclusion from our humanity, a primal disconnect with the human group.

Work on dehumanization has highlighted its association with social disconnection. Kelman (1976) notes that denying others membership in a community of interconnected individuals is a central aspect of treating them as less than human. Dehumanization also involves moral disengagement (Bandura, 1999), a process by which people are placed outside the "moral circle" where the rights and consideration attached to being human apply (Opatow,

1990). Being ignored and treated with indifference appear to be central to both dehumanization and social ostracism. Feeling displaced outside the circle of humanity may be an experience they have common.

Recent work on dehumanization¹ has demonstrated that it can take subtle and everyday forms (Haslam, 2006). Research in this tradition indicates that it can occur in interpersonal as well as intergroup contexts, showing that people commonly see others as less human than themselves (Haslam & Bain, 2007; Haslam, Bain, Douge, Lee, & Bastian, 2005). This work has highlighted two dimensions of humanness that may be denied to others (Haslam, 2006). "Human Uniqueness" refers to attributes that are seen as distinguishing humans from other animals, and involves refinement, civility, morality, and higher cognition (cf. Leyens et al., 2001). "Human Nature" refers to attributes that are seen as shared and fundamental features of humanity, such as emotionality, agency, warmth, and cognitive flexibility. When Human Uniqueness attributes are denied to people they are explicitly or implicitly likened to animals, and seen as child-like, immature, coarse, irrational, or backward. When Human Nature attributes are denied to them they are explicitly or implicitly likened to objects or machines and seen as cold, rigid, inert, and lacking emotion and agency.

The second, "mechanistic" form of dehumanization may be especially relevant to ostracism. In theory (Haslam, 2006), it has a relational component and commonly occurs in the context of 'asocial' or 'null' interactions (Fiske, 1991) where people "disregard

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¹ Although some researchers prefer to reserve the term "dehumanization" for severe or absolute denials of humanness, in the present work it is taken to include milder forms in which people are ascribed lesser degrees of humanness relative to other people or to themselves at other times.

the existence of other people as social partners" (p. 19). People in these kinds of interactions are likely to have an indifferent, distant, instrumental, and objectifying orientation to others, lacking genuine relatedness. The same form of dehumanization is implied by research on the experiential impact of social ostracism, which refers to "cognitive deconstructive" states (Twenge, Catanese, & Baumeister, 2003) that involve emotional numbing, reduced empathy, cognitive inflexibility, lethargy, and an absence of meaningful thought. Baumeister (1990) argues that people enter these states as a defense against emotional distress and aversive self-awareness following social exclusion. Similarly, Williams (2001) notes that people respond to ostracism with numbness, empty, neutral and bored feelings, a narrowly concrete focus on the immediate present, a reduced tendency towards action, and lack of self-assertion. These implications correspond to an experienced loss of Human Nature: ostracized individuals feel lacking in flexibility, emotionality, agency, and warmth, as if they see themselves as mechanical entities rather than fully human beings.

Research to date has focused on the impressive and far-reaching outcomes of social ostracism. However few studies have investigated the perceptions of self that accompany ostracism, and these focus exclusively on how positively the self is viewed (Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995; Nezlek, Kowalski, Leary, Blevins, & Holgate, 1997; Sommer & Baumeister, 2002). The current research aimed to investigate the link between the experience of ostracism, experimentally induced in two distinct ways, and perceptions of the self as less human, independent of the negative self-views that often accompany this experience. In doing so, it aimed for the first time to investigate the experience of being dehumanized from the perspective of the target. We predicted that the relevant sense of diminished humanness would be Human Nature, given its special relationship with social disconnection and the theoretical links between the mechanistic form of dehumanization and cognitive deconstructive states. As well as examining the target's self-perceptions, we explored their perceptions of the perpetrators of ostracism. Kelman (1976) notes that treating people as less than human also tends to dehumanize the perpetrator. We thus predicted that being ostracized leads people to feel less human and also to see the person who excluded them as less human.

Study 1

In Study 1, participants wrote an essay about an experience of social exclusion, social inclusion, or an everyday experience, modeled on the methods employed by Pickett, Gardner, and Knowles (2004). They then rated themselves and the other person (e.g., the excluder) on traits that assess the two dimensions of humanness (Haslam et al., 2005). If being excluded leads to feeling dehumanized, we would expect participants to rate themselves lower on traits associated with humanness, and Human Nature traits in particular, in the social exclusion condition compared to the other conditions. Because previous research has demonstrated that people rate themselves less positively when excluded (e.g., Nezlek

et al., 1997), trait humanness was examined independent of trait valence. We also expected that humanness would be denied to the perpetrators of ostracism, but made no prediction about which form of humanness would be involved or the valence related effects.

Method

Participants

Participants were 71 undergraduates (48 women, 23 men) who took part in the study for course credit. Their ages ranged from 17 to 56 years ($M = 19.87$, $SD = 5.10$).

Materials

Participants completed a questionnaire that asked them to recall vividly an experience when they were either 'especially social accepted by others' (inclusion condition; $n = 25$), 'experienced rejection or exclusion by others' (exclusion condition; $n = 25$), or 'an everyday interaction you had with another person or group of people yesterday' (control condition; $n = 21$), with participants randomly assigned to each condition. Participants spent 10–15 min writing about their experience. They were then given a list of 40 traits that included five positive Human Uniqueness traits (broadminded, conscientious, humble, polite, thorough), five negative Human Uniqueness traits (disorganized, hard-hearted, ignorant, rude, stingy), five positive Human Nature traits (active, curious, friendly, helpful, fun-loving) and five negative Human Nature traits (impatient, impulsive, jealous, nervous, shy), and 20 filler traits. The Human Nature and Human Uniqueness trait sets had been validated as rating highly and distinctively on each sense of humanness (Haslam et al., 2005). Participants rated the degree to which they possessed each trait and the degree to which they felt the others (e.g., ostracizers) possessed each trait.

Participants then rated four fundamental needs using 11 items adapted from Zadro et al. (2004) (see Table 1). These needs were *belonging* (e.g., "I felt as though I had made a "connection" or bonded with the other people in the situation"), *control* (e.g., "I felt that I was in control during the situation"), *self-esteem* (e.g., "I felt good about myself in the situation"), and *meaningful existence* (e.g., "I felt as though my existence was meaningless during the situation" [reversed]). One item was dropped from the last scale as it referred explicitly to a different methodology.

Participants took 20–30 min to complete the task in small groups in a classroom setting.

Results

ANOVAs were used to explore ratings of self and others, with experimental condition as the between-subjects factor. Examination of participants' responses on the four fundamental needs replicated previous findings, with participants reporting differing levels across conditions (see Table 1). Simple contrasts demonstrated that these effects were specific to exclusion. Only belonging

Table 1

Means and standard deviations for the fundamental needs in Study 1 (all scales 1 = not at all to 6 = very much so).

	Condition		
	Exclusion ($n = 25$)	Inclusion ($n = 25$)	Control ($n = 21$)
<i>Fundamental needs</i>			
Belonging (3 items; $\alpha = .92$) $F(2, 68) = 247.86$, $p < .001$	1.6 (.14) ^a	5.7 (.14) ^b	5.0 (.15) ^c
Control (3 items; $\alpha = .73$) $F(2, 68) = 81.69$, $p < .001$	2.1 (.16) ^a	4.7 (.16) ^b	4.6 (.17) ^b
Self-esteem (3 items; $\alpha = .94$) $F(2, 68) = 113.14$, $p < .001$	1.9 (.18) ^a	5.5 (.18) ^b	5.0 (.19) ^b
Meaningful existence (2 items; $\alpha = .91$) $F(2, 68) = 71.03$, $p < .001$	2.6 (.21) ^a	5.8 (.21) ^b	5.5 (.23) ^b

^{a,b,c} Values in a row with dissimilar superscripts are significantly different at $p < .01$.

differed between the inclusion and control conditions ($p < .01$). All four needs were strongly correlated (r 's $> .84$, p 's $< .001$).

Mean self-ratings on the four trait sets were computed for each participant and subjected to separate two-way mixed ANOVAs for each sense of humanness. Condition was the between-subjects factor and represented a test of the study's main hypothesis (i.e., lower endorsement of humanness traits in the exclusion condition), while valence (positive/negative) was the within-subjects factor. For Human Nature traits a main effect for valence, $F(1, 68) = 18.47$, $p < .001$, revealed that participants rated themselves as having more positive ($M = .59$) than negative traits ($M = -.04$). A main effect for condition, $F(2, 68) = 8.21$, $p < .001$, indicated that independent of valence, participants' ratings of Human Nature traits differed across conditions. Supporting the study hypothesis, simple contrasts showed that participants viewed themselves as having less Human Nature when excluded compared to the inclusion and control conditions (p 's $< .05$), which did not differ (see Fig. 1). Valence also interacted with condition, $F(2, 68) = 38.27$, $p < .001$. Simple effects analysis showed that when excluded, participants rated themselves as having fewer positive but more negative Human Nature traits compared to when they were included (positive: $t(48) = -8.71$, $p < .001$; negative: $t(48) = 4.71$, $p < .01$) or compared to the control condition (positive: $t(44) = -5.14$, $p < .001$; negative: $t(44) = 4.08$, $p < .001$).

For the Human Uniqueness dimension a main effect of valence, $F(1, 68) = 16.35$, $p < .001$, revealed that participants rated themselves as having more positive ($M = .34$) than negative traits ($M = -.30$). However, mean Human Uniqueness ratings did not differ across conditions, $F(2, 68) = 0.51$, $p > .05$ (Fig. 1). Again, valence interacted with condition, $F(2, 68) = 15.89$, $p < .001$, simple effects analysis showing that when excluded, participants rated themselves as having fewer positive Human Uniqueness traits and more negative Human Uniqueness traits than when included (positive: $t(48) = -2.64$, $p < .05$; negative: $t(48) = 3.84$, $p < .01$) or when compared to controls (positive: $t(44) = -2.90$, $p < .01$; negative: $t(44) = 2.86$, $p < .01$).

For other-ratings, two-way mixed ANOVAs revealed a main effect for valence on the Human Nature dimension, $F(1, 68) = 28.19$,

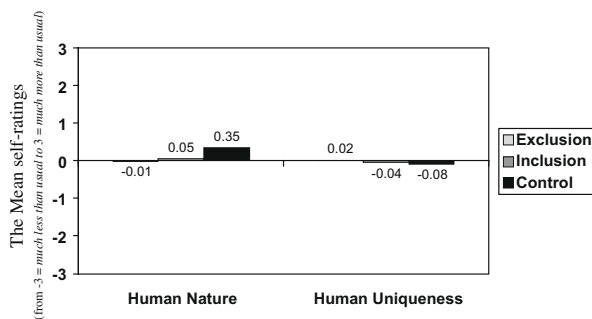


Fig. 1. Mean self-ratings on Human Nature and Human Uniqueness traits across conditions, Study 1.

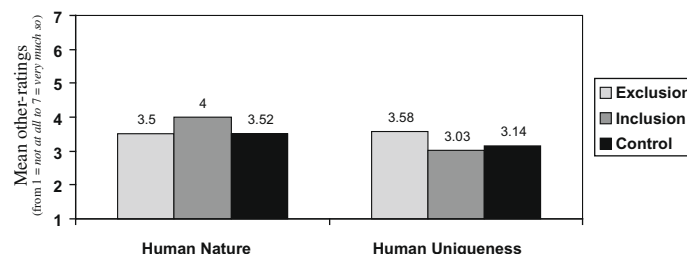


Fig. 2. Mean other-ratings on Human Nature and Human Uniqueness traits across conditions, Study 1.

$p < .001$, such that participants rated the others as having more positive ($M = 4.36$) than negative traits ($M = 2.96$). Levels of Human Nature traits also differed by condition, $F(2, 68) = 3.49$, $p < .05$. Simple effects analysis demonstrated that participants viewed others as having less Human Nature when they had been excluded compared to included ($p < .05$), again supporting the importance of Human Nature for ostracism (see Fig. 2). There was no difference between the exclusion and control conditions. Valence interacted with condition, $F(2, 68) = 28.19$, $p < .001$, simple effects analysis showing that when excluded, people denied others positive Human Nature traits but ascribed them more negative Human Nature traits compared to the inclusion (positive: $t(48) = -6.83$, $p < .001$; negative: $t(48) = 2.72$, $p < .01$) and control conditions (positive: $t(44) = -3.80$, $p < .001$; negative: $t(44) = 3.17$, $p < .01$).

For Human Uniqueness traits there was again a main effect for valence, $F(1, 68) = 16.93$, $p < .001$, with participants rating others as having more positive ($M = 3.62$) than negative traits ($M = 2.89$), and a main effect for condition, $F(2, 68) = 4.20$, $p < .05$. Simple contrasts demonstrated that participants attributed more Human Uniqueness qualities to others who excluded them than to those who included them or interacted with them neutrally (p 's $< .05$), with no differences between the latter (see Fig. 2). Valence interacted with condition, $F(2, 68) = 43.66$, $p < .001$, with simple effects analysis showing the greater denial of positive Human Uniqueness traits and greater attribution of negative Human Uniqueness traits in the exclusion condition compared to inclusion (positive: $t(48) = -4.55$, $p < .001$; negative: $t(48) = 9.28$, $p < .01$) and control (positive: $t(44) = -3.56$, $p < .001$; negative: $t(44) = 6.32$, $p < .01$) conditions.

Discussion

The results of Study 1 support our prediction that people see themselves and others as less human when they are socially excluded compared to neutral interactions or when they are included. Support was also found for the special importance of Human Nature, with Human Nature traits denied to both the self and others in the exclusion condition relative to the other conditions. Importantly, these effects occurred independent of trait valence, and condition by valence interaction effects replicated previous research on negative self-views following ostracism (Nezlek et al., 1997; Sommer & Baumeister, 2002). We found no support for a denial of Human Uniqueness qualities to the self following exclusion compared to other types of interaction, but an unexpected ascription of more Human Uniqueness qualities to excluding others. This finding may reflect a link between the Human Uniqueness dimension and status. When we are rejected or disdained by others we may perceive their relative status as higher than our own. However, given that people were particularly likely to attribute negative Human Uniqueness qualities this finding may be just as easily explained by the selection of particular trait terms to describe ostracizers (e.g., 'hard-hearted'). While the findings for Human Uniqueness are unclear, the results support

the notion that when social connections are disrupted our sense of shared humanity (Human Nature) is disrupted so that others as well as ourselves are perceived to lack it.

The first study supported our predictions, but left several questions unanswered. First, would the basic findings extend to other experimental manipulations of ostracism? Second, could we replicate the unexpected attribution of more Human Uniqueness to ostracizers? A further question that arose from Study 1 was how participants thought they were viewed by such ostracizers. Kenny (1994) has shown the importance of such meta-perceptions, but no previous work has investigated dehumanizing meta-perceptions. If people not only view themselves as dehumanized when they are ostracized, but also perceive that they are seen as less human by the ostracizer, this would provide a more complete insight into the relational nature of dehumanization.

Study 2

To address these questions we employed Cyberball, a computer simulated ball-toss game that was developed by Williams et al. (2000). In this game participants play with two other players who either pass them the ball (inclusion condition) or do not (exclusion condition). The game models a real life ball-tossing game and participants are told that they are playing on-line with other players. In order to test our hypotheses more thoroughly and given the potential influence of trait content for Human Uniqueness findings in Study 1, we developed additional non-trait measures of humanness to provide convergent support to the trait ratings. These measures incorporated concepts theoretically related to the two dimensions (Haslam, 2006) and included items reflecting the humanizing and dehumanizing qualities associated with each. In this way we directly measured concepts associated with the attribution and denial of humanness as well as traits associated with it. To assess meta-perceptions we asked participants to provide trait ratings and item responses according to how they felt they were viewed by others in the game.

Method

Participants

Participants were 72 undergraduates (46 women, 26 men) who participated in the study for course credit. Their ages ranged from 17 to 52 years ($M = 19.21$, $SD = 4.25$).

Materials

The study involved the Cyberball game and a brief questionnaire. Following methods employed by Zadro et al. (2004) participants were told the study involved the effects of mental visualization, and to assist them in practicing their skills they would be playing an Internet ball-toss game on the computer. They were asked to visualize the situation, themselves, and the other players and told they were playing against participants on-line in another laboratory on the university campus. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two versions of the game: the inclusion condition ($n = 36$) where they received the ball 33% of the time

or the exclusion condition ($n = 36$) where they received the ball twice and then never again. Each game lasted for 50 throws.

Once the game was finished participants completed a questionnaire. They again provided ratings for the four fundamental needs, this time with the wording taken directly from Zadro et al. (2004) utilizing all 12 items. They then rated themselves, the others in the Cyberball game, and the others' perceived view of themselves on measures of Human Nature and Human Uniqueness. In addition to the 40 traits used in Study 1, participants rated 12 new items assessing the attribution of Human Nature and Human Uniqueness and the related forms of humanness denial (Haslam, 2006), as follows: *High Human Nature* ("I felt like I had interpersonal warmth", "I felt like I was open minded, like I could think clearly", "I felt that I was emotional, like I was responsive and warm"), *Low Human Nature* ("I felt superficial like I had no depth", "I felt like I was an object, not a human", "I felt like I was mechanical and cold, like a robot"), *High Human Uniqueness* ("I felt like I was refined and cultured", "I felt like I was an adult not a child", "I felt like I had self-restraint", "I felt like I was rational and logical, like I was intelligent"), *Low Human Uniqueness* ("I felt like I was less than human, like an animal", "I felt like I was unsophisticated"). For other-ratings and meta-perception ratings the item stems changed to "I felt like the others. . ." and "I felt like the other people saw me. . .". Responses were made from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much so*). Indices of Human Nature and Human Uniqueness were constructed by reverse scoring the Low items and adding them to the High items.

Participants completed the task in small groups in a computer lab, taking approximately 30 min.

Results

Measures of the four fundamental needs were reliable (see Table 2), as were the new measures of humanness (self-ratings: Human Nature, $\alpha = .78$, Human Uniqueness, $\alpha = .59$; other-ratings: Human Nature, $\alpha = .86$, Human Uniqueness, $\alpha = .78$; meta-perceptions: Human Nature, $\alpha = .82$, Human Uniqueness, $\alpha = .67$). Reliabilities for self and meta-perceptions of Human Uniqueness were modest; however reliabilities were good for Human Nature, the main focus of the research.

As in Study 1, ANOVAs examined ratings of self, others and meta-perceptions, with experimental condition as the between-subjects factor. Examination of participants' responses on the four fundamental needs again replicated previous research (see Table 2), with excluded participants reporting lower levels on all measures. All four needs were strongly correlated (r 's $> .60$, p 's $< .001$).

Separate two-way mixed ANOVAs were conducted for self-ratings on each sense of humanness. Analysis of the positive and negative Human Nature traits revealed a main effect for valence, $F(1, 70) = 11.57$, $p < .001$, indicating that across conditions participants rated themselves as having more negative ($M = .45$) than positive Human Nature traits ($M = -.01$). A main effect of condition, $F(1, 70) = 10.66$, $p < .01$, indicated that as hypothesized, participants' self-ratings of Human Nature were significantly lower when ostracized (see Fig. 3). Valence interacted with condition, $F(1, 70) = 22.52$, $p < .001$, with simple effects analysis showing that

Table 2

Means and standard deviations for the fundamental needs in Study 2 (all scales 1 = *not at all* to 6 = *very much so*).

r	Condition	
	Exclusion ($n = 36$)	Inclusion ($n = 36$)
<i>Fundamental needs</i>		
Belonging (3 items; $\alpha = .83$) $F(1, 70) = 147.74$, $p < .001$	1.5 (.15)	4.0 (.15)
Control (3 items; $\alpha = .81$) $F(1, 70) = 90.96$, $p < .001$	1.6 (.15)	3.7 (.15)
Self-esteem (3 items; $\alpha = .81$) $F(1, 70) = 29.03$, $p < .001$	2.5 (.19)	3.9 (.19)
Meaningful existence (3 items; $\alpha = .67$) $F(1, 70) = 82.99$, $p < .001$	2.1 (.16)	4.2 (.16)

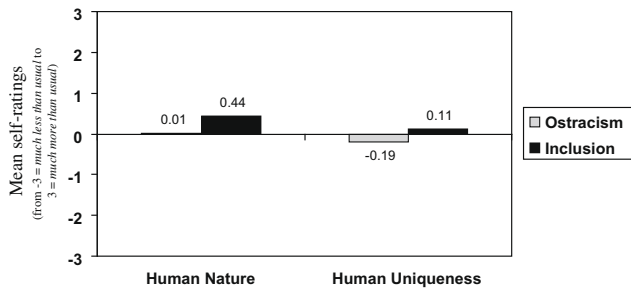


Fig. 3. Mean self-ratings on Human Nature and Human Uniqueness traits across conditions, Study 2.

ostracized participants attributed fewer positive Human Nature traits to themselves but did not attribute themselves more negative Human Nature traits (positive: $t(70) = -5.16, p < .001$; negative: $t(70) = 1.29, p > .05$). For Human Uniqueness traits there was no main effect of valence, $F(1, 70) = 0.67, p > .05$, (positive: $M = .01$; negative: $M = -.09$) but there was a condition effect, $F(1, 70) = 4.50, p < .05$, indicating that participants attributed less Human Uniqueness traits to themselves when ostracized (see Fig. 3). Valence did not interact with condition on Human Uniqueness traits, $F(1, 70) = 0.68, p > .05$.

For ratings of others, a two-way mixed ANOVA for the Human Nature dimension revealed a main effect for valence, $F(1, 70) = 23.41, p < .001$, indicating that participants rated others as having more positive ($M = 3.60$) than negative ($M = 3.10$) Human Nature traits. A main effect for condition, $F(1, 70) = 12.66, p < .001$, indicated that as in Study 1, participants rated others as having less Human Nature when they had been ostracized by them (see Fig. 4). Valence interacted with condition, $F(1, 70) = 22.08, p < .001$, with simple effects indicating that when excluded, participants denied positive Human Nature traits to others but did not attribute more negative Human Nature traits to them (positive: $t(70) = -5.63, p < .001$; negative: $t(70) = 0.07, p > .05$). For Human Uniqueness traits there was again a main effect for valence, $F(1, 70) = 8.41, p < .01$, with participants ascribing more negative ($M = 3.63$) than positive ($M = 3.10$) traits to others. A main effect for condition, $F(1, 70) = 5.53, p < .05$, indicated that participants attributed more Human Uniqueness qualities to others who ostracized them than to those who included them (see Fig. 4). Valence interacted with condition, $F(1, 70) = 86.06, p < .001$, with simple effects indicating that when ostracized, participants denied positive Human Uniqueness traits to others as well as attributing them more negative Human Uniqueness traits (positive: $t(70) = -5.24, p < .001$; negative: $t(70) = 7.48, p > .05$).

Analysis of meta-perceptions for the Human Nature dimension revealed no main effect for valence, $F(1, 70) = .77, p > .05$, (positive: $M = 3.70$; negative: $M = 3.53$) and no main effect for condition, $F(1, 70) = 1.41, p > .05$ (exclusion: $M = 3.74$; inclusion: $M = 3.49$). There was an interaction of valence with condition, $F(1, 70) =$

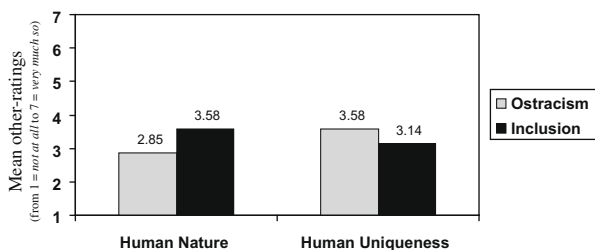


Fig. 4. Mean other-ratings on Human Nature and Human Uniqueness traits across conditions, Study 2.

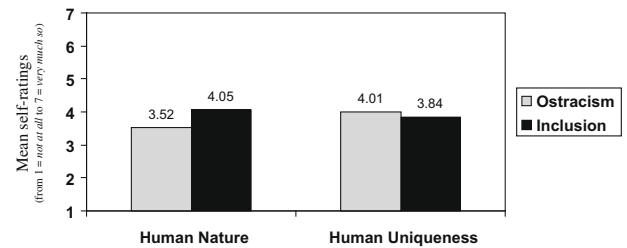


Fig. 5. Mean self-ratings on Human Nature and Human Uniqueness items across conditions, Study 2.

20.81, $p < .001$. When excluded, participants felt that others viewed them as having less positive and more negative Human Nature traits (positive: $t(70) = -2.27, p < .05$; negative: $t(70) = 3.89, p < .001$). For Human Uniqueness traits there was a main effect of valence $F(1, 70) = 11.82, p < .001$, with participants rating others perception of them as more positive ($M = 3.49$) than negative ($M = 2.84$). However there was no effect of condition, $F(1, 70) = 0.33, p > .05$, (exclusion: $M = 3.23$; inclusion: $M = 3.10$) and valence did not interact with condition $F(1, 70) = 0.40, p > .05$.

Lastly, responses to the concept items provided convergent support to our findings for Human Nature traits, indicating that participants viewed themselves and others as lower in Human Nature in the exclusion condition than in the inclusion condition (self: $F(1, 70) = 3.50, p < .05$; other: $F(1, 70) = 37.10, p < .001$) (see Figs. 5 and 6). Responses to the concept items also differed from trait ratings, providing evidence that participants thought others saw them as having less Human Nature in the exclusion condition, $F(1, 70) = 7.59, p < .01$) (see Fig. 7). Convergent support for Human Uniqueness was mixed. There were no differences for participants' self-ratings on Human Uniqueness, $F(1, 70) = 0.61, p > .05$ (Fig. 5), consistent with Study 1 but inconsistent with Study 2. Inconsistent with both studies, others were perceived as having less Human Uniqueness when excluding the participant, $F(1, 70) = 19.59, p < .001$ (Fig. 6) and in support of Study 2 there were no differences

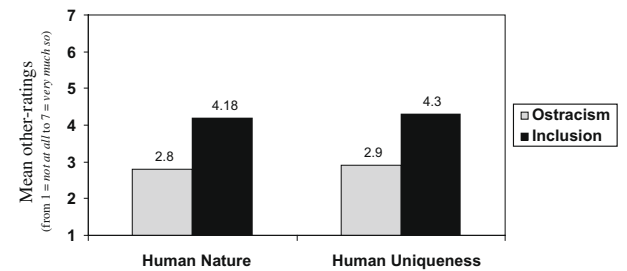


Fig. 6. Mean other-ratings on Human Nature and Human Uniqueness items across conditions, Study 2.

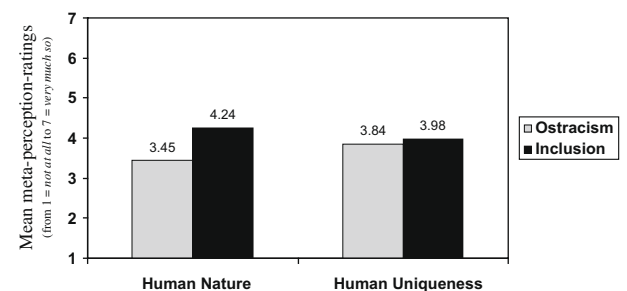


Fig. 7. Mean meta-perception ratings on Human Nature and Human Uniqueness items across conditions, Study 2.

for Human Uniqueness in participants' meta-perceptions across conditions, $F(1, 70) = 0.34, p > .05$ (Fig. 7).

Discussion

The findings of Study 2 replicate the basic effects found in Study 1 using a different methodology, supporting the idea that people view themselves and others as less human when they are socially ostracized compared to when they are included. In addition, Study 2 demonstrated that participants believed that others who ostracized them saw them as less human than those who included them. Study 2 further highlighted the central role of Human Nature in ostracism. Both trait ratings and concept item responses supported the importance of Human Nature for self-perceptions, perception of others, and meta-perceptions. There was some evidence that participants also saw themselves as lacking Human Uniqueness attributes, but the findings for Human Uniqueness were generally mixed. In the exclusion condition others were rated as having more Human Uniqueness traits as in Study 1, but they were denied Human Uniqueness attributes in the concept item responses and Human Uniqueness was not a factor in meta-perceptions. Four of six tests for valence replicated previous findings for self-perception following ostracism, again extending these effects to the perception of others and to meta-perceptions.

General discussion

Across two studies we found strong support for the dehumanizing consequences of social ostracism. People feel less human when they experience ostracism, see others who ostracize them as less human, and believe that they are viewed as less human by those others compared to when they feel included. The findings demonstrate that disconnection influences the extent to which all parties in episodes of social exclusion are perceived in a dehumanized fashion.

As predicted, Human Nature was the most relevant dimension of humanness, with consistent findings across both studies and all measures. By implication, the extent to which we experience ourselves and others as having essentially human qualities may be dependent upon human interconnection. Not surprisingly, these are the qualities that we believe we share with other members of our species (Haslam et al., 2005). Findings for the other sense of humanness, Human Uniqueness, suggest that it plays a less central role in ostracism. Indeed the most consistent finding for Human Uniqueness was that ostracizers were seen as having more rather than less of it.

The findings support previous theorizing on the role of social disconnection in dehumanization and the role that Human Nature plays in interpersonal forms of the phenomenon (Haslam et al., 2005). Being ostracized leads to viewing oneself as object-like, emotionally inert, cold, and rigid. This kind of dehumanized sense of self aligns with previous work on cognitive deconstructive states associated with social exclusion (Twenge et al., 2003). It has been argued that people enter these states to avoid aversive self-awareness, and experiencing the self as dehumanized may serve a similar purpose. Trait ratings in the current study specifically highlight the numbness and lack of agency and self-assertion associated with the experience of ostracism.

The detrimental effect of ostracism on psychological functioning is not limited to exclusion from particular relationships or groups, and even occurs when people are excluded by nonhumans. What may be common to experiences of ostracism, despite these variations in its relational context, is that people feel excluded from the human category. When ostracism occurs people feel their humanity is diminished, perhaps perceiving that they belong to the category to a reduced degree or not at all. Previous work has clearly

shown that belonging is a fundamental need whose frustration has many adverse effects, but the current work provides additional insight into the cognitive construction of ostracism. People may experience themselves as located outside the boundary of humanity when they are ostracized.

This is the first investigation of dehumanization from the perspective of the target. Previous research has highlighted the various ways that people perceive other groups as less human (e.g., Leyens et al., 2001; Viki et al., 2006), but none has looked at the experience of those being dehumanized. Taking multiple perspectives, the current work suggests that people who feel less human following ostracism believe that others view them in the same dehumanizing manner. In addition, they view the perpetrators of ostracism as less human. In this way, the findings highlight the cycle of inhumanity between victims and perpetrators. If dehumanization involves not only perpetrators dehumanizing victims but also victims dehumanizing perpetrators then when the tables have turned it is so much easier for erstwhile victims to visit dehumanizing actions upon their erstwhile tormentors.

To date there has been no work on the extent to which perpetrators of maltreatment experience themselves as less human, but research in this area may provide some insights. Research on social exclusion has demonstrated that excluded individuals have impaired self-regulation (Baumeister et al., 2006) and engage in all manner of neurotic, maladaptive, anti-social and destructive behavior (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). If, as our findings suggest, it is not only the recipient, but the perpetrators that are dehumanized, we may begin to better understand cycles of inhumane behavior. War veterans who develop PTSD, which is characterized by emotional numbing, are more likely to engage in domestic violence (Sherman, Sautter, Jackson, Lyons, & Han, 2006). Possibly it is the extent to which these veterans experience themselves as having lost those qualities associated with their humanness (e.g., warmth, empathy, and agency) that they continue to act inhumanely.

In conclusion, this research indicates that being socially excluded is a dehumanizing experience. In particular, it reduces the extent to which people believe that they possess attributes that are fundamental to our shared humanity (i.e., human nature). The findings imply that experiencing ourselves as having these attributes may depend upon having interpersonal connections. Just as "No [hu]man is an island", so is an isolate not completely human.

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