

## Dehumanization: An Integrative Review

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*The concept of dehumanization lacks a systematic theoretical basis, and research that addresses it has yet to be integrated. Manifestations and theories of dehumanization are reviewed, and a new model is developed. Two forms of dehumanization are proposed, involving the denial to others of 2 distinct senses of humanness: characteristics that are uniquely human and those that constitute human nature. Denying uniquely human attributes to others represents them as animal-like, and denying human nature to others represents them as objects or automata. Cognitive underpinnings of the “animalistic” and “mechanistic” forms of dehumanization are proposed. An expanded sense of dehumanization emerges, in which the phenomenon is not unitary, is not restricted to the intergroup context, and does not occur only under conditions of conflict or extreme negative evaluation. Instead, dehumanization becomes an everyday social phenomenon, rooted in ordinary social–cognitive processes.*

The denial of full humanness to others, and the cruelty and suffering that accompany it, is an all-too-familiar phenomenon. However, the concept of dehumanization has rarely received systematic theoretical treatment. In social psychology, it has attracted only scattered attention. In this article, I review the many domains in which dehumanization appears in recent scholarship and present the main theoretical perspectives that have been developed. I argue that a theoretically adequate concept of dehumanization requires a clear understanding of “humanness”—the quality that is denied to others when they are dehumanized—and that most theoretical approaches have failed to specify one. Two distinct senses of humanness are proposed, and empirical research establishing that they are different in composition, correlates, and conceptual bases is presented. I introduce a new theoretical model, in which two forms of dehumanization corresponding to the denial of the two forms of humanness are proposed, and I discuss their distinct psychological foundations.

The new model broadens the scope of dehumanization in a number of important respects and overcomes some limitations of previous work. In particular, I propose that dehumanization is an important phenomenon in interpersonal as well as intergroup contexts, occurs outside the domains of violence and conflict, and has social–cognitive dimensions in addition to the motivational determinants that are usually emphasized.

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### Domains of Dehumanization

Before an integrative model of dehumanization can be attempted, the ways in which the concept has been employed must be reviewed. Dehumanization is mentioned with numerous differences of emphasis and connotation in many scholarly domains, and any synthesis should be able to capture and organize these variations.

### Ethnicity and Race

Dehumanization is arguably most often mentioned in relation to ethnicity, race, and related topics such as immigration and genocide. It is in this paradigmatic context of intergroup conflict that some groups are claimed to dehumanize others, and these dehumanizing images have been widely investigated. A historical catalogue is offered by Jahoda (1999), who examined the many ways in which ethnic and racial others have been represented, both in popular culture and in scholarship, as barbarians who lack culture, self-restraint, moral sensibility, and cognitive capacity. Excesses often accompany these deficiencies: The savage has brutish appetites for violence and sex, is impulsive and prone to criminality, and can tolerate unusual amounts of pain.

A consistent theme in this work is the likening of people to animals. In racist descriptions Africans are compared to apes and sometimes explicitly denied membership of the human species. Other groups are compared to dogs, pigs, rats, parasites, or insects.

Visual depictions caricature physical features to make ethnic others look animal-like. At other times, they are likened to children, their lack of rationality, shame, and sophistication seen patronizingly as innocence rather than bestiality.

Dehumanization is frequently examined in connection with genocidal conflicts (Chalk & Jonassohn, 1990; Kelman, 1976). A primary focus is the ways in which Jews in the Holocaust, Bosnians in the Balkan wars, and Tutsis in Rwanda were dehumanized both during the violence by its perpetrators and beforehand through ideologies that likened the victims to vermin. Similar animal metaphors are common in images of immigrants (O'Brien, 2003a), who are seen as polluting threats to the social order.

### **Gender and Pornography**

Dehumanization is commonly discussed in feminist writings on the representation of women in pornography (LeMoncheck, 1985; MacKinnon, 1987). Pornography is said to dehumanize women by representing them in an objectified fashion, by implication removing women from full moral consideration and legitimating rape and victimization (Check & Guloine, 1989). Nussbaum (1999) identified seven components of this objectification: "instrumentality" and "ownership" involve treating others as tools and commodities; "denial of autonomy" and "inertness" involve seeing them as lacking self-determination and agency; "fungibility" involves seeing people as interchangeable with others of their type; "viability" represents others as lacking boundary integrity; and "denial of subjectivity" involves believing that their experiences and feelings can be neglected. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) argued that the sexual objectification of women extends beyond pornography to the culture at large, in which a normative emphasis on female appearance leads women to take a third-person perspective on their bodies.

Other feminist work argues that women are typically assigned lesser humanness than men. According to Ortner (1974), women are pan-culturally "seen as representing a lower order of being, as being less transcendental of nature than men" (p. 73), and femaleness is equated with animality, nature, and childlikeness. Similarly, Citrin, Roberts, and Fredrickson (2004) discussed the ways in which femaleness is culturally associated with lesser degrees of civility and emotional control, and the unmodified "natural" female body is often seen as disgustingly animal-like.

### **Disability**

Some scholarly work examines the dehumanization of people with disabilities. O'Brien (1999) showed that people with cognitive disabilities have historically

been subject to "organism metaphors" that compare them to parasites that infect the social body. "Animalization" also occurs, where the "feeble-minded" are denied full humanity on account of "their reportedly high procreation rates, their inability to live cultured lives, their presumed insensitivity to pain, their propensity for immoral and criminal behavior, and their instinctual rather than rational nature" (O'Brien, 2003b, p. 333). Bogdan and Taylor (1989) proposed that to avoid dehumanizing attitudes toward the disabled we must attribute thinking to them, see them as distinct individuals with unique qualities, perceive them as engaging in reciprocal behavior, and give them "social place" within a communal unit. These "humanizing sentiments" sustain a sense of the disabled person as "having the essential qualities to be defined as a fellow human being" (pp. 145–146).

### **Medicine**

The concept of dehumanization features prominently in writings on modern medicine, which is said to dehumanize patients with its lack of personal care and emotional support; its reliance on technology; its lack of touch and human warmth; its emphasis on instrumental efficiency and standardization, to the neglect of the patient's individuality; its related neglect of the patient's subjective experience in favor of objective, technologically mediated information; and its emphasis on interventions performed on a passive individual whose agency and autonomy are neglected. This form of dehumanization has been described as "objectification" and as "the denial of qualities associated with meaning, interest, and compassion" (Barnard, 2001, p. 98). Similar concerns are raised in critiques of psychiatric practice (Fink, 1982). Szasz (1973) argued that biological psychiatry's deterministic explanations and coercive treatments relieve individuals of their autonomy and moral agency. According to Szasz, psychiatric classification is equally dehumanizing, involving a "mechanomorphic" style of thinking that "thingifies" persons and treats them as "defective machine[s]" (p. 200). Dehumanization is also presented in the medical context as a mechanism that doctors use to cope with the empathic distress that attends working with the dying (Schulman-Green, 2003).

### **Technology**

Technology in general and computers in particular are a common theme in work on dehumanization. Montague and Matson (1983) presented a broad analysis of "technological dehumanization" or "the reduction of humans to machines" (p. 8), a cultural condition of postmodern society. This "pathology of mechanization" (p. 10) involves the robotic pursuit of efficiency and regularity, automaton-like rigidity and conformity,

and an approach to life that is unemotional, apathetic, and lacking in spontaneity. Critics charge that the computer metaphor of the mind in AI research is dehumanizing because computers lack our flexibility, emotionality, and capriciousness. Turkle (1984) argued that many adults in the 1970s and 1980s believed that computers lacked “the essence of human nature,” understood as emotion, intuition, spontaneity, and soul or spirit. Beliefs about the dehumanizing effects of computers compose one factor underlying computer anxiety (Beckers & Schmidt, 2001), and reservations about the educational use of computers revolve around concerns that they will reduce social relatedness and increase standardization, at the expense of students’ individuality (Nissenbaum & Walker, 1998).

### **Other Domains**

Dehumanization makes frequent cameo appearances in other academic domains. Educational theorists decry the dehumanizing implications of standardized assessment and teaching (Courts & McInerney, 1993), which are rigid and impersonal and treat students as passive and uncreative. Sport is said to have been dehumanized by technologies for perfecting the human engine (Hoberman, 1992). Stigma is claimed to dehumanize people experiencing mental disorders (Hinshaw & Cicchetti, 2000), and pro-choice advocates are claimed to dehumanize the fetus (Brennan, 1995). Implications of dehumanizing descriptions of accused criminals for jurors’ sentencing decisions have been investigated (Myers, Godwin, Latter, & Winstanley, 2004). The dehumanizing schemes of science fiction aliens, who leave their hosts as passionless automata, have attracted attention within cinema studies (Sobchack, 1987). Behaviorist psychology and economic formalism have been criticized as dehumanizing for their deterministic and instrumental approach to the person (Montague & Matson, 1982; Smith, 1999). The dehumanization of modern art has been celebrated as a purifying elimination of naturalism through emotional distancing, irony, and abstraction (Ortega y Gasset, 1968).

This survey illustrates how dehumanization has been discussed in many disciplinary contexts. Although certain themes repeat, there is great variability in the meanings that the concept has carried. Before integrating these meanings into a coherent model, existing psychological accounts of dehumanization must be reviewed.

### **Psychological Accounts of Dehumanization**

#### **Delegitimization**

One important account of dehumanization is found in Bar-Tal’s (2000) analysis of “delegitimizing beliefs.” In these beliefs “extremely negative characteristics are

attributed to another group, with the purpose of excluding it from acceptable human groups and denying it humanity” (pp. 121–122). Delegitimizing beliefs share extremely negative valence, emotional activation (typically contempt and fear), cultural support, and discriminatory rejection of the outgroup. Dehumanization is one of five belief categories, involving “labelling a group as inhuman, either by reference to subhuman categories … or by referring to negatively valued superhuman creatures such as demons, monsters, and satans” (Bar-Tal, p. 122). Delegitimizing beliefs are theorized as products of interethnic conflict that serve several functions: explaining the conflict, justifying the ingroup’s aggression, and providing it with a sense of superiority.

### **Moral Exclusion and Disengagement**

Kelman (1976) explored the moral dimensions of dehumanization in the context of sanctioned mass violence, focusing on the conditions under which normal moral restraints on violence are weakened. He argued that hostility generates violence indirectly by dehumanizing victims, so that no moral relationship with the victim inhibits the victimizer’s violent behavior. According to Kelman, dehumanization involves denying a person “identity”—a perception of the person “as an individual, independent and distinguishable from others, capable of making choices” (p. 301)—and “community”—a perception of the other as “part of an interconnected network of individuals who care for each other” (p. 301). When people are divested of these agentic and communal aspects of humanness they are deindividuated, lose the capacity to evoke compassion and moral emotions, and may be treated as means toward vicious ends.

Related arguments were made in Opotow’s (1990) work on “moral exclusion,” the process by which people are placed “outside the boundary in which moral values, rules, and considerations of fairness apply” (p. 1). Exclusion from the moral community is promoted by social conflict and feelings of unconnectedness, and varies in intensity from genocide through to indifference to other people’s suffering. Dehumanization is just one of several extreme forms of moral exclusion, but Opotow described several milder processes like psychological distance (perceiving others as objects or as nonexistent), condescension (patronizing others as inferior, irrational and childlike), and technical orientation (a focus on means–end efficiency and mechanical routine).

Bandura (2002) complements Kelman and Opotow’s work with an individual level account of the cognitive and affective mechanisms involved in moral agency. Dehumanization is one way in which moral self-sanctions are selectively disengaged. People who aggress are spared self-condemnation and empathic distress if their identification with victims is blocked by seeing them “no longer … as persons with feelings,

hopes and concerns but as sub-human objects" (Bandura, 2002, p. 109). Accordingly, people divested of human qualities were treated particularly harshly in an experimental study (Bandura, Underwood, & Fromson, 1975), and children high in moral disengagement engaged in more aggressive and delinquent behavior, and experienced less anticipatory guilt and remorse (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996). Thus, tendencies to dehumanize others may partially explain individual differences in destructiveness.

### Values

Schwartz and Struch (1989) developed a distinctive theoretical approach that emphasizes the central position of human values in dehumanization. People's values "express their distinctive humanity," so "beliefs about a group's value hierarchy reveal the perceiver's view of the fundamental human nature of the members of that group" (p. 153). When an outgroup is perceived to have dissimilar values to the ingroup, it is perceived to lack shared humanity and its interests can be disregarded. Schwartz and Struch argued that values reflecting that people have "transcended their basic animal nature and developed their human sensitivities and moral sensibilities" (p. 155) directly reflect a group's humanity. "Prosocial" values (e.g., equality, helpful, forgiving) are transcendent in this sense, whereas "hedonism" values (pleasure, a comfortable life) reflect "selfish interests shared with infra-human species" (p. 155). People can therefore be dehumanized by the perception that they lack prosocial values and/or that their values are incongruent with one's ingroup's values. Struch and Schwartz (1989) found that indexes of both dehumanizing perceptions and outgroup dehumanization mediated the relation between perceived conflict (between Israelis and an ultraorthodox Jewish outgroup) and endorsement of aggression, whereas ingroup favoritism was unrelated to aggression. They argued that a motive to harm the outgroup can lead to the denial of moral sensibility to its members, thus overcoming inhibitions to the motive's expression.

### Infra-humanization

In a productive recent line of research on "infra-humanization," Leyens and colleagues (Leyens et al., 2003; Leyens et al., 2001) have shown that people commonly attribute more uniquely human "secondary" emotions to their ingroup than to outgroups but do not differentially attribute the primary emotions that we share with other animals. This effect is irreducible to people's greater familiarity with ingroup members (Cortes, Demoulin, Rodriguez, Rodriguez, & Leyens, 2005). People actively avoid attributing secondary emotions to outgroups, discount evidence that outgroup members experience them (Gaunt, Leyens, & Sindic, 2004), and are reluctant to help outgroup members

who express their need in terms of them (Vaes, Paladino, Castelli, Leyens, & Giovanazzi, 2003). Secondary emotions are also preferentially associated with the ingroup when implicit methods are used (Gaunt, Leyens, & Demoulin, 2002; Paladino et al., 2002). Leyens and colleagues theorize these effects as the denial of the "human essence" to outgroups.

Infra-humanization is a particularly interesting form of dehumanization because it is subtle, requiring no explicit likening of outgroup members to animals, and is not reducible to ingroup favoritism (positive and negative secondary emotions are both denied to outgroups). Infra-humanization also occurs in the absence of intergroup conflict, and therefore extends the scope of dehumanization well beyond the context of cruelty and ethnic hatred.

### Common Themes

The theoretical perspectives on dehumanization previously reviewed share several important similarities. First, with the exception of the infra-humanization perspective they discuss dehumanization in the context of aggression. Whether focusing on the removal of normal restraints on individuals' aggression, the societal beliefs that place members of despised outgroups beyond the boundaries of moral consideration, or the perception of others' value dissimilarity, they view dehumanization as an important precondition or consequence of violence. Second, they generally present dehumanization as accompanying extremely negative evaluations of others, with infra-humanization theory again an exception that allows dehumanization to take milder, everyday forms. Third, they conceptualize dehumanization as a motivated phenomenon serving individual, interpersonal, or intergroup functions (relief from moral emotions, self-exoneration, enabling or post hoc justification for violence, epistemic certainty in the face of non-normative behavior, provision of a sense of superiority, enforcement of social dominance). The possibility that dehumanization might have cognitive determinants has been largely unexplored.

### A Model of Dehumanization

Any understanding of dehumanization must proceed from a clear sense of what is being denied to the other, namely humanness. However, with a few exceptions—Kelman (1976) on identity and community and Schwartz and Struch (1989) on prosocial values—writers on dehumanization have rarely offered one, leaving the meaning of humanness unanalyzed. Infra-humanization theorists have been unusually explicit, representing humanness as what distinguishes us from animals. Secondary emotions exemplify human uniqueness in their research, but they acknowl-

edge that additional uniquely human attributes (e.g., language) may be equally important.

## Two Senses of Humanness

This comparative sense of humanness as that which is uniquely human is a popular way to define the concept, but other senses are possible. As Kagan (2004) wrote

We can describe an object by listing its features ... or by comparing the object with one from a related category.

... Most answers to the question What is human nature? adopt this second strategy when they nominate the features that are either uniquely human or that are quantitative enhancements on the properties of apes. (p. 77)

Uniquely human (UH) characteristics define the boundary that separates humans from the related category of animals, but humanness may also be understood noncomparatively as the features that are typical of or central to humans. These normative or fundamental characteristics might be referred to as human nature (HN). Characteristics that are typically or essentially human—that represent the concept's “core”—may not be the same ones that distinguish us from other species. Having wings is a core characteristic of birds, but not a reliable criterion for distinguishing them from other creatures, and curiosity might be a fundamental human attribute despite not being unique to *Homo sapiens*.

I propose that UH and HN are distinct senses of humanness, and that different forms of dehumanization occur when the characteristics that constitute each sense are denied to people. Before laying out the two proposed forms of dehumanization, we must clarify the intuitive distinctions between the senses of humanness.

Little research has been conducted on the attributes that people see as UH, but evidence collected informally by Leyens et al. (2001) suggests language, higher order cognition, and refined emotion (“sentiments”). Gosling’s (2001) work in comparative personality suggests that humans are substantially unique in traits involving openness to experience (e.g., imaginative, intelligent, cultured) and conscientiousness (e.g., industriousness, inhibition, self-control). Demoulin et al. (2004) found that emotions judged UH were believed to be morally informative, cognitively saturated, internally caused rather than responsive to the environment, private (i.e., relatively invisible to observers), and emerging late in development. Schwartz and Struch (1989) proposed that prosocial values involving moral sensibility are seen as UH. The common threads running through these proposals are cognitive sophistication, culture, refinement, socialization, and internalized moral sensibility.

Even less work has been devoted to clarifying lay conceptions of HN. Some research has explored indi-

vidual differences in conceptions of HN (Wrightsman, 1992), but almost none has attempted to characterize shared beliefs. However, people might be expected to construe HN differently from UH. First, UH characteristics primarily reflect socialization and culture, whereas HN characteristics would be expected to link humans to the natural world, and their inborn biological dispositions. Second, HN should be normative (i.e., species typical): prevalent within populations and universal across cultures. As UH characteristics reflect social learning and refinement, they might be expected to vary across cultures and differentiate within populations. In short, what is UH may not correspond to our shared humanity. Indeed, Demoulin et al. (2004) found that UH emotions were judged to be more cross-culturally variable than others.

A third intuitive distinction between the two senses of humanness involves their ontological standing. HN characteristics should be seen as deeply rooted aspects of persons: parts of their unchanging and inherent nature. HN should be seen as that which is essential to humanness, the core properties that people share “deep down” despite their superficial variations. In sum, HN should be essentialized, viewed as fundamental, inherent, and natural (Haslam, Bastian, & Bissett, 2004; Rothbart & Taylor, 1992). UH characteristics may not be essentialized, in contrast. As they are seen as acquired rather than inborn (i.e., the “veil” of civilization), and as likely to vary between people and cultures, UH characteristics might even be perceived as nonessential.

## Evidence for Two Senses of Humanness

In a recent series of studies my colleagues and I have examined the composition of the two proposed senses of humanness. In three studies (Haslam, Bain, Douge, Lee, & Bastian, 2005) participants rated the extent to which personality traits were UH (“This characteristic is exclusively or uniquely human: it does not apply to other species”) or HN (“This characteristic is an aspect of human nature”). In every study mean ratings on these items failed to correlate or correlated negatively across traits, consistent with the senses’ distinctness. In five-factor model (FFM) terms, high UH traits tended to fall at the positive and negative poles of Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience (e.g., “idealistic,” “talkative,” “conservative,” “artistic,” “absentminded,” “analytical”), whereas temperament-based traits (Neuroticism and Extraversion) were rated low. HN traits had a different FFM signature, captured best by positive Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Openness traits, and negative (undesirable) Neuroticism (e.g., “ambitious,” “curious,” “determined,” “emotional,” “imaginative,” “passionate,” “sociable”). Affective traits were much more central to HN, which also appeared to be

understood in terms of interpersonal warmth, drive, vivacity, and cognitive openness (rather than cognitive sophistication, as in UH).

Haslam et al. (2005) examined judgments of the extent to which traits are HN and UH, on the one hand, and several conceptual judgments hypothesized to have differential associations with each. As predicted, HN traits were judged to be high in prevalence, universality, and emotionality, and to emerge early in development. UH traits, in contrast, were judged to be low in prevalence and universality, to appear late in development, and to be unrelated to emotionality. Consistent with the proposed ontological distinction between the two senses of humanness, only HN traits were understood in an essentialist fashion, seen as inhering sources of consistency and causal influence in the person. This finding replicated an earlier study (Haslam et al., 2004), in which HN traits were judged to be deeply rooted, immutable, informative, discrete, biologically based, and consistently expressed across situations.

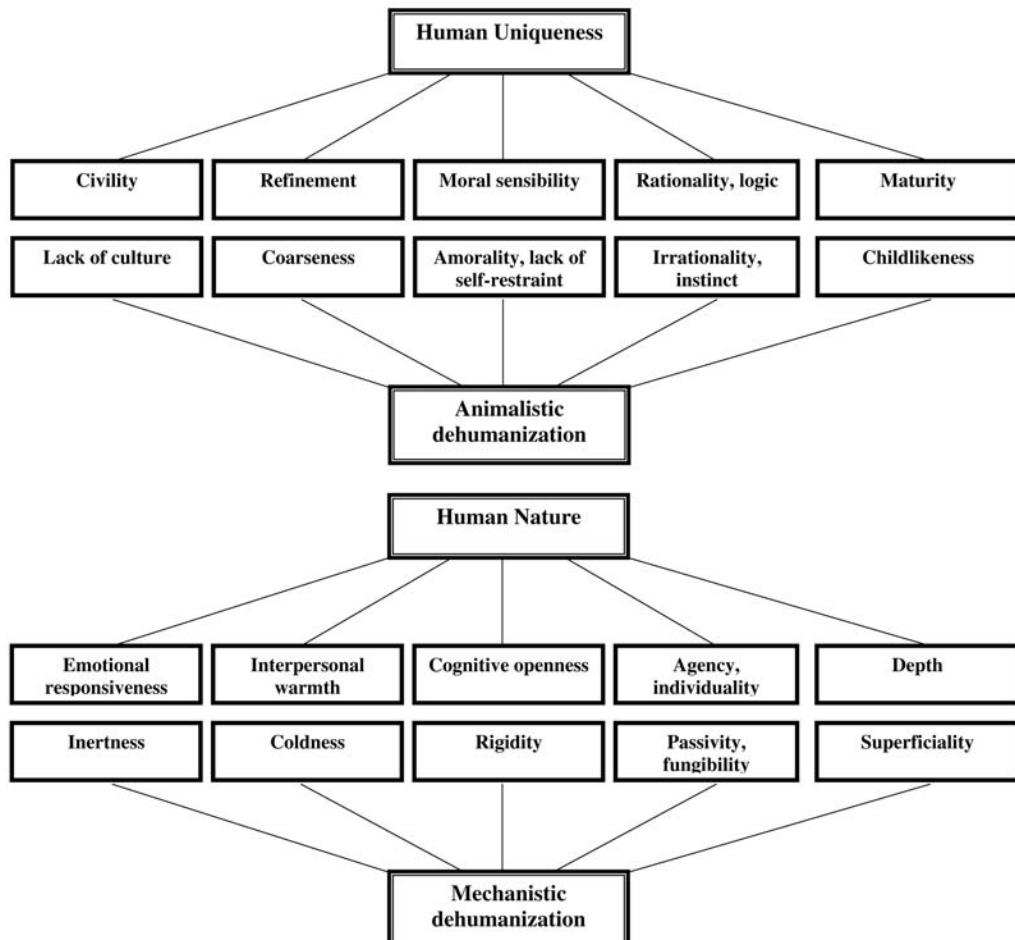
Well replicated evidence therefore supports the distinction between the two proposed senses of humanness. UH characteristics involve refinement, civility, morality, and higher cognition, and are believed to

be acquired and subject to variation between people. This resembles an Enlightenment sense of humanness (Kashima & Foddy, 2002), emphasizing rationality and cultivation. HN characteristics involve cognitive flexibility, emotionality, vital agency, and warmth, and are seen as a shared and fundamental “nature” that is embedded in the person. This is a Romantic sense of humanness that “lays central status on unseen … forces that dwell deep within the person” and are “given by nature” (Gergen, 1991, pp.19–20), its content revolving around passion, imagination, emotion, and will: “Heart! Warmth! Blood! Humanity! Life!” (Berlin, 1991).

## Two Corresponding Forms of Dehumanization

If there are two distinct senses of humanness, then two distinct forms of dehumanization should occur when the respective properties are denied to others. The characteristics of these forms of dehumanization are derived following and summarized in Figure 1.

When UH characteristics are denied to others, they should in principle be seen as lacking in refinement, civility, moral sensibility, and higher cognition. They



**Figure 1.** Proposed links between conceptions of humanness and corresponding forms of dehumanization.

should therefore be perceived as coarse, uncultured, lacking in self-control, and unintelligent. Their behavior should be seen as less cognitively mediated than the behavior of others, and thus more driven by motives, appetites, and instincts. As UH characteristics are seen as later developing (Haslam et al., 2005), their denial may be associated with a view of others as childlike, immature, or backward. Similarly, if UH characteristics are understood to have a moral dimension, people denied them should be seen as immoral or amoral (i.e., prone to violate the moral code or lacking it altogether).

Stated baldly, if people are perceived as lacking what distinguishes humans from animals, they should be seen implicitly or explicitly as animal-like. This proposed “animalistic” form of dehumanization therefore resembles infra-humanization (Leyens et al., 2003) but applies broadly to UH characteristics beyond secondary emotions, may involve explicit comparisons of others to animals, and may not be limited to intergroup contexts. UH characteristics might be denied in interpersonal (self vs. other) comparisons and relationships, rather than on the basis of outgroup membership.

When HN is denied to others, they should be seen as lacking in emotionality, warmth, cognitive openness, individual agency, and, because HN is essentialized, depth. As others are seen as lacking emotion and warmth they will be perceived as inert and cold. Denying them cognitive openness (e.g., curiosity, flexibility) will give them the appearance of rigidity, and denying them individual agency represents them as interchangeable (fungible) and passive, their behavior caused rather than propelled by personal will. Because they are denied deep-seated characteristics, people denied HN should be represented in ways that emphasize relatively superficial attributes.

This combination of attributed characteristics—*inertness, coldness, rigidity, fungibility, and lack of agency*—represents a view of others as object- or automaton-like. This form of dehumanization can therefore be described as *mechanistic*. The animalistic form of dehumanization rests on a direct contrast between humans and animals, but in the mechanistic form, although the relevant sense of humanness is noncomparative (HN), humans can be contrasted with machines. The shared, typical, or core properties of humanness are also those that distinguish us from automata.

This trichotomy of humans, animals, and machines has been elaborated in previous work (Sheehan & Sosna, 1991; Wolfe, 1993), but not explicitly in work on dehumanization. In early support for its relevance, Loughnan and Haslam (2005) used the Go/No-go Association Task (GNAT; Nosek & Banaji, 2001) to demonstrate that social categories may be differentially associated with the two senses of humanness, and with animals or automata, in the manner proposed. We predicted that artists would be seen as imaginative and spirited (high HN) but lack-

ing restraint and civility (low UH), and hence implicitly associated with animals, whereas businesspeople would be seen as rational and self-controlled (high UH) but unemotional, hardhearted, and conforming (low HN), and hence associated with automata. As predicted, the GNAT indicated that artists were associated with HN traits more than UH traits and with animal-related more than automaton-related stimuli. In contrast, businesspeople were associated more strongly with automata and UH traits. Finally, UH traits were less associated with animals than with automata, and HN traits less with automata than with animals. By implication, social groups that are not normally objects of prejudice may be subtly dehumanized in two distinct ways, implicitly likened to unrefined animals or soulless machines.

### Associated Features of the Model

**Emotion.** The two forms of dehumanization may have distinct affective dimensions. Writers who discuss the likening of people to animals repeatedly remark how this is accompanied by degradation and humiliation. Being divested of UH characteristics is a source of shame for the target—often with a prominent bodily component, as in the nakedness of the Abu Ghraib prisoners—who becomes an object of disgust and contempt for the perpetrator. Disgust and revulsion feature prominently in images of animalistically dehumanized others: Represented as apes with bestial appetites or filthy vermin who contaminate and corrupt, they are often viscerally despised. Interestingly, Rozin, Haidt, and McCauley (2000) identified phenomena that remind us of our animal nature—death, excretion, and sexuality—as fundamental elicitors of disgust: “Insofar as humans behave like animals, the distinction between humans and animals is blurred, and we see ourselves as lowered, debased” (p. 642). Disgust enables us to avoid evidence of our animality, so representing others as animal-like may elicit the emotion. Contempt, a kindred emotion (Miller, 1997), plays a similar role, locating the other as below the self or ingroup.

The mechanistic form of dehumanization has a quite different emotional signature. As it involves emotional distancing and represents the other as cold, robotic, passive, and lacking in depth, it implies indifference rather than disgust. Typically, mechanistically dehumanized others are seen as lacking the sort of autonomous agency that provokes strong emotion and are more likely to be seen as emotionally inert.

**Semiotics.** The two proposed forms of dehumanization also differ in the ways in which they are represented in language. When the animalistic form is invoked, a theme of vertical comparison consistently emerges. The other is subhuman or infra-human and is debased by humiliating treatment. Portraying others as

lacking UH characteristics such as refinement is understood as locating them below others on an ordinal scale of development or evolution. In contrast, the mechanistic form of dehumanization involves a sense of horizontal comparison based on a perceived dissimilarity (Locke, 2005). A person who is denied HN—cognitive openness, warmth, agency, emotion, depth—is seen as nonhuman more than subhuman. Because HN represents what is fundamentally and normatively human, those judged to lack it are seen as distant, alien, or foreign: displaced away rather downward.

**Psychological essentialism.** Leyens and colleagues (2001) argue that an essentialist understanding of social groups is a prerequisite for infra-humanization, which involves the denial of the “human essence” to others. I propose that essentialist thinking plays a subtly different role in the two forms of dehumanization.

Essentialist thinking about groups—seeing them as discrete “natural kinds” (Haslam, Rothschild, & Ernst, 2000, 2002; Rothbart & Taylor, 1992)—does appear to be necessary for animalistic dehumanization. Only if groups are believed to have categorically different natures can intergroup differences be seen as species-like. However, the nature of the intergroup difference may be essentialized without the content of what is attributed differentially to the groups being essentialized. Two groups may be seen as fundamentally different, but what distinguishes them may be seen as socially shaped rather than deep and inborn. This appears true of infra-humanization: Group differences are essentialized, but the UH emotions that are differentially attributed reflect socialization (Demoulin et al., 2004). Similarly, UH traits are not highly essentialized and are seen as emerging late in development (Haslam et al., 2005). Such emotions and traits may represent “sortal” essences that define a category boundary (Gelman & Hirschfeld, 1999), but they do not appear to be essences in the sense of inherent bases of category membership.

Essentialism plays a different role in mechanistic dehumanization. Here it is the content of what is differentially attributed (i.e., humanness as HN) that is understood as an inhering essence, and not (necessarily) the nature of the distinction between the dehumanizer and the dehumanized. HN characteristics are highly essentialized (Haslam et al., 2004, 2005) and can be denied to others in interpersonal comparisons in which no essentialized intergroup boundary exists (Haslam et al., 2005). Mechanistic dehumanization may occur when such a boundary is perceived, but it does not appear to require it.

**Social context.** Most social-psychological accounts present dehumanization as an intergroup phenomenon in which outgroups and their members are denied full humanness. The model developed here does not restrict dehumanization to the intergroup context

and proposes that comparable processes may take place in interpersonal perception. People may be dehumanized not as representatives of a social group but as distinct individuals or members of a “generalized other” from which other individuals wish to distinguish themselves. Dehumanization may occur equally in interpersonal (self-other) and intergroup (ingroup-outgroup) comparisons.

In three studies, Haslam et al. (2005) supported this possibility, finding that undergraduates attributed HN traits to themselves more than to the average student. This effect was independent of self-enhancement, obtained in both direct and indirect comparisons, and mediated by the attribution of greater depth (i.e., more essentialized traits) to self than to others. By implication, mechanistic dehumanization may occur in interpersonal comparisons. No equivalent effect for UH traits was obtained, consistent with findings that UH emotions are not attributed more to self than to ingroup (Cortes et al., 2005).

The lack of evidence for infra-humanization in interpersonal comparisons, combined with the claim that animalistic dehumanization requires the existence of an essentialized group boundary, raises the possibility that infra-humanization is primarily an intergroup phenomenon. It has been theorized in this fashion (Leyens et al., 2001, 2003), and its prototypical examples involve interethnic relations. Mechanistic dehumanization, in contrast, has not typically been theorized as an intergroup phenomenon, and many of the domains in which it is salient—for example, technology and biomedicine—do not have obvious intergroup dynamics.

It would be premature to align the two proposed forms of dehumanization exclusively with intergroup or interpersonal contexts. The denial of UH characteristics may occur in interpersonal comparisons, and HN characteristics are often differentially attributed to ingroups and outgroups (e.g., the objectification of women). Nevertheless, the present model of dehumanization tentatively proposes that animalistic dehumanization is typically an intergroup phenomenon but mechanistic dehumanization commonly applies in both intergroup and interpersonal contexts.

**Distinctive features.** The proposed model, summarized in Table 1, differs from previous accounts in broadening dehumanization to encompass two distinct forms that operate in interpersonal and intergroup contexts and do not entail conflict and antipathy. In this regard, it deviates from the dehumanization-as-demonization view embodied by the delegitimization approach (Bar-Tal, 2000). It proposes that subtler forms of dehumanization occur in everyday life when persons are not granted full humanness, as in stereotypes that deny groups UH or HN qualities (cf. Fiske, Xu, Cuddy, & Glick, 1999). Similarly, the model is distinctive in allowing that people might simultaneously be dehuman-

**Table 1.** Summary of Distinctive Characteristics of the Two Proposed Forms of Dehumanization

	Animalistic	Mechanistic
Form of Denied Humanness	Uniquely human	Human nature
Implicit Contrast	Animals	Automata
Prototypical Domains	Interethnic relations, disability	Technology, biomedicine
Exemplary Theories	Infra-humanization	Value based, objectification
Emotion	Disgust, contempt	Disregard, indifference
Semiotics	Vertical comparison	Horizontal comparison
Essentialism	Nature of difference between perceiver and target	Content of attributed difference between perceiver and target
Social Context	Primarily intergroup	Intergroup and interpersonal
Relational Definition	Communal sharing	Asocial
Cognitive Modality	Natural history/folk biology	Technical
Behavior Explanation	Desire based	Cause or causal history based

ized in both ways (e.g., the objectification and degradation of women in violent pornography). The two forms of dehumanization rest on independent dimensions of humanness (Haslam et al., 2005) rather than exclusive categories, and there is no incompatibility between denying someone refinement and emotional depth, or between feeling indifference to someone's suffering and disgust at their degraded condition.

### The Two Forms of Dehumanization in Previous Research and Theory

The proposed model should clarify the many ways in which dehumanization has been understood in previous research and theory. Examples and theories should often be aligned with one form of dehumanization or the other, although the two forms might sometimes combine and some theories might refer to common features of both. Delegitimization (Bar-Tal, 2000), moral exclusion (Opotow, 1990), and moral disengagement (Bandura, 2002) theories, for example, are quite non-specific: Others could be delegitimized, excluded, or disengaged by the denial of either sense of humanness.

The animalistic form of dehumanization, in which others are denied UH characteristics such as higher cognition, self-control, civility, and refinement, is best exemplified in the context of interethnic antagonism (e.g., genocide, racial stereotyping, attitudes toward immigrants). Animal or organism metaphors for ethnic outgroups are commonplace in this domain, as is the sense that intergroup differences are as sharp and impermeable as boundaries between species. This form of dehumanization also captures perceptions of the cognitively disabled (O'Brien, 1999, 2003b) and has a strong resonance with infra-humanization theory.

The mechanistic form of dehumanization is best exemplified by work in the domains of medicine and technology, where dehumanization is formulated in an explicitly mechanistic fashion (Montague & Matson, 1983; Szasz, 1973). Modern biomedicine is seen as dehumanizing in its focus on standardization, instrumen-

tal efficiency, impersonal technique, causal determinism, and enforced passivity. Writings on the dehumanizing implications of computer technology, educational testing, sport science, modern art, behaviorist psychology, and economic formalism similarly see these as depriving people of core features of HN. Theoretical work on the objectification of women (Nussbaum, 1999) has clear parallels with mechanistic dehumanization, and the value-based model of dehumanization may also. Schwartz and Struch (1989) argue that to deny prosocial values to others is to deny them UH characteristics, but research indicates that prosocial characteristics are judged to be aspects of HN instead. In addition, values reflecting HN themes of agency and self-determination are rated as especially important (Bain, Kashima, & Haslam, in press), so perceiving others to have dissimilar values is likely to involve denying them HN.

### Social-Cognitive Underpinnings of Dehumanization

In most theoretical accounts, dehumanization is seen primarily as a motivated phenomenon, enabling the release of aggression or removing the burden of moral qualms or vicarious distress. Many theorists also pay attention to the role of societal factors (e.g., political and religious ideologies, mass movements, delegitimizing beliefs). Less attention has been paid to the social-cognitive underpinnings of dehumanization. Examining whether it reflects ordinary processes of social cognition may open up possibilities for research and theory and clarify how it may arise outside contexts of conflict and violence. Several social-cognitive bases of dehumanization are proposed following.

#### Relational Cognition

One cognitive process that may be implicated in dehumanization is people's construal of their relationship with the dehumanized other. Alan Fiske's (1991) relational models theory, which proposes four fundamental modes in which relationships are construed, may help to

distinguish the two forms of dehumanization. In *communal sharing* (CS), people feel a sense of deep unity and solidarity with other members of their group, understand the group as a “natural kind” whose members share “some fundamental bodily essence in common” (Fiske, 2004, p. 69), and place great importance in the categorical distinction between “us” and “them.” Fiske argues that racial and ethnic identity commonly has a CS basis and that this model underpins interethnic conflict. These features call to mind the animalistic form of dehumanization. The proposed role of disgust in the likening of others to animals is consistent with the contamination concerns that prevail in CS relationships, disgust, in turn, being occasioned by violations of communal norms (Rozin, Lowery, Imada, & Haidt, 1999). Animalistic dehumanization may therefore occur in social contexts in which relationships are construed in CS terms.

People who dehumanize others in a mechanistic fashion, taking an indifferent, instrumental, distancing, and objectifying orientation toward them, may not construe any social relationship to exist. Fiske (1991) refers to “asocial” and “null” interactions, in which people “disregard the existence of other people as social partners” (p. 19) and assume no shared social framework. Mechanistic dehumanization may therefore index the extent to which people see no relatedness to others. If mechanistic dehumanization represents such a perception of lack of relatedness, it is understandable that it should be apparent in interpersonal contexts, whereas animalistic dehumanization may be more restricted to intergroup contexts, where a communal dynamic is likely to operate.

### Cognitive Modalities

Mithen (1996) has proposed that distinct forms of intuitive understanding devoted to thinking about people, animals, and objects to be manipulated arose over the course of hominid evolution. With the advanced cognitive fluidity of modern humans these “social,” “natural history,” and “technical” intelligences became interlinked. Fluidity between social and natural history modes enables phenomena such as anthropomorphism and totemism, but also the sense that other groups are “less than human” (Mithen, p. 196). The transfer of an essentialist mode of folk-biological thinking (Medin & Atran, 2004) into the social domain might underlie an intuitive understanding of outgroups as akin to different species, as in animalistic dehumanization. This possibility accords with the role attributed to essentialist thinking in infra-humanization (Leyens et al., 2001). A similar slippage between the social and technical domains could account for instances of mechanistic dehumanization. If other people are understood as akin to objects or artifacts, “which have no emotions or rights because they have no minds” (Mithen, p. 196), then they are free to be used instrumentally.

### Behavior Explanation

Self–other asymmetries in behavior explanation may also illuminate dehumanization. Malle (1999, in press) shows that people invoke “causal history” factors more when explaining the behavior of others than themselves, and invoke “reasons” (i.e., intentional states) less. These explanatory phenomena imply a more mechanistic view of the other, emphasizing factors that are deterministic and attenuate personal agency and de-emphasizing intentional states. An animalistic view of others does not entail explaining their behavior in a more causal, less mentalistic fashion but may involve denying them certain kinds of more refined intentional states (cf. secondary emotions; Demoulin et al., 2004). Malle distinguishes belief- and desire-based reason explanations, the former implying greater rationality and deliberativeness. Given their lesser cognitive sophistication, desire-based explanations should be given more for the behavior of animalistically dehumanized others. Malle’s (in press) finding that people explain their own behavior with less reference to desires than the behavior of others makes this speculation more plausible. Self–other asymmetries in behavior explanations may therefore reveal subtle, everyday forms of dehumanization.

### Social Categorization

Social categorization may also contribute to dehumanization. As Tajfel (1981) argued, depersonalization is a common aspect of intergroup perception, as evident in minimal groups as in warfare, although only in the latter is dehumanization in a strong sense typical. To Tajfel, depersonalization enables dehumanization and can be placed on a continuum with it (Billig, 2002). The relevant form of dehumanization here is mechanistic, as depersonalization involves a view of others as fungible and lacking individuality. Consistent with this claim, the attribution of greater HN to the self than to others is reduced when the other is individuated (Haslam & Bain, in press). For animalistic dehumanization to occur, a perception of the outgroup as lacking in UH characteristics would have to arise, perhaps by the fear-mediated attribution to it of unrestrained hostility. As Wilder (1986) notes, depersonalized or deindividuated outgroups are often judged to be highly threatening, in part because of their perceived entitativity (Abelson, Dasgupta, Park, & Banaji, 1998). In addition, recent evidence suggests that people may infra-humanize members of outgroups whose suffering is their ingroup’s collective responsibility in an effort to disengage their self-sanctions (Castano & Giner-Sirolla, in press). By these three means—effacing the individuality of outgroup members, encouraging an affect-laden view of the outgroup as a threatening entity, and feeling collectively responsible for the

outgroup's misery—social categorization may contribute to both forms of dehumanization.

### **Psychological Distance**

Several writers have noted the role of psychological distance in dehumanization. Opotow (1990), for example, describes distancing as a form of moral exclusion linked to the objectification of others and feelings of unconnectedness to others as a basis for dehumanization. Trope and Liberman (2003) recently proposed that greater psychological distance is associated with construals of events, situations, and people that are relatively decontextualized and abstract. When people are seen as socially distant, they are likely to be perceived in a simple and impoverished way, with greater recourse to abstract traits than to “specific behaviors, beliefs, motives, and intentions” (Trope & Liberman, p. 404). These more abstract construals of distant others are more likely to involve “cold” cognition-based judgments. Given its apparent links to shallower, “cooler,” more distanced, and less intentional perceptions of others, abstract construal may be a cognitive basis of mechanistic dehumanization. Consistent with this possibility, Haslam and Bain (in press) found that the (psychologically distant) future self was attributed fewer HN traits than the more concretely construed present self.

### **Empathy**

Empathy is often proposed as a requirement for overcoming dehumanization (Halpern & Weinstein, 2004) and may have an especially intimate connection with the mechanistic form. The attribution of UH attributes does not appear to be based on familiarity (Cortes et al., 2005), which should be associated with empathy, whereas the attribution of HN characteristics does (Haslam et al., 2005). These characteristics, being more affective and deeply rooted, should also be more pertinent to empathy, which involves an active engagement with other people’s inner thoughts and feelings. Failure to empathize should be associated with a perception of the other that is shallow and emotionally impoverished, features of the mechanistic form of dehumanization.

Work on “empathy disorders” (e.g., autism, psychopathy, fronto-temporal dementia [FTD]; Preston & de Waal, 2002) provides indirect support for this link. These disorders are often described in the same terms as mechanistic dehumanization, marked by a lack of emotional depth, warmth, and prosocial concern. People with autism have difficulty recognizing others’ beliefs, wishes, and emotions (Baron-Cohen, 1995) and are sometimes said to perceive others in rigid and mechanical ways. Psychopaths show an attenuated autonomic response to others’ distress and deficient moral concern for their well-being (Blair, 1995; Blair, Jones, Clark, & Smith, 1997), and are often described as cold

and heartless. People with FTD are emotionally shallow, lack feeling for others, and intriguingly appear to show a decreased sense of the humanness of others (Mendez & Lim, 2004; Mendez & Perryman, 2003). This work therefore supports a link between mechanistic dehumanization and empathy deficits.

### **Conclusions**

The aim of this article was to develop an account of dehumanization that does justice to the diverse senses and domains in which it has been identified, integrates existing research and theory, and describes its psychological underpinnings. The two proposed forms economically capture existing work and have theoretically plausible associations with social–cognitive processes that have not previously been discussed in this context. To summarize, animalistic dehumanization involves the denial of UH attributes, typically to essentialized outgroups in the context of a communal representation of the ingroup. It is often accompanied by emotions of contempt and disgust that reflect an implicit vertical comparison and by a tendency to explain others’ behavior in terms of desires and wants rather than cognitive states. Mechanistic dehumanization, in contrast, involves the objectifying denial of essentially human attributes to people toward whom the person feels psychologically distant and socially unrelated. It is often accompanied by indifference, a lack of empathy, an abstract and deindividuated view of others that indicates an implicit horizontal separation from self, and a tendency to explain the other’s behavior in nonintentional, causal terms.

The proposed model is intended to extend the scope of dehumanization as a concept. Rather than applying only to extreme cases of antipathy, in which the denial of humanness to others is explicit, dehumanization occurs whenever individuals or outgroups are ascribed lesser degrees of the two forms of humanness than the self or ingroup, whether or not they are explicitly likened to animals or automata. In this extended sense, the model might illuminate work on objectification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) and stigma, following up Goffman’s (1986) claim that “the person with stigma is not quite human” (p. 5). The two forms of dehumanization might also serve as dimensions of stereotype content (cf. Fiske et al., 1999).

It remains to be seen whether the model provides a useful framework for research. It is also unclear whether its two senses of humanness are widespread cross-culturally. Wherever a Romantic view of humanness is not prevalent in lay conceptions, HN might not be as sharply distinguished from UH as it is in Western studies, and two distinct forms of dehumanization might not occur. Additional forms of dehumanization, perhaps based on comparisons of hu-

mans to supernatural entities rather than animals and machines, might also exist. Nevertheless, if previous research and theory have conflated two distinct social perception processes, then the model may provide a productive foundation for future work.

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