SUFFERING BULLYING PASSIVELY IS TO BE EXCLUDED FROM HUMANITY: YOU ARE NOT HUMAN UNLESS YOU STAND UP FOR YOURSELF

Kyriaki Fousiani[1], †Maria Sakalaki[2], & Clive Richardson[2]
[1]Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, Netherlands
[2]Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, Greece

Abstract: Two experiments were conducted in order to test whether suffering as a result of bullying affects the perceived humanness of the victims. We hypothesized that observers who are confronted with suffering and passive endurance of victimization will view victims as less than human. We propose a double dehumanization of victims, that is, denial of both their human uniqueness and human nature. We also hypothesized that victims' defending themselves and deploying agency rather than passivity, has a humanizing effect on observers' perceptions of the victims. Suffering was manipulated via vignettes describing bullying incidents experienced by both children and adult victims. Study 1 (N = 197) fully corroborated our first hypothesis. Study 2 (N = 164) replicated the findings of Study 1 and additionally showed that victims' defense of themselves before harm-doers had a doubly humanizing effect on them (i.e., attribution of higher uniquely human but also human nature traits). These results provided support to our second hypothesis. Findings are discussed in terms of perceivers' detachment from those who display passivity instead of agency in conditions that involve suffering.

Key words: Bullying, Dehumanization, Human nature, Human uniqueness, Passivity vs. agency, Social suffering, Victims

INTRODUCTION

Humans observe various other people's social suffering throughout their lives. Suffering is everywhere, unavoidable and its scope is often overwhelming. Despite the evidence that people empathize with others' social emotions and suffering (Masten, Morelli, & Eisenberger, 2011; Rameson, Morelli, & Lieberman, 2012), we witness daily the mistreatment or exclusion of suffering others. Social suffering, closely connected to social misery, is on the rise and plagues modern society. According to Bourdieu, Accardo, and Ferguson (1999), social suffering involves experiences of domination, repression, and feelings of humiliation, anger, despair, or resentment. In this article, we argue that enduring such damage evokes, in lay thinking, passivity which is perceived as a less human quality, incompatible with agency. By contrast, coping with experiences of suffering by deploying agency-linked qualities, such as discursive strategies and arguments, defense of one's own rights, or active and intentional behavior to protect oneself from damage, is ascribed more human attributes by the observer.

Suffering may be rooted in the human-animal or even human-object division, where suffering victims – either individuals or groups   are seen as less than human. The failure to recognize other people as fellow human beings is considered to have been a fundamental enabler of violence and atrocities throughout history (Haslam, 2006; Haslam, & Loughnan, 2014). *Dehumanization* of others (Haslam, 2006) is therefore an essential component of suffering (Kelman, 1973; Rai, Valdesolo, & Graham, 2017) as it enables perpetrators to act out of violent impulses free of inhibition and without remorse (Bandura, 1999; Čehajić, Brown, & González, 2009; Kelman, 1973; Opotow, 1990; Rai et al., 2017; Waytz, Epley, & Cacioppo, 2010). Dehumanization gives a justification to the perpetrators, whose employment of a thought process along the lines of "if the other group or person is not human, then harming them is not bad" enables them to claim that they are not acting against moral values. Put differently, perpetrators would be enabled to commit horrible acts through a denial of the others' humanness, a core dimension of the well-known "moral disengagement" phenomenon. Moral disengagement is the process by which people convince themselves that detrimental conduct directed against individuals is morally acceptable by converting harmful acts to moral ones through linkage to worthy purposes (Bandura, 1986; Obermann, 2011).

Beyond the evidence showing that dehumanization increases behaviors leading to the suffering of targets (i.e., violence) (Bandura, 1999; Čehajić et al., 2009; Kelman, 1973; Opotow, 1990; Rai et al., 2017; Waytz et al., 2010), dehumanization of others can also function as an instrument of detachment from distressing experiences. For

instance, Vaes and Muratore (2013) showed that professional health care workers have more symptoms of burnout when they humanize their suffering patients, that is, when they attribute human qualities to them. Research on the Stereotype Content Model (Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2007) has demonstrated that groups that are stereotyped as neither competent nor warm and receive "the worst kind of prejudice" evoke extremely aversive emotions such as disgust and hate (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2007) and are being completely deprived of humanness (Cuddy et al., 2007; Harris & Fiske, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011).

More recently, Sakalaki, Richardson, and Fousiani (2017) showed that suffering victims can be dehumanized simply because they experience suffering or ill-being. This dehumanization arises independently of the actual condition of the victim (i.e., low-low status) or an observer's actual involvement in the victim's suffering. The mere experience of social or economic harmful situations which inflict degradation or suffering upon victims is sufficient to trigger dehumanization of the victims by an observer. The same authors showed that positive situations are judged to be more human than negative ones, while negative situations and suffering are attributed less humanness.

In line with this reasoning, we aimed to investigate the effects of suffering on the humanness attributed to victims, when suffering comes from interpersonal violence, such as bullying, and where the presence of a perpetrator is visible. We argue that not only does dehumanization by the observer lead to victimization and enactment of violence against the dehumanized others, but also that the suffering of victims itself leads to their dehumanization.

According to the dehumanization theory (see Haslam, 2006) two types of individual human characteristics can be distinguished. Firstly, uniquely human (UH) characteristics (e.g., civility, morality, rationality) that distinguish humans from animals and involve high-order cognition. Denial of this kind of traits to individuals is called animalistic dehumanization (Haslam, 2006) and it involves categorization of others as inferior beings, hence justifying aggressive or violent behaviors towards them. Secondly, human nature (HN) characteristics (e.g., emotional responsiveness, cognitive openness) distinguish people from machines or automata. Denial of these characteristics, which is called mechanistic dehumanization (Haslam, 2006), involves viewing the others as emotionally cold, close-minded and passive just like objects. It facilitates treating them with psychological distance or indifference.

The present study tested for the relationship between suffering from bullying and an observer's inclination to recognize humanness in victims. We hypothesized that others' suffering as an effect of bullying behavior would relate to the denial of full humanness to victims. Moreover, despite the evidence of the importance of UH over

HN traits in bullying (Fousiani, Dimitropoulou, Michaelides, & Van Petegem, 2016; Van Noorden, Haselager, Cillessen, & Bukowski, 2015), we claim that denial of both senses of humanness can occur in bullying (Fousiani, Michaelides, & Dimitropoulou, 2018). Both types of humanness are complementary dimensions of social judgment and influence our perception of, and behavior towards others (Vaes, Leyens, Paladino, & Miranda, 2012). In line with this reasoning, recent research has demonstrated the preponderance of HN traits in situations of suffering and victimization (Fousiani et al., 2018; Sakalaki et al., 2017). HN involves characteristics such as emotional responsiveness, warmth, cognitive openness, and depth (Haslam, 2006) that the observer would deny to attribute to the victims merely as a result of their victimization. Accordingly, we expected that observers would attribute not only low UH but also low HN traits to victims of bullying. Double dehumanization (Li, Leidner, & Castano, 2014) in this case may reveal extreme derogation of victims mirroring perceivers' emotional distance from the victims' misfortune (Hypothesis 1; Study 1 and 2).

In the mind perception theory (Gray, Gray, & Wegner, 2007), dehumanization entails depriving others of their two fundamental qualities: *agency*, that is, the capacity for planning and acting, including self-control, morality, memory, communication, thought, and reasoning; and *experience*, that is, the capacity for desires and feelings, including emotions, awareness of the surrounding environment, and basic psychological states such as hunger, thirst, and pain. We hypothesized that victims' ability to defend themselves and stand up for their goals, aspirations and rights and therefore behave like agents instead of passively suffering the violent incident will have a humanizing effect on the victims. Put differently, victims who do not tolerate victimization passively by looking helpless and vulnerable, but instead react in a self-protective way, do not trigger dehumanizing attitudes in an observer. On the contrary, observers might ascribe fully human qualities (i.e., competence, agency, rationality, cognitive openness, emotional depth etc.) to victims who do not back down but instead stand tall and defend themselves (double humanization of the victims) (Hypothesis 2; Study 2).

In this study we operationalized suffering of victims through bullying. Bullying is the repeated use of force, threat, or coercion to abuse, intimidate or aggressively dominate others (Olweus, 1993). It causes physical or emotional suffering (Boulton, Trueman, & Murray, 2008; Douglas & Augustyn, 2010; Hawker & Boulton, 2000). Although bullying can arise in any context, including school, family, the workplace, home, and neighborhoods, research investigating the link between suffering from bullying and dehumanization has been largely restricted to bullying at school and focuses predominantly on the dehumanization of bullies rather than victims (Costello

& Hodson, 2014; Fousiani et al., 2018; Fousiani et al., 2016; Van Noorden et al., 2015). In this work we presented the observers with incidents of bullying that were enacted in various contexts, such as at home, at work or at school. Given that bullying, no matter what is the context and who are the persons involved, causes emotional or physical suffering to the victims (Boulton, Trueman, & Murray, 2008; Hawker & Boulton, 2000), in this study we did not state different hypotheses for these various contexts in which bullying took place. Finally, instead of focusing on the dehumanization of the perpetrators of suffering (i.e., bullies) by perceivers (Costello & Hodson 2014; Fousiani et al., 2018; Van Noorden et al., 2015; Van Noorden, Cillessen, Haselager, Lansu, & Bukowski, 2017), we investigated the deprivation of suffering victims of their humanness.

STUDY 1

Method

Participants
One hundred ninety-seven individuals from Greece (aged 15-61 years, 80 male and 117 female) took part in a paper-and-pencil study. Participants came from various educational backgrounds (13 below high school, 80 had completed high school and 102 higher and university education, two missing).

Experimental procedure
We manipulated suffering of victims via bullying incidents. We created three vignettes similar to those of Bauman and Del Rio (2006), portraying one incident of verbal bullying among children and two incidents of verbal bullying among adults. Likewise, we created two vignettes (again, one among children and one among adults) portraying pro-social behavior (e.g., helping behavior). Participants thus took part in a simple within-subjects design comparing suffering from bullying versus pro-social behavior. The characters presented in all five vignettes were neutral as regards race and ethnicity, and had typically Greek names.

The three bullying vignettes were:
1. "*At the work place you hear an employee, Dimos, chant to another employee, Yiannis, "Director's pet, brown-nose, suck-up, kiss-ass." Yiannis tries to ignore the remarks but he is very shocked and confused. You saw this same thing happen the other day*".

2. *"Children of a class are going in to lunch and form up in a line. You hear Sotiris telling Dimitris "Give me your lunch money or I'll bust your lips". Dimitris hands his money over. This isn't the first time".*

3. *"The workers of a company must be divided into small groups in order to accomplish a task. You hear Petros insulting Spiros in an unacceptable way for no reason. Spiros cries "Stop annoying me all the time, you always do it. Leave me alone"."*

Moreover, we added, for comparison purposes, two pro-social vignettes where the person described gets help from his colleague/friend. These two vignettes were as follows:

1. *"Tassos and Elias are friends. They often exchange opinions and they trust each other. Earlier today Tassos asked for Elias's advice on a personal issue. Elias listened to him carefully and gave him a helpful advice".*

2. *"Two students decided to work together during the break in order to solve a mathematical problem. Miltos was recently ill and missed some lessons. For this reason, he asked Stelios to help him. Stelios helped him fill his gaps".*

Every participant was presented with all five vignettes, one by one. The vignettes were presented in a fixed order. After reading each vignette, participants were asked to complete a manipulation check item followed by several humanness scales. A mean was calculated for 1) the manipulation checks, 2) the scale measuring attribution of HN traits to the victims and 3) the scale measuring attribution of UH traits to the victims. At the end, participants indicated their demographic characteristics and finally they were thanked for their participation and debriefed.

Measures

Each vignette was followed by three scales measuring: 1) *Perceived suffering of the victim*, which served as a manipulation check (one item: *"In your opinion, the person described in the vignette suffers..."* 1 = not at all, 7 = a lot); 2) *Attribution of high or low human nature characteristics* to the victim (four items – "the person described in the vignette is cold/warm, without/with volition, emotionally unresponsive/ responsive, without/with autonomy – each rated on a 7-point bipolar, where 1 indicated low human nature and 7 indicated high human nature); 3) A*ttribution of high or low uniquely human characteristics* to the victim (four items rated on a 7-point bipolar Likert scale, where 1 indicated low human uniqueness and 7 indicated high human uniqueness: irrational/rational, uncivilized/civilized, childish/mature, and frivolous/profound). The scales were based on measures already used in previous

studies (Bastian & Haslam, 2010; Fousiani et al., 2016; Fousiani et al., 2018; Sakalaki et al., 2017). Averaged over the five administrations, Cronbach's alpha was .73 for the HN scale and .82 for the UH scale.
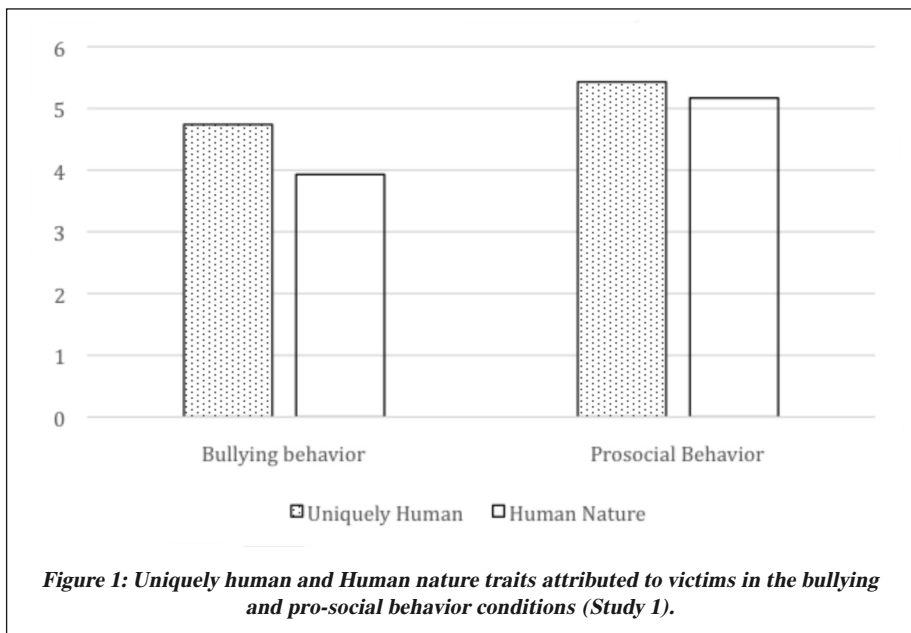
Results

We checked the manipulations for each of our vignettes separately by means of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with repeated measures. When comparing each bullying vignette with the first pro-social vignette, the effect of our manipulation (bullying versus pro-social behavior) on suffering came out significant only for the first, $F(1, 196) = 165.56$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .46$, and the second vignette, $F(1, 196) = 165.56$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .46$. Results revealed stronger perceived suffering of the victims in the first ($M = 5.71$, $SD = 1.24$) and the second ($M = 6.65$, $SD = .68$) bullying vignettes as opposed to the first pro-social vignette ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 2.13$). The mean difference between the third bullying vignette and the first pro-social vignette was not significant. Similarly, when comparing each bullying vignette with the second pro-social vignette, the effect of our manipulation on suffering was significant only for the first, $F(1, 196) = 280.11$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .59$, and the second vignette, $F(1, 196) = 648.55$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .77$. Again, results revealed stronger perceived suffering of the victims in the first ($M = 5.71$, $SD = 1.24$) and the second ($M = 6.65$, $SD = .68$) bullying vignettes as opposed to the second pro-social vignette ($M = 2.92$, $SD = 1.90$). The mean difference between the third bullying vignette and the second pro-social vignette was not significant. These findings confirm that our manipulations were effective for the two out of three bullying vignettes and for both pro-social vignettes. For this reason, we excluded the third bullying vignette from further analysis.

Hypothesis testing

For our analyses we computed a mean for the first two bullying vignettes and a mean for the two pro-social vignettes. It is noteworthy that separate analyses where each bullying vignette is compared with each pro-social vignette yield similar results.

The correlation between HN and UH scale scores was significant, $r = .52$, $p < .001$, in the bullying condition, and $r = .73$, $p < .001$, in the pro-social condition. Participants' scores were submitted to a 2 (Condition: bullying versus pro-social behavior) x 2 (Humanness dimension: HN versus UH traits) ANOVA with repeated measures. The effect of condition proved to be significant, $F(1, 196) = 170.70$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .47$. People attributed to the target more HN and HU traits in the pro-social condition ($M = 5.30$, $SD = .84$) as opposed to the bullying condition ($M =$

4.34, SD = .80). The effect of humanness dimension also came out significant, $F(1, 196)$ = 133.47, $p < .001$, η_p^2 = .41. Participants attributed to the targets more UN (M = 5.09, SD = .79) as opposed to HN traits (M = 4.55, SD = .62). Finally, the interaction between the condition and humanness was also significant, $F(1, 196)$ = 59.58, $p < .001$, η_p^2 = .23, and revealed that individuals attributed more UH traits to the target in the pro-social (M = 5.43, SD = 1.00) as opposed to the bullying condition (M = 4.74, SD = .93). Likewise, the attribution of HN traits was higher in the pro-social (M = 5.17, SD = .81) as compared to the bullying condition (M = 3.93, SD = .92) (see Figure 1). These results provide support to Hypothesis 1.

Figure 1: Uniquely human and Human nature traits attributed to victims in the bullying and pro-social behavior conditions (Study 1).

Discussion

The findings suggest that those who are subject to bullying, as opposed to pro-social behavior, and are perceived by participants as more suffering, are attributed less human traits. Specifically, victims of bullying were attributed lower UH but also lower HN traits, thus being doubly dehumanized by the perceiver. Observers deal with their exposure to victimization by rationalizing it and thus by dehumanizing the victims. These findings fully corroborate our first hypothesis. Interestingly, people were attributed more UH as opposed to HN traits, which

reveals that observers dehumanize others animalistically less than mechanistically (see Haslam, 2006). One limitation of this study is that we did not counterbalance the order in which the several vignettes were presented, which may have influenced the findings. Study 2 aimed to replicate these findings and further investigate whether demonstration of self-defensive strategies by the victims can have a humanizing effect on the victims. Importantly, vignettes in Study 2 were presented between rather than within participants and therefore we did not encounter the vignettes order issue.

STUDY 2

Method

Participants
One hundred sixty-four individuals (88 male and 76 female) of various educational backgrounds from Greece took part in a paper-and-pencil research. Participants' age ranged from 15 to 61 years.

Experimental procedure
A between-subjects experimental design was applied with three conditions (suffering from bullying, self-defense, and control). As in Study 1, we created bullying vignettes in order to manipulate suffering. These portrayed two different bullying incidents, one at work and one at home. Similarly, in the self-defense condition, vignettes portrayed two bullying incidents, at work and at home, in which the victim displayed willingness to stand up for himself. Finally, contrary to Study 1, which contrasted bellying with pro-social behavior, in this study we added one control vignette where no bullying was involved.

The two bullying vignettes were:
1. *"The company director wants to dismiss Yiannis without giving him any compensation and encourages employees to constantly address to him saying, "You are not good at this job, find something else to do, quit!" in order to make him resign. Yiannis finally resigns voluntarily without requesting any compensation".*
2. *"Despina is successful in her job. However, her husband attacks her daily, underestimates her and treats her in an unfair manner. Despina endures the situation without being able to react".*

The two self-defense vignettes were:

1. *"The company director wants to dismiss Yiannis without giving him any compensation and encourages employees to constantly address to him saying, "You are not good at this job, find something else to do, quit!" in order to make him resign. Yiannis is by no means planning to quit and responds to his colleagues, "I have the qualifications, so I was hired. Show me the respect I show to you and stop bothering me".*

2. *"Despina is successful in her job. However, her husband attacks her daily, underestimates her and treats her in an unfair manner. Despina defends herself calmly with arguments trying to make her husband think reasonably".*
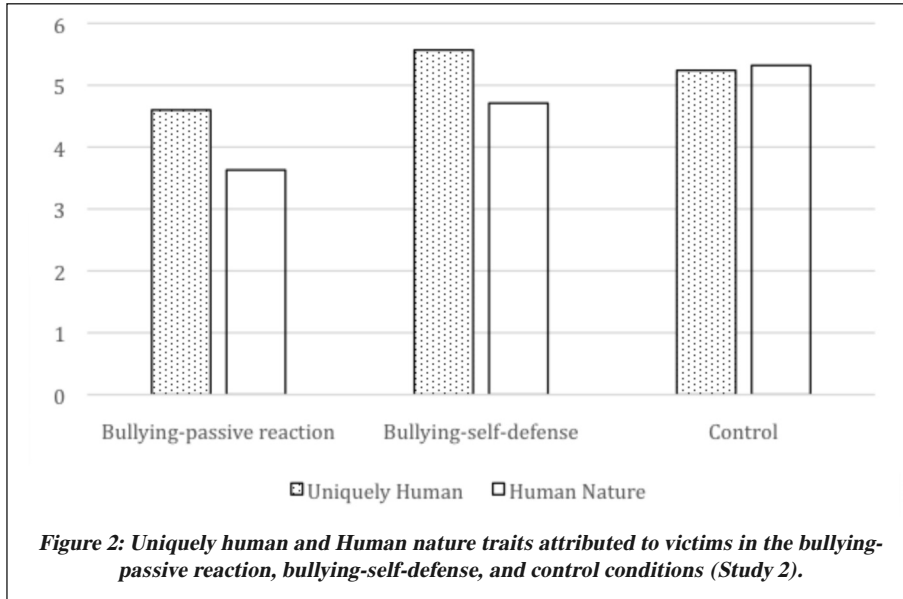
The control condition vignette was:

"Giorgos and Nikos are fellow students and friends. Nikos was recently ill and thus unable to attend a couple of lectures. He asks Giorgos to give him his notes to study for the exams".

Measures

We assessed dehumanization of the victims using the same *human nature* and *uniquely human* characteristics scales that were used in Study 1. Cronbach's alpha was .73 for the HN scale and .74 for UH.

Results

The correlation between HN and UH scale scores was $r = .58$, $p < .001$, in the bullying passivity condition and $r = .69$, $p < .001$ in the bullying-agency/self-defense condition. Participants' scores were submitted to a 2 (Bullying: bullying-passivity versus bullying-agency/self-defense) x 2 (Humanness dimension: HN versus UH traits) ANOVA with repeated measures on the last factor. The main effect of the Humanness Dimension came out significant, $F(1, 161) = 43.47$ $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .21$. Participants attributed to the targets more UH ($M = 5.12$, $SD = 1.22$) as opposed to HN traits ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 1.37$). The interaction effect between Humanness Dimension and Bullying (passivity, agency, control) was also significant, $F(2, 161) = 11.95$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .13$. As predicted, people attributed lower HN traits to victims who passively endured bullying than to victims who defended themselves or to non-victims (control group) ($M_{passive} = 3.63$. $SD = 1.00$, $M_{defend} = 4.71$, $SD = 1.42$, $M_{control} = 5.32$. $SD = 1.07$). Similarly, decreased UH traits were attributed to passive victims of bullying as compared to victims who defended themselves or to non-victims (control group) ($M_{passive} = 4.60$. $SD = 1.14$, $M_{defend} = 5.57$, $SD =

Figure 2: Uniquely human and Human nature traits attributed to victims in the bullying-passive reaction, bullying-self-defense, and control conditions (Study 2).

1.02, $M_{control}$ = 5.24. SD = 1.39) (see Figure 2). These results provide support to Hypothesis 2.

Discussion

Along similar lines to Study 1, the findings suggest that suffering victims who endure their victimization are doubly dehumanized. However, the willingness to defend one's own self and therefore to behave like an agent, instead of passively suffering victimization, seems to have a humanizing effect on a victim. These findings confirm our second hypothesis and shed light on the link between the ability to cope with one's negative experiences and attribution of humanness. One limitation of this study is that we did not include manipulation checks. Finally, it is noteworthy that we found that participants, in general, attributed more UH as compared to HN traits which is in line with the findings of Study 1.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The results obtained in these two studies provided evidence for the hypothesis that the suffering caused by bullying influences the perceived humanness of its victims. We hypothesized that perceivers view suffering victims as less than human in their

effort to deal with the experience of others' unjustified suffering. We proposed a double dehumanization of the victims, that is, denial of both their human uniqueness and human nature, when victims endure their victimization and suffer passively. Suffering caused to the victims was manipulated via verbal bullying incidents experienced by both adolescent and adult victims. Study 1 fully corroborated our hypothesis for double dehumanization of the victims in terms of both UH and HN traits. It showed that those who are subject to bullying and are perceived as suffering are ascribed less human traits than those who are not subject to bullying. Study 2 replicated the findings of Study 1 and further showed that the capacity to defend oneself and behave like an agent instead of suffering passively, not only overrules the dehumanizing effect of suffering but, instead, has a double humanizing effect on the victims (i.e.,, humanization in terms of both UH and HN traits). Put differently, victims are seen as more human when they display the ability to react actively to their mistreatment and stand up for themselves. These findings support our second hypothesis and shed light on the link between one's ability to cope with negative experiences and attribution of humanness by the observers.

Previous research suggests that perpetrators are able to harm others by denying their humanness, a strategy that enables one to morally disengage and see others' mistreatment as a socially acceptable behavior (Bandura, 1999; Čehajić et al., 2009; Kelman, 1973; Opotow, 1990; Rai et al., 2017; Waytz et al., 2010). In the present research we found that the dehumanization of others is not always a prerequisite for causing them suffering but, instead, can follow suffering. In other words, when exposed to the victimization and suffering of others, people view victims as lacking human qualities. Although the victims' vulnerability and suffering might be expected to trigger the observers' empathy and protective reaction (Fousiani et al., 2018; Gini, Albiero, Benelli, & Altoe, 2008), the suffering involved in victimization is rather seen as a distressing situation from which perceivers prefer to disconnect. Observers, when faced with victims, tend to deprive them of not only their human uniqueness but also their human nature traits, diminishing them to the status of creatures equal to animals or automata. This finding is in line with previous studies showing that individuals tend to dehumanize suffering others (Sakalaki et al., 2017). Interestingly, this pattern no longer holds when victims defend themselves before the observers' eyes and are seen as agents. In fact, being able to stand up for oneself against unreasonable mistreatment gives the impression of an autonomous person who has self-respect, is rational and has the ability to think and act intentionally, and furthermore has depth, agency, and is emotionally responsive and pro-active. These traits are inherent to the two dimensions of humanness, human uniqueness and human nature (see Haslam, 2006).

Based on the present findings, as well as on the existing literature (see Sakalaki et

al., 2017) we can conclude that suffering from any causes, including external (i.e., social, economic, and in this study interpersonal) or internal (i.e., psychological well-being, in Sakalaki et al., 2017) has an impact on an observer's perception of humanness of the victims.

Limitations, strengths and future directions

A limitation of this study is that we focused specifically on verbal bullying, which might differ in perceived severity or the emotional reaction it generates in observers compared to other types of bullying (e.g., physical or relational bullying) or other types of violence in general (e.g., aggression, discrimination, sexual harassment, mobbing etc.). Besides examining other types of bullying, further research should also explore whether passive acceptance versus an active reaction to external stimuli has similar effects on perceived humanness in situations other than suffering. Finally, although the effects of suffering on the attribution of humanness to the victims were straightforward, future studies should aim to replicate these findings employing more subtle dehumanization measures. Given that dehumanizing any target groups or their members is socially undesirable in contemporary societies, one might speculate that the effects of suffering on attributed humanness to the victims would be more robust if these alternative measures of dehumanization were used. Future research should assess dehumanization of the victims via the perceiver's experienced uniquely human (i.e., secondary) or non-uniquely human (i.e., primary) emotions towards victims (see Demoulin et al., 2004).

One strength of our study is that the manipulation of bullying against target members varied in terms of age – victims were presented as both children and adults –, and in terms of context, bullying was enacted at school, at work or at home. Furthermore, despite the evidence for the importance of UH traits in bullying phenomena (Fousiani et al., 2016; Van Noorden et al., 2015, 2017), this research investigated the effects of bullying on both humanness dimensions, namely UH and HN traits. Interestingly, we found evidence for double dehumanization of those who passively endure victimization and thus suffer, and double humanization of those who react actively against their mistreatment. Finally, previous research has probed the relationship between bullying and dehumanization of offenders (Fousiani et al., 2016; Van Noorden et al., 2015). Other studies have investigated the association between suffering as a result of external or internal conditions that are unrelated to a perpetrator's responsibility (e.g., economic crisis, unemployment, one's own psychological well-being etc.) (Sakalaki et al., 2017) and dehumanization of the victims. The present study is, to the best of our knowledge, the first to test experimentally how suffering caused by a visible perpetrator influences the perceived humanness of the victims and not the offenders.

Conclusion

These results provided evidence that a) a perceiver deprives a suffering victim of both human uniqueness and human nature traits, reducing a victim to the level of an animal or a machine-like being; and b) active reaction and self-defense have a humanizing effect on the victim. Individuals, when confronted with unjustified suffering of others, tend to dehumanize the victims of such suffering. However, a self-defensive response by the victim is sufficient to make observers acknowledge the agentic characteristics of the victim and put the double dehumanization of the victim into reverse.

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