Running head: HUMAN-ANIMAL BOUNDARIES

Dilemmatic Human-Animal Boundaries in Britain and Romania:

Postmaterialist and Materialist Dehumanization

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Abstract

Theories of dehumanization generally assume a single clear-cut, value-free and non-dilemmatic boundary between the categories 'human' and 'animal.' The present study highlights the relevance of dilemmas involved in drawing that boundary. In 6 focus groups carried out in Romania and Britain, 42 participants were challenged to think about dilemmas pertaining to animal and human life. Four themes were identified: *rational autonomy*, *sentience*, *speciesism*, and *maintaining materialist and postmaterialist values*. Sentience made animals resemble humans, while humans' rational autonomy made them distinctive. Speciesism underlay the human participants' prioritization of their own interests over those of animals, and a conservative consensus that the existing social system could not change supported this speciesism when it was challenged. Romanian participants appealed to Romania's lack of modernity and British participants to Britain's modernity to justify such conservatism. The findings suggest that the human-animal boundary is not essentialized; rather it seems that such boundary is constructed in a dilemmatic and post hoc way. Implications for theories of dehumanization are discussed.

 Key words: *animals; dehumanization; humans; infrahumanization; ontologization; prejudice; speciesism*

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In 2003, a Hungarian judge decided that two men wrongly accused of murder should receive less compensation than they had demanded in their wrongful-arrest suit. The judge argued that the two Gypsy men had "more primitive personalities than the average; therefore, the psychological damage they suffered was not so serious that it would justify the compensation they requested" (*Transitions On Line*, 18-24 November, 2003). Cases like this illustrate *dehumanization*, the process whereby out-group members are discriminated against by being associated with more animal-like attributes, or are perceived as being less than human. The present research is concerned with the ways that humans configure animal nature so that it comes to support such justifications of discrimination against out-group members.

In recent research on inter-group relations dehumanization has been operationalized in the *infrahumanization* and *ontologization* paradigms. The infrahumanization paradigm holds that groups are motivated to reserve the human essence to the in-group and to deny it to out-groups. This resembles the formulation of *pseudospeciation*, which holds that group members harbour the false belief that their group has a unique and superior human identity (Erikson, 1970; 1985). Infrahumanization research relies on the distinction between *primary emotions*, which are assumed to be common to animals and humans (e.g. *fear*), and *secondary emotions,* which are assumed to be uniquely human (e.g. *nostalgia*). In several studies it has been found that while primary emotions are equally attributed to out-group and in-group, out-

group members are generally attributed fewer secondary emotions than in-group members (Leyens, Paladino, Rodriguez-Torres, Vaes, Demoulin, Rodriguez-Perez, & Gaunt, 2000; Leyens, Rodriguez-Perez, Rodriguez-Torres, Gaunt, Paladino, Vaes, & Demoulin, 2001). This differential attribution of secondary emotions to in-groups and out-groups is considered to represent the perception of out-group members as less-than-human, and less human than the in-group, given their presumed inability to feel uniquely human emotions. Infrahumanization researchers further assume that by denying out-groups these essential human emotions, dehumanizing treatment is justified (Leyens, Désert, Croizet, & Darcis, 2002; Leyens, Cortes, Demoulin, Dovidio, Fiske, Gaunt, Paladino, Rodriguez-Perez, Rodriguez-Torres, & Vaes, 2003). While the infrahumanization paradigm makes use of the animal-human binary, it does not assume that in-groups *associate* out-group members with animals, but rather that they perceive out-group members as being less-than-human.

The other strand of research on dehumanization, the *ontologization* paradigm, has focused particularly on the dehumanization and social exclusion of the Gypsy minority. It has similarly used the animal-human binary, but it has operationalized dehumanization in terms of traits rather than emotions. This approach uses the distinction between animal (or natural) and human (or cultural) attributes, where animal attributes are common to animals and humans, e.g. *dirty*, whereas human attributes are uniquely human, e.g. *creative*. Experimental research has shown that members of the Gypsy minority are attributed more animal-like than human-like traits (Pérez, Chulvi, & Alonso, 2001; Pérez, Moscovici, & Chulvi, 2002; Chulvi & Pérez, 2003; Chulvi & Pérez, 2005), and less human-like traits than members of the in-group (Marcu & Chryssochoou, 2005). The

ontologization paradigm takes a historical approach and argues that the majority creates a different ontology for those minority groups which have resisted cultural assimilation for centuries in order to explain their resistance. Social groups which fail to be culturally assimilated, such as the Gypsies, are presumed to have a different human nature from that of the majority, which rationalizes their assumed inability to become civilized and thus fully human.

The empirical research programs of infrahumanization and ontologization bear a family resemblance to more theoretical perspectives within social psychology on the legitimization of discrimination. Bar-Tal (1989, 1990) suggests that dehumanization is a form of *delegitimization* which serves to exclude certain groups from the realm of acceptable norms and values, and to legitimize their inhumane treatment. Relatedly, dehumanization is seen as a form of *moral exclusion*, i.e. placing individuals or groups "outside the boundary in which moral values, rules and considerations of fairness apply. Those who are morally excluded are perceived as nonentities, expendable, or undeserving" (Opotow, 1990:1). In other words, several theories assume that treating an out-group as 'less than human' can be both a precursor and a justification of negative actions towards members of that group.

Despite their shared reliance on the animal-human binary, ontologization and infrahumanization theories differ in two key aspects. First, ontologization researchers are more explicit about the historical basis of their findings. They argue that those particular social groups who do not adopt assimilationist cultural strategies are presumed to have a different ontological essence that explains their resistance to the majority culture's efforts to assimilate them. In contrast, infrahumanization researchers argue that conflict is not a

necessary pre-condition for infrahumanization, as this phenomenon relates more to in-group favouritism. Indeed, some research has shown that ontologization can go beyond failed assimilation and be applied to other discriminated out-groups, such as black Africans (Deschamps, Vala, Marinho, Costa Lopes, & Cabecinhas, 2005). Secondly, the ontologization paradigm attends to the attribution of traits, whereas the infrahumanization research attends to the attribution of emotions. These two different operationalizations may tap into different representations of humanness, and so far it remains unclear whether the two measures yield converging results; some research has found that they converge in some countries but not in others (Marcu & Chryssochoou, 2005).

Traits have also been used to measure the attribution of humanness to self and others (Haslam, Bain, Douge, Lee, & Bastian, 2005). Haslam et al (2005) did not employ a human-animal binary; participants rated personality traits from the Five Factor Model on continuous scales of human typicality and human uniqueness. Haslam et al (2005) found that only human typicality is understood in an essentialist manner, and raised the debate of whether dehumanization involves representations of *human nature* or of what is *uniquely human* (e.g. secondary emotions). While this particular debate is beyond the scope of this paper, it is noteworthy that dehumanization research lacks a consensus on what the human essence is and how it should be investigated. Infrahumanization researchers, for example, chose to focus on the attribution of human emotions for ease of operationalization and because other aspects of humanness such as intelligence or language had already been studied (see Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998; Giles & Coupland, 1991). Relatedly, it is not the case that animals are the only 'other' to the

category of humans; people could also be dehumanized by comparing them to machines (Haslam, 2006).

Yet, few theorists and experimentalists have reflected on *how* the human-animal boundary is drawn or *why* it might serve as such a robust resource for delegitimizing out-groups (see Plous, 2003). Infrahumanization research has recently focused on the problems associated with a strict dichotomy between human and animal emotions and has suggested that emotions be located along a single continuum of humanness (see Demoulin, Leyens, Paladino, Rodriguez-Torres, Rodriguez-Perez, & Dovidio, 2004). However, the distinction between humans and animals, whether understood as categorical or continuous, is implied to be both consensual and unaffected by ideological factors.

In contrast, the present research explored the human-animal boundary as an ideological construction that can be made up and contested in dialogue. How might the construction of human-animal differences be understood as ideological work? As Garner (2003) points out, ideological discourse is dominated by anthropocentrism that reflects humans' power and domination over animals. Philosophers such as Ryder (1971) and Singer (1990) call this anthropocentric ideology *speciesism* and describe it as a lived ideology, suggesting that it may contain contrary propositions (see Billig, Condor, Edwards, Gane, Middleton, & Radley, 1988). Indeed, animals are sometimes anthropomorphised as being like humans and sometimes dehumanized as being unlike humans (see Opotow, 1993). Humans may dehumanize the animals they eat, while simultaneously anthropomorphizing the pets to whom they feed the scraps of those animals from the dinner tables. By so doing, humans shore up their interests in protein-rich food and inter-species companionship respectively. Like any ideology, speciesism

comprises "a well-systematised set of categories which provide a 'frame' for the belief, perception and conduct of a body of individuals" (Eagleton, 1991: 43). In this case, the body of individuals whose actions are so framed is 'humans' themselves.

Humans, animals and speciesism

Examining the humans' position of power over animals is important for the dehumanization paradigm because, as Plous (2003) remarks, "the very act of 'treating humans like animals' would lose its meaning if animals were treated well" (p. 510). If animals are usually excluded from the scope of justice, the question naturally arises as to what allows humans, but not animals, to enjoy rights. The philosopher Tom Regan (1997) has highlighted that human rights rest on both cognitive and non-cognitive criteria, which could be extended to animals, but typically are not. The first of these is *rational autonomy*. Indeed, the first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that "all human beings … are endowed with reason and conscience". Yet, as Regan (1977) notes, such human rights are given to humans who are not rational autonomous agents (such as infants or severely mentally disabled people) but are refused to certain rational animals (such as some primates). The non-cognitive criterion holds that humans are *sentient* beings, i.e. capable of feeling pain and pleasure, and that rights therefore should be granted to them in order to protect them from suffering. As the article 5 of the UDHR stipulates, "no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment". Animals, obviously, do not enjoy such rights, and Regan (1997) argues that it is humans' anthropocentric attitudes rather than any a priori differences between humans and other animals that determines the current denial of rights to animals who have the capacity for sentience. As Malik (2000) insightfully points out,

"there is no line on the map that allows us to define the boundary between Man (sic) and Beast. We have to draw that line ourselves, according to our needs and perspectives" (p. 205). Leaving aside the issues of rational autonomy and sentience, Singer (1990) posits a different reason to extend rights to animals: "the moral principle of equal consideration of interests" (p.237), where interests represent any being's desire to stay alive and to be free from pain, for "if a being suffers, there can be no moral justification for refusing to take that suffering into consideration" (p.8). For Singer, it is speciesist to believe that human life is sacrosanct and that only humans are morally entitled to rights and protection from harm and suffering.

Like other ideologies that justify hierarchy and exploitation, speciesism is arguably accompanied by representations of what one might call false consciousness in animals, i.e. an internalization of their inferiority. Studies of 'false consciousness' run aground when they posit some kind of 'truth' against which the consciousness of a group is measured and found to be wanting (see Billig 1999, Eagleton, 1991, Jost, 1995 for discussion). It would be particularly difficult to know how human theories of 'false consciousness' might apply to animal cognitions. However, as Singer (1990) and Plous (2003) point out, humans often portray animals as enjoying their exploitation, and farm animals depicted in mass media as working happily for the benefit of humans are not difficult to locate. Food packaging such as the *Laughing Cow* mask the exploitation and pain that comes with intensive farming. Also, note how writers on National Hunt horse racing in the UK routinely balance coverage of equine fatalities in races with claims about steeplechasing being within thoroughbreds' nature and a source of satisfaction to them (for example, see Montgomery, 2006). Such representations may function as a form

of *system-justification*, (Jost and Banaji, 1994) that legitimates existing unequal social arrangements. Also, as Haraway (1989) notes, we are conditioned to look at animals as mirrors of our nature, often with disregard for the welfare of the animals that we make do our metaphorical work for us. Indeed, Orwell's *Animal Farm,* arguably the best example of a literary discussion of false consciousness among animals, gains its force as an analogy of false consciousness among *humans*.

Cultural and postmaterialist values

So far, we have described humans' speciesism as homogenous but cultural values may also shape the ways that animals are imagined to be. There are obvious differences between and within human cultures with regard to the way animals are perceived. For example, cows are viewed as holy in Hindu culture but pigs are seen as unclean in Muslim and Jewish cultures. Some religions, such as Jainism and Buddhism, prescribe vegetarianism for all. However, in Christian and secular societies, vegetarianism represents a personal choice. Some societies have even tentatively extended the concept of 'rights' to animals.

Growth in concern about animal rights has been understood as a particularity of 'postmaterialist' capitalist societies (Franklin, Tranter & White, 2001). Inglehart (1977, 1990, 1997) holds that value-orientations in advanced industrial societies change in response to increased existential security. As people become liberated from immediate material worries, they dedicate more time to thinking about social groups who had historically experienced discrimination (such as disabled people, women and ethnic minorities), environmental politics and animal welfare. In extending rights to animals, postmaterialist values seem to help in breaking the dichotomy of culture-nature and in

achieving a hybridization of the two in what Latour (1993) would call "a work of translation". In Britain this project took institutional form in 1824 when the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was founded, the first ever animal welfare society in any country. Yet, Latour also notes that modern societies tend to ignore such hybridization and continue to construct 'people' and 'things' as ontologically different, with animals being one of several funny zones in between that modern subjects prefer not to think about (see Latour, 1993, p. 100).

However, postmaterialist values and the increased knowledge about the humans' relatedness to other species do not always moderate speciesist attitudes. As Singer remarks, "the moral attitudes of the past are too deeply embedded in our thought and our practices to be upset by a mere change in our knowledge of ourselves and other animals" (1990: 212). Indeed, while scientific research is usually disdainful of anthropomorphic attributions to animals, it requires a form of 'reverse anthropomorphism' in generalizing results of studies conducted on animals to humans (Rollin, 2000). Thus while speciesism is traditional and long-standing, it is also the height of modernity.

Given the influence of speciesism and of postmaterialist values on the construction of the human-animal boundary, the present study aimed to examine how ideological dilemmas surrounding this boundary might be resolved in countries at very different points on the postmaterialist spectrum. We predicted that both materialist and postmaterialist values would support speciesism, and that individuals from both materialist and postmaterialist societies may be able to claim that their cultures' speciesism is inevitable but for different reasons.

The present study

To understand better the variation in the construction of the human-animal boundary, the present study proceeded by prompting dilemmas about life-and-death issues involving humans and animals among focus group participants in Britain and Romania. As Billig et al. (1988) have suggested, contrary themes are necessarily invoked when people argue and discuss everyday issues. We predicted that 'animal nature' would be a dilemmatic construction in these focus groups because people usually use animal-derived produce for their daily lives, but can experience sympathy and pity for animals' plight and include some animals in their homes as pets.

In Inglehart's terms Britain is a postmaterialist country while Romania is not, as Britain is one of the richest countries in Europe whereas Romania is one of the poorest. Britain has a long history of animal rights activism, whereas animal welfare organizations were founded in Romania only in the late 1990s. While vegetarianism is quite common in Britain and has a long history, in Romania the Romanian Vegetarian Society was founded only in 1991. In Britain vegetarianism is linked to animal issues, whereas in Romania it is linked more to health issues. We expected that, given the wider spread of postmaterialist values in Britain than in Romania, the British participants would be more likely to extend the scope of justice to animals, and that different justifications of speciesism would arise in the two cultural groups.

<div align="center">Method</div>

Participants

Twenty-one Romanians and twenty-one British people participated. The nineteen female and two male Romanian participants were students at a high-school in Bucharest

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(age range = 17 to 19 years, M = 17.80 years). The ten male and eleven female British participants were recruited via posters on a university campus (ages range = 18 to 42 years, M = 24.80 years).

Focus groups interviews

Informed by current issues within each country, six questions pertaining to animal and human life were drawn up for each country. The questions about human life were the same across the two national groups and pertained to euthanasia, abortion and the separation of conjoint twins with unequal chances of survival. A question about animal experimentation was used for both national groups. The Romanian sample answered two other questions about the euthanasia of stray dogs in Bucharest (the Romanian capital) and the reduction of unnecessary suffering during the killing of animals at abattoirs. The British participants answered two questions about fox hunting and the culling of uninfected animals during the foot-and-mouth epidemic in 2001 (see Appendix A for the complete interview schedule). The questions about animals differed in the two countries in order to reflect the animal issues specific to each country. Thus, although the questions were not identical, they were functionally equivalent as it is often the case with cross-cultural research (see Lyons & Chryssochoou, 2000).

Procedure

The Romanian participants were recruited at a high-school in Bucharest, and the British participants were recruited on a British university campus. Each focus group was composed of seven participants, and the discussions were moderated by the first author. The participants were debriefed at the end of the each focus group discussion.

Analysis

The analysis was carried out by the first author. The Romanian focus group interviews were translated into English. Our analysis was informed by thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). Our themes were theory-driven as they sought to reflect instances of speciesism and influences of postmaterialism. Each transcript was read carefully and patterns in the data were noted. Data was categorised into codes, related codes were spliced and themes were formed. Overall, four main themes emerged from both the British and the Romanian data, some of them reflecting similarities, and others, differences.

As the research aimed to examine the meanings people attach to animal and human existence within different political and socio-economic contexts, we were principally interested in the construction of the categories of 'humans' and 'animals' in talk. Our approach shared many assumptions with discursive psychology (Edwards & Potter, 1992), and discourse analysis (Potter & Wetherell, 1987); we assumed that such constructions were unconstrained by any external reality (Edwards, Ashmore, & Potter, 1995), but understood the construction of such categories as forms of social action (Wetherell, 1998) and we were oriented towards inconsistencies in the construction of such categories.

Results

Rational Autonomy

Humans' rational autonomy was often spontaneously invoked by participants attempting to demarcate animals from humans. Humans were explicitly described as those who "have reason, which distinguishes them from animals" (Romanian focus group

[RFG] 1, 170) but categorical distinctions were readily challenged, in which the dilemma was often resolved by resorting to incontestable ideologies such as religious dogma:

154   A: "Humans are thinking creatures."

155   B: "How do you know animals are not?"

156   A: "They communicate, too, but not like humans."

157   C: "Humans are superior creatures as God put them at the centre of his

158   creation, the centre of animals, of nature, everything."

159   B: "But that doesn't mean that humans should take advantage…" (RFG 3, 154-

        59).

As it can be noted, participant C intervened to resolve the apparent dilemma but religion was not incontrovertible; participant B contested it. In discourse analysis, this form of argument is referred to as a 'bottom-line argument', i.e., one that invokes something that often works as a 'fundamental' and that cannot be challenged or is difficult to challenge.

As regarded the existence of reason in animals, one participant was doubtful about the animals' mental abilities, as can be seen in this dialogue about animal testing:

46   D: "But don't you think that's pretty hypocritical because the animals'

47   parents, for example, might get really sad when the baby animal dies."

48   E: "Yeah, I think you've to look at it…if they actually do or not, because

49   animals don't have the same kind of…like, you know, frontal cortex,

50   emotional attachment as humans do, like self-awareness issues, so they

51   may feel the loss, I guess, but in a different way, but it becomes quite

52   philosophical, doesn't it? Does the way that we have attachment with

53   ourselves…we put that above the way animals have attachments to each

54   other, which we as humans tend to do." (British focus group [BFG] 1, 46- 54).

Thus humans acknowledge that animals feel pain, but deny that animals are intelligent or

self-aware, and this denial of mentation in animals is arguably a strategy to reduce

conflict over the use of animals, as Plous (2003) suggests.

Rational autonomy was used also to make distinctions among humans, and those

who lacked this capacity were sometimes explicitly constructed as lacking human

essence:

"When people get Alzheimer's, (…) they are basically stripped of them being a

human being" (BFG 1, 37-38).

Thus, contrary to Regan (1997), these participants attended to variability in humans'

rational autonomy and used it as a basis to selectively allocate humanity. This often

justified the withholding of human rights, such as the right to life of disabled unborn

children:

"You cannot know if that child will have a conscience or just be a vegetable"

(RFG 3, 291-92).

or disabled children who were already born:

"There's no use in that [disabled] child being in a wheelchair, being on a

respirator, ventilator" (BFG 2, 523-25).

and the right of terminally ill patients to decide when to die:

"The patient may be considered as not being in his full mental faculties (RFG1,

405).

As this last extract shows, it was not the case that humans who lacked rational autonomy

were constructed as necessarily unworthy of life but as lacking the ability to make

rational decisions about the beginning or continuation of their own lives. However, the withholding of rights to choose life or death presumes that the speakers themselves possess rational autonomy and so can adjudicate such matters for others and presumably themselves. Thus, rational autonomy provides a basis for both demarcating humans from animals and for demarcating humans who can and cannot speak for themselves on matters of life and death.

This awareness of humans' own distinct rational autonomy was also used to argue against cruel treatment of animals who do not have a voice:

"I just think that animals don't have a choice. We choose whether they're gonna live or die, which is really bad" (BFG 3, 81-82).

"But the pig is still a being, it's got life, and…I don't know, human rights are more important but only because humans have reason, which distinguishes them from animals, but nevertheless, because of this, does it mean we shouldn't offer them any…facilities, so to speak?" (RFG 1,169-72).

As these quotations indicate, some participants implied that humans should be responsible towards animals precisely because they have more agency than them, and it could be argued that these participants expressed group-based guilt for humans' mistreatment of animals. Just as in research on inter-group relations (e.g. Iyer, Leach & Crosby, 2003), the Romanian participant in the extract above arguably experienced group-based guilt and the dilemma of privilege because she perceived her in-group, the humans, to be unfairly advantaged in comparison to animals by being naturally endowed with reason and autonomy.

Sentience

While rational autonomy made humans distinct from animals, sentience was often invoked as the basis of similarity between humans and animals:

"[Animals] are instinctual but have feelings nonetheless. At the end of the day, our feelings are instinctual, too. It's a feature that makes us resemble animals" (RFG 2, 246-48).

Sentience served as a rhetorical basis for treating animals with respect in discussions about animal experimentation in Britain:

"You can take that to a more basic level, as well, and argue about the discomfort and pain the animal might feel by being tested on. That no living creature has the right to undergo that treatment" (BFG 1, 60-62).

Thus, while the participants denied moral status and decision-making to animals and humans lacking in rational autonomy, they nonetheless agreed that animals had moral standing on the basis of sentience. However, sentience was not a 'bottom-line' argument against the exploitation of animals for human ends. The type of animal seemed to matter. Regarding animal experimentation for example, one participant justified it on the basis of her dislike of rats:

"It's on rats that they [experiment], and I agree, I really don't like rats" (RFG 1, 244-45).

One could argue that portraying animals as unpleasant acted as a form of moral disengagement. Just as in-groups may be included in the scope of justice more that out-groups, intimate animals (i.e., pets) were protected more than animal strangers from animal cruelty (see Opotow, 1993):

"There's no way you're gonna test on my dog 'cause to me there's that emotional

attachment […] If I was emotionally attached to an animal I would be against

[animal testing], but just thinking, oh, yeah, some monkey out there I don't know

anything about, I would think that's ok" (BFG 1, 163-64, 177-179).

Participants' invocations of sentience allow a different vantage point from which to view

theories of dehumanization that presume that humans think animals possess only primary

emotions, and that this limited emotional range justifies their exploitation. Although

primary emotions were attributed to animals, these were used to ground sentience-based

arguments against animal cruelty, as when this participant discussed fox hunting in the

UK:

"The animal's parents, for example, might get really sad when the baby animal

dies" (BFG 1, 46-47).

Similarly, humans who were attributed a lack of humanizing rational autonomy were

described as feeling primary emotions, e.g. happiness. However, this was a basis for

positive descriptions of such persons and their interests:

"This malformation [Down's syndrome] doesn't prevent those children from

being happy. They may be even happier than us in their own world" (RFG2, 377-

78).

Speciesism

Note that in none of the cases quoted so far have participants evoked the idea that

humanity might be a lesser form of life than animal life or be less entitled to decide

matters of life and death for members of their own and other species. In the focus group

discussions, speciesism was characterized by mutually supporting claims that humans were ontologically superior to animals and that humans' interests took precedence over animals' interests. These claims could even be invoked to describe animal exploitation as unavoidable or even noble in some cases, e.g. animal testing:

> "I think that you have to test on something. There are certain things that you cannot test on humans" (BFG 2, 21-22).

> "I agree with these experiments because this way lives can be saved, humans are prevented from getting ill, there are certain noble causes, so to speak" (RFG 2, 224-25).

To support speciesist ideologies, participants cited the authority of religion, philosophy or tradition:

> "The issues of philosophy say that humans are the ultimate goal, and therefore we humans can use any means to reach our ends" (RFG 2, 211-12).

> "It does make sense to test things on animals before humans if you believe that a human life is worth more than an animal life, which I happen to" (BFG 2, 29-31).

> "Humans have always regarded animals as a means…through which they can reach their goals. Humans have always been superior, animals have been given to them to help them" (RFG 2, 218-20).

> "Humans are superior creatures as God put them at the centre of his creation, the centre of animals, of nature, everything" (RFG 3, 160-61).

On the one hand, these citations of 'the issues of philosophy,' the intentions of a God and the superiority of human beings evidence the plethora of ideological justifications that humans can use to defend speciesism. On the other, the citations suggest the vulnerability

of speciesism to attack in that they acknowledge for the necessity to defend speciesism. Indeed, some participants contested the validity of speciesism quite explicitly in their talk:

> "I would prefer to see convicted criminals having been tested on rather than animals. But then you get into the whole human rights. But, you know, humans just know they're supreme beings, so they think they've got the right to use whatever they want" (BFG 3, 51-57).

Speciesist talk is dilemmatic and here the participants expressed contradictions that make up common sense ideologies about human-animal similarity. Human rights appear at first incontrovertible and then as the consequence of human arrogance. Of course, two categories of 'human' are at play here; the 'human rights' which might save the prisoner from experimentation and the humans who 'know they're supreme beings' and who might adjudicate whether this prisoner or the prisoner's animal counterparts are to be the subjects of experimentation. However, in spite of their evident difficulty, participants often constructed a possible rational answer to the dilemmas between fulfilling human interests and avoiding animal cruelty that could be reached by 'weighing up' the evidence on each side, as in the case of animal experiments, for example:

222   E: It has been shown in time that it is a pretty efficient option, even if it would

223   appear slightly cruel or brutal or…I think that most would agree with an

224   experiment on an animal rather than on a human. And besides, these experiments

225   should take places, indeed, for progress and scientific discoveries and…But, in

226   the end, if we were to think about animal suffering, this wouldn't be too correct

227   and it's not normal…

228 G: But what could we do? Experiment on plants? Ultimately it is the only

229 solution…

230 F: And at the end of the day, the best guinea pig is the rat (sic), it breeds

231 extremely quickly and can have many offsprings…

232 G: Yes, but not only rats, there are many carried out on monkeys, especially as

233 regards the brain…I mean, because they are very similar to humans, and some of

234 them [experiments] are very cruel.

235 E: Yes, but it is less costly to do it on rats than on monkeys…

236 G: Yes, but with rats you can't do experiments researching the human brain. Or

237 something indeed vital for humans.

238 H: But cancer exists in animals, too. And for cancer, it's on rats that they

239 do…And I agree, I really don't like rats…

240 I: I don't agree with these two, they are arguing about the type of animal, this

241 issue is not relevant, it doesn't matter on which animal you do the experiments, it

242 matters that it is an animal, this is essentially the problem. (RFG1, 222-42).

Here we see participants weighing up the material as well as the moral costs and benefits

of animal testing and we find that one efficient strategy to justify the inevitable cruelty of

animal testing is to portray animals as pests. Note the complexity of the argument and

how certain lines of reasoning are introduced and then effectively resisted. There seems

to be a form of utilitarianism underlying these exchanges, which appears to be a standard

and accepted basis for weighing moral dilemmas. However, not all participants endorsed

the view that animals should be sacrificed for the benefit of humans. The same dilemma

regarding animal experimentation was echoed by the British participants:

"If we didn't use animals to test on, how would we find new cures for medicine

and stuff? What is the other option? So there's a lot of benefits and there's a lot of

disadvantages, but you've just got to weigh up the two. I think there's a lot of

abuse and exploitation and stuff going on…" (BFG 2, 55-58).

But as can be seen in the following exchange, the participants perceived the dilemmas

associated with speciesism and with humans' power over animals:

110   J: "I agree. We are superior beings and we have to test medicine on somebody

111   else to see if they are good.

112   K: "And if aliens come and kidnap you and do experiments on you to test

113   whatever they need in order to evolve, would that seem logical to you because

114   they are superior?

115   L: "Do you want, as a human, if you believe in medicine, shouldn't you test them

116   on yourself, as a human?

117   M: "It would be best that those who discover a medicine test it on themselves.

118   We've got a responsibility, we can't test on animals because it would

119   mean….Because it doesn't say anywhere that humans are superior and that they

120   should use animals and test on them and evolve because of them…Because those

121   animals are creatures, too, and have the same right as us to populate the earth,

122   right?" (RFG 3,110-22).

Here the participants questioned the authority of speciesism, with phrases such as "it

doesn't say anywhere that humans should use animals", and "if aliens do experiments on

you, would that seem logical?", showing the lack of any fundamental ideology to which

humans can appeal to justify their speciesist beliefs and behaviour and thus highlighting

the inherently dilemmatic nature of speciesism. At the same time, phrases such as "we've got a responsibility, we can't test on animals" could be interpreted as expressions of group-based guilt, which arises when members of an advantaged group acknowledge their responsibility and mistreatment of a disadvantaged out-group (see Branscombe, Doosje & McGarty, 2002), especially when the in-group's advantage seems unfair and beyond the in-group's control. Interestingly, the reference to aliens as superiors creatures that could do to humans what humans do to animals shows that there exist other binaries, such as human-alien, that can shape the construction of humanness as well as the perception of the power balance between species (see Haslam, 2006).

Speciesism has been described as the putting of humans' interests before those of animals. Yet, attaching a lower value to animals' interests does not imply that those interests have no value whatsoever. Even where the priority of humans' interest was most boldly asserted, awareness of animals' interests was evident in views that it is normative, rather than logical, to prioritize humans' interests:

"You first have to think about human not animal rights" (RFG 1,186-87).

or that an animal's death was a lesser wrong than a human's death:

"There's one thing for a lab mouse to die, another, for a human to die" (RFG 3,147).

and in the recognition that animal research required justification:

"I think if there is any possibility of medical gain, then I think animal testing is justified" (BFG 3, 41-42).

Thus British participants acknowledged the horror of culling animals to prevent the spread of foot-and-mouth disease in 2001 even when they did not disagree with such culling:

"Even though it was awful…the way it was handled was wrong. I think it had to be done because it was better to save us and a lot of people" (BFG 2, 264-65).

Finally, participants often tempered their utilitarianism by calling attention to examples of animal research that were not necessary for humans' welfare and which were unjustified. Here participants often drew a distinction between medical research and cosmetics research, with the former being justified in terms of necessity and worth:

"To conciliate both animals and humans, it is necessary to do certain experiments but only if strictly necessary, not for luxury or other purposes" (RFG1, 276-77).

"I don't agree with cosmetics, that's more of a vanity thing, but if it's for medicine, it's for a worthy cause" (BFG 1, 8-10).

Maintaining Materialist and Postmaterialist Values

Thus far we have described similarities in the Romanian and British data. In this final section, we attend to the differences in the ways that the participants in each country appealed to their own country's particular economic situation to justify the exploitation of animals. The Romanian participants were aware of the link between material development and social values and tended to agree that animals were better treated in Western European countries. However, in their own country, improvements in human rights took precedence over improvements in animal rights:

"I think that in the end somewhat the facilitation of human rights ultimately determines a better life for animals, too. But the causal chain, so to speak, starts

with humans: if humans have more rights and manage their money better, then

with time there will be solutions for animals, too" (RFG 1, 198-201).

In this trickle-down theory, improving the rights of humans leads to improvements in the

rights of animals. At other points Romanian participants argued that improving animal

rights at home would increase the chances of European Union membership, as in the case

of the culling of stray dogs:

"In my opinion, they should put [dogs] in a dog shelter, it is true, many financial

resources are needed for such a thing, but, for us to get into the European Union, I

think this is the best measure, not killing them" (RFG 1, 25-27).

Against these modernizing Westernizing agendas, concepts like "tradition" and "national

identity" were invoked to justify the status quo in Romania, including the killing of

animals. One participant focused on the Romanian tradition of knifing pigs before

Christmas:

"This is a matter of tradition as well, because in our country pigs have always

been cut in the traditional way" (RFG 1, 153-54).

Again, rational autonomy, in the form of decision making, was introduced to justify the

maintenance of traditional forms of animal cruelty:

"In time, we become civilised, but, still, certain traditions should be kept. And if

humans, be they Romanian, Swiss, Belgian, want the pig to be cut or injected,

they should be able to decide this" (RFG 2, 140-42).

There were echoes of Bhiku Parekh's insightful observation that "although we can draw

up a list of universal moral values, not all societies have the required moral, cultural,

economic and other resources to live up to their demands" (2000: 133). Caught between

the dilemma of tradition and Westernization, some Romanian participants concluded that

Romania would modernize, but slowly:

> "For the third millennium, it's clear that this is what should be happening in order
>
> for us to evolve. But, as regards their application, I don't think that this will be
>
> possible, in our country, for a long time" (RFG 1, 207-10).

These accounts of the difficulties of securing animal rights might lead one to suspect that

British participants would endorse them more obviously than Romanians did. Phrases

like *organic*, *vegetarian* and *against animal testing* were part of the British discourse but

not the Romanian one. In the course of the focus groups, one British participant declared

herself to be a vegetarian and others advocated cruelty-free cosmetics and organic

products. Participants often voiced the opinion that such postmaterialist values ordinarily

shaped consumer behaviour:

> "There'll be a lot of people who are concerned about animals rights and don't
>
> want to use products tested on animals 'cause they don't feel
>
> personally….whatever, they've decided they don't want to. So they look at the
>
> product and it says "against animal testing" or "this product is not tested" (BFG 3,
>
> 140-43).

In contrast to the Romanian participants, who saw ethical treatment of animals as

evidence of modernization, the British understood such practices as a return to tradition:

> "If they went back to traditional, natural, even organic farming methods, you have
>
> to respect the land, they'd have the space to go around, they wouldn't need all
>
> these injections to prevent the illnesses" (BFG 1, 384-87).

Ironically, the British invoked tradition not to justify the exploitation of animals, like the Romanians did, but to propose less cruel alternatives to farming.

Not only modernity and tradition but also poverty and wealth were used in each country to justify the status quo. In Romania, the participants used existential insecurity to legitimise the exploitation of animals:

"Shelters [for dogs] don't seem to me a good solution in our country because we are a poor country, we hardly feed ourselves, let alone dogs" (RFG 2, 40-41).

"And nobody says that you should be purely brutal in the act of getting food, because ultimately that's what it is, but in our country there are more important problems that require greater attention than this" (RFG 1, 133-35).

"I don't know if this [the euthanasia of dogs] is a very good measure, but I know for sure that it is in line with our resources" (RFG 2, 32-33).

For the British participants, consumption appeared to be the unstoppable force that limited changes in animal welfare:

"There is a greater demand for cheaper food and all the *economy* brands, and the effect it's had on farmers, quite badly, they kind of tried to take shortcuts, like when they feed the animals their own brains and stuff, which led to BSE" (BFG 1, 377-80).

"Do you think we're actually to blame as consumers, partially, for these epidemic patterns? We're constantly saying we want food cheaper and the people who are gonna make it cheaper are the farmers, and they're gonna cut corners and this is why I think things like these may be happening" (BFG 3, 320-23).

This is not to say that the British participants endorsed consumption patterns that limited animals' welfare, only that they constructed them as barriers to changing the status quo:

> "The whole sort of foot and mouth incident and everything like that just highlights the complete lack of respect that business seems to have for nature nowadays. Everybody is taking the short-term viewpoint of business, it's just the viewpoint of you making your profits for the end of year results" (BFG 1, 391-95).

Discussion

What are these British and Romanian participants telling social psychologists about how we should configure the human-animal boundary in our theories of inter-group relations? First, they show the contested nature of both that boundary itself and its relationship to exploitation. Rational autonomy makes (most) humans unlike (most) animals but sentience makes us all appear to be much more alike and almost equal in the rights we should enjoy. In line with Billig et al's (1988) perspective, these essential differences and similarities fall out from, and are not epistemologically prior to, ideological concerns. Second, as in other domains of liberal ideology, our participants were caught on the horns of a dilemma between believing in their own groups' superiority and more important interests and in believing that cruelty against other living things was wrong. While theories of dehumanization tended to assume that animals provide a good blueprint for ill-treated out-groups because animals have fundamentally different natures from humans, these data show how humans' shared consensus about human-animal differences can lead them to infer that they should treat animals well. As one participant put it, "humans rights are more important [ ] because humans have reason,

which distinguishes them from animals, but nevertheless [ ] does it mean we shouldn't offer them [animals] any…facilities, so to speak?" (RFG 1, 169-171). Like good modern subjects, these participants are aware that human and animal nature are caught up in a complex relationship with each other, but still imagine that humans and animals are fundamentally different (Latour, 1993).

It could be argued here that speciesism served to justify the system (cf. Jost & Banaji, 1994) because it provided the participants with an ideology that could rationalize the existing power relations between humans and animals. At the same time, speciesism provided the participants with readily available solutions to the dilemmas that they encountered when thinking about animal exploitation for human needs. While both British and Romanian participants endorsed speciesist views and used them to justify the exploitation of animals and to draw the human-animal boundary, they used their societies' differing economic conditions in very similar ways to suggest the impossibility of improving animal welfare. Complicating Inglehart's theory, both characteristics of materialist and post-materialist societies provided means of justifying the status quo. At the individual level, both poverty and rampant consumerism seemed to force humans to make choices that would harm animals, while at the societal level, they both engendered lifestyles and cycles of consumption detrimental to animal welfare. It would thus appear that postmaterialist values cannot totally override deeply embedded and all-pervasive speciesist attitudes, maybe because, as Garner (2003) argues, the moral pluralism of liberal ideology conceives animal rights as a moral *preference* rather than as a moral *obligation*.

If the human-animal boundary is dilemmatic, then what are the implications for the operationalization of the concept of dehumanization? Categories such as 'human' and 'animal' seem to be more fluid than the ideologies that shape them or the social inequalities that these ideologies protect. Firstly, the dilemmatic construction of the categories 'animal' and 'human' along such dimensions as rational autonomy and sentience suggests not only that these should be viewed as ends of a humanity continuum (cf. Demoulin et al., 2004) but also that one continuum may be not enough. Also, even if emotions and traits are placed on a humanity continuum, their places on this continuum may not always be the same, but may vary function of context or rhetorical purposes. Arguably, the dimensions of sentience and rational autonomy correspond broadly to Haslam et al's (2005) *human nature* and *uniquely human* dimensions that constitute humanness. It could be argued that while rational autonomy is rhetorically used as the crucial difference between humans and animals, sentience may be used as the essential difference between humans and machines (cf. Haslam, 2006), and it would be interesting to examine further how human-machine or human-alien boundaries are constructed in discourse.

Secondly, these participants are asking us if the dehumanization of out-groups might not be dilemmatic too. The dehumanization of out-groups may be an ad hoc phenomenon that varies as a function of the in-group's interests. One could argue that just as animals can experience both dehumanization and anthropomorphization, so the dehumanization of out-groups may be a spontaneous and localized phenomenon, justifying particular ideologies or serving certain purposes, something that research on dehumanization might want to explore. If it is shown that dehumanization is context-

31

dependent, this might be explained in terms of system-justification, for it could be argued that just like speciesism, dehumanization may not linked to the perception of the out-group's attributes *per se*, but to the in-group's interests of power and domination. Given that the most excluded animals from the scope of justice were the pests, it is possible that dehumanized groups are perceived as posing threat to the in-group and be seen as vermin to society, and future research on dehumanization might want to explore the link between perceived threat and dehumanization. At the same time, given the ideological aspects of speciesism, it could also be argued that dehumanization, too, serves to justify the system and to legitimize the social exclusion of certain groups, such as the Gypsies. In this sense, dehumanization might be a post hoc phenomenon and a form of moral exclusion or delegitimization, in line with Opotow's and Bar-Tal's theorization.

To conclude, the present study offers insights into the psychological processes that accompany the drawing of the human-animal boundary, and the construction of humanness itself. By showing its dilemmatic aspects, the present study challenges the essentialization of the categories human and animal and draws attention to the ad hoc nature of these two categories. The dilemmas surrounding the human-animal boundary were resolved by resorting to resources such as speciesist views, tradition, religion, lack of postmaterialist values, existential insecurity or consumerism. Speciesism generally excluded animals from the scope of justice by making humans argue that animals are essentially inferior to humans and that their role on earth is to serve humans' needs. At the same time, this study suggests that dehumanization may be dilemmatic, too, and that the dehumanization paradigm should also take into account the psychological processes associated with the attribution of humanity to dehumanized groups. Thus, while Gypsies

may be considered too "primitive" to suffer real psychological trauma, they are no longer

primitive when their music is used to entertain the non-Gypsy majority.

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Appendix A

The questions for the Romanian participants:

1. Two years ago the mayor of Bucharest suggested that stray dogs claimed by no one should be euthanised. I would like you to comment.

2. At the beginning of the year 2003 the Ministry of Agriculture and Food issued the order 425 which stipulated that animals taken to the abattoir should not be subjected to any unnecessary suffering or pain during the killing. What do you think?

3. Some people consider animal experiments necessary for scientific progress. I would like your opinion on this.

4. Sometimes two conjoint twins are born with complications, and only one of them has survival chances. When the operation of separation takes place, it is known that the other twin is going to die. What do you think?

5. Euthanasia has been suggested as a means of ending the suffering of terminally ill patients who are dependent on life-support machines. What do you think?

6. Foetuses that will be born with malformations or genetic diseases are usually aborted. I would like your opinion on this.

The questions for the British participants:

1. It has been argued that animal testing should not be allowed. I would like your opinion on this.

2. Do you think fox hunting should be banned or not?

3. During the foot-and-mouth epidemic many uninfected animals were culled. What do you think?

4. Sometimes when two conjoint twins are born only one of them has survival chances. When the operation to separate them is carried out it is known in advance that one of them will die. What do you think?

5. Foetuses revealed to have malformations of various genetic disorders are sometimes aborted. I would like your opinion on this.

6. Euthanasia has been suggested as a way of ending the suffering of terminally ill patients. How do you feel about this?