A Silent Slur is Worth A Thousand Words: Disgust for instances of racism linked to character judgments.

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Abstract

What is the underlying mechanism of emotional perception regarding individuals who commit violent acts and who display characteristics of racism? Fifty-seven participants made ratings of character and act judgments along with ratings of anger and disgust in order to assess the relationship between moral outrage and disgust in regard to situations involving harm and implied negative character. Results showed that participants were more likely to attribute feelings of disgust towards a racist individual and more likely to attribute feelings of anger towards a violent individual. These results add to the literature on the role that anger and disgust play in moral judgments.

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Philosophies differ in regard to the interpretation of actions and the actors who carry out the actions in question. There are some views that endorse the idea that whatever maximizes the most happiness and causes the least amount of harm is the ideal, moral way to live (Cahn, 2008). Other views propose that there exists an absolute moral guide that every person needs to follow and that any violation, regardless of situation, is inherently wrong (reference). One view that seems to adapt to the complexity that morality as a concept seems to innately have, is the idea of moral relativism. Morality *could* be non-universal and rather be culturally specific, as such it is difficult if not impossible to develop a rule system that takes all of these differences into account. Some cultures may advocate for the use of public displays of violence to serve as examples to potential perpetrators, but other cultures may see this as brutal and decry the practice as immoral (Harman, 1978).

Additionally, there is an aspect of moral philosophy that acknowledges the metacognitive aspect of moral evaluations which posits that most of our ideas about what is right and wrong are largely relative to the culture that *we* live in, which presents a bias when evaluating other cultures' practices (reference). Putting aside the different moral philosophies, it is important to be able to deconstruct what a moral evaluation consists of. In every transgression, there is an act and there is an actor. Are they evaluated independently, or are they evaluated as one unit? What emotions are experienced in these evaluations? For the most part, human beings are not binary in their decision-making patterns. Things exist in a continuum as opposed to being *only* this or *only*

that. This makes evaluations more involved, which is a beneficial aspect of existing in a culture. Legal systems rely on a thorough presentation of evidence in order to make a just claim regarding someone's innocence or lack thereof. By exploring the lack of mechanistic, routine-based, behavior it must then become clear that emotions add an aspect of increased complexity to the judgment of a situation.

Moral transgressions are divergences from a command or law and can be emotionally salient, which can influence the interpretation of events and situations. In moral psychology, there is an attempt to rectify all of these issues and to obtain a deeper understanding of what morality is. In order to understand the overarching umbrella of morality, the emotions that underlie moral judgments need to be dissected. While not the only two emotions present in moral psychology, the prominent ones seem to be anger and disgust when looking at interpretations of moral transgressions. The literature on moral transgressions is often bountiful with colorful characters either masturbating into frozen poultry, having sex with their siblings, beating up cats or eating dead dogs. These situations are often posed as transgressions and participants are often tasked with determining whether the act is right or wrong, and whether the actor performing the act is a good or bad person. It is the synthesis of these emotions and ratings on whether an act is right or wrong that make emotions necessary to the ability to make moral judgments (Prinz, 2006).

Disgust

Disgust as an emotion in and of itself is primarily biological in nature. Rozin and Fallon (1987) approach disgust with the lens of a food rejection emotion. Substances that we find disgusting are not substances that we would intentionally ingest or put into our mouths. The

rejection of these items can consist of facts about the object itself or where it came from. The most common example, and the substance that elicits the most disgust is feces. There are other aspects of disgust as a food rejection emotion that also require foresight, an anticipation of what the food item *might* do as well as knowing where it came from. The authors argue that disgust evolved either to maintain clean living environments and mitigate the presence of harmful bacteria and the spread of disease, or its presence came about as a cultural aside, a way to transmit values and place high negative affect on the consumption, indulgence, or possession of certain objects, food-items, acts. Disgust most likely also served as a way to facilitate close bonding and mating. Humans are highly sensitive to sensory information and highly pungent odorous and gustatory attributes could be maladaptive for the prospect of mating. Curtis and Biran (2001) asked inhabitants of several different countries what disgusted them. The typical responses included items such as feces, urine, menstrual blood, maggots, open wounds, and dirty feet. The responses that deviated from a biological perspective were items such as betrayal, sex with a child before it is weaned, beggars, and touching someone of a lower caste. This inclusion of disgusting things being social attributes casts them into the realm of moral disgust.

The raising of the upper lip and the wrinkling of the nose is the classic facial prototype for disgust (Ekman et al.,1987). When asked to drink a cup of juice with a sterilized dead cockroach inside of it, participants responded overtly with disgust. The notion of having a bug touch their lips was bad enough, but even drinking *anything* that had touched the bug was bad as well. (Haidt, 2001). This is the emotional aspect of disgust. Things that repulse us, or that makes our skin crawl tend to be things that violate some aspect of how the world ‘should be’. In their 2009 paper, Tybur, Lieberman, Griskevicius posited that disgust exists in three domains: sexual

disgust, pathogen disgust, and moral disgust. Sexual disgust relates to mate choice, participants display more disgust when asked to imagine sex with any relatives or to imagine hearing two neighbors having sex. Pathogen disgust concerns itself with anything relating to infections, bodily secretions, and substances that may contain harmful elements. This is evident from participant responses when asked to imagine stepping in a large pile of dog feces or accidentally touching someone's bloody cut.

Moral disgust concerns itself with transgressions, usually in a social context. Participants viewed those who would scam the elderly out of their money or stealing online bank information as situations that would evoke moral disgust. The paper proposes that each of these domains serves an evolutionary purpose. Avoiding things that have the potential to cause illness would certainly prolong your life and ensure the likelihood of reproduction. Avoiding sexual partners that were too closely related would make any offspring more viable, avoiding sexual partners that engaged in costly or risky behavior would ensure that any offspring would be well raised. Avoiding persons that would engage in morally disgusting behavior would essentially be equivalent to avoiding socially costly situations. Those that would rape, kill, and murder, would do so without hesitation. Avoiding these individuals would increase the likelihood of survival, and acceptance within a social group. The domain of moral disgust is where the separation between biology and psychology takes place. Avoiding that which makes you sick or that which reduces your capability to reproduce are essentially biological strategies. Avoiding those who harm, and mar social groups achieves a goal of self-preservation, however, siding with those that would take advantage of others would surely be somewhat advantageous.

The ability to discern those with bad moral paths may lead to acceptance in social groups with may indirectly lead to better survivability. Morally disgusting things can be a synthesis of sexual and pathogen disgust as well. Participants that were asked to describe why a fictitious incestuous relationship was disgusting to them could not come up with a concrete answer. The most common response was that of the viability of the potential offspring. Participants were informed that the sex was consensual, and that no offspring would come to fruition. Participants responded with insistent feelings of disgust, although were unable to say *why*. This idea of 'moral dumbfoundedness' was first introduced by Haidt (2001), and it describes the inability to pinpoint exact reasons as to why an action is morally wrong. Participants were dumbfounded in the sense that they would present counter arguments, were debated, would make new counter arguments, and still display an inability to arrive at an answer to why the action was wrong. It is clear to see that disgust is a multi-faceted emotion, differing from the purely biological standpoint of avoiding chemically and naturally aversive substances/environments, as well as avoiding sexual partners that promote a lack of viability in offspring. Instead, disgust employs an evaluation that synthesizes these avoidances and combines an assessment of a person's moral worth or standing before interacting or associating with them. Moral disgust is what allows the transition from biologically guiding mechanisms to transfer to culturally salient mechanisms.

Anger

Anger is often visualized by a reddening of the face, flared nostrils, and parallel eyebrows. The increased blood flow to the lower extremities are suitable for approach or conflict. The distinction between these (which?) two so-called 'basic emotions' (Ekman, 1999) is a subtle, but important one. The idea of basic emotions posits that there are universal facial expressions for distinct emotions that exist across all cultures. Fear, enjoyment, sadness, anger,

and disgust are some of these so-called basic emotions. We have seen that within the different domains of disgust, the key component was the mechanism of avoidance. If you were to see someone with scabs covering their forearms and coughing thick phlegm into a napkin, you would most likely avoid them. If you saw someone hurting a young child, causing the child to scream in pain, you *may* approach or confront the attacker. Those experiencing anger are willing to risk losses in order to punish the person responsible for the anger (de Quervain et al., 2004).

The moral aspect of anger is called 'moral outrage'. Past research has shown that moral anger facilitates a hostile approach. Haidt (2003) sproposed a triad of emotions consisting of contempt, anger, and disgust (CAD). The driving force behind this triad was that these emotions were felt when certain things were violated. When autonomy was violated, that is the rights of a person, often being actualized in the realm of physical harm, anger was felt. When divinity was violated, that is religious or sexual norms being violated, disgust was felt. This CAD model attempts to break anger and disgust from sharing a bond and to be analyzed as distinct and separate emotions. Hutcherson and Gross (2011) found that physical harm then seems to be the catalyst for moral anger. Participants that read passages about a biologist that intentionally served her own flesh, grown from cells, to dinner guests was received as being more anger inducing (Russell & Giner-Sorolla, 2011). The findings of this study showed that it was the intentionality and the harm inflicted on others of the act that elicited the anger, rather than the taboo aspect of the vignette (eating human flesh). By contrast, feelings of disgust were reported when a bodily violation has occurred.

In other words, anger latches on to displays of intent and harm, and disgust arises when a bodily taboo is experienced. This has caused some researchers to argue that there is a more

cognitively overpowering aspect of anger evaluations compared to disgust (Russell and Giner-Sorolla, 2013). Participants were asked to evaluate the action and list things that would lessen the degree of the emotion they were feeling. Results found that participants were more likely to decrease their feelings of anger after imagining some of those revaluations had taken place. Results also showed that participants that experienced feelings of disgust did not change their evaluations after thinking about the possible changes that could have been made. This shows that the 'flexibility' of anger is more pliable, whereas the 'flexibility' of disgust is quite rigid and static.

Moral Judgments

It is important to not only focus on the emotions experienced by participants as a result of a moral evaluation, but to focus on the evaluation itself. In the evaluations, a rater can either make their judgment from an act-based perspective or from a person-based perspective (ref). The differences in these two stances is how the situation is judged. In an act-based approach, individuals determine if the act is right or wrong. In a person-based approach, individuals determine if the actor *doing* the act is good or bad. These different approaches can be thought of as two types of philosophies. The act-based approach resembles a world-view synonymous with a command of "thou shalt not kill" in which all acts of homicide should be vilified and condemned regardless of any context surrounding the situation.

Character. Person-based approaches more closely resemble the idea of context mattering. If you can either kill the person about to kill your daughter or watch your daughter die because you know that killing is intrinsically wrong, the person-based rater would most likely assume that killing the perpetrator would be the 'right' thing to do. The person-based approach also seems to

be more ‘mature’. It seems somewhat reductionist to assume that an act is wrong and always wrong despite contextual issues. By identifying the actor in a sequence of events, the rater is able to determine the quality of an individual’s moral character. Moral character can be thought of in a myriad of ways, most succinctly, a person with good moral character is often trustworthy and treats others fairly (Uhlmann, Pizarro, and Diermeier, 2014). These traits, often preceded by the word ‘character’ help to visualize an individual that is cooperative, reliable, and non-threatening.

Having ‘bad’ character can be actualized in a number of ways. For example, participants were more likely to hire a candidate that requested a one-million-dollar bonus than a candidate that requested a forty-thousand-dollar marble table (Tannenbaum, Uhlmann, and Diermeier, 2011). This helps create the idea that individuals with poor moral character may also have other deficits in areas such as self-control, selfishness, impulsiveness, and poor integrity. Having good character is a deciding factor for entrance into certain governmental positions (Rhode, 1984). Quite aptly, the recent investigations into Supreme Court Justice Bret Kavanaugh were the spectacle of every newspaper and news station. After accusations of sexual assault and misconduct were made against Justice Kavanaugh, his character suffered as a result. The most common question was, how could someone with such low moral character serve as a judge on the highest-ranking court? This is why character evaluations are so important. They carry an array of information with them. The ability to carry out a job, any job, asks for applicants to list any times they were in trouble with the law and if it led to the conviction. The area of effect for bad character extends not only to the individual, but to anyone in the general locus of that individual (Melendez, Lichtenstein, and Dolliver, 2016).

The literature has shown several catalysts for emotional judgments; situations involving physical harm often elicit feelings of anger. Situations involving a violation of divinity, purity, or a sexual norm, often elicit feelings of disgust. The feelings of anger can be somewhat modified by thinking about what could reduce your anger, but disgust judgments do not have the same elasticity. Judgments made about an act are often quite rigid in that they are either right or wrong. Judgments made about a person doing the act is more concerned with the quality of the character of the person, which may in turn effect the overall impact of the act. Where then does morality come into play? Moral judgments concern whether something is right or wrong. The moral judgment is an amalgam of the act and the character and the anger and disgust felt by the participants. Uhlmann, Zhu and Tannenbaum (2012) present the case of individuals who perform morally 'good' actions but are deemed 'bad' as a result. A doctor who decides to spend money on new machines is seen as more callous and a worse person overall than a doctor who chooses to use the money to save one boy's life. The doctor is seen as having made the correct moral decision, but in doing so his character suffers. Additionally, the individual who makes the decision to throw a passenger off of a boat in order to save others is seen as being more moral, but as a worse person overall.

The literature refers to such a paradox as an act-person dissociation. This is where an act itself is seen as moral, but the actor performing the act has their character suffering negatively. The decisions for participants lie in the behind-the-scenes of a situation. Why was an individual even *able* to throw someone over board? Sure, they saved a few extra lives, but they still claimed one. Maybe the person has always wanted to throw someone overboard, and now is there chance. How heartless is the doctor who uses moneys on machines rather than save a child's life?

Perhaps it looks better for the hospital to be able to boast about the newest machinery that lines the halls as opposed to saving just one life. These insights are not just conjecture, they are the rationale that helps foster and support the notion that morality is a complex concept, composed of many working parts.

When evaluating an actor's character, it is important to have the full picture in front of you. Knowing that an individual killed a man would most likely cause you to think that individual is bad. If the man that was killed was in the process of raping the individual's daughter, he may not be so bad after all. In this sense, the motivation for the action plays a role in the evaluation of the action. In this same sense, these moral judgments can manipulate the perception of the actor's character by manipulating their motives for doing the action. Alicke (1992), found that a driver speeding home to hide a vial of cocaine was more to blame, a worse person, and deserving of more severe punishment, than his facsimile counterpart that speeded home to hide an anniversary present. The motivations for these actions were the only things that differed in this situation. The scenario also included a detail that a stop sign was obscured by a tree branch as to make the sequence events not so direct. Both drivers ran a stop sign, crashed into another car and caused severe harm and lacerations to another driver. The driver speeding home to hide cocaine was cited as the cause of the accident *even* when another negligent driver had run a different stop sign. Participants may have conflated speeding home to hide cocaine with being under the influence of cocaine, intent to sell cocaine, etc. The fact that the driver speeding home to hide cocaine was on the way to dispose of an illegal substance could have provided participants with enough information to make a judgment that led to consider him to be

more to blame and deserving of harsher punishment than a driver speeding home to hide an anniversary present, a seemingly socially desirable motive.

Act. It is clear that motive is a highly helpful diagnostic tool to use when evaluating a situations moral wrongness. Literature shows that anger judgments are often made when harm and intent are both present. Giner-Sorolla and Chapman (2017, Study 2) showed participants vignettes about individuals that possessed one of four attributes: a desire to harm with consequences, a desire to harm with no consequences, no desire to harm with consequences, and no desire to harm, with no consequences. One such consequence describes Tom, a construction worker. In the desire situations, he either wants to throw a 50-pound steel beam onto his supervisor and does so, breaking his legs, or he wants to throw a 50-pound steel beam onto his supervisor but does not do so. Conversely, in the no desire situations, Tom is holding a 50-pound steel beam but does not want to drop it on his supervisor so he does not, or Tom is holding a 50-pound steel beam and does not know his supervisor is below him, he drops it and breaks the supervisor's legs. Participants reported stronger feelings of disgust in the desire situation in which there were no consequences. Conversely, participants reported stronger feelings of anger in the no desire situation in which there were consequences.

For disgust, it seems apparent that *just* the desire alone to cause harm to another is more morally damning than actually causing the harm. For anger, not desiring to cause the harm but doing so anyways is more anger inducing than having the desire alone. This brings about the issue about inferences. Participants reasoned that if a person was willing and actively desired to cause severe harm to someone, even though the act wasn't carried through, was a strong indicator of that person's moral character, or lack thereof. Similarly, the result of breaking the

legs of his supervisor, participants felt that Tom was being reckless in not considering the safety of disposing of steel beams when not in use. Participants displayed similar results across the other vignettes they read.

In keeping with the inferences made about actor's in these vignettes, Giner-Sorolla, Chapman (2017, Study 1) demonstrated similar findings when participants were asked to judge an actor, John who either beat up his girlfriend or his girlfriend's cat. Participants were shown both scenarios and asked to indicate who was more to blame, more trustworthy, more likely to have normal human feelings, and a host of other question to assess act, character, disgust and anger ratings. The scenarios paint John as having recently found out that his girlfriend had been cheating on him. In order to resolve this, John decides to either beat his girlfriend, or to beat his girlfriend's cat. Participants felt more anger towards the John that beat his girlfriend and more disgust towards the John that beat his girlfriend's cat. Additionally, the John that beat the cat was rated to be less-wrong than the John that beat the girlfriend, however, he was rated as having worse moral character. There is a clear act-person dissociation present, in which the act is rated to be less wrong, but the individual is rated to have worse character. Participants likely engaged in a slippery slope type of thought process, if he is willing to beat a cat, what *else* is he willing to do? The important part of the reasoning is the aspect of willingness, intent, and desire. From these studies it is apparent that ratings of disgust correspond to violations of character and a desire to harm without needing to follow through, and ratings of anger correspond with the wrongness of an act and whether or not the harm inflicted was intentional or due to recklessness.

Inferences are easier to make when there is something to actually infer from. In the case of the cat-beater, it may be less of a leap and more of a sidestep, to reason that this individual has

poor character and is therefore perceived to be a worse person than someone who would beat a woman. Uhlmann, Zhu, and Diermeier (2014) answered the question of what happens when there is no act, only an inner monologue. In their study, participants read a vignette about two factory managers: one who physically assaults a coworker, and one who utters a racial slur to himself. Results showed that the violent manager was rated more harshly on act judgments and the racist manager was rated more harshly on character judgments. Inferences of poor character have been seen in situations where animals are harmed, or when there is a desire to harm. Uttering a racial slur carries an enormous amount of character information. The factory manager that assaults a coworker may be acting out of a split-second error judgment. An instance of racism is something born out of hate, which may attribute to its character implications. Uhlmann, et al. (2014) note the importance of this finding in that it shows that the vignettes used in previous studies, although certain to evoke emotions and ratings, may not be as 'real' as an unfortunately common racial slur. Additionally, this contradicts the previous notion that moral judgments may reside solely in the domain of the divine and the pure. There does not appear to be any evident purity violation in an act of racism, however unjust or unappealing the act is. This extension of moral judgments allows for more research focused on real-life situations as opposed to the, at times, outlandish moral dilemmas.

Action Tendencies

It has been shown that there are differing action tendencies for anger and disgust. However, while both emotions different strategies for conflict and avoidance, both also deal with different aggression patterns. In a study by Molho et al. (2017), participants read vignettes that had them imagine that either themselves or individuals they knew were the victim of a crime. In

the condition in which they imagined someone else was the target of a crime, participants reported more disgust and more anger when they themselves were the victim of the crime. Even when citing instances that the participant had experienced outside of the laboratory, anger ratings were highest when the victim of a crime was the participant and ratings of disgust were highest when the victim of a crime was another person. Additionally, participants that rated scenarios as being more eliciting of disgust were also more in favor of acts of retaliation such as social exclusion and acts damaging the reputation of the transgressor, or so-called indirect aggressive acts. Direct aggression refers to face-to-face confrontations that can either involve a physical or verbal aspect. These confrontations are thought to be 'costly' as they present potential risks to the individual. Conversely, indirect aggression is low in cost as the individual retaliates by means of damaging the transgressors reputation or socially distancing themselves and others from the transgressor. Lastly, when evaluating the emotion felt after seeing a man intentionally throw a lit cigarette onto a pile of jackets either containing the participants jacket, or another person. The synthesis of intentionality and the target of judgment, either the participant or another individual, led to increases in anger ratings when the participants jacket was burned and disgust ratings when another individuals jacket was burned. In keeping with the idea that anger fosters a more costly, direct aggression approach, participants cited direct retaliation and confrontation more often when they were the victims of a transgression. Conversely, ratings of disgust were positively related to acts of indirect aggression.

Consider the example of the man masturbating into a chicken carcass once more. Is the act wrong? Is he a bad person? Is he disgusting? The question is still just as multi-faceted as before but there is some insight in regard to how a breakdown could be made. There is no

(apparent) harm taking place. The man is by himself; the chicken is already dead; he derives pleasure from the act, and no one is being hurt. The ideas of moral dumbfounding may resurface causing a "just because it's gross" loop ad infinitum. The literature shows us that when there is no harm, anger is rarely felt, and when there is a violation of a sexual norm, disgust is felt. We can analyze the character of someone who would masturbate with a chicken corpse and create a decision tree of what they would also do if they were *willing* to do that to a chicken. The man masturbating into a chicken is a rare case, however, a decision can still be made. With more realistic examples, the conclusions may not be as straightforward and clean cut.

The Current Research

It can be seen from the previous literature that there is a relationship between act judgments and the likelihood to attribute anger towards the act itself. It has also been shown that there is a relationship between character judgments and the likelihood to attribute disgust towards the actor. Literature also shows that there is a link between social avoidance and disgust ratings, as well as a link between confrontation and anger ratings. Taken together, these concepts establish that in a situation in which a harmful and deliberate act is present, it should be rated as more angering and participants should be more likely to attribute characteristics of act judgments on the target in terms of more deserved blame, punishment, and an assessment of the target's morality. Conversely, in a situation in which the motivation or intent underlying an actor's harmful action which leads to a display of poor character, will be related to a higher rating of disgust and the attributes of poor character, less trustworthy, a bad person, and low moral standards. One area of interest that has not been explored is whether or not in the absence of harm or even any *direct* action what will happen? In other words, if an actor does not actually *do*

anything, what will the outcome be? Can a thought or utterance that no one hears be considered to be disgusting or indicative of bad character?

In the current research, our goals were therefore to see if the absence of action would still result in similar tracking that we have seen before with act/anger and character/disgust being linked to one another. The materials for the present research were adapted from Uhlmann, Zhu, and Diermeier (2014) in which participants are asked to read about a factory manager who either punches a coworker in the face, or utters a racial slur under his breath and out of earshot.The present research includes additional measurements of ratings of anger, disgust, action tendency, and likelihood of reform. We hypothesize that participants will feel more disgust towards the racist factory manager and more anger towards the violent factory manager as racism can be perceived as an indicator of poor character and violence can be perceived as a senseless harm which typically result in ratings of disgust and anger respectively (Giner-Sorolla and Chapman, 2017). Additionally, the racist factory manager should have worse character than the violent factory manager who should receive more blame and condemnation for his act as the racist manager is displaying his poor character and the violent manager is displaying an act of harm which typically translates to harsher judgments of act and character ratings respectively (Uhlmann, Zhu, and Diermeier, 2014). Furthermore, participants should rate the violent factory manager less likely to commit the transgression again and more likely to change their ways going forward compared with the racist factory manager as anger is a more flexible emotion compared to disgust, and the violent manager may be able to change his ways as opposed to someone with a poor character (Russell, Giner-Sorolla 2013). Similarly, the violent factory manager should be more receptive to changing their own ways and reforming compared to the

racist factory manager. Participants should report more approach-oriented behaviors such as confrontation and yelling towards the violent factory manager and more withdrawal-oriented behaviors such as an increased tendency to use indirect aggression techniques such as damaging the reputation of the racist factory manager (Molho et al., 2017).

Methods

Participants

One hundred and seventeen Brooklyn College students were recruited in exchange for course credit. Sampling was determined a priori using G*Power, we determined the sample size needed to power our central hypothesis (paired samples t-test: difference in disgust and anger ratings) with 80% power to detect a small effect size (d = 0.34), the effect observed in Giner-Sorolla and Chapman, (2017). Twenty pilot subjects were collected to ensure that there were no technical problems with the questionnaire. Their data was not analyzed in a way that was relevant to the hypothesis. Two exclusion criteria were established. Firstly, if any subjects were under the age of 18, they would be shown the debriefing form, awarded the points for which they had signed up, and be taken to the end of the survey immediately. Secondly, if any subjects failed an attention check at the end of the surveys, their data would be excluded from the analyses. After checking for those who failed the age check, (n = 31), and those who failed the attention check (n = 30). The remaining 57 participants, (40 Female, 17 Male, M_{age} = 19.77, SD_{age} = 3.12) were used in the analyses.

Procedure

Participants were asked to read two different scenarios describing people committing transgressions. All participants saw both of the following scenarios involving factory workers, John and Robert. The *slur scenario* read as follows: “Robert a factory manager, is unhappy about a coworker’s behavior, so he says, ‘damn Ni**er’ to himself”. The *physical assault* scenario, read as follows: “John a factory manager, is unhappy about a coworker’s behavior, so he punches him in the face.” The independent variable in the study was the transgression that they saw. In order to mitigate any order effects that may be present, participants were either shown John's name or Robert's name first in every dependent measure. Additionally, preceding each dependent measure was a reminder about what Robert and John had done. The data was organized so that lower numbers represent a rating towards the racist factory manager, and higher numbers represent a rating towards the violent factory manager.

All dependent measures were randomized so to eliminate any possibility of an ordering effect. Questions that aimed to amass a general rating of an emotion would be grouped together, but in random order. After reading the scenarios participants responded to several measures all on a 7-point Likert scale that was structured to measure a comparison between the violent (John) and Racist (Robert) person, (e.g., who is more xxx....). To assess act evaluations, participants responded to whose action they thought was more immoral, who should be punished more severely, and who deserves more blame. To assess character evaluations, participants responded to who was a worse person, who was more trustworthy (reverse scored), and who had better moral character.

Participants were also asked to evaluate words related to disgust (sickened, repulsed, disgust) and anger (infuriated, outrage, anger), and were shown two sets of female faces

(Appendix A) displaying both emotions taken from the Montreal Set of Facial Displays of Emotions (MSFDE); (Beaupré, Cheung, and Hess. 2000). Participants responded to the faces on both a continuous rating scale, and as a forced choice. On the continuous rating, participants were asked who they felt more of the emotion towards, Robert or John. On the forced choice rating, participants were asked which set of faces best expresses how they feel towards Robert and another question asked them to which face best described their feelings towards John.

In order to assess ratings of character in the scope of future consequences, participants were asked who they felt would be more likely to behave inappropriately again in the future, who is more likely to change "their" ways in going forward, and if they would change under pressure? To assess whether or not John or Robert would change under pressure, participants were shown three hypothetical scenarios:

> *Imagine that after the incident, all employees are required to take a class on appropriate behavior in the workplace. Whose behavior is more likely to improve because of the class?*
>
> *Imagine that the factory owner made John and Robert each talk to the coworker they were unhappy about, to try to work out their differences. Who is more likely to change their attitude toward the coworker because of this?*
>
> *Imagine that the factory owner reduced both John's and Robert's pay for a week. Who is more likely to "learn a lesson" and behave differently in the future because of this?*

To assess which transgressor would be more willing to discuss the possibility of reform, participants were asked who they would rather sitting down and reasoning with and asking them to explain themselves. Participants were also asked which transgressor they would be more willing to confront, and asked who they would more likely yell at, and argue with.

To assess participants' likelihood and willingness to promote social disapproval, participants were asked who they would be more likely to spread negative information about and getting other people to dislike. To assess participants' likelihood and willingness to personally avoid either transgressor, they were asked who they would refuse to talk to and deliberately ignore. These questions were rated on the same 7-point Likert scale and preceded with a preamble that informed participants that regardless of what they chose, they would not suffer any negative consequences from either John or Robert.

In Part I of the study, the act items, character items, emotion faces forced choice, emotion faces continuous ratings, emotion words items, and character future consequences were presented in separate blocks, in random order. Part II started with a brief cover story to explain how the observer in the story came to know about John/Robert's actions.

> *Imagine that you work as a security guard at this factory. You are watching and listening to the security camera footage and you happen to notice both of these incidents, the one with John and the one with Robert. You decide to notify the factory owner about what happened.*

The action items and change under pressure items were then presented in separate blocks, in random order. Within all blocks, the order of the items was randomized.

Participants also completed the Revised Disgust Scale (DS-R) which is a self-report scale that assesses individual differences in disgust sensitivity. The scale consists of items which ask the participant to indicate how strongly a statement matches their own personal disgust sensitivity, i.e. "It would bother me tremendously to touch a dead body". The scale also consists of items that ask the participant to indicate how disgusting they believe a certain scenario is, i.e. "You see a man with his intestines exposed after an accident".

Lastly, participants completed an attention check explained some of the logic behind decision-making research and told participants that if they were paying attention to type the word "apple". The following question would ask them to write their initials, if they had read the previous question carefully, they would have seen that they were instructed to *not* write their initials. Afterwards, participants indicated whether or not they had any questions about the study, if they were familiar with the materials, their age, race, ethnicity, and political orientation.

Results

All items were measured such that lower numbers indicate more of that emotion or attribute towards the racist factory manager, conversely, higher numbers indicate more of that emotion or attribute toward the violent factory manager.

Act and Character

The three ratings for character and act (α =.75) judgments formed a reliable scale. Character and act ratings were separately averaged together with their respective items. The hypothesis that the racist factory manager should have worse character than the violent factory manager is evidenced by a paired t-test which shows that the ratings for character (M = 4.24, SD = .65) were significantly different for ratings of act (M = 4.68, SD = 1.52), t(56) = -2.07, p <.05. Follow up one-sample t-tests against the midpoint of the scale (4) showed the means in the unpredicted direction with worse character ratings for the violent manager, t(56) = 2.75, p <.01, and worse act ratings for the violent manager, t(56) = 3.41, p <.01. It is possible that the racist manger did not elicit the intended effect of poor character.

Disgust and Anger

The facial ratings for disgust and the verbal ratings for disgust formed a reliable scale (α =.83). Similarly, the facial ratings for anger and the verbal ratings for anger formed a somewhat reliable scale (α = .56). However, the verbal ratings of disgust and anger were highly correlated at (r = .79) and the facial ratings of disgust and anger were negatively correlated at (r = -.49), so the facial ratings will be used as the primary method of emotion comparison. A paired samples t-test showed that ratings for anger (M = 4.66, SD = 2.12) were significantly different than ratings for disgust (M = 2.84, SD = 1.98), t(56), = 3.88, p <.01 indicating that the violent manager and the racist manager evoked different ratings of anger and disgust. Follow up one-sample t-tests against the midpoint of the scale (4) showed trends in the predicted direction, higher disgust for the racist manager compared to the violent manager, t(56) = -4.41, p <.01 and higher anger for the violent manager compared to the racist manager, t(56) = 2.37, p<.05.

Using the forced choice paradigm, the hypothesis that participants would choose the faces depicting anger for the violent manager and would choose the disgusted faces for the racist manager was supported by a chi-square test of independence, χ^2 = 17.26, p <.01.

Changing Own Ways

The likelihood for the factory managers changing their own ways was operationalized by two measures: who would be more likely to behave inappropriately again in the future and?. These scores were averaged together and compared to a midpoint (4) of the scale (M=4.30, SD = 1.41). The hypothesis that participants should rate the violent factory manager less likely to commit the transgression again and more likely to change their ways going forward compared to the racist factory manager was not supported as evidenced by a one-sample t-test of the ratings against the midpoint of the scale (4), t(56) = -.81, p = .42. The average for these two measures

was expected to be much higher than it turned out to be. The rationale for this was based on previous work that showed that anger was a flexible emotion, and therefore subject to mutability.

Change Under Pressure

The likelihood for the factory managers ability or willingness to change under pressure was operationalized by three measures: Whose behavior is more likely to improve because of the class, who is more likely to change their attitude toward the coworker, and who is more likely to "learn a lesson" and behave differently in the future? These dimensions were averaged together and compared to the midpoint (4) of the scale (M=4.76, SD=1.42). The hypothesis that the violent factory manager should be rated as more likely to change because of pressure was supported by a one-sample t-test, $t(56) = 4.06$, $p < .01$. The measures for change under pressure were again based on the idea that ratings of anger have been shown to be flexible given contextual information.

Action Tendency: Reason

The likelihood for the participants to interact with the factory managers was operationalized on two dimensions: who would they rather sit down and reason with and ask them to explain themselves, These dimensions were averaged together and compared to the midpoint (4) of the scale (M=4.56, SD=1.37). The hypothesis that participants should report more willingness to speak to the violent factory manager compared to the racist manager was supported as evidenced by a one-sample t-test, $t(56) = 3.09$, $p < .01$. This result seems to suggest that participants may have felt more comfortable speaking with the violent manager than compared to the racist manager.

Action Tendency: Confront

The likelihood for the participants to interact with the factory managers was operationalized on two dimensions: who they would more likely yell at and argue with. These dimensions were averaged together and compared to the midpoint (4) of the scale. (M=4.22, SD=1.95). The hypothesis that participants should report more approach oriented behaviors towards the violent factory manager compared to the racist factory manager was not supported as evidenced by a one-sample t-test, $t(56) = .47$, $p > .05$. We had expected that participants would be angrier with the violent factory manager and therefore more likely to engage in directly aggressive acts towards him, violent acts may result from a lapse in judgment or a failure to regulate temper which would lead to perceptions of recklessness.

Action Tendency: Withdraw

The likelihood for participants to adopt indirect aggression behaviors was operationalized on two dimensions: who would they be more likely to spread negative information, and would they try and get other people to dislike. These dimensions were averaged together and compared to the midpoint (4) of the scale (M=3.66, SD=1.59). The hypothesis that participants should report more withdrawal-oriented behaviors towards the racist factory manager compared to the violent factory manager was not supported as evidenced by a one-sample t-test, $t(56) = -1.59$, $p = .12$. Behavior of indirect aggression towards the racist factory manager was based on the research that showed that creating a negative image for someone with poor character was a likely outcome, although purely conjecture, the means were moving in the expected direction.

Action Tendency: Avoid

The likelihood for participants to socially avoid the transgressors was operationalized on two dimensions: who would they refuse to talk to and who would they deliberately ignore. These dimensions were averaged together and compared to the midpoint (4) of the scale (M=3.68, SD=1.72). The hypothesis that participants should report more ratings in the predicted direction of being more likely to avoid the racist manager was not supported as evidenced by a one-sample t-test, $t(56) = -1.39$, $p = .17$. The avoidance paradigm was thought to be linked to the racist manager with whom participants should feel the most disgust towards, however, it does not appear that the effect was strong enough.

In order to assess the relationship between act judgments and emotions, act judgments were classified as the dependent variable and both anger and disgust served as the independent variables. It was hypothesized that anger ratings and disgust ratings should be correlated the same with act ratings. Anger ratings, ($ß = .13$, $p>.05$) and disgust ratings, ($ß = .19$, $p>.05$) were not significantly related to act ratings. A t-test of the difference between dependent betas indicated that the difference in slopes was not significant, $t(54) = -.33$,$p >.05$.

In order to assess the relationship between social disapproval, avoidance and emotions, the items for social disapproval and avoidance the following items were averaged together: who would they refuse to talk to and who would they deliberately ignore, who would they be more likely to spread negative information, and would they try and get other people to dislike. This created a rejection/avoidance index. The hypothesis that disgust ratings will be more highly correlated to this index compared to anger ratings is evidenced by a multiple regression in which anger ratings ($ß = .12$, $p > .01$) and disgust ratings ($ß = .31$, $p < .01$) was at least partially

significant. A t-test of the difference between dependent betas indicated that the difference between slopes was not significant, $t(54) = -1.30$, $p > .05$.

In order to assess the relationship between likelihood of confrontation or direct aggression, the items for the measure of confrontation were treated as the dependent variable and the emotions of anger and disgust were treated as the independent variable. The hypothesis that direct aggression tendencies will be more correlated with anger to a greater extent compared to disgust is evidenced by a multiple regression in which anger ratings (ß = 19, $p > .05$) and disgust ratings (ß = .26, $p > .05$) and was not supported. A t-test of the difference between dependent betas indicated that the difference between slopes was not significant, $t(54) = -.41$, $p > .05$.

In order to assess the relationship between the likelihood of reform possibility on emotions, the items for reform were treated as the dependent variable and the emotions of anger and disgust were treated as the independent variables. The hypothesis that reform tendencies will be more correlated with anger compared to disgust is evidenced by a multiple regression in which anger ratings (ß = .005, $p > .05$) and disgust ratings (ß = -.06, $p > .05$) and was not supported. A t-test of the difference between dependent betas indicated that the difference between slopes was not significant, $t(54) = .41$, $p > .05$.

Discussion

The results show support for the replication of Uhlmann, Zhu, and Diermeier (2014) in which participants showed significantly different ratings for act judgments and character judgments. However, this difference attributes worse ratings of character judgments towards the violent factory manager in *addition* to worse act ratings. The reason for this shift in direction is

unclear. The research has a steady track of showing that character ratings are more apt when the character of an individual is apparent and poor. This furthers the literature on the one prediction that was in the right direction, participants attributed more blame, punishment, and immorality to the violent factory manager compared to the racist factory manager. The expected outcome was to see worse ratings for character items towards the racist manager, it could be that his action (or lack thereof) was not salient enough to elicit the responses.

The differentiation between anger and disgust was also supported with the distinction of anger ratings being directed towards the violent factory manager, while disgust ratings were directed toward the racist factory manager. These findings help support the notion that the qualities of an individual may lead to more disgust being felt, and the actions of an individual may lead to more anger being felt. The ideal finding would be a way to show that character maps onto disgust and onto the racist factory manager, conversely, showing that anger and act judgments map onto the violent factory manager.

Results showed that participants were more likely to try and reason with the violent manager compared to the racist manager. One possible interpretation of this is that participants may have felt that trying to reason with the racist manager may have been pointless, and they may have been supporting the idea that anger is a flexible emotion. One possible addition to this finding would be to have added a behavioral measure to see if the action tendency would be visible in participants reaction.

One other hypothesis supported by this research was the synthesis of the items assessing social disapproval and avoidance. The avoidance and rejection index created from the averages of the items seems to suggest that the correlation between these indirect aggressive acts is higher

for disgust ratings compared to anger ratings. The findings that there were no significant differences between the dependent betas may reduce the weight of the first finding, however, there may be a better chance of finding a relationship if more structure is to find the link between withdrawal behavior and poor character.

An unexpected finding was that there seemed to be no link between social avoidance and a racist character. This was surprising because past research has shown that there is in fact a tendency to avoid that which we find disgusting or indicative of poor character. One possible way to extract this finding further could be to compare the ratings of disgust and character with the social avoidance measures. It could also be that the racist factory manager was not salient enough to elicit such a reaction.

Limitations

The null findings of our other hypotheses may be due to a number of factors. Our participants were recruited through a university participant pool; however, they were required to complete the measures online. The recruitment pool allows for measures to be taken to have participants pass a pre-test, assessing native language, age, and other attributes. We experienced a substantial amount of participant attrition which very well may be a reason some of our hypotheses were not significant. The attrition we experienced was mainly due to participants failing our age check, if the study was conducted in a laboratory or on another recruiting service such as Amazon Mechanical Turk, we could have more control over who was taking our study. The other major source of attrition was the attention check at the end of the survey. Participants had seen all of the dependent measures and were given an attention to check to see if they were

engrossed in the study, or if they were just clicking any radio button in order to advance in the survey. However, there was no reliability test performed to see excluding those who failed the attention check were actually providing data that was unusable. In a review on the validity of attention checks it was suggested that while participants who fail the checks may not be paying attention at that very moment, it may not be synonymous with saying that their data is 'bad' (Waites and Ponder, 2016). Furthermore, if the participants were confused by the attention check catching them off guard, what is actually being measured? Another possibility of why there was so much attrition due to the attention checks may be the fact that participant pools, on average, perform rather poorly on the attention checks. Over three studies Huaser and Shwarz (2016) demonstrated that participants from Amazon Mechanical Turk performed significantly better than participants in a subject pool. The rationale is that the Mechanical Turk workers are incentivized to pay attention, whereas, course credit may not be enough to curb a wandering daydream. In the end, we did not reach our desired sample size in order to achieve our desired effect size. If more data was collected, we may be able to see some of the effects as more apparent.

Future Directions

The results of the present study have partially replicated the effects found that link act judgments as being more directed towards the act of an individual (reference). However, the idea of harm is still linked to the perception of the anger. If the factory manager had simply called the co-worker a few bad words that weren't pejorative towards any race or creed, would the perception be the same? Does harm exist on a continuum in which physical, recoverable injuries are linked with anger, and brutal, life-threatening assaults take on another form? John will still

punch his coworker in the face, however, what if Robert strapped the coworker to a table and skinned him alive?

Conclusion

The present study found evidence for the anger-disgust differences, indicating there is a distinction between the two emotions. Evidence was also found for the willingness for participants to attempt to reason with a violent transgressor more than a racist one. Lastly, evidence was provided for the likelihood of social avoidance being linked to the racist manager compared to the violent factory manager.

It is difficult to say from these results whether or not the participants evaluated the act and actor differently. Participants were certainly able to decide which manager they were angrier with, and which manager they were more disgusted with. However, the lack of evidence for the act and character differences brings into question whether or not there is a marked difference between the characterization of both managers.

Perhaps it is the language of the vignettes that help guide the participants in making their decisions. The racist manager uttered a slur out of earshot. The participants knew about it, but no one else did. What if there had been racist graffiti on a coworkers locker? It might then be the case that there would be an interaction involved which may prompt participants to make more of a decision regarding the character of someone who would do that.

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Appendix A

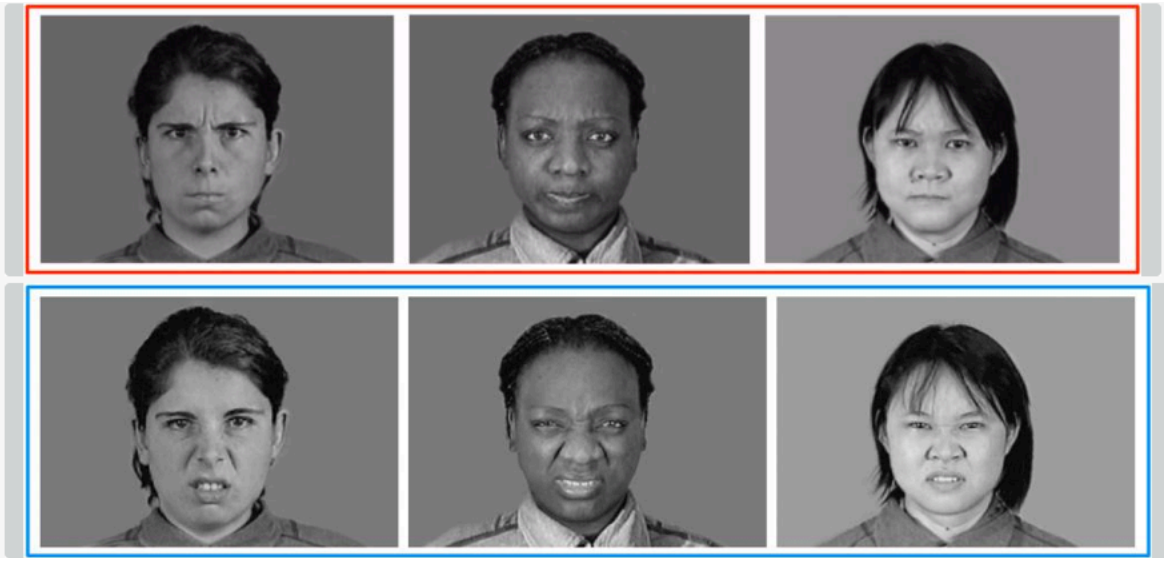

Figure 1: Faces taken from MSFDE, top row portrays anger, bottom row portrays disgust.