

RUNNING HEAD: PERSON-CENTERED MORALITY

Morality is Personal

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**Abstract**

What is the purpose of moral judgment? We argue that the basic goal of moral cognition is often not to praise or condemn specific actions, but rather to try to understand other people's dispositional moral character via their actions, and that incorporating lay virtue ethics into psychological theory helps to paint a more complete picture of people's moral psychology.

In 2007, the Atlanta Falcons' star quarterback Michael Vick was exposed for bankrolling a dog-fighting ring. Details about the fights were grim; dogs that proved insufficiently violent in test fights, for example, were brutally hanged or drowned. Vick was criminally prosecuted and sentenced to 23 months in prison, even though prosecutors had recommended a maximum sentence of only 18 months (McCann, 2007). He also lost his \$130 million contract with the Falcons, who ruled out his ever returning to the team, and team owner Arthur Blank told reporters he felt personally betrayed (King, 2007).

What underlies the public outrage over Vick's actions, and the Falcons' finality in cutting their ties to him? Although few observers would argue that killing a pit bull is more morally blameworthy than killing a human being, Vick's behavior suggests a callous and sadistic personal character that even premeditated murder might not. While gratuitous animal cruelty may not rise to the level of murder in American jurisprudence, in everyday moral psychology it points to severe deficits in empathy and moral character.

In the present chapter, we argue that the goal of moral cognition is often not to praise or condemn specific actions, but rather to try to understand other people's moral character *via* their actions (Pizarro & Tannenbaum, 2011; Uhlmann, Pizarro, & Diermeier, 2015). Human beings often act as intuitive virtue theorists who view behaviors as signals of underlying moral traits such as trustworthiness and compassion. In making this argument, we first briefly review historical approaches to the philosophy and psychology of ethics, before introducing the concept of person-centered morality. We then explore two lines of empirical evidence supporting our argument that moral judgment is often about evaluating people, not acts: first, character assessments are automatic, yet nuanced, and serve an important functional purpose. Second, character information can outweigh information about objective harm, and judgments of

character often diverge from evaluations of acts. Next, we present evidence that results supporting the person-centered view of morality are highly replicable. To close, we argue that recognizing that human beings have a preoccupation with moral virtues leads to the insight that our moral judgments can be both rational and intuitive, in meaningful senses.

### **Historical Perspectives on Morality**

Since the Enlightenment, moral philosophy has been dominated by two opposing perspectives on ethics. On one side stand consequentialist philosophers, who view the outcomes resulting from an action as the only meaningful criterion for evaluating its morality or immorality. The most prominent consequentialist theory is utilitarianism, which judges as morally right the action that maximizes good outcomes across all morally relevant beings (Bentham, 1823/1970; Mill, 1861/1998; Smart & Williams, 1973). Standing in opposition to consequentialist theories of ethics are deontological theories, which evaluate the rightness or wrongness of an action according to whether it adheres to a moral rule or duty (Kant, 1785). There are several forms of deontology, some of which view the consequences of an act as one morally important feature among many, and some of which emphasize strict adherence to moral rules, regardless of the consequences (see Bartels, 2008; Kagan, 1998), but all of which deny that maximizing good outcomes, by any means necessary, is the only meaningful ethical principle.

Moral psychologists have inherited this preoccupation with deontological and utilitarian approaches to ethics from their philosophically-minded counterparts. Decision researchers have commonly treated utilitarian theory as normatively correct and proceeded to document systematic departures from this ethical standard (Baron, 1994; 2008, Sunstein, 2005). Similarly, Greene and colleagues (Greene, Morelli, Lowenberg, Nystrom, & Cohen, 2008; Greene, Sommerville, Nystrom, Darley, & Cohen, 2001) have advanced a dual-process model of moral

judgment, in which automatic, System 1 processes are said to produce deontological moral judgments, and deliberative, System 2 processes can sometimes override these System 1 processes and produce utilitarian judgments. In response to this line of work, some researchers have argued that deliberate reasoning is associated with *neither* deontological nor utilitarian judgment (Royzman, Landy, & Leeman, 2015), and others have suggested that, rather than resulting from System 2 overruling System 1, utilitarian judgments are a product of dispositional thinking styles (Baron, Scott, Fincher, & Metz, 2015). Still others have empirically disputed the presumed optimality of utilitarian judgments (Bartels & Pizarro, 2011).

Despite the myriad theoretical and empirical disputes, scholarship on deontology and consequentialism is united by one commonality: it takes discrete actions to be of primary concern in moral judgment. That is, both deontological and consequentialist ethical theories are focused on what makes particular actions right or wrong, and empirical studies of deontological and utilitarian judgment are focused on when and why people judge particular actions to be permissible or impermissible. There is, however, a “third voice” in ethical philosophy that takes a different approach: *virtue ethics* places the focus on the character of moral actors. In other words, the driving question in virtue ethics is not “how do I decide what to do?”, but rather “how can I be a good person?” Virtue ethics may actually be the oldest philosophical approach to normative ethics (Aristotle, 4<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.E./1998), though it has only reemerged as a prominent alternative to deontology and utilitarianism comparatively recently (Anscombe, 1958).

### **Person-Centered Morality**

Just as normative theories of virtue ethics contend that people’s chief moral concern ought to be with cultivating moral virtues, we argue that, descriptively, moral cognition is often

more concerned with evaluating others' character than the rightness or wrongness of their actions, a view that we call Person-Centered Morality (PCM; Pizarro & Tannenbaum, 2011; Uhlmann et al., 2015). Rather than a stand-alone model in its own right, PCM is more of a needed corrective to descriptive theories that have focused on judgments of acts. We believe that a complete theory of moral cognition cannot neglect characterological evaluations of people.

Why would moral judgment be oriented toward character assessments, rather than praise and condemnation for particular actions? We see a functionalist reason why moral judgment so often focuses on the person. Many researchers have argued that it is vitally important to be able to predict one's likely intentions toward us – will this person be benevolent or malevolent, trustworthy or treacherous? (e.g., Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Cottrell, Neuberg, & Li, 2007; Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2008; Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2007; Pizarro & Tannenbaum, 2011; Wojciszke, Bazinska, & Jaworski, 1998; Wojciszke, Dowhyluk, & Jaworski, 1998). We agree; indeed, this seems to us to be the most important piece of information we can know about another person with whom we may interact (Goodwin, 2015; Goodwin, Piazza, & Rozin, 2014), and it is a person's moral character that should be informative about their good or bad intentions (Landy, Piazza, & Goodwin, 2016). Consistent with this perspective, judgments of character are largely determined by information about a person's intentions, rather than other considerations, such as the outcomes they have caused (Martin & Cushman, 2015, 2016). Furthermore, information about a person's moral character has been found to dominate in impression formation – Goodwin et al. (2015), using correlational, experimental, and archival research designs, demonstrated that overall impressions of both real and hypothetical targets are best predicted by their morality across a wide range of contexts. Perhaps their most striking result is that impressions of real individuals based on their obituaries were best predicted by the morality

information they conveyed, even though the obituaries contained more information about their achievements and ability, overall. Participants learned more about the competence and ability of the deceased individuals, but primarily attended to their morality when forming opinions of them.

In fact, moral character is so fundamentally important in social evaluation that good character may be among the only unambiguously positive attributes a person can possess. This point is illustrated by a study in which participants expressed preferences for the presence or absence of trait characteristics in others. When they considered an acquaintance who had a reputation for being competent, sociable, incompetent, or unsociable, they always preferred this person to be moral, rather than immoral, and they preferred moral acquaintances to be sociable and competent. However, they preferred immoral acquaintances to be unsociable and incompetent (Landy et al., 2016; see also Peeters, 1992; Wojciszke, Bazinska et al., 1998). We argue that typically positive attributes such as intelligence and friendliness are considered negative and undesirable in the wicked, because they make it more likely that such people can successfully carry out their ill intentions toward us. People even seem to consider understanding the “intentions” of non-human animals to be of great importance. While it seems unlikely that we make full-blown judgments of moral character for animals, people readily make attributions about an animal’s dispositional harmfulness, which contribute to beliefs about whether the animal is worthy of moral protection (Piazza, Landy, & Goodwin, 2014).

From this functionalist perspective, discrete moral and immoral acts are informative of another’s likely future intentions insofar as they provide information about that person’s underlying character. Or, as Helzer and Critcher (2015) phrase it, discrete acts are “outputs” that respond to situational “inputs” and provide information about the “moral cognitive machinery” a

person possesses. To possess sound moral cognitive machinery is precisely to possess good moral character, which they define as those personality traits most necessary for cooperative social relationships, particularly traits relating to how one treats other people.

Given their functional importance, we would expect assessments of character to come naturally to people. Indeed, this is the case. Incredibly, infants as young as six months old show a preference for a “helper” character who aided another character in reaching a goal over a “hinderer” character, who prevented them from reaching the goal (Hamlin, Wynn, & Bloom, 2007). Moreover, judgments of trustworthiness and aggression can be made by adults after as little as 100 milliseconds of exposure to a human face, and these judgments are highly correlated with analogous judgments made with no time constraints (Willis & Todorov, 2006). This result is also supported by neurological evidence: amygdala activation in response to faces correlates with the presence of features that are thought to indicate dishonesty, even when the task being completed does not require one to assess the target’s character (Engell, Haxby, & Todorov, 2007). This suggests that we automatically assess trustworthiness in others, even with only minimal information, and even when we are not consciously motivated to do so.

Of course, we do not evaluate a person’s character solely on the basis of their facial features; we typically rely on behavior to inform our judgments, and in such cases, assessments of character can be quite nuanced, responding to a variety of behavioral features. One widely studied feature has been called “diagnosticity” (Skowronski & Carlston, 1989). Immoral behaviors are seen as more diagnostic of character than moral behaviors, because, by definition, moral people rarely engage in immoral behaviors, but immoral people sometimes strategically engage in moral behaviors. Thus, moral behaviors are often not particularly informative as to underlying character, whereas immoral behaviors are highly diagnostic (see also Reeder &

Brewer, 1979). Further, even the *same* action can seem like a better or worse indicator of moral character, depending on how it is performed. For instance, when faced with an opportunity to do something immoral, an actor who immediately gives in to temptation is seen as having worse character than an actor who does so only after deliberation. Conversely, an actor who immediately decides to do the right thing is seen as having better character than an actor who deliberates first. Faster decisions indicate less internal conflict about what to do, and therefore more extreme (good or bad) character (Critcher, Inbar, & Pizarro, 2013).

It should be obvious by now that inferences about character are a frequent part of social and moral cognition. But what exactly do these inferences consist of? That is, what trait attributes do people see as relevant to assessments of character, or, phrased differently, what are the characteristics of laypeople's conception of "good character?" Several attempts have been made to answer this question, with somewhat disparate results, but aggregating across them, trustworthiness and compassion seem to be viable candidates for "core" elements of moral character.<sup>1</sup> Walker and Hennig (2004) identified three types of moral exemplar: just, caring, and brave, and found that traits ascribed to each varied considerably. However, those traits ascribed to all three were largely related to honesty and integrity (e.g., truthful, honest) and to compassion

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<sup>1</sup> Insofar as trustworthiness can be seen as the likelihood that one will keep one's promises and will not cheat others, these two core elements of character bear resemblances to Kohlberg's (1969) ethics of justice and Gilligan's (1982) ethics of care, as well as Turiel's (1983) definition of the moral domain, which he argues involves "justice, rights, and welfare" (p. 3). All of these theories of morality are fundamentally act-centered, but their convergence with the study of character speaks to our point that PCM must be a part of any integrated theory of moral cognition. Haidt and Graham (2007; Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009) argue for additional, widely important virtues or "moral foundations," including respect for and obedience to authority, loyalty to one's in-group, and bodily and sexual purity. However, across cultures and subcultures, only virtues relating to fairness (which includes honesty and integrity) and caring for others are endorsed universally. Therefore, we see our assertion that trustworthiness and compassion are core elements of moral character as largely consistent with their work.

toward others (e.g., helpful, empathic). Similarly, Walker and Pitts (1998) used hierarchical cluster analysis to organize traits ascribed to a moral person. They found that traits related to being caring and honest clustered together, and that other elements of trustworthiness (integrity, dependability) formed their own clusters. Other clusters related to being principled, loyal, fair, and confident. Lapsley and Lasky (2001) elicited traits that participants thought were aspects of “good character”, then had a separate sample rate how characteristic each trait was of a person with good character. The majority of the traits rated as most characteristic related to trustworthiness (e.g., sincere, honest) or compassion (e.g., understanding, kind), though some were not closely related to these virtues (e.g., loyal, fair). Using a similar procedure, Aquino and Reed (2002) had participants generate traits that are characteristic of a moral person. Most of the traits produced related to trustworthiness or compassion. Lastly, Piazza, Goodwin, Rozin, and Royzman (2014) introduced a conceptual distinction between “core goodness traits” that should be desirable in anyone, and “value commitment traits” (e.g., committed, hardworking) that contribute to good character in good or neutral people, but make the character of bad people (e.g., a “dedicated Nazi”) even worse. Half of the core goodness traits related to trustworthiness (e.g., honest, trustworthy) or compassion (e.g., kind, charitable), though others did not (e.g., just, humble).<sup>2</sup> Across all of these studies, trustworthiness and compassion emerge as central elements of good character. Other traits appear as well, but none so often and so consistently. We take this as evidence that people think of the “good person” as someone who can be trusted and who will treat others kindly.

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<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that the purpose of this study was to illustrate the distinction between core goodness and value commitment traits and to explore the importance of this distinction in impression formation, not to produce a complete catalog of all traits of each type. We suspect that a complete list of core goodness virtues would be dominated by trustworthiness and compassion traits.

Evaluations of character are a fundamental part of social cognition. They are functionally important and automatic, though they can also respond to subtle aspects of behaviors in quite nuanced ways. The person-centered approach to moral judgment also contributes unique and testable predictions (Pizarro & Tannenbaum, 2011; Uhlmann et al., 2015). For instance, acts that provide clear signals of poor moral character elicit moral condemnation completely out of proportion to the objective harm that they cause (Pizarro, Tannenbaum, & Uhlmann, 2012). Furthermore, striking dissociations can emerge between moral evaluations of an act and the person who performs the act. Such *act-person dissociations* suggest that *neither type of judgment can be subsumed into the other*. That is, judgments of character cannot merely be aggregations of act judgments, and judgments of acts cannot merely be inputs into character judgments. These findings provide some of the strongest available evidence that moral virtues are necessary to account for the full scope of human moral cognition.

### **Some Anecdotes, and Some Evidence**

A perfect example of person-centered moral judgment is public outrage over frivolous executive perks. Why do such perks elicit widespread condemnation, notwithstanding the fact that they may waste relatively few organizational resources and do little concrete harm? Merrill Lynch CEO John Thain, for instance, provoked outrage when – in the midst of laying off thousands of employees – he spent lavishly redecorating his personal office. Extravagances included \$28,000 curtains, an \$87,000 rug, and a \$35,000 toilet. After the spending was reported in the media, Thain promptly lost his position as CEO. Interestingly, Thain's compensation of over \$80 million a year elicited no such vitriol (Gasparino, 2009). In cases like this, the issue seems not to be the objective degree of waste, but rather what these frivolous expenses say about the executives as people.

Empirical support for this idea comes from Tannenbaum, Uhlmann, and Diermeier, (2011, Study 2), who asked their participants which of two candidates they would hire as CEO of a manufacturing company. The candidates were comparable in their qualifications, and differed only in their requested compensation. One candidate requested a salary of \$2 million, while the other requested a salary of \$1 million, plus an additional benefit that would cost \$40,000. In one condition, this benefit was a cash signing bonus, and participants quite reasonably preferred the low-salary candidate. However, in another condition, the requested benefit was a marble table for the CEO's office, and in yet another, it was a marble table with the candidate's portrait carved into it. In both of these conditions, participants preferred to hire the candidate who requested \$2 million in salary over the candidate who requested \$1 million and the perk. Participants indicated that the request for the table indicated poor character (specifically, low integrity), and that the candidate who requested it would make less sound business decisions than the candidate who requested the higher salary. Thus, when a job candidate requested a frivolous, self-indulgent perk, participants inferred poor moral character, and this inference led to their rejecting the candidate, paralleling the public outrage directed at John Thain and his \$35,000 toilet.

Interestingly, this result seems to stem from the perceived informational value of the requested perk. Participants did not just see the table-requester as having worse character than the high-salary-requester, they felt that they *knew more* about his underlying moral character. A more direct demonstration that objectively less harmful acts can be seen as more informative of poor character comes from a study about two unfriendly managers, a "misanthropic" manager who was rude to all of his employees to a "bigoted" manager who was rude only to his Black employees (Uhlmann, Tannenbaum, Zhu, & Diermeier, 2009). Though he harmed fewer people,

participants strongly preferred the misanthropic manager to the bigoted manager and saw the bigot's behavior as more informative about his character than the misanthrope's. Another study on this topic examined the informational value regarding character provided by tipping behavior (Uhlmann, Tannenbaum, & Diermeier, 2010). Participants considered a restaurant patron who tipped \$15 in pennies to be a worse person than a patron who tipped \$14 in bills, despite being materially more generous, and this effect was mediated by the perceived informational value of his act, rather than the immorality of the act itself. All of this research converges on the conclusion that an act that does objectively less harm (or more good) can nonetheless signal worse moral character.

Let us now return to the sordid tale of Michael Vick recounted earlier. We argued that the cruelty he enacted upon animals led to inferences of severe character deficits, more so than some harmful actions directed at humans may have. Evidence for this assertion comes from studies involving two jilted lovers (Tannenbaum et al., 2011, Studies 1a and 1b). Participants read about two men who learned that their girlfriends were cheating on them. Both men flew into a rage; one beat up his unfaithful girlfriend, the other beat up her cat. Participants judged the former action to be more immoral, but judged the cat-beater as having worse character (specifically, as having less empathy) than his woman-beating counterpart. This is an example of an act-person dissociation.

A similar study compared judgments of another pair unlikable managers. The "violent" manager expressed his displeasure at a coworker by punching him in the face, whereas the "racist" manager did so by muttering a racial slur about the coworker to himself (Uhlmann, Zhu, & Diermeier, 2014). The violent manager's action was seen as more immoral, probably due to the obvious physical harm that it caused. Yet, the racist manager was seen as having worse

moral character, again showing a dissociation between judgments of the immorality of acts and the character of actors.

Both of these studies concerned inferences of character from actions that, though less immoral than focal comparisons, are still clearly morally negative (i.e., animal cruelty and racial epithets). However, there may be some circumstances in which even a morally *praiseworthy* act can be indicative of bad moral character. In an initial test of this idea, participants read about two target persons: a medical research assistant, whose duties involved inducing tumors in mice and then administering painful injections of experimental cancer drugs, and a pet store assistant, whose job involved giving gerbils a grooming shampoo and then tying bows on them. Even though the medical research assistant's acts were seen as more praiseworthy than those of the pet store assistant, she was simultaneously perceived as more coldhearted and aggressive (Uhlmann, Tannenbaum, & Diermeier, 2009). Strikingly, these results were found even among participants who strongly supported animal testing. This demonstrates a pattern of dissociation complementary to that of the cat-beater and racial slur studies: an act can be objectively praiseworthy, yet still signal poor character.

This finding has since been replicated in the context of utilitarian dilemmas. In one study, participants read about a group of people who were stranded on a sinking life raft, but could throw one injured passenger overboard to save everyone else (Uhlmann, Zhu, & Tannenbaum, 2013). When they elected to do this, their action was rated as more morally right than when they elected not to. Yet, the passengers who sacrificed one life to save many were seen as having worse moral character than the passengers who did not. In two follow-up studies, participants read about a hospital administrator who had to choose between funding an expensive surgical procedure to save one sick boy, or purchasing a new piece of hospital equipment that

would save 500 lives in the future. As in the “life raft” study, the administrator who chose to save more people by sacrificing one was seen as having done the morally right thing, but as having worse moral character. Also, as in the “frivolous perk” study discussed above, these results were attributable to the informational value ascribed to the person’s action. The utilitarian administrator’s choice to buy the new equipment was seen as diagnostic of a lack of empathy, which mediated the effect of his decision on overall assessments of his character. Interestingly, though, he was also seen as a better leader, for having made the more pragmatic choice. In some cases, it seems, doing the right thing requires a bad person.

We have reviewed evidence supporting two novel hypotheses derived from PCM. First, information about an actor’s character can outweigh information about objective harm in social judgments. Furthermore, judgments of the morality of acts can diverge from judgments of an actor’s character, suggesting that neither type of judgment can fully explain the other, and both are important aspects of moral cognition. Character matters.

### **Person-Centered Morality is Robust and Replicable**

The field of psychology (and science more broadly) currently finds itself in the midst of a crisis of confidence in the replicability of our findings (Pashler & Wagenmakers, 2012; Nosek, Spies, & Motyl, 2012), with many high-profile failures of replication emerging recently (e.g., Klein et al., 2014; Open Science Collaboration, in press). One approach to addressing this concern is to replicate research findings in independent laboratories *before*, rather than after, they are published. In a large scale Pre-Publication Independent Replication (PPIR) project, Schweinsberg et al. (in press) attempted to replicate ten unpublished moral judgment effects, originally found by Uhlmann and his colleagues, at 25 partner universities. The ten effects

included six explicitly testing predictions derived from PCM, many of which we have discussed in the present chapter.

The replication effect sizes for these six effects were all statistically significant in the expected direction, although the bad tipper effect described earlier only replicated in U.S. samples. Perhaps the most theoretically crucial effect was the act-person dissociation such that carrying out medical tests on animals was seen as a praiseworthy act but also led to negative character inferences. In contrast, two out of four original effects that involved topics *other than* person-centered moral judgments entirely failed to replicate. The overall results of the PPIR suggest that PCM is reliable and replicable. Given this, we now consider how the psychological importance of moral virtues can best be integrated into prevailing models of moral judgment.

### **Moral Judgment Can Be Both Intuitive and Rational**

Modern moral psychology is divided over the root of moral judgments. Some researchers (Landy & Royzman, forthcoming; Royzman, Landy, & Goodwin, 2014) support variants of traditional rationalist models (e.g., Turiel, 1983) that emphasize the role of reasoning and cognitive deliberation in producing moral judgments. Many others claim instead that moral judgments are the result of rapid, automatic evaluations, often called intuitions (Haidt, 2001; 2007). We argue that moral judgment can be both rational and intuitive<sup>3</sup> in important senses, and that PCM can provide the bridge to unite these approaches.

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<sup>3</sup> The precise nature of these automatic intuitions is not relevant here, and PCM does not speak to this issue. They could be affective evaluations (Haidt, 2001; Haidt & Joseph, 2004), cognitive computations that have been automatized and can be run without conscious involvement under normal circumstances (Aarts & Custers, 2009; Kahneman & Klein, 2009; Stanovich, West, & Toplak, 2011), or some combination of both.

As we argued above, character judgments serve an important functional purpose. We think that this makes them, in an important sense, rational, in that they meet the fundamental need to understand others' likely intentions toward us. Importantly, participants themselves do not appear to view person-centered judgments as irrational. Research shows that when targets are judged simultaneously (joint evaluation), participants think more carefully and are less likely to make judgments they themselves consider unjustified (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Hsee, Loewenstein, Blount, & Bazerman, 1999; Pizarro & Uhlmann, 2005). In our empirical investigations, perceived informational value regarding character can outweigh objective harm in eliciting condemnation in both joint and separate evaluation (Tannenbaum et al., 2011; Uhlmann, Tannenbaum, Zhu et al., 2009; Zhu, Uhlmann, & Diermeier, 2014), and act-person dissociations readily emerge under conditions of either joint or separate evaluation (e.g., Tannenbaum et al., 2011; Uhlmann & Zhu, 2014; Uhlmann, Tannenbaum, & Diermeier, 2009; Uhlmann et al., 2013). Thus, PCM appears compatible with a subjective sense of making rational judgments.

We noted earlier that in addition to being functional, character judgments are often automatic – that is, they are intuitive. Haidt and colleagues have demonstrated the role of automatic intuitions in moral judgment in their widely-cited studies of “moral dumbfounding.” They show that people condemn harmless transgressions such as eating a dead dog or fornicating with a chicken carcass, but cannot provide explanations for their condemnation (Haidt, Bjorklund, & Murphy, 2011; Haidt, 2001; Haidt, Koller, & Dias, 1993; though see Royzman, Kim, & Leeman, 2015). These studies all examined evaluations of acts, however.

Applying the PCM perspective to the moral dumbfounding paradigm demonstrates our point that moral judgment can be both rational and intuitive. In another example of an act-person dissociation, participants rated harmless-but-offensive actions – copulating with a dead

chicken and eating a dead dog – as less morally wrong than theft, which directly causes harm. However, the chicken-lover and the dog-eater were seen as having worse moral character than the thief (Uhlmann & Zhu, 2014). Importantly, this characterological assessment seems rationally defensible – acts like masturbating into poultry have high informational value for judging character (Nelson, 2005; Nelson et al., 2010) because they are exceptionally statistically rare (Ditto & Jemmott, 1989; Fiske, 1980), they represent extreme deviations from normative behavior (Chakroff & Young, 2015), and there is almost no conceivable reason to commit them that is external to the person, making them low in attributional ambiguity (Snyder, Kleck, Strenta, & Mentzer, 1979; see also Gray & Keeney, 2015). Therefore, it is quite reasonable to draw strong character inferences from them. Indeed, when participants made character judgments, they were *less* morally dumbfounded when they were asked about offenses that are rare, deviant, and unambiguous, yet harmless, than when they were asked about prototypically harmful offenses (Uhlmann & Zhu, 2014, Study 3). Haidt and colleagues' participants were not able to articulate why a harmless act is wrong, but they probably could have roughly articulated why it indicates bad character.

Integrating these theoretical perspectives and relevant bodies of empirical evidence, we propose that the person-centered nature of moral cognition can unite rationalist and intuitionist perspectives on human morality. Moral judgment is rational and adaptive because social perceivers effectively exploit the informational value of social behaviors to draw reasonable inferences about the underlying vices and virtues of other agents. Moral judgment is intuitive because inferences about other people often must be made quickly and efficiently for reasons of basic survival. The ancient notion that morality is fundamentally concerned with human virtues

is supported by a growing body of empirical evidence, and has much to add to contemporary models of moral judgment.

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