Identification With All Humanity as a Moral Concept and Psychological Construct

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Abstract
Studies of those who rescued Jews during the Holocaust suggest that their most shared quality was a sense "of belonging to one human family" (Monroe, 1996, p. 205), caring deeply about human beings without regard for their race, religion, or other distinction. In this article, we first note the development of the concept of "one humanity" since the late 15th century, and then we summarize recent work with a new measure of that caring—the Identification With All Humanity Scale (IWAH). Research with the IWAH establishes that identification with all humanity is more than (a) an absence of prejudice and its sources and (b) the sum of positive qualities, such as dispositional empathy and principled moral reasoning. Many people appear to intuit that a mature moral person would identify with all humanity, even when they do not do so themselves. Finally, a brief discussion is offered of how identification with all humanity may develop or could be taught.

In July 1940, after the Nazis had conquered one half of Poland and the Soviets the other half, masses of refugee Jews crowded the gates of foreign embassies and consulates in Lithuania, pleading for protection. Although most diplomatic outposts, including the American embassy, turned them away, those who came to the one-man Japanese consulate in Kaunas were fortunate. Chiune Sugihara, the Japanese diplomat there, saw many "begging with tears in their eyes . . . They were so desperate that they went so far as to kiss my shoes" (quoted in Levine, 1996, p. 259). Throughout August, and contrary to his government's orders, Sugihara wrote thousands of visas for Jews to travel to Japan, often working 18 hours a day. He knew that doing so could cost him his career, which it did. When the Soviets conquered Lithuania and closed all foreign consulates, Sugihara and his family had to leave on September 5th on a train bound for Berlin. However, he continued to hand out visas until the train departed. His wife later estimated that Sugihara had saved 6,000 Jews (Sugihara, 1990). Levine (1996) estimated 10,000, as many of the visas Sugihara wrote were for entire families. When he later described his motives, Sugihara wrote, "I acted according to my sense of justice, out of love for mankind" (quoted in Levine, 1996, p. 253).

We began with Sugihara's story because he exemplified *identification with all humanity*, a deep caring for all human beings regardless of their race, religion, or nationality. Sugihara saw only suffering people who needed his help; he did not distinguish these desperate Jews from anyone else. Later interview studies with those who rescued Jews during the Holocaust reported that the most decisive quality distinguishing them from nonrescuers was that they possessed a sense "of belonging to one human family" (Monroe, 1996, p. 205)—a concern for others that extended across all boundaries of race and religion (Oliner & Oliner, 1988). That identification with all humanity is the topic of the research reported here.

The Historical Development of Identification With All Humanity

Historically, the concept of one human family has developed slowly since the late 15th century. The great geographic discoveries of America, Africa, and Asia unleashed the brutalization and enslavement of their inhabitants but also created "the incipient notion of the human race as a single collectivity" (Headley, 2008, p. 27). That notion

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evolved slowly. It was expressed, for example, in the 18th and 19th centuries in the struggles to end slavery. Only in the 20th century, however, do we find a surge of self-conscious expressions of all humanity as a single group, such as the saying widely attributed to Gandhi, "All humanity is one undivided and indivisible family" or Steichen's (1955) *The Family of Man*.

With this emerging moral sense of a common humanity, humanity became a focus of international law in the 20th century. The concept of "crimes against humanity," coined early in the century, was used first as a legal concept in the Nürnberg trials after World War II (Clapham, 2007). When the United Nations General Assembly (1948) declared in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* that human rights belong to all human beings, "without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status" (Article 2), the common humanity of all human beings was created as a moral mandate as never before. The concept of crimes against humanity was slowly incorporated into international law in the latter half of the 20th and early 21st centuries (McFarland, 2011).

Identification With All Humanity as an Individual Difference

This historical development notwithstanding, a sense of identification with all humanity is today an individual difference worthy of study. It is more than an absence of prejudice, as one could be free of all prejudices but still care little for humanity.

To Alfred Adler and Abraham Maslow, identification with all humanity was an expression of human maturity. To Adler, *gemeinschaftsgefuhl* (social interest) was a genuine caring for others that, in its most mature form, leads to activities that are useful in their "helpfulness to all mankind, present and future" (Adler, 1927/1954, p. 78). To Maslow, individuals who have attained "self-actualization" have a deep "feeling of identification with mankind," think of themselves as "members at large of the human species," and have "a genuine desire to help the human race" (Maslow, 1954, p. 138). Adler did not create a measure of mature social interest, and Maslow did not create one of self-actualization. Several later efforts were made to measure these constructs (e.g., Crandall, 1980; Shostrom, 1964), but these measures assess other facets of the constructs and not identification with all humanity (McFarland, Webb, & Brown, 2012).

Because identification with all humanity is an important moral concept, and no measure of it existed, we developed the Identification With All Humanity Scale (IWAH; McFarland et al., 2012). The measure consists of nine three-response items in the following form:

1. How much do you identify with (that is, feel a part of, feel love toward, have concern for) each of the following?
   a. People in my community
   b. Americans
   c. All humans everywhere
2. When they are in need, how much do you want to help:
   a. People in my community
   b. Americans
   c. People all over the world

Responses are on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*). The sum of the "c" items constitutes the IWAH. The full measure and further information on the scale's development are available elsewhere (see McFarland et al., 2012, and http://edtech.wku.edu/~smcfar/documents/iwah.pdf). By presenting the three identifications together, a comparison is implied but not requested. When used in other countries, that country's name is used instead of "Americans" (e.g., Hamer & Gutowski, 2009).

For most participants, identification with all humanity is not high. Participants in our many adult and student samples average almost exactly 3 (*somewhat*). About 10% average 2 (*just a little*) or less; fewer than 10% average 4 (*quite a bit*) or higher. The mean for each IWAH item is usually about half a point lower than the mean of the other two identifications, and fewer than 15% identify as much with all humanity as with the other two groups.

Because the three identifications correlate positively—those who say that they care about "all humans everywhere" are also likely to say that they care about their closer groups—and the concern is to understand the unique associations with caring about "all humans everywhere," the other identifications are used as statistical controls. For an explanation of this statistical control, see McFarland et al. (2012).

McFarland et al. (2012) reported a series of 10 studies testing the validity of the IWAH. Identification with all humanity was consistently negatively related as expected to *generalized prejudice* (the tendency to have many prejudices, often called *ethnocentrism*), as measured by Altemeyer's (1996) Manitoba Ethnocentrism Scale, and to its two main roots (McFarland, 2010), right-wing authoritarianism (Altemeyer, 1996) and the social dominance orientation (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). The IWAH was positively related to dispositional empathy (Davis, 1983) and principled moral reasoning (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, & Bebeau, 1999), and it was weakly related to self-rated political liberalism. However, statistically, all of these together explained just a portion of the IWAH. From the six factors of the HEXACO model (Ashton & Lee, 2009),

consisting of the well-known Big Five personality traits plus an added morality factor, identification with all humanity was positively related to Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism, but these explained only a small portion of the IWAH. Across several samples, the IWAH was unrelated to self-rated religiousness or religious conservatism. The IWAH was found to be generally stable in individuals across 10 weeks. Others who know an individual well tend to score them similarly on the IWAH to how they score themselves.

The IWAH consistently predicted concern about global issues (e.g., global warming), concern about humanitarian needs, and support for universal human rights on measures developed by McFarland and Mathews (2005), including a willingness to invest national resources and to send troops to defend people around the world in situations such as genocide or ethnic cleansing. Individuals high on the IWAH were found to have greater knowledge of global humanitarian issues, and they were more likely to choose to read about them over other matters (McFarland et al., 2012). They were more prone to value the lives of outgroup members (Afghanis in this study) equally with the lives of ingroup members (Americans) on a measure of the ethnocentric valuation of human life (Pratto & Glasford, 2008). Individuals high on the IWAH consistently pledged larger contributions for international humanitarian relief. The IWAH predicted these findings even when the related constructs cited in the previous paragraph (generalized prejudice, empathy, etc.) were statistically controlled. Members of a major humanitarian charity and of a major human rights organization scored substantially higher on the IWAH than a general adult sample. The IWAH was also found (a) to be distinct from measures of the importance of one's morality (Aquino & Reed, 2002) and Schwartz's (1992) value of universalism and (b) to predict concern for universal human rights beyond these measures (McFarland et al., 2012).

It appears that many individuals can intuit identification with all humanity as a moral ideal. McFarland and Brown (2008) asked a large sample of students, after they had completed the measure, to complete it a second time as "the most mature and most moral person you could imagine anyone being would answer" (McFarland & Brown, 2008). The IWAH scores for 86% of the participants were higher for this most mature and moral person than they had reported for themselves. Whereas the individuals' own mean on the IWAH items was 3.03 (*somewhat*), their mean for the most mature and moral person was 4.03 (*quite a bit*). Just 7% of this sample averaged 4.0 or higher in their personal IWAH responses, but 45% thought that a fully mature and moral individual would do so ranging from 4 (*quite a bit*) to 5 (*very much*). Those high in right-wing authoritarianism and the social

dominance orientation were somewhat less likely than others to envision identification with all humanity as a moral ideal.

These results suggest a kind of moral intuition, that many persons who have never thought about identifying with all humanity can nonetheless intuit doing so as an important moral ideal. This moral intuition appears to differ from the moral intuitionism popularized by Haidt (2001). Haidt emphasized primitive emotions that drive moral judgments (e.g., the deep feeling that it is wrong to eat one's dead pet), even when one cannot offer a logical reason for the judgment. In contrast, the belief that one should identify with all humanity appears logically compelling rather than emotionally driven. Second, Haidt's moral intuitionism emphasizes moral feelings that persons possess and claim, whereas McFarland and Brown's (2008) participants intuited that a fully mature and moral person would possess a morality that they, themselves, did not (McFarland & Brown, 2008). This issue merits further study.

General Discussion

Research with the IWAH confirms that identification with all humanity is more than (a) the absence of generalized prejudice and its roots and (b) the positive qualities of dispositional empathy, principled moral reasoning, and other related constructs. Although these qualities and identification with all humanity are consistently related, identification with all humanity predicts concern for human suffering and human rights— valuing the lives of ingroup and outgroup members more equally, knowledge of humanitarian concerns, and giving to international charity beyond these related constructs.

For us, the critical issue is to learn how identification with all humanity develops. Its roots in heredity, childrearing, and later life experiences are not known. In an unpublished study, an effort was made to identify memories of childrearing that correlate with identification with all humanity. A large adult sample completed 54 items with the stem, "When I was a child, my parents, on the whole . . ." These items measured seven dimensions, including affection and support ("were very affectionate"), moral and caring ("had concern for suffering people"), intellectual and global ("encouraged me to think about global issues"), punitive ("used physical punishment quite a bit"), religious ("wanted me to be devoutly religious"), patriotic ("were very patriotic"), and spoiling ("were very lenient"). Alas, none of the seven dimensions related to the participants' identification with all humanity; nothing of their parents' childrearing that we measured was found to contribute to it. We offer further

speculations on the sources of identification with all humanity (McFarland et al., 2012).

Can identification with all humanity be taught? There appear to be few public efforts to do so. In the 1970s, a children's television series, *Big Blue Marble,* named for a photo of the Earth surrounded by black space, tried to teach it. Its theme song contained the refrain,

Folks are folks and kids are kids, we share a common name,

We speak a different way but work and play the same. (Redwine & Paris, 1973)

We know of no similar effort today, as patriotism and ingroup loyalty appear to dominate the public values now taught to children.

Perhaps, in addition to children's TV shows, the story of Chiune Sugihara and stories of others like his can inspire this identification. Perhaps the moral intuition found by McFarland and Brown (2008) offers a possibility: Merely presenting the question of how a moral and mature person would think regarding all humanity might inspire many to realize that identifying with all humanity is a moral value they should adopt as their own. The issue of how identification with all humanity develops or could be taught merits serious study. If it can be, our research suggests that we might witness a greater concern for many of humanity's problems—from genocide to world hunger to global warming.

Readers will undoubtedly find limitations in this research and potential new directions for studying identification with all humanity. We sincerely hope that others will address these with their own studies.

Recommend Reading

Headley, J. M. (2008). (See References). Headley traces the evolution of "the idea of humanity as a single moral collectivity" (p. 63) from the early Renaissance (c. 1500) to the creation of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in 1948.

McFarland, S., Webb, M., & Brown, D. (2012). (See References). This article provides more detail on the development and validity of the Identification With All Humanity Scale.

Monroe, K. (1996). (See References). This study of rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust inspired our studies of identification with all humanity.

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The authors declared that they had no conflicts of interest with respect to their authorship or the publication of this article.

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