Young people's judgments about respecting and violating human rights

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ABSTRACT

The research examined with in depth clinical interviews (N = 48), how adolescents aged 13–17, and young adults aged 18–25 reasoned about human rights. Participants were presented with general questions about human rights and four contextualized situations in which violations of human rights occur. Results showed that adolescents and young adults judged and reasoned similarly about human rights in response to general questions, but there was more variation in judgments and justifications about specific situations involving violations of human rights. Within specific contexts individuals consider different aspects of situations and balance or co-ordinate them in coming to decisions. However, all ages approached the general issue of human rights, and their violations, primarily from a moral perspective and to a lesser extent from the perspectives of societal organization and cultural practices. Less agreement, and less moral reasoning, was found in reference to punishment of human rights violations.

1. Introduction

The concept of rights has been important to philosophical, political science, and psychological analyses of morality (Dworkin, 1977; Gewirth, 1982; Helwig, 1995; Kohlberg, 1971; McClosky & Brill, 1983; Mill, 1859; Nussbaum, 2000; Turiel, Killen, & Helwig, 1987; Turiel, 2002). Extensive philosophical discussions have provided definitions of the concept of rights and considered their appropriate application across situational and societal contexts, focusing, for the most part, on civil liberties, such as freedom of speech, religion, and assembly. In a particularly influential analysis, Dworkin (1977) drew a distinction between abstract and concrete rights, addressing the question of whether rights should be applied in universal and absolute ways in different contexts. For Dworkin, the abstract concept of a right involving civil liberty is necessary to a moral system, and governments are obligated to respect such rights (see Dworkin, 1977, Chapter 7). However, the application of rights may not be universal in the sense that it can be in conflict with other moral and social considerations in some situations. A classic example is whether or not speech should be free when a public speaker advocates violence towards a racial or religious group. Dworkin and others have proposed that both the general concept of rights and their application and possible subordination to other concerns in situations of conflict need to be taken into account. In this context of universality, the notion of human rights has been of particular interest. Human rights[1] as differentiated in the philosophical literature from civil rights, are understood to be the rights one has simply because one is human; and they are, as such, equal and inalienable. However, Donnelly has distinguished this *conceptual universality* from the *substantive universality* of human rights, arguing that, while conceptual universality "establishes that if there are any such rights, they are held

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[1] For the purposes of international relations, the idea of human rights today refers to the rights outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948, given that virtually all states in the world accept the authority of the Declaration.

equally/universally, [i]t does not show that there *are* any such rights" (2007, p. 283). The latter is a substantive issue. This distinction is important because criticisms of universality of human rights often stem from confusing values such as justice and fairness, with practices that aim to realize those values. As Donnelly (2007), p. 284) explains,

Rights - entitlements that ground claims with a special force, are a particular kind of social practice. Human rights - equal and inalienable entitlements of all individuals that may be exercised against the state and society - are a distinctive way to seek to realize social values such as justice and human flourishing.

It is, therefore, possible for people to support the conceptual universality, without supporting the particular ways in which human rights seek to realize the values of justice and fairness. How people reason through those different judgments is a question of interest to psychology, as it bears directly on how individuals' moral reasoning about justice and fairness may differ in the abstract and in concrete situations.

Psychological researchers have included the concept of rights in analyses of moral development. For example, Kohlberg (1953, 1969, 1971) included judgments about rights as an essential component of moral thinking. In Kohlberg's formulation the development of "true" moral understandings of rights (and justice) do not emerge until (and if at all) the highest stages of moral development involving "principled" reasoning about moral universals such as justice and rights. However, a large body of research shows that there are distinct domains of moral and non-moral reasoning. In the Social Domain Theory formulations, morality is defined as involving judgments about welfare, justice, and rights, and research within the theory documents that children form these moral concepts at young ages, distinguishing them from both the conventions of social systems and areas of personal jurisdiction. Those distinctions are also maintained across ages (Smetana, 2006; Nucci, Turiel, & Roded, 2017; Smetana, 2018; Turiel, 1977, 1983, 2002, 2015). Social Domain Theory, thus, proposes that individuals reason about their social world within three distinctly developing social-cognitive domains; the moral domain, concerned with issues of fairness and justice, the social-conventional domain, concerned with social norms and authority dictates, and the personal domain, concerned with psychological needs and prerogatives. The theory draws on philosophical categories to identify the criteria for different domains of knowledge that emerge in childhood and develop throughout individual's lifetime (Killen, Elenbass, & Rutland, 2016). Much of the research on domains has assessed evaluations of actions, that is, "criterion judgments," and reasoning or justifications for those judgments (Davidson, Turiel, & Black, 1983; Turiel, 1983, 2002). Criterion judgments bear on whether or not actions are judged to be contingent on authority dictates, existing rules/laws, and generalizable across societal or cultural settings. It has been found that acts in the moral domain are judged not to be contingent on these features, and that acts in the conventional domain are.

Social Domain Theory, thus, supplies an appropriate framework for studying people's conceptions of rights as moral, legal (social), or personal, as well as for studying how this reasoning develops with age. More specifically, of interest to the present study is understanding whether and how reasoning about human rights develops with age, and in what ways it differs across the domains. Previous research on rights within this perspective has been conducted by Helwig (1995)a, 1997) and colleagues, who studied the concepts of civil liberties and rights, such as freedom of speech and religion, and freedoms associated with democratic institutions, Their research conducted in the United States and Canada, has shown that children aged 6–11 (Helwig, 1997), as well as adolescents and adults (Helwig, 1995a), endorse those rights in the abstract and think they should not be contingent on authority, laws, or common practices (findings that align with the positions put forth by, as examples, Dworkin, 1977 and Gewirth, 1982). For example, across ages it was judged wrong for governments to place restrictions on rights in situations entailing straightforward application of those rights (e.g., giving a public speech critical of the government). However, in some situations involving conflicts between the rights and other moral or social concerns (e.g., speech advocating violence) the civil liberties were not supported. Likewise, while children at all ages rejected undemocratic practices for reasons of fairness and harm, older children drew on a broader set of reasons in providing justifications.[2] In a closely related body of research, grounded in the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Ruck and his colleagues (Peterson-Badali, Morine, Ruck, & Slonim, 2004; Peterson-Badali & Ruck, 2008; Ruck, Keating, Abramovitch, & Koegl, 1998; Ruck, Peterson-Badali, & Helwig, 2014; Ruck & Tenenbaum, 2014) found that children can differentiate between different types of rights, and while they endorse nurturance rights pertaining to care and protection (such as parental obligations to provide for children and protect them from harm), they distinguish those rights from self-determination rights like freedom of speech, right to privacy, and choice of friends. Reasons for upholding rights are generally based on needs for self-expression, autonomy, adequate communication. Within this realm of study of rights (for comprehensive, interdisciplinary analyses on the topic see the *Handbook of Children's Rights,* edited by Ruck, Peterson-Badali, & Freeman, 2017), it has also been found that children and adolescents from other cultures make judgments about self-determination and nurturance rights that correspond to those made in the United States and Canada. Across a variety of non-Western cultural contexts, young people have been found to endorse participation or self-determination rights and view them as universal rights. Such findings have been obtained with Druze adolescents who judged the rights to religion, reproduction and free speech as freedoms that can be subordinated to conflicting social concerns (Turiel & Wainryb, 1998); with Malaysian Chinese youth, who were more likely to advocate for self-determination rights than nurturance rights, (Cherney & Shing, 2008); with rural and urban youth in China who thought that children should have a voice in the society, and that the government and parents must provide nurturance and endorse their self-determination rights (Helwig, Arnold, Tan, & Boyd, 2007; Lahat, Helwig, Yang, Tan, & Liu, 2009); with mixed-race adolescents in South Africa whose reasoning was focused on the negative consequences of not having their rights fulfilled (Ruck, Tenenbaum, & Willenberg, 2011; see also Day, 2014); and with traditional Arab-Muslim adolescents in Israel who showed support for children's rights, especially so when they viewed their

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[2] In line with this, Wainryb (1993) research has shown that adolescents and adults in the U.S. when judging events occurring in other cultures, justified their relativistic judgments on informational grounds, and their nonrelativistic judgments on moral grounds.

schools and families as democratic (Khoury-Kassabri & Ben-Arieh, 2009).

The topic of rights, manifestly, is a broad one encompassing many issues, including, as mentioned, civil liberties, nurturance and children's rights. However, somewhat different from civil liberties and rights, which primarily bear on matters like freedoms of speech, religion, and assembly, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reflects a more general concern with a set of globally agreed upon principles, designed to assure all people fair treatment, dignity, and protection from harm. This includes also special assistance in childhood, and the "same social protection" for all children (UDHR, Art. 19). To study how people reason about human rights, thus, it is important to distinguish them from civil rights, because the two sets imply different kinds of protections, and therefore, potentially elicit different kind of reasoning at different ages. Whereas civil rights pertain to particular freedoms and the necessity of self-expression, human rights are more general, in that they are based on "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family" intended as "the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world" (Preamble, UDHR). Moreover, as discussed earlier, while human rights might be binding in their conceptual universality, functionally they are not legally binding in the ways civil rights might be. Therefore, adults may reason about these types of rights – and the associated obligations they could lead into – in ways different from adolescents who may not have the same experiences with obligations. Nor are human rights without controversy among philosophical and legal scholars. While philosophers such as Donnelly defend the notion of human rights as "[today] the only proven effective means to assure human dignity" (2007, p. 288), others worry that human rights are illusory, as mere abstract ideals (Posner, 2012; MacInyre, 1984). In the context of these tensions, from a developmental psychological perspective, it is of value to explore whether at different ages, individuals might think differently about human rights in the abstract as opposed to particular contexts (as "effective means").

Another issue that has been subject to a polarized debate is whether it is at all valid to propose a set of universal human rights to be adhered to globally (Brown, 2004; Donnelly, 2007; Freeman, 2011; Hopgood, 2013; Ignatieff, 2001; Langlois, 2009; Moyn, 2016; Nussbaum, 2006; Sen, 1999). As above cited research within Social Domain Theory has shown, for people at any age to see a given issue as generalizable and not contingent on cultural norms is an indication that they are considering it to be a moral concern. It is, thus, valuable to explore whether both adolescents and adults see human rights as universal and generalizable, and hence moral concerns, or whether their views diverge. Finally, questions have been raised as to whether human rights should sometimes be subordinated to other moral goals. Whether, as an example, freedom from torture should always be granted (as per UDHR, Article 5), Indeed, for Walzer (2007), p. 302, the question of torture in some situations is valid: "One of my examples was the 'ticking bomb' case, where a captured terrorist knows, but refuses to reveal, the location of a bomb that is timed to go off soon in a school building." Walzer regards this as a situation requiring exceptions to the application of a right, that involves violating a moral goal in order to promote a moral goal. Yet, the ability to engage in this type of complex weighing of different considerations might also be age dependent.

These debates raise important questions requiring psychological inquiry into people's conceptions of human rights. However, studies in this regard are limited.[3] A fundamental question is whether different individuals form concepts of human rights differently. Second, are human rights conceived to be applicable across different situations and societal contexts? And, third, how do individuals make judgments when human rights might be in conflict with other moral or social goals (as in Walzer's discussion of torture)?

In the present study, we examined judgments about actually occurring situations in different parts of the world, involving violations of human rights. The choices of situations were informed by several UDHR articles (see below), and although situated in different countries, they pertained to issues that are of concern in the U.S. We examined in greater depth, the types of judgments adolescents and young adults make about human rights, and the justifications they provide. We chose to compare adolescents and young adults because, as mentioned, studies on reasoning about human rights are limited and data provided by opinion polls are not only relatively superficial but based on adults. We expected that young adults might think about human rights differently from adolescents for a number of reasons discussed above. In addition, adults might be more familiar than adolescents with the situations used in this research. Further, because we wanted to use real-life, rather than hypothetical situations involving violations of human rights, we did not include children under the age of 14. The pilot study we ran prior to our research, which included a group of 10–13 olds, revealed that some adjustments in presentation would be needed for descriptions of social situations and associated questions in order to discuss the topics with younger children, as they were often less familiar with the topics than the high school adolescents. Moreover, unlike some studies on civil and children's rights, we did not subdivide the adolescent group, as our pilot research indicated no differences in response patterns between younger and older adolescents. However, we see value in adding younger groups, as well as dividing the adolescent groups by age in future studies in order to explore potential differences in more detail.

We largely followed the parameters of a research line on civil rights, basing our expectations on some of those findings (Helwig, 1995a, 1997). Assessments were made of abstract conceptions of human rights, as well as evaluations and reasoning regarding violations in different contexts. To assess abstract conceptions participants were posed with general questions on whether they knew what human rights are, and the role of laws and cultural practices in upholding or denying human rights. Our first expectation (H_1) was that adolescents and young adults would have knowledge about human rights and conceive of them as universally binding, and not contingent on authority or existing laws; and that they would think laws should support human rights. We also expected (H_2), based on previous findings in the civil rights related studies, that some divergences between the age groups would emerge, in particular with regards to how judgments about features of human rights that are not straightforward (e.g. universality,

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[3] Staerkle and Clemence (2004) did examine ratings of acceptability of human rights violations by authorities (e.g. interference with privacy, refusal of asylum) when framed either in terms of human rights or as news of a violation, and found that adolescent and young adults were more likely to judge violations depicted as news events as more acceptable than when stated as human rights (see also Doise, 2002).

inalienability) are justified.

In order to assess judgments about human rights regarding concrete violations, participants were presented with four situations drawn from existing practices. As shown in previous research, concrete situations often involve decisions that take into account differing considerations that are sometimes in conflict with other moral goals or with established common practices. The four situations were designed to address some of the most pervasive violations, which also constitute the most debated philosophical topics. The situations involved different types of either discrimination or harm, pertaining to different cultural settings. They included: i) the practice of the caste system in India, where the poor class of "untouchables" are in servitude to the wealthy class (UDHR, Article 4 states no one shall be held in slavery or servitude); ii) torture of prisoners suspected of terrorism by U.S. authorities, for reasons of national security (Article 5 prohibits torture); iii) the practice in Saudi Arabia of requiring head coverings and restricting liberties of women (Articles 13 and 18 protect freedom of movement, and freedom of thought) and; iv) the segregation of Roma people in European countries based on their ethnic minority status (Article 7, equal protection of the law). Participants were asked to evaluate the violations and to provide reasons for their evaluations. For each situation, participants were also posed with several questions designed to assess whether they judged the rights to apply to everyone within a society and whether laws within a society can allow the practices in question. In general, we expected (H3) that most would negatively evaluate the violations, but that they would also take into account and attempt to balance the different considerations involved. This expectation stems from a large body of research within the social domain theory framework. Several decades of such research have provided evidence that domain-based forms of reasoning are central to social life, and reflect fundamental types of judgments that individuals use to make, both straightforward and complex everyday decisions (Killen et al., 2016). We were interested in examining whether (and why) some violations would be judged more acceptable than others. We expected (H4) that the upholding of human rights would be based on moral reasons, while acceptance of the violations would more likely be based on conventional aspects of social organization. An additional assessment that has not been used in the research on civil rights was of judgments regarding possible retribution for those who engaged in the violations of the rights. We expected (H5) that recommendation for or against retribution would depend on the initial evaluation of the situation, and that the justifications would entail a balancing of moral and conventional considerations.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The study included 48 participants, 24 adolescents aged 13–17 years (M = 15.3, SD = 1.7), and 24 young adults aged 19–25 years (M = 22.7, SD = 2.1). There were equal numbers of males and females in each group. The adolescent participants were recruited from public and charter high schools, and the young adults from universities and community colleges in the west coast region of the United States, as well as from youth hostels in San Francisco. Although these participants had various types and levels of educational background, we did not anticipate that educational experiences would impact their reasoning, as our questions pertained to their judgments about situations occurring in real life known or familiar to the general public. The recruitment eligibility required that the participants were born and raised in the U.S. and that they culturally self-identified as American. The participants were of diverse socioeconomic and racial backgrounds, including proportions of the largest ethnic groups approximately equivalent to the national averages (15 % African American, 10 % Asian, 50 % Caucasian, 20 % Latinex, 5% Other). Signed consents (adults) and assents (adolescents) were obtained from all the participants prior to the interview, and parental consents were obtained for the adolescent group, at the time of scheduling of the interviews.

2.2. Assessments and procedures

2.2.1. General assessments

Since previous research has shown that individuals hold general conceptions of rights which partially guide decisions in situational contexts, participants were posed with a set of general questions about the topic of human rights. The first two questions (*Do you know what human rights are?* and *Can you define human rights in your own words?*) were included because the philosophical literature has raised the question of whether the idea of human rights has relevance to people at large, as well as because we were interested in whether there would be any variations in conceptualizations. We expected that participants would be aware of the idea of human rights and maintain working definitions.

Additional general questions (modeled on research on civil rights) assessed judgments as to whether human rights should be legally sanctioned (*Do you think national laws should allow human rights?* and *Do you think it is alright to have anti-human rights laws?*). Finally, two questions assessed whether human rights are judged as moral rights, and therefore applicable to all people and across social contexts or if there can be exceptions (*Do you think people should sometimes not have human rights?* and *Do you think there can be different cultural versions of human rights?*). Again, these questions pertained to matters debated in the literature on human rights. We expected that participants would not regard human rights to be contingent on laws, but that they would be more likely to consider exceptions to the application of rights as valid and be accepting of cultural variations.

2.2.2. Contextualized situations

In order to further assess how human rights are conceived in concrete situations, we presented participants with four types of violations of human rights, occurring in different parts of the world (full descriptions of the situations can be found in Appendix A). One situation, involving social inequality described the caste system in India distinguishing between the rights accorded to different

groups, and resulting in exploitation of the poor. A second situation, involving the infliction of harm, described the use of torture on the prisoners in prisons maintained by United States authorities, to obtain information regarding possible terrorist plots. A third situation, involving restrictions on personal liberties, described the practice in Saudi Arabia of requiring women to cover their heads. The fourth situation, involving ethnic discrimination, described the exclusion in the treatment of the minority group of Roma people in European nations. As already mentioned, each situation described a cultural or governmental practice that constitutes a violation of Articles of the UDHR. To reduce order effects, we used counterbalancing (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister, & Zechmeister, 2006). We systematically varied the presentation order for each participant, such that each one of the four situations was presented first an equal number of times (12 times each), followed by a random order of the remaining three. We tested for whether the responses were different when a situation was presented first versus in any other ordinal position, and we found no significant difference. For each situation, we assessed participants' evaluations, judgments, and reasoning about the violations by posing the following questions:

1 Is this (the act) alright or not? Why or why not?
2 Should all groups in a society have the same rights? Why or why not?
3 Is it OK to have a law allowing this situation to happen? Why or why not?
4 Is this alright if a law exists that allows it? Why or why not?
5 Do you think that carrying out /endorsing these practices should be punished?

2.3. Coding and reliability

A coding system was used for evaluations, judgments, and reasons (referred to as justifications) based on previous studies, (Davidson et al., 1983; Helwig, 1995, 1997; Turiel, 2008), as well as additions based on new features of responses in this research. Evaluations and judgments were coded for all right, not all right, and maybe/depends responses. The coding of justifications consisted of the categories listed in Table 1, which shows that the categories can be grouped into three domains of reasoning: moral, social-conventional, and personal. The moral domain codes entailed issues of welfare, justice, and rights. New codes in the moral domain category stemming from this study pertain to justifications based on consideration of people's human rights, human dignity, and human capabilities. Conventional domain codes entailed references to rules, laws, authorities and social customs. Personal domain codes referenced personal choice and psychological needs. In the case of multiple justifications, the more elaborated one was coded as primary. More specifically, when participants gave two different justifications (more than two was rare) further probing was

Table 1
Justification Categories.

Category	Description and Examples
MORAL	
Equality	References to equality and reciprocity.
	Example: "Men and women are the same and should be treated the same"
Justice	References to fairness or maintaining a balance of rights between persons.
	Example: "It's not fair to treat them [the Roma] differently because they don't pay taxes they are still part of society and contribute in other ways"
Equal human rights	References to human rights, equal access to same rights.
	Example: "We are all human and we all deserve the same human rights."
Respect for persons	References to a need for respect, for respectful treatment of other.
	Example: "People should be respected for who they are."
Welfare	References to harmful consequences to others
	Example: "Torture is harm if it is overseas or here."
Dignity/ worth of person	Appeal to human dignity, worth, or rejection of humiliation of persons.
	Example: "If you humiliate people and treat them, like, as if they were less than, you think they don't have dignity"
SOCIAL CONVENTIONAL	
Societal progress / efficacy	References to positive or useful social consequences of an instrumental nature.
	Example: It's OK [the caste system] because it's sustainable it moves the society along and make it progress
Social utilitarianism	Determining that the greatest priority is whatever is best for the greatest number of people in the society.
	Example: It is OK to torture one person [prisoner], if that is going to make many people in the society feel safe.
Authority	Appeal to authority or existence of rules.
	Example: "If the law says it's OK then we have to obey the law."
Societal or cultural organization	Appeal to societal or cultural customs, or traditions, or shared organization expectations.
	Example: "It works for that culture. I cannot have a say as an outsider."
PERSONAL	
Psychological Functioning	References to people maintaining positive psychological characteristics, including pride, self-worth, and identity.
	Example: "The untouchables will lose their self-worth and then they will think that they deserve to be treated that way
Personal needs	References to control (lack of) and sense of personal freedom as a need.
	Example: "It's not OK because the Saudi women have all that wealth but they still cannot go outside by themselves when they want to, so it's like prison"
Personal choice	References to personal choice, preference, or individual fault.
	Example: "It's wrong because they are not being given the opportunity to make their own choices."
Uncodable	Response vague, not responsive to question, or absent.

used to establish which justification they would elaborate upon and commit to, and that justification (primary) was coded and used in analyses. To establish inter-coder reliability an independent coder coded 20 % of the protocols. Using Cohen's kappa, inter-rater agreement for evaluations was 0.94, and for justifications, it was 0.82.

3. Results

Analysis of the data was organized by responses to the general questions about human rights, and to questions about violations of human rights in the four situations. Justifications for evaluation responses that were overwhelmingly negative or positive were not analyzed separately. However, when evaluations were equally divided between positive and negative, the associated justifications were analyzed separately. Statistical analyses for both evaluation and justification responses included fitting generalized linear mixed models by maximum likelihood. The same participants performed at all levels of the independent variables and participants were compared on the basis of belonging to either of the two age groups or sex groups, thus age and sex were within-subjects variables. To account for autocorrelation error due to within subjects design we introduced an additional term into the log regressions with lme4 function. In performing linear and logistic regression analysis in R, lme4 provides functions for fitting and analyzing mixed linear (lmer) and generalized linear (glmer) models. Linear mixed-effects models are suitable for data that are collected and summarized in groups, as was the case with our data. These models describe the relationship between a response variable and independent variables, with coefficients that can vary with respect to one or more grouping variables. We also fitted glmer with Adaptive Gauss-Hermite Quadrature, nAGQ = 8. nAGQ is used to estimate covariance and is applied to binary or ordinal data with small sample sizes, as in our case, Values greater than 1 produce greater accuracy in the evaluation of the log-likelihood. We ran post hoc Wald tests and in some cases Pearson chi square, with Fisher's exact tests. Prior to fitting the logistical regression models, we used GPower to compute statistical power analysis with power ($1-\beta$ set at 0.80 and $\alpha = 05$, one tailed and two tailed outcomes. This showed that our sample size for one tailed would have to be N = 43, and for two tailed N = 55, for the difference to reach statistical significance at the .05 level. Thus, our sample size was sufficient to yield statistically significant results actual power 0.85 for one tailed, and 0.79 for two tailed. In addition, we ran Chi square goodness of fit tests for each question with simulated p-value of 10,000 replicates (p values reported at the foot of all the tabulated results).

3.1. General questions

Following each of the general questions and the questions pertaining to each situation, participants were asked to provide justifications for their responses (see Table 1 for a list of justification, categorized by domain of reasoning). Up to two justifications were provided for some questions, so percentages in the tables do not sum to 100 in some instances. To examine the probability of using a given justification, we fitted multilinear, mixed-effects logistic regressions. A mixed-effects model was necessary to account for the dependency in justifications, as each participant contributed several categories, in response to each question per each situation. Participants were represented as a random effect. We assessed whether the probability of providing a given justification differed by situation, particular question (across all situations), age, and sex. A data-reduction process was used to improve the power to detect significant differences. Sex had no significant effect on any of the results so males and females were collapsed in all analyses.

3.1.1. Defining human rights

First, we present findings on whether participants stated that they know what human rights are and how they defined them. The majority of the adolescents (95 %) and of the young adults (79 %) expressed knowledge of the term, the remainder expressed uncertainty. In defining human rights, we examined whether participants focused on the moral, social-conventional (including legal), or other aspects. The majority of both adolescents and young adults (74 % on average) referred primarily to moral issues, such as protection from harm, justice and equality, and dignity and humane treatment of others. Within the moral category, the assurance of dignified and humane treatment was the most used definition at both ages (25 % of adolescents and 34 % of young adults). A minority in each age group, (27 % on average), gave reasons entirely or primarily concerned with social convention, defining human rights as a set of norms that protect cultural values, serve as the rule of law, and contribute to societal progress. For some respondents, human rights had to do with personal and emotional concerns, either exclusively, or in conjunction with moral concerns. These definitions were more frequent among adolescents than the young adults. Issues such as happiness, ability to make personal choices, and healthy psychological functioning defined human rights for more than a third (34 %) of adolescents, but for fewer (12 %) of the young adults.

3.1.2. Legality and universality

Responses to the general questions were first analyzed for sex and age effects on a particular configuration of responses that indicates an endorsement of human rights as universal and inalienable. Such a configuration included responding that: national laws should support human rights; there should not be laws against human rights; there should not be exceptions in individuals' human rights, and human rights should not vary across nations (see Table 2). As mentioned, there was no significant sex effect, so our further analyses combined males and females. The age effect was significant, $b = 1.78$, $z = 3.01$, p < .005, (Wald test: p < .001), with adolescents more likely to provide the affirmative (as above described) response configuration. Given that tests for interactions indicated that the age effect was dependent on the question, we ran further linear regressions. Large majorities (92 %), with no age difference, stated that national laws should endorse human rights, and (90 %) negatively evaluated laws counter to human rights. However, adolescents were less likely than young adults to state that people should sometimes not have human rights (46 % vs. 62

Table 2

Percentage of participants' evaluation judgments, domain based justifications, and differentiated moral domain justifications in response to general questions.

Adolescents = AD Young Adults = YA	JUDGMENTS						JUSTIFICATIONS BY DOMAIN						MORAL DOMAIN DIFFERENTIATED					
	Positive		Negative		Maybe/ depends		Moral		Social conventional		Personal		Harm/ Welfare		Equality/ Justice		Dignity/ Human Rights	
	AD	YA	AD	YA	AD	YA	AD	YA	AD	YA	AD	YA	AD	YA	AD	YA	AD	YA
Should national laws allow for human rights?	88	96	0	0	12	4	95	88	24	34	12	4	33	17	33	21	29	50
Is it alright if national laws are anti-human rights?	0	0	96	84	4	16	92	83	29	38	16	4	42	17	25	33	25	33
Should people sometimes not have human rights?	33	30	46	62	21	8	46	49	50	80	16	0	8	8	13	4	25	37
Is it alright to have different versions of human rights?	33	75	55	25	12	0	71	25	58	88	8	0	8	4	42	21	21	0
Pearson chi squared goodness of fit	$X^2 (4) = 14.68, p < .01$						$X^2 (6) = 55.77, p < .001$						$X^2 (6) = 38.26, p < .001$					

%), $b = -0.29$, $t = -2.11$, $p < .05$; and that human rights could vary by nation (33 % vs. 75 %), $b = 0.25$, $t = 2.04$, $p < .05$.

Our results therefore confirmed our expectation (H_1) that the participants would have knowledge about human rights and conceive of them as universally binding, and that they would think laws should support human rights. When it came to viewing human rights as not contingent on authority or existing laws, in other words generalizable across cultures and inalienable, as we expected (H_2), differences did occur, and adolescents provided more affirmative judgments than the adults.

3.1.3. Analyses of justifications

The analyses of justifications included the categories of responses as grouped into the moral, social conventional, and personal domains. Additionally, we examined the sub categories pertaining to the moral domain, given that types of moral reasoning are a major focus in the study of human rights. Of special interest were distinctions regarding matters of harm (welfare), equality and justice (combined into one category), and human rights and dignity (also combined).

As Table 2 shows, across all the questions young adults were more likely than the adolescents to provide social conventional justifications, $b = 1.36$, $z = 3.52$, $p < .001$, again confirming our expectations regarding age differences. In further examining the moral domain responses, by groupings (harm/welfare, justice and equality, human rights and dignity) we found that for adolescents, harm/welfare was, overall, a more frequent concern than it was for the young adults, $b = -0.25$, $t = -2.18$, $p < .05$. With regard to specific questions, the majority of individuals in both age groups (92 % on average), thought that national laws should support human rights for moral reasons, and that, likewise, (for 88 %) moral concerns justified rejecting anti-human rights laws. By contrast, when asked if "some people in some situations should not have human rights," both groups provided fewer moral justifications (48 % on average) than for responses regarding laws. However, young adults were more likely than the adolescents to give social conventional reasons, $b = 1.48$, $z = 2.91$, $p < .005$. Similarly, in responding to the question, "is it alright to have different national versions of human rights," young adults, who were more accepting of this notion (75 % vs. 33 %), gave moral reasons less frequently than did the adolescents (25 % vs. 71 %), and social conventional ones more frequently (88 % vs. 58 %), $b = 1.57$, $z = 3.09$, $p < .005$. Thus, adolescents viewed these two questions as a matter of both morality and convention, but for young adults conventions were more salient. Further, for the adolescents, equality and justice was the most likely of the moral justifications, $b = -1.93$, $t = -3.01$, $p < .005$, while fewer young adults referred to this concern (42 % vs. 21 %), $X^2 (1) = 7.0$, $p < .005$.

3.2. Social situations depicting violations of human rights

Tables 3 to 6 present the percentages of positive, negative, and maybe/depends responses to all the questions, for each of the four situations, followed by domain-based, and further in-depth, moral domain justifications. The responses, pertaining to each situation, include evaluations (responses to "Is this all right or not?") of the human rights violation, and judgments as to: whether all groups [peoples] should have the same rights; whether it is permissible to have laws allowing the given violations; whether the violated rights are actually contingent on existing laws, and whether the violations should be punished. To test the significance of the differences in responses, we ran a multivariate logistic regression for each question, across the situations. We also ran Pearson's chi squared tests for each question per each situation.

As can be seen in Table 3, the majority of participants in each age group negatively evaluated the violations in each situation. Similarly, as Table 4 shows, majorities judged, in each situation, that all groups of people (that is, including those being discriminated against) should have the same rights. However, age differences emerged again, that intersected with the situations. The overall age differences were tested for negative evaluations, which yielded a significant result, $X^2 (3) = 43.71$, $p < .001$. Adolescents provided negative evaluations more frequently than the young adults in all situations but the caste system, which they (79 %) rejected, but less often than the young adults. Thus, while young adults were most disapproving of the caste system (92 %), the adolescents (100 %) were most disapproving of the forced head covering. For both age groups, torture was the least negatively evaluated situation.

Table 3
Percentage of participants' evaluations, and justifications for evaluations by situation and age.

		Cast System		Prisoner Torture		Head Covering		Roma People	
		Adolescents	Young Adults	Adolescents	Young Adults	Adolescents	Young Adults	Adolescents	Young Adults
Evaluations	Yes	13	0	12	30	0	4	9	26
Is this alright or not?	No	79	92	71	66	100	79	79	70
	Depends	8	8	17	4	0	17	21	4
Justifications									
Moral		75	92	55	55	96	71	84	74
Harm/ Welfare		8	4	13	21	4	13	0	4
Justice/Equality		21	42	4	4	67	42	21	25
Dignity/Worth		25	21	13	17	8	8	13	8
Human Rights		21	25	25	13	17	8	50	37
Social Conventional		21	4	33	33	4	21	4	13
Personal		4	4	13	13	0	8	13	13

Pearson chi squared test for goodness of fit was significant, for evaluations $X^2 (6) = 24.19$, $p < .001$; for justifications $X^2 (6) = 39.07$, $p < .001$.

Table 4

Percentage of participants' evaluations and justifications for judgments as to whether everyone in society should have equal rights by situation and age.

		Cast System		Prisoner Torture		Head Covering		Roma People	
		Adolescents	Young Adults	Adolescents	Young Adults	Adolescents	Young Adults	Adolescents	Young Adults
Evaluations	Yes	71	83	66	54	92	91	79	87
Should everyone in the society have	No	8	4	21	38	4	0	4	8
equal rights?	Depends	21	13	12	8	4	9	17	4
Justifications									
Moral		78	71	82	37	92	77	78	70
Harm/ Welfare		0	0	9	8	4	0	0	9
Justice/Equality		26	21	9	8	46	45	39	9
Dignity/Worth		26	8	30	17	17	5	30	22
Human Rights		26	42	34	12	25	27	9	30
Social Conventional		9	29	9	29	4	14	13	17
Personal		13	0	9	24	4	9	9	13

Pearson chi squared test for goodness of fit was significant, for evaluations $X^2 (6) = 62.23$, p < .001; for justifications $X^2 (6) = 13.34$, p < .01.

3.2.1. Situations justifications

Table 3 also presents the justifications percentages in the moral, social conventional, and personal domains, as well as further moral domain groupings (harm/welfare, justice and equality, human rights and dignity). Most participants made little reference to either social conventional or personal domains in justifying their rejection of the human rights violations in all situations. In their moral justifications, age differences emerged; most notably, in reference to the equality and justice category. This was the category most salient for adolescents in the case of the forced head covering, (67 % vs. 42 %), and for young adults in the caste system case (21 % vs. 42 %), $X^2(3) = 9.55$, p < .05. Thus, it appears that in their concerns over equality and justice, different types of violations of rights, indeed the same ones they judged as most disapproving, captured the focus of adolescents as opposed to the young adults.

Further, as mentioned above, torture was the least negatively evaluated of all the situations, and correspondingly, justifications for torture differed notably from the others (p < .001). Both groups referred less often than in other cases, to the moral domain (57 % on average) and more to social conventional and personal domains (33 % and 13 %). Nevertheless, torture too was still most likely to elicit moral reasoning, $b = -1.49, z = 2.89, p < .005$, and specifically, the category of human rights and dignity (28 % on average). Social conventional justifications for torture were also significantly likely, $b = 1.24, z = 2.10, p < .05$, regardless of age, but adolescents applied them to rejecting torture and young adults to approving it.

3.2.2. Judgments about equal rights for everyone

Most participants thought that all people in the society should have equal rights (see Table 4). However, the torture situation was judged differently, $b = 0.21, t = 3.40, p < .001$, and a proportion of both adolescents and young adults, although significantly more of the latter (21 % vs. 38 %), $X^2 (2) = 6.89, p < .05$. suggested that equal rights should not apply in this case.

3.2.3. Equal rights for everyone justifications

Table 4, presents also the percentages of justifications for judgments about equal rights and shows that moral justifications were mostly used. However, this was not the case for the young adults' justifications for torture, which were distributed equally in the moral (37 %), social-conventional (29 %), and personal (24 %) domains, and were different from the other situations, $X^2 (6) = 47.96$, p < .001, as well as from the adolescents' justification of torture, $X^2(2) = 33.92, p < .001$. Moreover, they applied to negative judgments which were suggesting that the prisoners in this context, should not have equal human rights. Table 4 also shows that at each age the moral category equality and justice was a less likely response to torture than to any other situation, $b = -0.19, t = -2.10, p < .05$.

3.2.4. Judgments about legal status

To understand how participants thought about the legal aspects of these human rights violations, we also assessed two somewhat different questions: whether they thought it would be alright to have laws permitting the acts in the four situations; and whether they thought the acts should be permissible if laws existed that allowed them. As Table 5 shows, the majority of participants at responded negatively. In that context, there were some differences among the situations and between the age groups. Overall adolescents were more consistent in how they responded to the two questions across the situations, and age effect for these questions combined was significant, $X^2 (7) = 13.84, p < .05$, Fisher's exact (p = .04). Across all the situations, young adults were more approving than the adolescents of laws permitting the acts in question. This age difference is most pronounced in torture of prisoners and Roma discrimination. In the case of torture, more of the young adults (37 %) than adolescents (8%) judged that it was alright to have a law that allows it, $X^2 (2) = 32.71, p < .001$. Correspondingly, more young adults (30 %) than adolescents (8%) also judged the act as alright if a law allows it, $X^2 = 6.51, p < .005$.

Similarly, in the case of the discrimination of the Roma ethnic minorities, more young adults than adolescents (25 % vs. 4%) said

Table 5

Percentage of judgments as to whether laws should permit the acts / whether existing laws justify the acts, and combined justifications for both legal evaluations.

		Cast System		Prisoner Torture		Head Covering		Roma People	
		Adolescents	Young Adults	Adolescents	Young Adults	Adolescents	Young Adults	Adolescents	Young Adults
Evaluations	Yes	0	4	8	37	0	8	4	25
Should there be a law permitting the act?	No	83	83	80	63	100	92	75	71
	Depends	17	13	12	0	0	0	21	4
Is the act alright if the law allows it?	Yes	0	8	8	30	0	29	8	21
	No	83	84	80	66	100	71	75	70
	Depends	17	8	12	4	0	0	17	9
Justifications									
Moral		75	71	55	50	84	62	79	75
Harm/ Welfare		4	0	21	21	13	0	13	4
Justice/Equality		33	33	4	8	50	46	25	33
Dignity/Worth		8	17	13	4	17	8	4	4
Human Rights		29	21	17	17	4	8	37	33
Social Conventional		25	21	32	37	8	34	17	21
Personal		0	8	13	13	8	4	4	4

Pearson chi squared test for goodness of fit was significant at p < .001, for evaluations $X^2 (6) = 47.60$ and 24.3; for justifications $X^2 (6) = 18.77$.

it would be alright to have laws permitting it, $X^2 (2) = 26.87, p < .001$, and more (21 % vs. 8%) were accepting of the acts if existing laws permit them, $X^2 (2) = 8.46, p < .05$.

3.2.5. Legal status response justifications

Table 5 also shows that the majority of participants provided moral justifications for their judgments in each situation. However, responses to torture, again, differed from the others, $X^2 (2) = 15.03, p < .001$, were within the moral domain less frequently than others (52 %) and were, moreover, connected to the judgment that laws should permit torture. Nonetheless, as it was the case with the evaluation (is this all right or not?) question, human rights and dignity justification was the most likely one to be provided in torture situation, regardless of age, $b = 2.48, z = 2.22, p < .05$.

Another notable difference, and one that also corresponded to the evaluation justifications was that the equality and justice category was applied differently by age groups. While more adolescents than young adults (58 % vs. 37 %) applied this category to the forced head covering situation, fewer did so to the caste system (27 % vs. 45 %), $X^2 (3) = 9.55, p < .05$.

Overall, the justification results, taken together and in combination with the judgments regarding the social situations, support our expectations that most of the participants would negatively evaluate the violations, but that they would also take into account, and attempt to balance the different considerations involved (H₃). The results also support our expectation that upholding of human rights would be based on moral reasons, while acceptance of the violations would more likely be based on conventional aspects of social organization (H₄).

3.2.6. Judgments about punishment

Responses to questions as to whether there should be punishment for the human rights violation acts show reasoning about the

Table 6

Percentage of participants' evaluations and justifications for judgments as to whether there should be punishment, by situation, judgment, and age.

		Cast System		Prisoner Torture		Head Covering*		Roma People*	
		Adolescents	Young Adults	Adolescents	Young Adults	Adolescents	Young Adults	Adolescents	Young Adults
Evaluations	Yes	44	37	56	38	35	42	38	38
Should act be punished?	No	30	37	31	43	48	37	48	46
	Depends	26	26	13	19	17	21	14	16
Justification by type of judgment									
Acceptance									
Moral		55	26	33	25	38	37	30	34
Social conventional		10	13	22	20	0	16	9	3
Personal		5	11	8	0	0	0	4	3
Rejection									
Moral		10	26	7	12	14	20	2	22
Social Conventional		10	24	26	43	43	13	46	28
Personal		10	0	4	0	5	13	9	10

Pearson chi squared test for goodness of fit was significant for acceptance, $X^2 (6) = 17.30, p < .001$; for rejection, $X^2 (4) = 9.84, p < .05$.
  * Note: One third of participants did not offer any justifications.

consequences for the perpetrators. As Table 6 shows, with no overall age difference, across the situations an average 43 % approved of punishment. The torture situation was the only exception, for which adolescents more so than young adults (56 % vs. 38 %). endorsed punishment. Young adults were overall more likely to reject than accept punishment (p = .03).

3.2.7. Punishment response justifications

In each situation analyses were conducted separately for the positive and the negative judgments. Table 6 shows that, regardless of age, moral domain justifications were used more for acceptance of punishment, $X^2(3) = 43.76, p < .001$, while social conventional justifications were used more for the rejection of punishment, $X^2(3) = 43.76, p < .001$. Both age groups gave more moral responses in total (positive and negative judgments taken together), with one exception. For the young adults, punishment of torture, which 62 % rejected, was mostly (63 %) justified with social conventional reasons. This is consistent with the young adults' responses about torture throughout, from the results regarding evaluation to the legal status of it. These results about punishment judgments and justification, confirm our expectation (H_5) that recommendations for or against retribution would depend on the initial evaluation of the situation, and that the justifications would entail a balancing of moral and conventional considerations.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study show that the category of human rights is part of the moral thinking of adolescents and young adults regarding rights more generally. Along with ideas about civil liberties, as demonstrated by a number of previous studies (e.g., Helwig, 1995a, 1997; Lahat et al., 2009; Ruck et al., 2014), the idea of human rights, with its broader application to human kind, was found to be part of moral reasoning that includes conceptions of welfare and justice (2002, Turiel, 1983). The role of human rights in moral reasoning was documented in this study using methods that included assessments of general or abstract conceptions, as well as assessments of their application in different types of concrete situations depicting violations of rights aligned with Articles of UDHD. The assessments in the concrete situations showed that conceptions of human rights are applied to their violations but that other considerations, including moral and non-moral ones are taken into account in making decisions.

The finding that most participants were familiar with the concept of human rights is buttressed by the corresponding finding that most defined the concept with regard to moral issues bearing on protection from harm, as well as justice, equality, and dignified, humane treatment of persons. The large majority of participants also thought that a nation's laws should foster human rights and that it is not acceptable for nations to have laws that run counter to human rights. Moreover, these judgments were mainly based on moral reasons. These findings are in accord with criteria associated with the moral domain. There was a tendency for the young adults to use moral reasons bearing on dignity and worth of persons, and for the adolescents to focus more on welfare and prevention from harm. Both age groups referred to equality and justice, but young adults tended to apply it more to the practices of servitude in the caste system, while the adolescents applied it more to the forced veiling and restriction placed on women in Saudi Arabia situation. Nevertheless, about a half of the participants did not think that all people should always have human rights, seeing the possibility of exceptions. In each age group, about a third thought that some people should not be granted human rights, and a further one in five of adolescents were equivocal about it. Such judgments were supported with mostly conventional justifications, or with suggestions focused on retribution, as illustrated by the response of a 16-year-old female: "People who committed really atrocious crimes, should be deprived of human rights, they should feel how their victims felt" (15-year-old, female).

The types of moral justifications provided to evaluations in general questions, and contextualized situations point to the bases for distinguishing between human rights and civil rights. The research on civil rights has focused on liberties or freedom (e.g., of speech, religion, assembly) and individual agency. In that research and in the present study it has been found that rights (civil and human) were judged as non-contingent on laws and generalizable across societal settings. The main distinguishing feature between the two types of rights lies in the justifications for endorsements of the rights. Endorsements of civil rights are generally based on reasons bearing on needs of self-expression, autonomy, fulfilling psychological needs, and means of securing democratic principles (Helwig, 1995a, 1997; Helwig & Turiel, 2017; Turiel & Wainryb, 1998). As found in the present study, endorsements of human rights were based on reasons bearing on welfare (preventing harm and promoting well-being), fairness, justice, and equality, as well as preserving human dignity and worth. As one participant put it, "When you deny rights, you are not just taking away things, you take away dignity and pride" (16-year old, females).

A potentially interesting finding in this study's general assessments is that although the majority of young adults expressed familiarity with the idea of human rights, fewer of them (79 %) did so than the group of adolescents (95 %). In addition, a larger number of adolescents than young adults supported the principle of the universality of human rights. In connection with this is the finding that the majority of the young adults (75 %), in contrast with a smaller number of adolescents (33 %), judged that it is acceptable for there to be different versions of human rights. One possible explanation of this finding is that the young adults were more cognizant than the adolescents of ambiguities in concepts of human rights, due to possible variations in how morality can be manifested in different cultural contexts (Kohlberg & Kramer, 1969; Turiel, 1974). The majority of justifications for the judgments by the young adults, that it is acceptable to have different versions, were in the domain of social convention. Further, while it appears that more of the adults (62 %) than adolescents (46 %) supported the inalienability of human rights, it is important to note that almost half of those adolescent were in a fact uncertain as to their judgment. It appears that with age there is change in the ability to hold in view multiple considerations, and to counterbalance relative harm to the individual with the notion of the greater good, as well as with the reality of the demands of social life and the constraint of the legal systems inherent to it. To put this in the context of Donnelly's (2007) earlier discussed "relative universality of human rights," this age difference might be pointing to an adolescent focus on the *conceptual universality* of human rights, as opposed to the young adult's preoccupation with the *substantive universality*.

We also assessed judgments and reasoning about human rights in the context of actual situations derived from existing practices in several cultures. On the basis of many previous studies – and especially studies on judgments about civil rights (e.g., Helwig, 1995; Ruck & Tenenbaum, 2014; see also Turiel, 2008, and Nucci et al., 2017) – we expected that there would be some variations in the ways abstract concepts of human rights would be applied in specific situational contexts. The previous research has shown that within concretely specified situational contexts individuals take into account different aspects of situations and weigh and balance or coordinate them in coming to decisions. Such coordination can involve weighing and balancing of concerns within the moral domain (e.g., rights and welfare) or between domains (e.g., moral and conventional or personal).

The four specific situations presented to participants each depicted different types of violations of human rights: the existence of a caste system in India and within it the treatment of the "untouchables," with class-based discrimination and servitude; the use of torture with prisoners by authorities in the United States for reasons of national security, which involved cruel and unusual punishment; the forced wearing of head scarves for women in Saudi Arabia, involving restrictions of freedom and gender discrimination; and segregation of the Roma people in Europe, involving ethnic-based discrimination of minorities. It was found that the majority of both ages negatively evaluated each of the depicted violations. In each situation majorities also judged that all groups of people should have the same rights. Furthermore, justifications for those evaluations were mostly in the moral domain. In that context, however, there were complex patterns of differences among the four situations and in the age groups. In each age group, more participants (about one-third) either positively evaluated the acts in the torture situation or were equivocal about it than in the other three. The age differences obtained were not entirely straightforward. For the torture, head covering, and Roma situations more of the adolescents than young adults negatively evaluated the violations. By contrast, more of the young adults than adolescents negatively evaluated the situation involving a caste system. The former might suggest that with age there is an increased understanding of the multidimensional nature of situations, such that torture can be seen as an issue of security, head covering an issue of religious requirements, and the Roma segregation a matter of nomadic cultural integrity of the Roma. Research on civil rights shows that in some cases, adolescents may endorse rights that run counter to existing cultural practices or religious belief systems that deny individual rights and personal autonomy to people in general and specifically to girls and women (Helwig, Ruck, & Peterson-Badali, 2014; Neff & Helwig, 2002). The latter finding suggests that with age there might be increased knowledge about social class differences and the issue of servitude. Although research on adolescents' conceptions of the societal resources and fairness is limited, reviews on a range of related societal issues, from homelessness to civil rights-have shown that adolescents' thinking often varies as a function of age and social class (Flanagan, 2013). Studies suggest that older adolescents have a more complex understanding of equal rights to access societal resources, than their younger peers (e.g. Helwig et al., 2014).

The justifications for the evaluations were in line with the situational differences. The fewest number of moral justifications (55 %) were used with regard to the evaluations of torture than for the other situations, whereas the greatest number (33 %) of justifications (out of all situations) were based on societal utility and organization. An example of that type of reason is the following response of a 23-year-old male: "Because role of government is to preserve security and look at collective not individuals."

This type of finding was paralleled in the justifications for judgments regarding whether a law should exist allowing for the torture of prisoners (see Table 5). It appears, then, that participants – and more of the young adults than adolescents – gave credence to the idea that torture may be legitimate if it provides protection for national security. Correspondingly, a greater number in each age group asserted that in the context of torture on suspicion of terrorism, not all people should have the same rights, that is, the prisoners should not be granted the same rights. Additionally, more young adults (33 %) judged that there should be a law permitting torture than any of the acts in the other situations. Correspondingly more young adults (30 %), than in the other situations, judged that such a law renders the act acceptable.

Justifications for these judgments, especially by young adults, were more likely to be in the conventional domain (though still fewer than moral justifications). The young adults used conventional justifications, giving priority to "preserving national security and looking after the collective, not the individuals" (22-year-old, male), in the torture situation more than the adolescents and more than in any other situation. These findings align with the positions taken by philosophers (e.g., Walzer, 2007 ticking bomb example) that there are certain circumstances under which the use of torture might be seen as legitimate. Our findings are also in line with previous, related research, and offer further clarification on some ways in which adolescent and adult views differ. We know from civil rights studies that adolescents often subordinate civil liberties such as freedom of speech to moral concerns such as harm to an individual (1997, Helwig, 1995). By contrast, opinion polls such as the WorldOpinionPoll (2009), show that although a large majority of adults support rules against torture, significant minorities would make an exception in the case of terrorists who have information that could save lives, and would not prohibit humiliating or degrading treatment of detainees. It should be considered too, that this situation could be seen as different from the other three, in that torture is not, and could not be thought of as a "cultural practice" in a way that each of the other situations can be. If torture is a "special" context that elicits different considerations, from adolescents and adults, yet we know based on our other findings that the two age groups do not differ in their support for human rights in general, a possible conclusion emerges that the adults do not see torture as a human rights issue while the adolescents do. This suggestion, while tentative, is in line with our finding that the majority of adults thought that some people should sometimes not have human rights.

Large majorities evaluated the practices in the other three situations as wrong, but there were some age differences. In the situations involving forced head coverings and discrimination against Roma minorities, more young adults than adolescents were accepting of the rights violations. This suggests that to a greater extent than adolescents young adults gave priority to facets other than moral ones of welfare, justice, and dignity. For a minority of young adults, practices of gender-based and ethnicity-based discrimination in these contexts were acceptable, as were the laws that allowed them, because they were seen to be grounded in different cultural practices, as articulated by a 22-year-old female: "It is their culture, we cannot tell them how they should go about things."

This type of reasoning conflates cultural relativism (acknowledgement of the different value systems in cultures) or even cognitive relativism (the suggestion that there are no objective truths) with ethical relativism (the idea that there are no moral universals). Some (e.g. Beck, 2002; Mortimer & Larson, 2002) have suggested that because young adults in the United States are increasingly affected by social patterns fostering differentiation, multiculturalism, diversity, and individualization they develop a radical form of relativism - which holds that any opinion is as good as any other. In our interpretation however, these relativistic positions do not represent an internalization of cultural patterns or a failure to make moral judgments. Rather, it points to the complexity of coming to a decision about some multifaceted social situations, and a moral concern with tolerance. Developmentally, respecting and supporting diversity and pluralism, while embracing the notion that "all humans are created equal" can be a complex endeavor and it involves coordinating different domains of thought.

The situation involving the caste system, however, yielded contrasting evaluations in that a greater number of adolescents (21 %) than young adults (8%) judged the practice as alright or were equivocal. Given that for this situation adolescents gave more conventional justifications than the young adults, it may be that some still have less awareness of the economic and personal negative consequences of social group distinctions embedded in social hierarchies. It should be emphasized that these participants were in the minority, and that majorities in both age groups across all situations negatively evaluated the violations, as well as potential or actual laws that enable them, mainly with moral reasons.

Participants were also asked, for each situation, whether the act should be punished. Given the responses we obtained to this question, the findings need to be seen as exploratory. This is because the question seems to have elicited somewhat different considerations on the part of the participants from the main questions on evaluations, equality of rights, and legal status. Participants were largely divided in their views as to whether the violations of human rights in each of the four situations should be punished. Moral justifications were more likely to be provided for acceptance of punishment, and conventional justifications for the rejection of punishment. Endorsing punishment for morally based reasons seems easier to explain than the rejection of punishment for conventional reason. The moral reasoning for acceptance of punishment would be to the effect that a violation of human rights goes against the requirements of welfare, justice, and equality, and therefore requires retribution. These ideas are reflected in the responses of a 16-year-old male: "They're creating an unjust system, and if people are not okay with it, then it's all about them being selfish and it's not fair."

Rejecting punishment in cases of human rights violations for conventional reasons requires explanation not readily available. In their justifications, adolescents tended to suggest that those enacting the discriminating policies should not be punished because they are "just doing their jobs" or because they likely "have good intentions" which have to do with maintaining a larger societal harmony. Young adults tended to reference the need for education rather than punishment, indicating that restoration, or even rehabilitation, is preferable to retribution. Thus, although both age groups justified rejecting punishment with social conventional reasons, they focused on different aspect of those types of concerns, with young adults appearing to be more practical, or actionable, in their suggestions. However, further research is needed to ascertain how individuals think about retribution in the context of human rights violations.

The findings of the study we have reported bear directly on how individuals think about human rights and indirectly on contentions among philosophers, political scientists, and legal philosophers who have engaged in debates about the validity of the concept. As we have stressed, adolescents and young adults approach the general issue of human rights and instances of violations of human rights primarily from a moral perspective and to a lesser extent from the perspectives of societal organization and cultural practices. Although people also give importance to matters of personal choice and jurisdiction in many aspects of their lives, such considerations were not often brought to bear on human rights. The thinking of those who participated in this research clearly align with scholars from other disciplines who contend that human rights are connected to welfare, and justice and therefore can have universal appeal, and do not align with those who dismiss the concept of human rights on the grounds of cultural relativity. In conjunction with research on civil rights, the study we have reported shows that concepts of human rights are a major component of moral thinking, both when they are considered in the abstract and when they are considered in contexts of actually-occurring situations.

4.1. Limitations and future directions

In this study we only focused on high school age adolescents and young adults and compared the difference between the two. For a more comprehensive developmental account it would be very beneficial to include other younger or older age groups, or split the existing groups into younger and older cohorts. We will address these matters in future studies. Another limitation of the current study was that the relatively small sample did not allow for in-depth exploration of sub- sections of data. Given a larger sample size, it would have been interesting to further analyze some of the gender and age interactions within each of the social-cognitive domains separately. This could have provided more detailed explanations of the participants' reasoning. Further, our sampling drew from a cross-section of the population, aiming to be representative of general population rather than treating ethnicity or socioeconomic status as study variables. Therefore, any potential differences in reasoning that might be attributed to those factors would have to be explored in a separate, expanded study. Finally, although it is possible that people's reasoning about the value of life, justice, and harm in the context of human rights might be affected by their religious orientations which often ground such beliefs, level and type of religiousness were not variables in this study. Another future area of exploration, therefore, could be to study how the notions of justice rooted in different religious doctrines impact people's view of each other's rights, both across and within societies. Another area would be to explore moral reasoning of people who are stateless or displaced and for whom human rights might take on a larger significance in the absence of civil rights.

Appendix A

Social Situations

Caste system. The caste system in India distinguishes classes of people. There are those who are rich, those who are moderately well off, and those who are poor, known as *the untouchables*. The wealthy employ *the untouchables* to perform hard work for barely enough pay to feed their families. The middle classes, while not employing *the untouchables*, still have no physical contact with them.

Terrorism and torture. American oversees detention prisons, such as Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay became known to the public through the media, based on evidence of physical and psychological abuse, and torture of detainees by the US Army. The military and the government officials gave orders for the prisoners to be tortured, in order to extract information about possible terrorist plots.

Head covering. Saudi Arabia is a wealthy country and women there are highly educated, qualified and rich. The government, however, places many restrictions on them. Women must wear clothes that cover them head to toe, cannot question religious authorities and are not allowed to drive but must be driven by men who are either family or hired drivers.

Roma segregation. As a part of their cultural orientation the Roma people live transient lives. In many countries they are therefore undocumented and unregistered even if they live in their place of birth. As a result, regular employment is not accessible to them, and therefore, they often earn money as street performers, live segregated in shacks, and rummage through garbage.

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