

RUNNING HEAD: BJW and secondary victimization

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Are high strivers for justice more unjust when they react to a victim? Further evidence
on the effects of the belief in a just world, of the innocence of the victim and of the
persistence of suffering on secondary victimization

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Resumen

Esta investigación es un nuevo análisis de las relaciones entre la creencia en un mundo justo (BJW), la inocencia de la víctima y la persistencia del sufrimiento en la victimización secundaria. Estudios anteriores mostraron que la persistencia del sufrimiento de una víctima inocente incrementa la victimización secundaria de los sujetos con alta BJW en comparación con los sujetos con baja BJW (Correia y Vala, 2003). El estudio que describimos aquí pretende replicar estos hallazgos y superar las limitaciones metodológicas de los estudios previos. Los sujetos fueron 266 estudiantes de licenciatura. El diseño fue un factorial 2x2x2 inter-sujetos, comparando alta y baja BJW, inocencia vs. no inocencia de la víctima y dos niveles de persistencia del sufrimiento. Los resultados confirmaron parcialmente las predicciones. En las conclusiones analizamos las implicaciones teóricas y prácticas de estos datos.

Palabras Clave: Creencia en un mundo justo, inocencia de la víctima, justicia, victimización secundaria, persistencia del sufrimiento.

Abstract

This research aims to further explore the effects of Belief in a Just World (BJW), victim's innocence and persistence of suffering on secondary victimization. Previous studies showed that an innocent victim whose suffering is more persistent is more secondarily victimized by high BJW participants than by low BJW participants (Correia & Vala, 2003). This study intends to replicate this finding and to overcome methodological limitations of these previous studies. Participants were 266 undergraduate students. The design was between-subjects 2 BJW (high, low) X 2 innocence of the victim (innocent, non-innocent) X 2 persistence of the suffering of the victim (more persistent, less persistent). The results supported partially the predictions. Theoretical as well as social implications of these findings are discussed.

Key words: belief in a just world, victim's innocence, justice, secondary victimization, persistence of suffering

Are high strivers for justice more unjust when they react to a victim? Further evidence on the effects of the belief in a just world, of the innocence of the victim and of the persistence of suffering on secondary victimization

Innocent victims are often treated as if they were guilty of their suffering (e.g. Lerner & Simmons, 1966). Theoretical developments suggest that this is even more pronounced if their suffering is persistent and the observers have a high need to find justice in the world (Lerner, 1980). It is obvious that this phenomenon is harmful to the victims.

Recent research has given some support to this hypothesis (Correia & Vala, 2003). Consequently, we think that this effect has both theoretical and empirical interest and the study presented in this paper intends to contribute to shed further light on the impact of the observer's belief in a just world (BJW), the innocence of the victim and the persistence of suffering on secondary victimization. It also intends to overcome some methodological limitations of previous studies and to introduce open measures of secondary victimization. Moreover, it intends to explore the impact of the sex of the victim on secondary victimization.

The phenomenon of secondary victimization (Brickman et al., 1982), the set of reactions towards victims that contribute to worsen the effects of their situation (primary victimization: Brickman et al., 1982), is well known and documented in the literature (see Correia, 2003; Furnham, 2003; Furnham & Procter, 1989; Lerner & Miller, 1978 for reviews) and so are its manifestations (e.g. victim devaluation, avoidance of the victim, blaming of the victim and minimization of his/her suffering). As a consequence, victims often lack social support which research has shown to be central for their physical and psychological well-being and/or recovery (Cohen & Wills, 1985, Ross, Lutz, & Lakey, 1999).

One theoretical approach that has proved to be useful in the understanding of secondary victimization is the BJW theory (Lerner, 1980). Originally, it postulated that all people have the need to believe that the world in which they live is a just place, which would mean that all people believed, to a lesser or greater degree, the world is a place where each person gets what he/she deserves (Lerner & Simmons, 1966). In such a place, good people and good behaviours will originate positive outcomes whereas bad people and bad behaviours will bring about negative ones. According to Lerner (1980) the BJW, seemingly rooted in a primitive causal attribution scheme (Piaget, 1932), allows people to have confidence in the future and to carry out long-term projects.

The development of BJW scales (e.g. Dalbert, Montada & Schmitt, 1987; Lipkus, 1991; Rubin & Peplau, 1973, 1975) allowed the distinction between high and low believers in a just world (HBJWs and LBJWs, respectively). Later research has collected empirical evidence that BJW is also crucial for both non-victimized and victimized individuals' mental health, with HBJWs showing better mental health than LBJWs (Dalbert, 2001).

According to Lerner's theory, individuals feel the need to preserve their BJW, even when they face unjust situations, such as the suffering of innocent victims. However, this tendency is especially felt by HBJWs (those who are more motivated to see the world as a just place) when they lack the motivation or ability to change the victim's situation (Mohiyeddini & Montada, 1998). In either case, HBJWs, more than LBJWs, tend to reorganize their cognitions in such a way that they end up considering an innocent victim as non-innocent that is they secondarily victimize him/her. In fact, most research (Correia, 2003; Montada, 1998 for literature reviews) that assesses the impact of BJW on secondary victimization, HBJWs victimize victims in a higher degree than LBJWs and this happens among participants of different nationalities, in various

victimizing situations and with different measures of BJW. Therefore, the justice motive is paradoxically at the core of certain unjust reactions (Lerner, 1980).

Besides the perceiver's BJW degree, Lerner (1980) stated that two other factors contribute to increase the threat to the BJW caused by the confrontation with a victim: the fact that the victim is innocent, and the fact that his/her suffering can not be relieved. However, only recently (Correia & Vala, 2003) did empirical studies take into account the joint effect of the observer's BJW, the innocence of the victim and the persistence of suffering on secondary victimization.

In the first study (Correia, 2001; Correia et al., 2001) the impact of only two of these three variables was considered: the innocence of the victim and of the observer's BJW. The results showed that the various forms of secondary victimization were more positively associated under the condition where the threat to BJW was highest (HBJWs participants facing an innocent victim) than under the remaining conditions. In this study, the suffering of the victim was kept constant, and was very persistent. In two following studies (Correia, 2001; Correia & Vala, 2003) the joint impact of observers' BJW, the innocence of the victim and the persistence of his/her suffering on secondary victimization was analysed. The results showed effects of the observers' BJW as well as interaction effects among the variables. In fact, the victim was considered in a fairer situation or more derogated by HBJWs than by LBJWs. Moreover, the innocence of the victim moderated the impact of the observers' BJW on the judgement about the attractiveness of the victim: when the participants were confronted with an innocent victim, HBJWs derogated the victims more than did LBJWs, whereas for a non-innocent victim no such difference took place. Furthermore, the impact of both the innocence of the victim and the persistence of the victim's suffering on the judgement about the derogation of the victim was moderated by observers' BJW. In other words, when the observers were confronted with an innocent victim whose suffering was more

persistent, participants with a higher need to re-establish their BJW derogated the victims more than participants with a lower need. This moderation effects clearly show that only by taking into account the joint impact of the BJW, the victim's innocence and the persistence of suffering can we predict when a victim will be secondarily victimized.

As in Correia et al. (2001) and Correia and Vala (2003), in the present study we used the situation of an HIV-infected person. In these previous studies the primary victimization situation was that of someone who had become HIV-infected. The victim was identified as X, in order not to give away any clues about the victim's sex, age, social class or other social-demographic variables. The victim's innocence was operationalized by stating that X had become HIV-infected either because the condom broke (innocent victim) or no condom was used (non-innocent victim). The persistence of the victim's suffering (Correia & Vala, 2003), was operationalized by telling participants that there was either no hope of survival (more persistent suffering) or hope of survival (less persistent suffering)¹.

Although the pattern of results obtained in those studies were in line with the predictions, the joint effects among BJW, innocence of the victim and the persistence of suffering were expected to be more numerous. We consider this is the result of several methodological limitations in those studies and therefore some differences were introduced in the present study.

As far as independent variables are concerned, there are four main differences. Firstly, one of the reasons that might have contributed for the absence of these systematic joint effects may rely on the operationalizations of the innocence of the victim. In the current study the operationalization of the non-innocence was kept but that of the innocence was changed into a situation of blood transfusion. This change is due to the results obtained in Correia and Vala (2003). In that study, although there was a statistically significant difference between perceptions of the victim's innocence and

non-innocence in the predicted direction the participants did not consider the innocent victim as completely innocent. Since Weiner, Perry and Magnusson (1988) have shown that by telling participants that someone HIV-infected through a blood transfusion was considered innocent, and as we are not interested in studying the causes of innocence perception, but rather its effects on secondary victimization, we decided to change its operationalization.

Secondly, the persistence of the victim's suffering was operationalized differently. Whereas in Correia and Vala (2003) participants were told either there was hope or no hope of survival (less and more persistent suffering, respectively), in this study they were told that even with medical care the infected person will die from the disease (more persistent suffering) or that with medical care the infected person will survive it (less persistent suffering). We believe that in this way the future of the victim is stated less ambiguously.

Thirdly, this study was presented as an impression formation study whereas in the previous ones participants were informed that they were about people's opinions on HIV-infected people. This could have induced more normative responses of non secondary victimization towards innocent victims than presenting the study as an impression formation study.

Finally, the victim was identified by a common male (João) or female name (Maria), instead of by X. Our aim was to manipulate the sex of the victim, which had not been done in the previous studies, in order to explore any gender-related issues concerning secondary victimization of HIV-infected people. This may be especially likely when HIV-infection involves sexual activity. In fact, there is a double standard for men and women (Alferes, 1997) which, on the one hand, promotes sexual activity for men and, on the other hand, encourages passivity and virginity for women. This phenomenon is usual in numerous societies both in developing (Gupta, 2000; Rivers &

Aggleton, 1998) and in developed countries, such as Holland (van den Eijnden, Buunk & Bosveld, 2000) or Portugal (Alferes, 1997). Therefore we would expect a HIV-infected female to be more secondarily victimized than a male when sexual intercourse is at the origin of the situation.

As for the dependent measures, besides the attractiveness of the victim measure in Correia and Vala (2003) we introduced another measure of attractiveness of the victim.

In sum, this study aims to determine the impact of the observer's BJW, the victim's innocence and the persistence of suffering and to explore the impact of the sex of the victim on secondary victimization. The predictions are the following: (i) a main effect of the observers' BJW reflecting the fact that globally HBJWs victimize the victims more than LBJWs; (ii) a main effect of the victim's innocence reflecting the fact that globally the innocent victim is less subject to secondary victimization than the non-innocent victim, due to the social norm of objective evaluation of the victim that makes an innocent victim more positively evaluated than a non-innocent victim (Weiner, Perry & Magnusson, 1988); (iii) a three-way interaction effect between the observers' BJW, the victim's innocence and the persistence of the victim's suffering on secondary victimization: in agreement with Lerner and Simmons's (1966) results, we expect the innocent victim with a persistent suffering to be more secondarily victimized by HBJWs than by LBJWs; for the non-innocent victim conditions, and according to what was found by Correia and Vala (2003), it is expected that secondary victimization is higher when HBJWs judged the non-innocent victims whose suffering is less persistent, than when HBJWs judged these victims.

As far as the sex of the victim is concerned, this study is mainly exploratory. Therefore, we can only expect that there will be no differences between a male or female victim in the innocent victim condition (HIV-infected through a blood

transfusion). In the non-innocent condition (HIV-infected because no condom was used) it is expected that the female victim will be more secondarily victimized than the male because participants will focus on the counter-normativity of female sexual activity and, therefore, they will consider her more blameworthy.

Method

Participants

Three hundred and four undergraduate students from several majors and several universities took part in this study. The participants were recruited by students and received a randomly assigned questionnaire which they completed at home. Thirty-eight participants were excluded from analyses as a result of the check on the manipulation of the persistence of suffering variable. Of the remaining 266 participants, 96 were male and 170 female. Participants' ages varied between 17 and 41 years ($M = 21.37$; $SD = 3.34$).

Procedure and experimental design

Participants were invited to take part in two independent research projects. They were first presented a BJW scale, among other scales that acted as distractor items, so that the participant was not presented with the case of a victim immediately after making judgements about justice. The second study was presented as an impression formation study.

In this study, the design was between-subjects 2 X 2 X 2 X 2: the first variable is BJW (low: below the median; or high: above the median); the second variable is the victim's innocence (innocent victim: he/she became HIV- infected because he/she was treated with HIV-infected blood in a blood transfusion; non-innocent victim: he/she became HIV- infected because he/she did not use a condom); the third variable is the persistence of the victim's suffering (less persistent suffering, when it is said that the person will survive the disease; more persistent suffering, when it is said that the person

will die of the disease); the fourth variable is the sex of the victim (the victim was named with a female name - Maria - or a male name - João).

Independent variables

Belief in a just world. Participants began by answering the 6 items of the General Belief in a Just World scale by Dalbert, Montada and Schmitt (1987; $\alpha = .61$) on a 6-point scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 6 (completely agree). The mean of the answers to the scale is 3.10, with a standard deviation of .68 and a median of 3.17. Higher scores mean a higher BJW.

The victim's innocence. The victimization situation that was presented to participants consisted of a fictitious excerpt from an interview with an HIV-infected person that was infected through sexual intercourse with a friend. Under the “non-innocent victim” condition the individual was infected because he/she did not use a condom, although he/she knew the risks he/she ran; under the “innocent victim” condition, the individual was infected during a blood transfusion at the hospital, and so could not have avoided the disease.

Persistence of suffering. Before answering the questions about the victim, the participants read a sentence in the text about the persistence of the victim's suffering. The information given in the less persistent suffering condition was: “According to the doctors, with appropriate medical care there is hope that Maria/João will survive to the illness”; in the more persistent suffering condition: “According to the doctors, even with appropriate medical care Maria/João will die from the illness.”

The sex of the victim. It was said that the victim would be treated only by Maria or João in order to preserve his/her anonymity.

Dependent Variables

Attractiveness of the victim. To evaluate the attractiveness of the victim participants were asked to what extent much they imagined the victim: a physically

attractive person, a nice person, a good person, on a 1 (not at all) to 7 (certainly). Moreover, participants were asked to choose, from the following characteristics, which of them they thought described the victim: polite, responsible, mature, nice and warm. The measure of attractiveness was the number of characteristics assigned to the victim. An index of attractiveness of the victim was built ($\alpha = .73$).

Derogation of the victim. To evaluate the derogation of the victim, participants were asked to identify, from the following characteristics, which of them they thought described X: stupid, selfish, nervous, unconscientious, deceitful. The measure of derogation was the number of characteristics assigned to the victim.

Perception of justice and deservingness. The perception of the situation's justice in which the victim is was measured through the answer to the following questions: "How would you characterize the situation in which the victim finds herself/himself?", on a 1 (completely unjust) to 7 (completely just) Likert-type scale and "Maria/João deserves what happened to her/him" on a 1 (completely agree) to 7 (completely disagree) Likert-type scale. The last item was reverse coded and an index of perception of justice and deservingness ($\alpha = .65$)

Results

Manipulation check

Because the data for some participants were incomplete, the degrees of freedom differ slightly across the measures.

To check on the manipulation of the victim's innocence variable, participants were asked about the victim's innocence: "Could X have avoided the disease?" on a scale of 1 (no, not at all) to 7 (yes, completely). A univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) 2 (BJW: low/high) X 2 (victim's innocence: innocent/ non-innocent) X 2 (persistence of suffering: more persistent/ less persistent) X 2 (sex of the victim: female/male) on this variable, revealed a significant main effect of the victim's

innocence ($F(1, 248) = 773.71, p < .001$), with the participants regarding the HIV-infected individual who did not use a condom as more capable of avoiding his/her infection ($M = 6.33$), that is less innocent, than the individual that was infected by a blood transfusion ($M = 1.72$). Moreover 1.72 is different from 4 which is the mean point of the scale ($t(128) = -17.26, p < .001$). Therefore the manipulation of the variable “victim's innocence” was successful.

To check on the manipulation of the “persistence of suffering” variable, participants answered two questions: “The negative consequences of the situation of Maria/João can be easily repaired?” on a 1 (easily repaired) to 7 (can not be repaired) scale and “The situation of Maria/João have negative consequences that are temporary or permanent?” on a 1 (temporary) to 7 (permanent) Likert-type scale. We took the mean of these two answers as a measure of persistence of suffering ($\alpha = .63$). A univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) 2 (BJW: low/high) X 2 (victim's innocence: innocent/ non-innocent) X 2 (persistence of suffering: more persistent/ less persistent) X 2 (sex of the victim: female/male) in this variable, revealed a significant main effect of the persistence of suffering ($F(1, 248) = 36.65, p < .001$) with the participants in the more persistent condition considering the suffering as more persistent ($M = 6.58$) than the participants in the less persistent condition ($M = 5.88$).

Moreover, at the end of the questionnaire participants answered the question “According to the doctors there is some hope that X will survive the disease?”, choosing one of two alternatives “There is hope” or “There is no hope.” Just as was mentioned above, only participants who answered correctly were included in the analyses of the results.

Secondary victimization

Preliminary analyses showed that the sex of the victim did not reveal significant effects and therefore will not be further considered. A univariate analysis of variance

(ANOVA) 2 (BJW: low/high) X 2 (victim's innocence: innocent/ non-innocent) X 2 (persistence of suffering: more persistent/ less persistent) was conducted for each of the dependent variables. Table I presents means and standard deviations of dependent variables by condition.

Attractiveness of the victim. Regarding the attractiveness of the victim, the only significant effect found was a three-way interaction between BJW, the innocence of the victim, and the persistence of the victim's suffering ($F(1, 253) = 5.00, p = .026$) (Figure 1). All the remaining effects were not significant (all F 's < 2.06 , all p 's $> .10$).

In line to what was expected, under the condition in which the victim is innocent and the suffering is more persistent the attractiveness of the victim was marginally lower for HBJWs ($M = 4.00$) than for LBJWs ($M = 4.43, F(1, 253) = 2.95, p = .09$), whereas for the “non-innocent victim/ more persistent suffering” conditions the difference in attractiveness between HBJWs ($M = 4.60$) and LBJWs ($M = 4.46$) was nonsignificant ($F(1, 253) = 1.46, p > .10$). Another effect that was found was that HBJWs judged innocent victims more attractive if their suffering is less persistent ($M = 4.60$) than when their suffering is more persistent ($M = 4.00, F(1, 253) = 5.54, p = .019$). Contrarily to what was expected, there was no significant difference between high and low believers in a just world when judging a non-innocent victim of a less persistence suffering ($M = 4.30$ and $M = 4.07, F(1, 253) = .83, p > .10$).

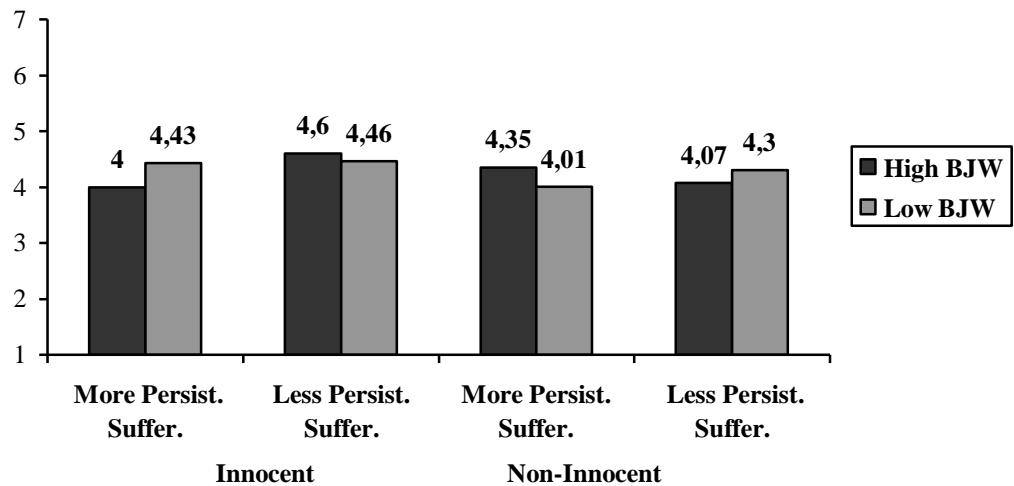
Table 1.

Means and standard deviations on the dependent variables by condition

Innocent Victim					
		High BJW		Low BJW	
		More	Less	More	Less
		Persistent	Persistent	Persistent	Persistent
Attractiveness		4.00	4.60	4.43	4.46
		(1.22)	(1.23)	(.93)	(1.06)
Derogation		.94	.32	.62	.59
		(1.16)	(.57)	(.61)	(.92)
Justice		1.71	1.30	1.24	1.40
		(1.25)	(.67)	(.64)	(1.02)
Non-Innocent Victim					
		High BJW		Low BJW	
		More	Less	More	Less
		Persistent	Persistent	Persistent	Persistent
Attractiveness		4.35	4.07	4.01	4.30
		(.97)	(.92)	(.90)	(.77)
Derogation		1.26	1.29	1.04	1.40
		(.83)	(.90)	(.69)	(.72)
Justice		3.12	3.13	2.39	2.65
		(1.38)	(1.22)	(1.17)	(1.35)

Figure 1

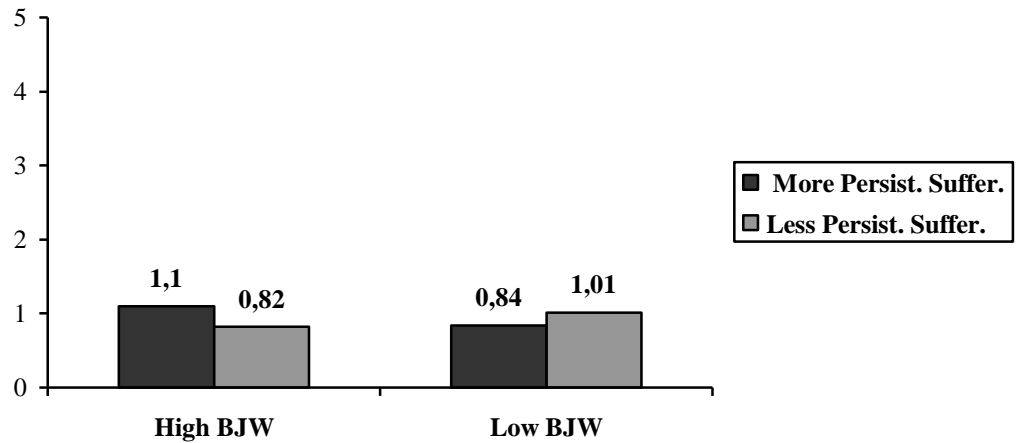
Interaction between the observers' BJW, the victim's innocence and the persistence of suffering on the attractiveness of the victim



Derogation of the victim. Regarding the derogation of the victim, there was one main effect of the victim's innocence and two two-way interactions: one between the BJW and the persistence of suffering and another one between the persistence of suffering and the innocence of the victim. Participants attributed more negative traits to the non-innocent victim ($M = 1.26$) than to the innocent victim ($M = .62$, $F(1, 257) = 35.44$, $p < .001$). In this way the innocent victim was less negatively evaluated in comparison to a non-innocent victim. The two-way interaction between the BJW and the persistence of the suffering ($F(1, 257) = 4.74$, $p = .031$) showed that for LBJWs there is no influence of the persistence of the victim's suffering on the number of negative traits assigned to the victim ($M = .84$ and $M = 1.01$ are not significantly different ($F(1, 257) = 1.19$, $p > .10$), whereas HBJWs assign more negative traits to the victim of a more persistent suffering than to the victim of a less persistent suffering ($M = 1.10$ and $M = .82$, $F(1, 257) = 3.92$, $p = .049$) (Figure 2).

Figure 2

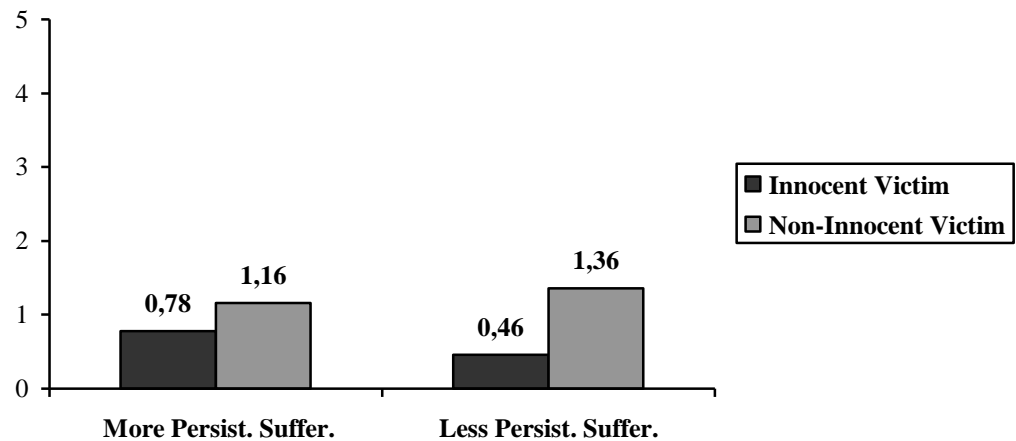
Interaction between the observer's BJW and the persistence of suffering on the derogation of the victim



The two-way interaction between persistence of suffering and the innocence of the victim ($F(1, 257) = 6.27, p = .013$) showed that when the victim is innocent more negative traits are assigned to the victim of a more persistent suffering ($M = .78$) than to the victim of a less persistent suffering ($M = .46, F(1, 257) = 4.81, p = .029$), whereas when the victim is non-innocent no more negative traits are assigned to the victim of a less persistent suffering ($M = 1.36$) than to the victim of a more persistent suffering ($M = 1.16, F(1, 257) = 1.78, p > .10$) (Figure 3). All the remaining effects were not significant (all F 's $< .41$, all p 's $> .10$).

Figure 3

Interaction between the victim's innocence and the persistence of suffering on the derogation of the victim



Perception of justice and deservingness. Regarding the perception of justice and deservingness of the victim's situation, there was one main effect of the victim's innocence and one main effect of the observer's BJW. The main effect of the BJW on the perception of justice ($F(1, 255) = 7.39, p = .007$) means that participants with HBJW regarded X's situation as being fairer ($M = 2.32$) than did participants with LBJW ($M = 1.94$). The main effect of the victim's innocence on the perception of justice means that participants think the non-innocent person is in a fairer situation ($M = 2.84$) than the innocent person ($M = 1.14; F(1, 255) = 94.96; p < .001$). All the remaining effects were not significant (all F 's < 2.10 , all p 's $> .10$).

Discussion

The aim of this research was to further explore the impact of the observer's BJW, the victim's innocence and the persistence of suffering on secondary victimization, trying to replicate some of the previous results obtained and overcoming methodological limitations of those studies.

The results unequivocally showed the importance of the three variables considered for secondary victimization and globally the results were according to the predictions.

Non-innocent victims were attributed more negative traits than the innocent victim and were considered in a more just situation, reflecting the social norm of objective evaluation of the victim (Weiner, Perry & Magnusson, 1988) and according to the results obtained in previous studies (Correia, et al., 2001; Correia & Vala, 2003).

As far as the effects of BJW are concerned, globally participants with HBJW considered the victim more deserving of the situation in which the victim finds himself/herself than LBJWs.

As predicted there were combined effects of the observer's BJW, the victim's innocence and the persistence of suffering on secondary victimization. A combined effect of these three variables was found on the attractiveness of the victim. As expected, the innocent victim with a more persistent suffering was judged less attractive by HBJWs than by LBJWs. Also high believers in a JW judged innocent victims more attractive if their suffering is less persistent than when their suffering is more persistent.

Although not predicted, but not contradicting the general hypotheses we found combined effects of two of the variables that we considered would affect secondary victimization: BJW and persistence of suffering on one hand, and innocence of the victim and persistence of suffering on the other hand. We found that for LBJWs there is no influence of the persistence of the victim's suffering on the derogation of the victim whereas HBJWs derogate more the victim of a more persistent suffering than to the victim of a less persistent suffering. On the other hand, we found that when the victim is innocent s/he is more derogated when her/his suffering is more persistent (the most threatening victim) than when her/his suffering is less persistent. On the contrary, when

the victim is non-innocent there is no such difference. Therefore the results support our predictions.

Compared with the previous studies (Correia et al, 2001; Correia & Vala, 2003) more numerous and more consistent effects were found on this study. One of the reasons might be the fact that with the new operationalization of the innocence of the victim, the innocent victim was really perceived as not capable of avoiding her situation. Besides the fact that the study was presented as an impression formation may have decreased the impact of the social norm of non-secondarily victimize an innocent victim.

However, the effects of the independent variables did not exactly match the ones of previous studies as far as the forms of secondary victimization in which they were obtained are concerned. For instance, in Correia and Vala (2003) study there was a combined effect among observer's BJW, the victim's innocence and the persistence of the suffering on the measure of derogation of the victim whereas in this study these three variables had effects combined in two: BJW and persistence of suffering, and innocence of the victim and persistence of suffering. The opposite happened as far as the attractiveness of the victim is concerned: in the present study the independent variables had a joint effect, whereas in the other study there was only a joint effect of two of them - BJW and the innocence of the victim. It is our opinion that the study of the different forms of secondary victimization towards a victim and in what situations they are more probable is an important avenue of research.

As far as the sex of the victim is concerned, although a clear pattern of results was not found, we still think future studies should include this variable because in fact victims have a sex and probably this variable also affects observers' reactions towards them. If the sex of the participant is also considered we will be studying secondary victimization in an intergroup relations context.

One main question arises as to what the implications of these findings are. Theoretically, these results confirmed that although people have some objectivity in reacting to victims according to their innocence, it seems that the motivation to find justice in the world makes people less just in the way they evaluate the victims. What are the social implications of this finding? This may mean that people do not adequately react to innocent victims (people that do not have what they deserve) even if they care for people having what they deserve. We should then make people aware of this effect before they confront victims, for instance by integrating this knowledge in the common sense. People should then be educated to react to the victims restoring justice actionally and not psychologically. This means helping the victims and not blaming them.

Footnotes

1 It could be argued that when there is no hope of survival participants may think that the victim will suffer for less time than when they are told there is hope of survival.

However, Correia and Vala (2003) showed that opposite was true.

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