ABSTRACT

People agree that legitimate victims ought to be helped and illegitimate victims ought to be punished. Yet, people disagree about who is a legitimate victim. Victimologists theorize that legitimate occupants of the victim role possess characteristics which make them worthy of sympathy. However, this hypothesis is untested. Social contract theory posits that people are suspicious of social exchanges; claims to the victim role activate a social contract that requires others to engage in a social exchange. Thus, people may seek to disqualify victimization claims, but may acknowledge victims as legitimate when they fail to find delegitimizing evidence. Research indicates that individual differences in moral values, just world beliefs, and political values may influence reactions to victims. An individual’s moral values and political values may determine how they conceptualize the victim role. Individuals with strong just world beliefs are more likely to seek out ways to blame victims. This dissertation empirically examined how individuals describe victims and people’s tendency to be suspicious of claims to the victim role. Study 1 examined the language used to describe victims and how moral values, just world beliefs, and political values were related to these descriptions. Results indicated that the victim role comprises meaningful and intuitive concepts such as innocence, vulnerability, experiencing harm, and helplessness. Illegitimate victims were described as phony victims who were attention seekers. Legitimate victims were defined by their situation. Illegitimate victims were defined characteristically as frauds, fakers, and liars. Moral values related to harm, fairness, and
purity were used to describe victims. Study 2 tested whether people seek to confirm or disconfirm claims to the victim role. Participants generally sought to confirm claims. However, Democrats preferred confirming evidence, whereas Republicans preferred disconfirming evidence. The evidence contradicted the hypotheses based on social contract theory and supported the idea that the victim role is central to thoughts about and evaluations of victims. These results provide insight into the victim role and how personal values related to morals, politics, and justice influence reactions to victims.

*Keywords:* Victim, Social Role Theory, Social Contract Theory, Moral Values, Political Affiliation, Just World Beliefs
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved wife, Annika, who has taught me to appreciate the importance of being frank.
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

*Df* Degrees of freedom: number of values free to vary after certain restrictions have been placed on the data

*F* Fisher’s F ratio: A ratio of two variances

*t* Gosset’s t student distribution

*M* Mean: the sum of a set of measurements divided by the number of measurements in the set

*SD* Standard deviation: the square root of the variance of sample

*p* Probability associated with the occurrence under the null hypothesis of a value as extreme as or more extreme than the observed value

*N* Number of participants in a given sample

*α* Cronbach’s alpha, a measure of internal consistency

*r* Pearson product-moment correlation

*R^2* Coefficient of determination: Pearson product-moment correlation squared

*d* Cohen’s D

> Greater than

< Less than

= Equal to
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Discussions about victimization and “playing the victim” have become prosaic in Western society. The media’s obsession with overreporting and dramatizing victimization is well-documented (e.g., Greer, 2007; Reiner et al., 2003; Reiner et al., 2000). One of the central questions researchers and laymen ask when examining victim narratives is, “Is the victim worthy of sympathy?” (van Dijk, 2009; Christie, 1986). This question assumes that there are qualifications for legitimate victim status. Yet it is unclear what those qualifications are and whether individuals seek to legitimize or delegitimize claims to the victim role.

Regardless, due to the victim role’s ubiquity, sociologists argue that victim status is now a social status (e.g., Greer, 2007; Parsons, 1950/1991). Many social scientists (e.g., Campbell & Manning, 2014; van Dijk, 2009; Best, 1997) are unsurprised by this development, because those who obtain victim status become entitled to numerous benefits. For instance, merely claiming victim status may make a previously trivial misfortune seem more severe and thereby enable the claimant to receive greater social and financial support (Campbell & Manning, 2014).

Furthermore, the notion that legitimate victims ought to receive assistance is universally assumed in modern societies (Jensen & Rønsbo, 2014). However, claims to the victim role are not always successful (e.g., van Dijk, 2009) and can lead to adverse consequences when the claims fail (Pollack, Danziger, Jayakody, & Seefeldt, 2002). Despite the protected nature of victim status, claims to this role are controversial and the criteria by which victims are accepted
as legitimate are poorly understood (van Dijk, 2009; Christie, 1986). There are no empirical studies on how the victim role is defined or what determines whether people seek to legitimize or delegitimize claims to the victim role.

I had three goals in this study. First, I attempted to examine how legitimate victims and illegitimate victims are described as a way to understand the characteristics and qualifications necessary to obtain victim status. Second, I attempted to test whether people seek to confirm or disconfirm claims to the victim role. Third, I attempted to examine whether moral values, just world beliefs, and political values provide insight into how individuals define the victim role and whether these values and beliefs affect reactions to those who claim the victim role. Three topics are addressed in the literature review. First, an argument is made for the existence of the victim role based on social role theory. Second, an argument is made that people are motivated to seek out ways to delegitimize claims to the victim role based on social contract theory. Third, I will argue for the ways that individual differences in moral foundations, just world beliefs, and political values may influence how people think about victims and can provide convergent validity regarding victim descriptions. Lastly, two studies are reported. In the first study, descriptions of illegitimate victims and legitimate victims were collected to gain insight into these concepts. The second study was an attempt to experimentally test whether individuals seek to disconfirm or confirm claims to the victim role, and whether this approach is related to political values or moral beliefs.

**The Victim Role as a Social Role**

Social role theory asserts that stereotypes associated with social roles (e.g., gender, race, police officer, professor) influence individuals’ responses to occupants of these social
roles (Eagly, 1984; Rudman & Glick, 2001). Whereas this theory has traditionally been used as a framework for examining the influence of gender roles, it has far reaching implications for how individuals understand other social roles (Koenig & Eagly, 2014; Kleider et al., 2008). For instance, Kleider, Cavrak, & Knuycky (2012) found evidence that stereotypic Black face types are more likely to be categorized as belonging to drug dealers. Additionally, Koenig and Eagly’s (2014) research indicated that participants ascribe certain occupations and attributes to members of particular social groups (e.g., fast food worker is a high school dropout). Using social role theory as a framework for understanding the victim role, it is likely that there are stereotypical traits and behaviors associated with victims if the victim role is a social role.

Victimologists and sociologists contend that the victim role is a social role (e.g., van Djik, 2013; Greer, 2007; Spalek, 2006; Reiner et al. 2003; Christie, 1986; Parsons, 1951/1991). In his seminal work on the “ideal victim”, Nils Christie (1986) suggested that a legitimate victim is innocent, vulnerable/weak, completing a noble work (i.e., helping someone else) when they were victimized, defenseless, deserving of sympathy, and the offender is undeniably bad. This is generally accepted by social scientists as the most complete description of the victim role (e.g., van Djik, 2009; Greer, 2007). Yet, there are no empirical studies examining how ordinary people define legitimate or illegitimate victims. However, there is indirect evidence that people have criteria by which they identify victims and by which the legitimacy of a claim to the victim role is tested.

On one hand, many claims to the victim role appear to be recognized and accepted. Claims to the victim role are often successful for several reasons. First, the victim role is associated with expectations of access to public resources throughout the modern world.
(Fassin & Rechtman, 2009). Second, “norms to be kind” lead many to feel social pressure to be compassionate toward victims and to display positive public attitudes about victims (e.g., van Dijk, 2013; Hastorf, Northcraft, & Picciotto, 1979; Kleck, 1968). Third, individuals often empathize with victims (Batson, Early, & Salvarani, 1997) and often experience feelings of personal responsibility to help victims (Tilker, 1970). Fourth, victims can use various governmental and non-governmental institutions to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the public (For a review of the inter-level sociological influence of the victim status see Jensen & Rønsbo, 2014). Fifth, the near universality of the construct suggests that it is useful and socially adaptive.

On the other hand, at least some claims to the victim role evoke suspicion. Individuals are willing to directly challenge claims they believe are attempts to cheat the social system (e.g., Delton et al., 2012; Fehr & Gächter, 1999). Van Dijk (2013) has pointed out that the victim role may be used as a pejorative. For instance, “playing the victim” and “playing the race card” are considered poor excuses for bad behavior, failing to meet social obligations, or for making illicit requests for assistance. The 2012 US presidential candidate Mitt Romney insinuated that many Americans use the victim role to justify illicit claims to public financial support: “There are 47 percent (of the voting population) ... who believe that they are victims... that they are entitled to health care, to food, to housing, to you name it.” Moreover, some individuals’ unwillingness to endorse illicit claims compels them to sacrifice their own best interests to punish those who subvert the social system (Fehr & Gächter, 1999; Pollack, Danziger, Jayakody, & Seefeldt, 2002). This desire to punish those who break the rules, even at a high personal cost, appears to be universal (Henrich, 2006).
Despite the fact that the victim role appears to be a social role, there is no empirical research on the specific qualifications or characteristics that define legitimate or illegitimate victims. On one hand, victims are recognized universally. On the other one hand, some people fail to qualify as legitimate victims. Previous research indicates how people react to identified social system cheaters, but it is untested whether people think about claims to the victim role using implicitly agreed upon standards. This appears to be a significant gap in victim literature. Thus, collecting people’s descriptions of victims should provide insight into whether people use specific criteria to judge victims and whether these criteria are commonly accepted or idiosyncratic.

**Victim Status as a Social Contract**

Many psychologists argue that the way in which humans’ process social exchanges is a product of their need to solve adaptive social problems (e.g., Cosmides & Tooby 1992; Gigerenzer & Hug, 1992). Cosmides & Tooby’s (1989) social contract theory (SCT) posits that due to the social needs of early hunter-gatherers, humans have developed the ability to automatically inspect social exchanges that entail benefits gained when costs are paid. 

Expanding this perspective to the current project, the victim role can be regarded as a social status that entitles the victim to certain shared resources to compensate them for the costs they incurred from an unfortunate event or circumstance. However, as noted above, there appear to be qualifications for successful claims to victim status. Social contract theory can account for these qualifications. Social contract theory posits that we use a cheater detector algorithm to identify cases in which someone takes a benefit, in this case claiming the victim role, without paying the cost. These individuals are illegitimate victims. Whereas
legitimate victims produce feelings of sympathy and compassion, illegitimate victims elicit feelings of frustration and moral outrage. Thus, the victim role is a valid position to hold in a social exchange, but illicit attempts to benefit from this position may lead to harsh consequences.

**Cheater detector module.** Numerous studies indicate that people are highly attuned to the possibility that others are trying to shirk their social contract obligations (e.g., Mathew, & Boyd, 2013; Delton et al., 2012; Cosmides & Tooby, 1992). Children as young as four can detect cheaters (Harris, Nunez, & Brett, 2001). Attempts to cheat the social system may lead to physical punishment or ostracization (e.g., Mathew, & Boyd, 2013; Fehr & Gächter, 1999). Furthermore, Cosmides and Toby’s (1992) research indicates that social exchange problems are assessed with the goal of detecting social exchange cheaters. However, individuals also appear to be wary of systematically punishing everyone who fails to contribute. A study by Delton et al., (2012) indicated that people are excellent at differentiating between those who are unable to contribute to their social group and those who intentionally try to abuse the group’s cost-benefit social contracts. Participants in this study were willing to share resources with those who were ill and with those who were unsuccessfully attempting to contribute, but not with those who were intentionally lazy or shirking their obligations.

Cosmides and Tooby (2008) have thus argued that our minds have adapted to uniquely deal with cheaters by evolving a detection module that is automatically activated in social exchanges. There is some research supporting that social exchanges are related to specific brain networks which are unrelated to general problem solving (Ermer, Guerin, Cosmides, Tooby, & Miller, 2006; Stevens & Hauser, 2004). Additionally, individuals with bilateral impairment to the
limbic system perform worse on social exchange problems, but not on general reasoning problems (Stone, Cosmides, Tooby, Kroll, & Knight, 2002). Lier, Revlin and Neys (2013) have found evidence supporting the cheater detector module’s automaticity. By using a dual-task load procedure, they found that participants could solve social exchange word problems regardless of cognitive load, but cognitive load impaired performance on non-social word problems.

It seems likely that we possess a cheater detector algorithm and that it is modular. However, the question of how it operates in response to claims to the victim role remains. On one hand, if someone claims victim status, then social pressure and personal biases may lead people to accept claims of victimhood. Individuals seek to support hypotheses formed from initial impressions of other people and weigh evidence supporting these hypotheses more heavily than evidence that undermines their hypotheses (e.g., Darley and Gross, 1983). People tend to rely on their previous beliefs when making decisions more than newly encountered facts that contradict their beliefs (e.g., O’Brien, 2009; Nickerson, 1998). When people seek out evidence that supports their beliefs, they become more biased in favor of those beliefs rather than weighing all new evidence equally (Jonas & Schultz-Hart, 2001). Thus, if people accept the victim role as a social status, they may seek to support their notions about the victim role by confirming claims to it. On the other hand, if a claim to the victim role is evaluated under the same scrutiny as other forms of cost-benefit social exchanges, then the automatic activation of the cheater detector module will compel observers to seek to disconfirm claims to the victim role. In other words, if people have a natural tendency to be suspicious about claims to the victim role, then they will attempt to confirm the hypothesis that the claim is illicit by looking
for evidence that disconfirms it. Cosmides (1989) has argued that the way in which social exchange problems are handled, and thereby the hypotheses formed in relation to such problems, are content-specific. The content of a claim to the victim role is the request for some benefit at the cost of the observer which should automatically activate the cheater detector module. Thus, people may attempt to confirm their assumptions that claims to the victim role may be illicit.

It may be the case that when social contracts are well-known and offer benefits to the successful claimant, as is the case with the victim status, there would be specific qualifications to legitimize a claim. Whereas a person categorized as a legitimate victim would only need to have experienced sufficient misfortune, there are many ways in which someone could become categorized as an illegitimate victim. In other words, a cheater is someone who violates a social contract, but they may cheat by lying about experiencing a misfortune, exaggerating the misfortune, making poor efforts to resolve the misfortune, abusing the social benefits of their legitimate victim status, and so on. Like the rules of a board game, there is only one way to play correctly, but many ways to cheat. Individuals’ notions about illegitimate victims are likely far more elaborate than their notions about legitimate victims and may be inseparable from cognitions about legitimate victims.

**Individual Differences in Reactions to Victims**

People do not always agree about who is a legitimate victim (Campbell & Manning, 2014). There are several well-known individual differences that might affect the process by which individuals judge victims and how that process unfolds. Previous research provides
indirect evidence that moral values, just world beliefs, and political values may be important variables in judging the legitimacy of victims.

Claims to the victim role are based on moral assumptions and the language of victimization is saturated with moral judgments such as “innocent”, “wrong”, “unfair”, and “not guilty” (e.g., Christie, 1986; Lerner, 1980). In van Dijk’s (2009) case study of famous victims, he argued that victims who have fallen out of favor in the media were assigned undesirable dispositional labels (e.g., liar, cheater, faker), but ideal victims were described using language that focused on the misfortunate event rather than the victim (e.g., ‘someone who has been harmed’, ‘a bad thing happened to them’). Van Dijk (2009) suggested that legitimate victims are passive in their own victimization narrative and illegitimate victims are seen as aggressors against the social system. Multiple studies indicate that moral values influence reactions to victims. People feel an obligation to help victims (Tilker, 1970), especially when reminded of their own in-group’s history of suffering (Warner, Wohl, & Branscombe, 2014). Victims may be judged for their actions. For instance, compassion towards welfare recipients is contingent on their effort to work (Petersen, Sznycer, Cosmides, & Tooby, 2012).

Moral foundation theory posits that humans possess only a few central moral tenets, but cultural context determines how these moral values are expressed (Graham et al., 2013). Researchers have consistently found five moral foundations that individuals possess in varying degrees: care/harm; fairness/cheating; loyalty/betrayal; authority/subversion; sanctity/degradation (e.g., Graham, et al., 2013; Haidt & Hersh, 2001; Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009). Care/harm is related to a sense of nurturing others and sensitivity to others experiencing harm. Fairness/cheating is related to equity. Loyalty/betrayal is related to allegiance to in-
groups. Authority/subversion is related to respect for established institutions and social systems. Sanctity/ degradation is related to moral purity such as chastity.

People can accurately state which foundations are important to them when given lists of moral values (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009). These lists correlate strongly with the moral foundations questionnaire (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009). Moral values appear to be related to judgments about social groups. For instance, higher scores on fairness predict more positive attitudes about members of an organization whose specific mission is supporting fairness and equality (i.e., American Civil Liberties Union) and higher scores on authority predict more positive attitudes about police officers (Graham et al., 2011).

There is also research indicating that text analysis techniques can be used to show that moral values can predict behavior. The moral foundations dictionary is a word library that is strongly correlated with the moral foundation questionnaire (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009). This dictionary can be used to analyze bodies of text by calculating the proportion of words in these bodies of texts and examining how these scores are related to individual reports of specific moral values. It has been used to predict people’s attitudes about life events (Sagi & Dehghani, 2013). The moral foundations dictionary also appears to be a reliable indicator of individuals’ moral values across time as their moral values develop and change (Leidner & Castano, 2012). For example, individuals who have strong moral concerns for fairness are likely to use more fairness related words when describing social events.

In addition to the fact that people appear to be motivated to detect illegitimate victims, people may also seek to delegitimize victims to preserve their sense of a just world (e.g., Lerner, 1980; Lerner, 1966). The just world hypothesis states that people develop a strong motive for
justice because they need to believe in an orderly and fair world (Lerner, 1977). The world is orderly if people can control their outcomes. It is fair if people who perform the right behaviors are rewarded and those who perform the wrong behaviors are punished. Many researchers have found that violations of these beliefs, such as innocent people being harmed, can create a threat to an individual’s sense of a just world (see Lerner, 1980 for a review of research from 1966-1980; see Hafer & Bégue, 2005 for a review of research from 1980-2005). Thus, even if a misfortunate individual would typically be categorized as a legitimate victim, if they pose a threat to an individual’s sense of a just world they may still generate negative reactions.

Political values may influence perceptions of victims and decision-making styles. In the US, self-defined political identity consistently predicts beliefs about social, economic, and foreign policy (e.g., Inbar & Lammers, 2012; Graham et al. 2013; Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009). Haidt (2001) notes that these beliefs color individual perspectives on how important and controversial issues are understood. For instance, gay marriage is perceived as a matter of equality for liberal-leaning individuals, whereas for many conservatives it is a matter of potential harm (Haidt & Hersh, 2001). Both conservatives and liberals tend to be more likely to support a policy that is framed in terms of their party’s values (Day, Fiske, Downing, & Trail, 2012). There is also research indicating that political affiliation may influence thinking styles (Iyer et al., 2012).

Moral values, just world beliefs, and political values appear to be related. Moral foundations correlate with political beliefs (Graham et al., 2013) and just world beliefs are positively correlated with conservative values (Anderson et al., 1997). Moral values predict whether a candidate or policy will be supported (Skitka & Baumann, 2008). Iyer et al. (2012)
found evidence that Democrats are primarily concerned with caring for others and equality whereas Republicans appear to also place high value on loyalty to others, respect for authority, and maintaining purity (e.g., avoiding disgusting objects and non-normative sexual practices). Consequently, moral foundations, just world beliefs, and political affiliation may provide insight into individual differences in responses to victims. Whereas social liberals may be willing to embrace victims of unfair rules (e.g., traditionally marginalized groups) as legitimate victims, social conservatives are more likely to regard these individuals as trying to subvert social intuitions, because conservatives place higher value on institutional authority and social order (Janoff-Bulman & Carnes, 2016).

In this introduction, I described how social role theory and social contract theory may direct conceptualizations about victims. The victim role is assumed to be a social role by many social scientists. Yet, this notion is empirically untested. Research indicates that individuals need to qualify for the victim role. Yet, there is no research on these qualifications. Research indicates that people are suspicious of social exchanges. It has been argued that claimants to the victim role are requesting a social exchange whereby the costs they have incurred from their misfortune qualifies them to certain benefits. Thus, people are likely suspicious about claims to the victim role. The victim role may be the byproduct a failed search for illegitimate victims. Thus, the illegitimate victim may be the primary concept when thinking about victims. Lastly, moral values, just world beliefs, and political values appear to be related to how people evaluate victims.
The Present Study

It is hypothesized that the victim role has specific qualifications and characteristics that people can describe. Legitimate victims will be described in terms of having suffered. Illegitimate victims will be described as cheaters and rule breakers. It is hypothesized that more sympathetic and compassionate language will be used to describe legitimate victims than illegitimate victims. It is hypothesized that legitimate victims will be described as those who are not illegitimate victims. Thus, more negation terms (e.g., “not guilty”, “blameless”) will be used to describe legitimate victims than illegitimate victims. Based on previous research, it is hypothesized that liberalness should positively correlate with concerns about harm and equality. Based on previous research, it is hypothesized that Conservativeness should positively correlate with concerns about authority, loyalty, and sanctity. Based on previous research, it is hypothesized that just world beliefs should correlate with conservativeness. It is hypothesized that people will seek out information that disconfirms claims to the victim role. Because conservatives tend to use more moral values in their decision making than liberals, conservatives should be more likely detect illegitimate victims. Thus, it is hypothesized that conservatives will tend to seek out evidence to disconfirm claims to the victim role to a greater degree than liberals.

In the next section, two studies are presented. These studies were designed to examine how people define victims and whether people have tendency to seek out information that confirms or disconfirms claims to the victim role.
CHAPTER 2: PILOT STUDY

To test the most appropriate way to ask participants to describe legitimate victims, two samples using two different test questions were collected. An undergraduate sample of 35 people (Figure 2.1) and a graduate student/post-undergraduate sample of 12 people (Figure 2.2) were collected. Undergraduate students were asked to, “list five things that describe victims” whereas graduate students were asked, “what are five things you would use to describe or assign to a legitimate victim?” Responses were examined visually in list format and as word clouds. Word clouds calculate the frequency and likelihood of co-occurrence of words in a text to create an image. Word size indicates frequency whereas dispersion indicates the likelihood of co-occurrence of two words. After removing filler words and phrases (e.g., “that has a”, “someone who had”, “A victim that”), the undergraduate sample contained 194 root words (e.g., “take”, “take-n”, “tak-ing”), 66 of which were synonyms, and 37 duplicates that were reported by two or more participants. After removing filler words and phrases the graduate sample contained 77 root words, 22 of which were synonyms, and 17 duplicates. The two lists contained 18 identical words: injured, damaged, harmed, helpless, hurt, innocent, needy, sad, scared, vulnerable, weak, and wronged. Although these results indicated that similar victim descriptions were used responses to both question formats, many distinct concepts emerged as well. It is important to note the low amount of duplicate words.

Participants were specifically instructed to list 5 different descriptions of victims. Thus, the
percentage of duplicates was expected to be small. However, the pilot studies demonstrated that the questions appeared to be coherent and participants within and between the samples generated at least some of the same or related words.

Figure 2.1. Undergraduate Responses Word Cloud

Figure 2.2. Graduate/Postgraduate Responses Word Cloud
CHAPTER 3: STUDY 1

It has been argued that the victim role is a meaningful and well-understood social role. In Study 1 I systematically examined the vocabulary people use to describe victims in an attempt to support this notion. Participants were randomly assigned to describe either illegitimate victims or legitimate victims. Participants’ descriptions were analyzed using word analysis techniques. To replicate previous findings and examine individual difference hypotheses, all participants completed measures related to their moral values, just world beliefs, and political affiliation.

Aristotle (340BC/2000) posited that the first step in understanding a well-known, but ill-defined, concept is to examine how people describe it and talk about it. Examining word associations to gain insight into underlying concepts has a venerable history in psychology as well. For example, Allport and Odbert (1936) referenced dictionaries to compile a massive list of personality-related words to determine whether personality could be reduced into a few key traits. Rosch (1975) used a similar technique to develop the family resemblances theory of prototypes. By using dictionaries and testing which words seemed related to specific categories, she found evidence that people typically group objects into predictable and meaningful categories.

In the twenty-first century, advances in technology have enabled researchers to explore the relations between language use and individual differences by analyzing large bodies of text.
For example, Yarkoni (2010) found numerous correlations between the language used by bloggers and their personality traits in a sample of 694 blog post entries. Schwartz et al. (2013) analyzed 75,000 Facebook users’ entries to explore how word usage related to personal activities, personality, gender, and age. These studies have provided insight into personality traits and language that would be inaccessible using small samples of people completing personality measures and the use of traditional statistical techniques. Accordingly, I chose to ask people to describe victims and then examined their responses for common themes using language analysis methods as the first step in exploring descriptions of the victim role.

Two word analysis techniques were used to examine the descriptions of illegitimate and legitimate victims. The first technique was a natural word grouping analysis. This approach groups bodies of text based on the content of the text. The second technique was a linguistic inquiry and word count (LIWC) analysis. This approach analyzes text using specific themes that are determined a priori. According to Schwarz et al. (2013), natural word grouping and linguistic content analysis techniques can be used to meet the goals of insight and prediction, respectively.

Natural word grouping techniques were used to examine the natural grouping of descriptors to gain insight into how people think about illegitimate and legitimate victims. LIWC analyses were used to examine the frequency of occurrence of certain words and phrases in free narrative responses. Haidt’s moral foundation’s LIWC libraries and Pennebaker’s (2007) LIWC libraries were used for these analyses. Both of these libraries have been used in multiple language analysis studies (e.g., Sagi & Dehghani, 2013; Leidner & Castano, 2012; Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009). The LIWC analyses were conducted to provide convergent validity.
regarding whether individuals’ moral values and their moral language use were similarly related to victim descriptions. For instance, individuals who consider harm to be an important moral value should use more words related to harm when describing legitimate victims compared to those who consider harm to be a trivial value.

Although Study 1 was primarily an examination of the descriptions of illegitimate and legitimate victims, the data collected was also used to test how moral values, just world beliefs, and political values are related to thinking about victims and to replicate previous findings related to these values and beliefs. First, it was hypothesized that natural word grouping analyses would indicate more positive/sympathetic descriptions of legitimate victims than illegitimate victims. Second, participants would use more negation words (e.g., “not guilty”, “blameless”) to talk about legitimate victims than illegitimate victims. Third, participants with higher liberal affiliations would have higher scores on measures of harm/care and fairness/equality as well as use more terms related to these moral values to describe victims. Fourth, participants with higher conservative affiliations would have higher scores on sanctity/purity, authority/respect, and ingroup/loyalty as well as use more terms related to these moral values to describe victims. Fifth, just world beliefs would positively correlate with conservativism.

**Method**

**Participants**

For this study, I aimed to employ eight hundred participants via MTurk. As noted above, natural word grouping analyses require large sample sizes to be effective. Typically, text analyses that explore underlying personality constructs use samples of blog posts or other large
bodies of text that contain hundreds of thousands (100,000s) to millions (1,000,000s) of words (e.g., Yarkoni, 2010; Schwartz, 2013). Because this study only collected six words or short phrases from each participant, text analyses benefited from a large sample.

Data were collected using MTurk. MTurk is an online worker request service owned by Amazon. It enables businesses and researchers to recruit MTurk users to perform various tasks for small fees. MTurk users can volunteer for any study they wish. Only MTurk users with US IP addresses who declared they were eighteen years old or older were allowed to participate. There were no other restrictions. Participants received twenty-five cents upon study completion. Research on MTurk samples (e.g., Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011) indicated that this amount of compensation was an adequate incentive and would not create sample biases. The experiment required approximately fifteen minutes to complete.

MTurk allows unlimited users to access a study until the specified amount have been paid by the researcher. Additionally, a record is created for each session as soon as the study’s web link was opened. Thus, the first page of the study was accessed 1,292 times. One thousand two hundred and sixty-five participants (1,265) consented to be in the study on the second page of the study’s website. One thousand one hundred and fifty-eight participants (1,158) began the study and were randomly assigned to either the legitimate or illegitimate condition. Five hundred and sixty-six (568) participants were in the legitimate condition. Five hundred and ninety-six (596) participants were in the illegitimate victim condition. Nine hundred and forty-one participants (941) provided at least one description of a victim in the condition to which they were assigned. Four hundred and sixty-four participants (464) were from the illegitimate condition and four hundred and eighty-seven (487) participants were from the legitimate
condition. Eight hundred and seventy-one (871) participants completed the study, twelve of which requested to have their data deleted. Eight hundred and thirty-five of participants (835) who completed the study and agreed to allow the use of their data provided complete responses to every task and adequately completed the tasks. Four hundred (400) participants were from the illegitimate victim condition and four hundred and thirty-five (435) participants were from the legitimate victim condition.

Measures

Moral foundations questionnaire (MFQ-30). This measure assesses moral foundations. It consists of thirty-two items and five subscales that measure the following moral foundations: harm/care, fairness/reciprocity, ingroup/loyalty, authority/respect, and purity/sanctity. All items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strong disagreement, 5 = strong agreement). The MFQ-30’s subscales correlated with other measures of moral values such as Schwartz’s Value Scale (average $r = .51$), demonstrating external and discriminant validity (Graham et al., 2011).

The MFQ-30 also has high predictive validity (Graham et al., 2011). For example, higher levels of harm/care-related values generated more positive reactions to nurses and more negative reactions to hunters. Higher levels of fairness generated more positive reactions to organizations that had the objective of protecting equal rights (e.g., ACLU), and rich people (republicans only). Higher levels of ingroup/loyalty generated more positive reactions to other Americans, and more negative reactions to flag burners (republicans only). Higher levels of authority/respect generated more positive reactions to soldiers, police officers, and U.S. Marines. Higher levels of purity/sanctity generated more positive reactions to virgins and
spiritual people, and more negative reactions to atheists (republicans only) and homosexual people (republicans only).

**Global belief in a just world scale (GBJWS).** This measure assesses belief in a just world as a personality trait (Lipkus, 1991). It consists of seven items which are each rated on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = strong disagreement, 6 = strong agreement). Research indicates it has high reliability as well as internal validity ($\alpha = .92-.93$), concurrent validity [$r=.85$ with the Belief in a Just World Scale (Rubin & Peplau, 1975); $r = .83$ with the Multidimensional Belief in a Just World Scale (Furnham & Proctor, 1988)], and convergent validity (RMSEA = .082, SRMR = .029, CFI = .987) (Reich & Wang, 2015).

**Political affiliation.** Numerous studies (e.g., Inbar & Lammers, 2012; Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009) have used the following three questions, rated on a seven-point Likert scale (1= very liberal, 7 = very conservative), to determine political leanings: “How would you rate yourself politically on the following: ‘social issues’, ‘economic issues’, and ‘foreign policy.’” This question has face validity and appears to be a reliable measure of political affiliation (Inbar & Lammers, 2012; Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009). Jost (2006) has also provided an extensive review of these items and has determined that they are reliable and have good construct validity.

**Procedures**

The data were collected online. Participants accessed the study's website online through MTurk. The welcome page informed participants that the study was about logical thinking styles and its effect on people’s perceptions of others. After reading the information
statement, participants were randomly assigned to either the illegitimate victim description or legitimate victim description condition.

In both conditions, participants were asked the following question “Please contemplate what it means to be a legitimate (illegitimate) victim. Then, list six (6) things you would use to describe a legitimate (illegitimate) victim.”. Participants were then instructed to type one answer at a time and to press the continue button to proceed to the next page on which they would enter their next answer. This process continued until they had been allowed to type six separate responses. Next, participants completed the MFQ-30, GBJWS, and answered the three political affiliation questions.

**Statistical Analysis Plan**

**Natural word grouping analysis.** This is a systematic analysis used to gain insight into target concepts by examining the natural language used to describe them. This statistical technique, developed by Schwartz et al. (2013), involves three steps. First, a tokenizer (i.e., a program for dividing text into meaningful elements) was used to group words and short phrases into sets that ranged from 1-3 words; these sets are called n-grams. After the n-gram sets were made, n-gram frequency scores for each participant were created by dividing the presence of each item from each n-gram set by the total number of words in each participant’s word set. This process was visually inspected to improve accuracy and to avoid double-coding, because the tokenizer could count a single word as a member of one group, but when it examined phrases of two or three words it may code that word again for two different groups which are related to the opposite concepts. For instance, the word “faking” and the phrase “not faking” would be coded in two different categories. Second, point bi.serial correlations were
conducted to determine the strength of the relationships between n-grams and conditions. These analyses indicated whether specific n-grams had a stronger relationship with illegitimate or legitimate victims. Third, a visual representation of the n-gram sets was examined. Word clouds were created using the text provided by participants to gain insight into the most common ways used to describe illegitimate and legitimate victims. The correlations and visual tools were used to extract key concepts related to the victim role and served as the bases for hypothesis testing in Study 2.

**Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC).** This is a widely used statistical tool created by Pennebaker (2007). It performs a word frequency analysis by counting the number of times specific words or short phrases from a word library occur in a word set (e.g., the number of times the words “harm”, “fair”, and “deserve” from the library “victim” occurs in a text sample). Next, it creates a proportion score by dividing the number of occurrences of words in the word set from that library by the total number of words in the word set. For instance, if a participant used five words from a victim library in their twenty words of text, they would have a proportion score of .25 for their victim library.

Participants’ entries were analyzed using the moral foundation dictionary. The moral foundations dictionary contains LIWC libraries that represent each of the five moral foundations and also includes a general morality library: *Harm Virtue, Harm Vice, Fairness Virtue, Fairness Vice, Ingroup Virtue, Ingroup Vice, Authority Virtue, Authority Vice, Purity Virtue, Purity Vice, Morality General*. Each library contains between sixteen and sixty-eight root words as well as numerous permutations of each root word. Virtue libraries contain moral words that positively represent the moral value. For example, fairness virtue words would
include the words equality, fairness, and impartial. Vice libraries contain moral words that negatively portray the moral value. For example, fairness vice words would include the words bias, injustice, and exclusion. As stated in the introduction, Graham et al., (2009) have tested these libraries and they appear to be valid measures of moral foundation concerns. A moral foundation score for each participant’s entry for each library was calculated using the analysis described above. These scores were used in correlation analyses to examine the relationship between political affiliation and moral foundations as well as to determine the degree to which moral language is used to describe victims.

Pennebaker’s (2007) LIWC libraries for adverbs, articles, negations (“not”, “weren’t”, “non”), negative emotions (“sad”, “angry”), past tense, positive emotions (“happy”, “calm”), present tense, pronouns, and verbs were also used. Adverbs, articles, pronouns, and verbs were examined to provide insight into whether the concept being described is understood as active or passive. Past and present word tenses were examined to provide insight into the trait vs state nature of the victim role. Emotion words were used to determine whether participants were more sympathetic or empathic towards legitimate victims than illegitimate victims.

Study 1 Results

Descriptive Statistics

MFQ sub-factor scores and correlations between sub-factors were within the range of previous research (Graham et al., 2011). Economic issues, social issues, and foreign policy issues were significantly correlated with each other with Pearson correlations ranging from $r = .75$ - .80. Thus, a sum political affiliation variable was created. The political affiliation variable was significantly correlated with all the MFQ sub-factors. Positive correlations indicate that as
conservativeness increases so does the MFQ score. Political affiliation also correlated with the GBJWS ($r = .35$). The GBJWS significantly correlated with all the MFQ sub-factors except for harm/care. The correlations, $p$ values, means, and standard deviations for these measures can be found in Table 3.1.
Table 3.1

Bivariate Correlations of Individual Difference Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>1.</th>
<th>2.</th>
<th>3.</th>
<th>4.</th>
<th>5.</th>
<th>6.</th>
<th>7.</th>
<th>8.</th>
<th>9.</th>
<th>10.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MFQ Sub-factor Score</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Authority/Respect</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Fairness/Reciprocity</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Harm/Care</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ingroup/Loyalty</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Purity/Sanctity</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Party Affiliation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Economic</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>-.35</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Social</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>-.30</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Foreign</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>-.31</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Party Affiliation Sum</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>-.34</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just World Belief</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. JWB Sum Score</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>-.23</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Higher scores on political affiliation are more conservative. Significant correlations are boldface.
Four hundred (400) participants listed at least one illegitimate victim description. Five thousand seven hundred and forty-one words (5,741) were listed. Thus, the average participant used 14.35 words to describe an illegitimate victim. One thousand four hundred and fifty-one (1,451) different words or word forms were used. Excluding the words “victim” and “born”, the ten most frequent illegitimate victim descriptions were: liar (n = 84), wrong (n = 78), fake (n = 58), (not) innocent (n = 53), person (n = 46), false (n = 43), attention(attention seeking) (n = 34), illegal (n = 34), unfair (n = 32), crime (n = 32).

Four hundred and thirty-five (435) legitimate victim condition participants listed at least one legitimate victim description. Five thousand three hundred and thirty-four words (5,334) were listed. Thus, the average participant used 12.26 words to describe a legitimate victim. One thousand one hundred and fifty-three (1,153) different words or word forms were used. Excluding the word “victim”, the ten most frequent legitimate victim descriptions were: hurt (n = 172), innocent (n = 95), harmed (n = 80), taken (advantage of) (n = 77), abused (n = 62), injured (n = 57), scared (n = 55), violated (n = 53), helpless (n = 51), and pain (n = 40). An alphabetized list of the top 1,000 words used in each condition is can be found in the supplementary materials.

Natural Word Grouping Analyses

N-grams (i.e., single words or short phrases) which made up at least .5% (i.e., five uses for every one thousand words) of the total words in each condition were used in natural word grouping analyses (i.e., words used at least 27 times in the legitimate victim condition and words used at least 29 times in the illegitimate victim condition). Thirty-one (31) n-grams appeared at least five times for every one thousand words in at least one of the word lists.
Twenty-eight (28) n-grams had a least one appearance in both the illegitimate and legitimate victim word lists. Three (3) n-grams were only found in the illegitimate victim condition: fake, liar, and phony. Point biserial analyses were conducted on these n-grams to determine whether the n-grams had a stronger relationship with one of the conditions. The correlations and p values can be found in Table 3.2. A positive correlation indicates a statistically significantly stronger relationship with the legitimate victim condition relative to the illegitimate victim condition. A family-wise Bonferroni correction was used to determine significant results and to account for the large number of tests conducted. Point bi-serial analyses indicated that the following n-grams were used significantly more in the legitimate victim description condition relative to the illegitimate victim description condition: abuse, angry, attention (seeking, mongering, etc.), harm/harmed, helpless, injured, innocent, loss, pain, sad, scared, taken advantage of, violated, vulnerable, weak. Point bi-serial correlation analyses indicated that the following n-grams were used significantly more in the illegitimate victim description condition relative to the legitimate description victim condition: attention (seeker), illegal, fake, false, fraud, phony, unlawful, liar.

Table 3.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N-grams</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abuse</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attacked</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention (seeking, mongering, etc.)</td>
<td>-.19</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word</td>
<td>Value</td>
<td>p-value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>-.015</td>
<td>.665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fake</td>
<td>-.28</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False</td>
<td>-.23</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraud</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harm/Harmed</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpless</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurt</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injured</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innocent</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liar</td>
<td>-.30</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pain</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phony</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scared</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taken advantage of</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unlawful  
Victim  
Violated  
Vulnerable  
Weak

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Positive correlations indicate a stronger relationship with the legitimate victim condition than the illegitimate victim condition. Family-wise Bonferroni corrections were applied, making the cutoff for significance $p < .0016$ at the $\alpha = .05$ level. Significant p-values are in boldface.

Next, word clouds were generated for the illegitimate and legitimate victim word lists to gain insight into how legitimate and illegitimate victims were described. See Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2 to examine the word clouds. A visual inspection of the legitimate victim word cloud indicates that the victim is someone who has had misfortunate things happen to them. They have been hurt, wronged, and violated. The legitimate victim is the target of misfortune, but not the protagonist of their victimization. The misfortune’s negative characteristics appear to be central in how participants thought about legitimate victims. Attributions to the legitimate victim described them as weak, helpless, vulnerable, scared, and violated. These characteristics indicate that the legitimate victim is susceptible to negative outcomes and was an easy or unfair target of misfortune.
A visual inspection of the illegitimate victim word cloud indicated that illegitimate victims are defined by negative dispositional traits. Illegitimate victims are untrustworthy fakers who engage in outright deception. Illegitimate victim descriptions indicated that they are compared to legitimate victims, but do not qualify for the victim status. Words such as liar, false, and attention (seeker) indicate that they are illicitly claiming victimhood. This suggests that the illegitimate victim concept is not as coherent as the legitimate victim concept and that the illegitimate victim concept may be more subjective.
Figure 3.2. Illegitimate Victim Description Word Cloud. The word cloud was generated from the 5,741 words used to describe an illegitimate victim. The word list was not filtered using the n-gram technique.

Moral Foundations LIWC Analyses

Point biserial correlation analyses were conducted between the conditions and the eleven moral foundation LIWC libraries. A family-wise Bonferroni correction was applied to the eleven analyses. After the correction, there were significant differences between the legitimate and illegitimate victim descriptions for the following MFQ LIWC lists: fairness (vice and virtue) words, harm (vice) words, and purity (virtue) words. See Table 3.3 for the complete set of analyses, Pearson correlations, and p values.

Table 3.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIWC Library</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authority Vice</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Authority Virtue  
Fairness Vice  
Fairness Virtue  
Harm Vice  
Harm Virtue  
Ingroup Vice  
Ingroup Virtue  
Purity Vice  
Purity Virtue  
Morality General

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authority Virtue</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness Vice</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness Virtue</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harm Vice</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harm Virtue</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingroup Vice</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingroup Virtue</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>N/Aa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purity Vice</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purity Virtue</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality General</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Positive correlations indicate a stronger relationship with the legitimate victim condition than the illegitimate victim condition. Family-wise Bonferroni corrections were applied, making the cutoff for significance $p < .004$ at the $\alpha = .05$ level. Significant $p$-values are in boldface.

a. Zero ingroup virtue words were reported.

**LIWC Analyses**

The results from the natural word grouping and moral foundation LWIC library analyses indicated that legitimate victims are understood as passive recipients of misfortune, whereas illegitimate victims are actively trying to illicitly claim the victim role. To provide further insight into how these roles were thought about, point bi-seral analyses were conducted between condition and LIWC libraries. Specifically, the adverbs (e.g., about, also, again), articles (a, a lot, an, the), negative emotions (e.g., ache, adverse, aggress), past tense, positive emotions (e.g., positive, agree, hope), present tense, negations (e.g., doesn’t, has not, without), pronouns (e.g.,
anything, he, she), and verbs (e.g., listen, look, take). A family-wise Bonferroni correction was applied to the nine analyses. After the correction, there were significant differences between the legitimate and illegitimate victim descriptions for the following LIWC lists: adverbs, articles, negations, negative emotions, positive emotions, and pronouns. See Table 3.4 for the complete set of analyses, Pearson correlations, and $p$ values.

Table 3.4

LIWC Libraries Analyses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIWC Library</th>
<th>$r$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adverbs</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negations</td>
<td>-.22</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Emotions</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past tense</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Emotions</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>&lt;.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronouns</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Positive correlations indicate a stronger relationship with the legitimate victim condition than the illegitimate victim condition. Family-wise Bonferroni corrections were applied, making the cutoff for significance $p < .006$ at the $\alpha = .05$ level. Significant $p$-values are in boldface.
Sign Test

A sign test of significant n-gram and LIWC bi-serial correlations was conducted to determine if more concepts were used to describe legitimate victims or illegitimate victims. The sign test results indicated that there was a significant difference in the number of significant correlations between the two word lists ($Z = 2.15$, $p = .03$), whereby 22 of the 31 significant correlations were used to describe legitimate victims.

Study 1 Discussion

Study 1 provided evidence that the victim role is regarded as a specific status in which certain unfortunate things happened to an individual (e.g., harmed, hurt, injured). Illegitimate victims appeared to be described as social system cheaters who commit fraud, are fakers, and engage in outright deception. Moral concerns for fairness, harm, and purity affected how people described victims. Legitimate victims were considered purer and to have experienced more harm than illegitimate victims. On the other hand, illegitimate victims were described as less fair and more unjust.

Hypothesis one was supported. More sympathy-related n-grams were used for legitimate victims than illegitimate victims. Words such as vulnerable, innocence, violated, and helpless were used to describe legitimate victims whereas words such as fake, fraud, phony, and attention seeker were used to describe illegitimate victims. Hypothesis two was not supported. Participants used significantly more negation terms to describe illegitimate victims than legitimate victims. This finding indicates that individuals may think illicit claims to the victim role are claims which do not qualify for a set of standards related to the victim role. In other words, participants may conceptualize the victim role as a meaningful social role and an
illegitimate victim is one who does not meet this standard. Corroborating this finding, there were more victim descriptions and concepts used to describe legitimate victims than illegitimate victims.

All the secondary hypotheses were supported. Hypothesis three was supported. Liberalness was correlated with placing greater value on fairness/reciprocity and harm/care. Hypothesis four was supported. Conservativeness was correlated with placing greater value on authority/respect, ingroup loyalty and purity/sanctity. Hypothesis five was supported. Conservativeness correlated with just world belief.

Study 1 indicated that the victim role is coherent and that illegitimate victims are understood in terms of how they fail to qualify as a legitimate victim. The victim role appears to be understood in terms of events that happened to the victim and in relation to the moral values that have been violated. This provided indirect support for the notion that different values may impact who is viewed as a victim and how people react to victims. Furthermore, previous relationships between moral values, political affiliation, and just world beliefs were replicated.
CHAPTER 4: STUDY 2

Study 1 was an attempt to gain insight into how people think about victims and how individual differences influenced this process. Study 2 tested whether people tend to seek out information to confirm or disconfirm claims to the victim role. Social contract research supports the notion that people are sensitive to information that indicates someone is violating a social contract. Furthermore, the victim role appears to be a social role that activates a social contract. Thus, I hypothesized that when people encounter claims to the victim role, they will seek out information that confirms that the target is an illegitimate victim. However, based on confirmation bias research and Study 1’s results, the alternative hypothesis was that the victim role may be a robust enough concept that participants will attempt to confirm claims to the victim role.

In Study 2, participants were asked to evaluate a claim to the victim role. Participants had the opportunity to select additional information about a target who claimed to be a victim. The additional information either supported or undermined the target’s claim. Prior to reading about the target, participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. Participants in the first condition were oriented towards the importance of information indicating that the target was an illegitimate victim. Participants in the second condition were oriented towards the importance of information indicating that the target was a legitimate victim. Participants in
the third condition were not oriented towards the importance of specific information, but were asked to be objective in their decision-making regarding the target’s victim status.

It was hypothesized that participants in the illegitimate victim instructions condition would seek out more information that disconfimed claims to the victim role than participants in the legitimate victim instructions condition, but not more disconfirming information than the control condition. Additionally, it was hypothesized that participants in the control condition would seek out more disconfirming information than participants in the legitimate victim instructions condition. Based on previous evidence and Study 1’s findings, it was hypothesized that conservatives would choose more disconfirming information than liberals. It was also hypothesized that as just world beliefs increased, participants would seek more evidence that disconfirmed claims to the victim role and would seek less evidence that confirmed claims to the victim role. It was hypothesized that as concern for moral values related to harm and equality increased, participants would seek out more evidence that confirmed claims to the victim role. Lastly, it was hypothesized that as concern for moral values related to loyalty, authority, and purity increased participants would seek out more evidence that disconfirmed claims to the victim role.

**Method**

**Participants**

Previous research using the confirmation bias paradigm has found large effect sizes in groups with 9 participants per cell (Nickerson, 1998). However, for several reasons, I sought to gather at least two hundred and fifty participants. I hypothesized that participants in the illegitimate victim instructions condition and control conditions would not be significantly differ
in the amount of disconfirming evidence chosen. A larger sample would protect against type II error. Additionally, because the confirming and disconfirming evidence dependent variables were generated from the first study and are not the standardized confirmation bias materials used in other studies (e.g., Jonas & Schultz-Hardt, 2001), the effects may be weaker than in a confirmation bias study with standardized dependent variables. Lastly, ancillary analyses required significantly more power to conduct multivariate analyses.

Only MTurk users with US IP addresses who claimed to be eighteen years old or older were allowed participate. There were no other restrictions. Participants received one dollar for completing the study. Using the same method as in Study 1, 250 slots for participants were posted on MTurk. As in the first study, a significant number of people started the study, but did not complete it. Three hundred and eighty-one (381) MTurk users elected to participate in Study 2. Two hundred and eighty-six (286) completed the study. Five participants requested that their data be deleted. Two hundred and fourteen (214) demonstrated an adequate understanding of the instructions, spent at least 10 seconds on the main task instructions, spent at least 30 seconds on the main task, and adequately followed the survey instructions. Seventy-seven (77) participants were in the illegitimate victim orientation condition. Seventy-six (76) participants were in the legitimate victim orientation condition. Sixty-one (61) participants were in the control condition. Participant disqualification ranged from 18-30 participants across the three conditions.

Measures

The MFQ-30, GBJWS, and the political affiliation measures used in Study 1 were used again. Participants were also asked to report the political party they affiliated with the most
strongly. The political party options were as following: Republican, Democrat, Libertarian, Green, Independent, Constitution, and Other (please specify).

**Procedures**

After opening the website for the study, participants were told that they were testing a new training procedure designed for disaster response specialists (i.e., people who assess disaster survivors’ need for assistance after a major disaster). Participants were informed that they would be required to carefully read the mission statement and additional instructional materials that trained disaster field workers were required to master before they worked on disaster sites. Participants were told that after they reviewed these materials they would be asked to evaluate an actual disaster case. Then, participants were randomly assigned to their condition in which they read a mission statement designed either to orient them towards the importance of evaluating information that disconfirmed a claim to the victim role, orient them towards the importance of evaluating information that confirmed a claim to the victim role, or a mission statement designed to be a control which asked participants to be objective. The condition instructions can be found in Appendix A.

Next, participants were informed that they could select additional information before evaluating a randomly assigned actual disaster survivor case. Participants were also informed that they could choose this additional information by selecting boxes that represented packets of information about the case. See Appendix B for the instructions participants received regarding this task. Each packet had a clear title and a thesis (one or two sentences) that provided evidence that supported or undermined the target’s claim to victimhood. The packets were designed to give the impression that packets selected would potentially reveal
information that supported or undermined the claim to the victim role, but the actual contents could not be ascertained from the title and thesis. For instance, one of the packets was titled “reported health concerns” and its thesis stated that it contained a psychological analysis of the validity of the claimant’s biomedical/psychological concerns as well as an evaluation of the credibility of the claimant’s health concerns. This package could potentially undermine the claim to the victim role, but the title and thesis statement did not necessarily do so. All the packets were derived from the descriptions of victims given in Study 1 and clearly supported either the illegitimacy or legitimacy of the claim to the victim role. Participants were informed that, based on their selection, they would be able to read the information they selected before they made their judgments about the claimant. There were twelve information packets from which to choose. See Appendix C to review the information packets. Lastly, participants were asked to complete the MFQ-30, GBJWS, and the political affiliation measures.

**Study 2 Results**

**Statistical Analysis Plan**

The dependent variables in Study 2 were number of confirming and disconfirming packets selected. These were discrete count variables. Thus, descriptive analyses of homogeneity of variance, skewness, kurtosis, and dispersion were conducted to determine what statistical tests would be most appropriate to examine the effects of condition on evidence type. A repeated-measures design was used, because confirming and disconfirming evidence chosen was measured for each subject.

Political party affiliation was measured both as a nominal (e.g., Republican, Democrat) variable and as an interval variable (e.g., liberal to conservative values regarding foreign policy).
The nominal form was used to determine whether there was a three-way interaction between condition, evidence type, and party affiliation. Individual differences in moral values, just world beliefs, and political affiliation were measured as interval variables. Thus, they were used in linear and multiple regression analyses to determine whether they predicted confirming or disconfirming evidence. If regression analyses were significant for multiple variables, then mediation and moderation analyses would be performed.

**Descriptive Statistics**

Amongst the 214 participants were 77 Democrats, 65 Republicans, 62 Independents, 3 Libertarians, 1 Green party, 1 Constitution Party, and 5 who specified something not listed (e.g., anarchists, apolitical). Bivariate correlations for the MFQ, GBJWS, and political affiliation questionnaires were consistent with previous research and with Study 1’s findings.

**Main Hypotheses**

Evidence for disconfirming the victim role and evidence for confirming the victim role was evaluated. The evidence was coded as two different variables. Because confirming and disconfirming evidence were treated as different variables, analyses were conducted using a repeated-measures design. Descriptive analyses of the evidence variables indicated both had robust violations of the assumption of normal distribution. Furthermore, Kolomogorov-Smirnov’s test for sample distribution indicated both variables met the criteria for a Poisson distribution and the means for these variables roughly equaled their respective variances making these variables ideal candidates for a Poisson analysis.

Thus, a repeated-measures Poisson analysis was performed with evidence type as a within-subjects factor (confirming, disconfirming) and condition as the between-subjects factor.
on amount of information chosen. The results indicated a within-subjects effect on amount of information chosen $F(1, 422) = 3.93, p < .05$. Participants chose more confirming evidence ($M = 2.29, SD = 1.51$) than disconfirming evidence ($M = 2.04, SD = 1.46$). This result was qualified by an interaction effect of evidence type and condition on amount of information chosen, $F(2, 422) = 5.70, p < .05, d = .13$. A post hoc scheffe test indicated participants in the legitimate victim instructions condition preferred confirming evidence ($M = 2.33, SD = 1.62$) to disconfirming evidence ($M = 1.80, SD = 1.41$), $t(76) = 2.183, p < .05, d = .34$. A post hoc scheffe test indicated participants in the control condition preferred confirming evidence ($M = 2.59, SD = 1.48$) to disconfirming evidence ($M = 1.89, SD = 1.38$), $t(61) = 2.584, p < .05, d = .49$. Participants in the illegitimate victim instructions condition did not significantly prefer one type of evidence.

Study 1 revealed that political affiliation may influence reactions to claims to the victim role. Thus, a three-way repeated measures Poisson analysis was conducted to test the effects of condition, evidence type, and political party affiliation on evidence chosen. The results indicated a significant three-way interaction $F(17, 404) = 1.884, p < .05$. Simple effects tests revealed that Republicans in the illegitimate victim instructions condition chose more disconfirming evidence ($M = 2.52, SD = 1.40$) than confirming evidence ($M = 1.33, SD = 1.24$), $t(20) = 2.71, p < .05, d = .89$, but did not differ in the type of evidence preferred in the other two conditions. On the other hand, Democrats in the legitimate victim instructions condition chose more confirming evidence ($M = 2.96, SD = 1.63$) than disconfirming evidence ($M = 1.66, SD = 1.43$), $t(25) = 3.40, p < .05, d = .85$, but did not significantly differ in the other two conditions.
There were no significant differences between conditions or evidence types for any of the other political parties. Please see Figure 4.1 for a visual representation of the interaction.

*Figure 4.1. Three-way interaction.*

These results indicate that when Republicans were oriented towards the importance of evaluating evidence to delegitimize a claim to the victim role, they sought out disconfirming evidence, but they did not seek out evidence to legitimize a claim to the victim role when oriented towards the importance of confirming evidence. Republicans did not show a preference for either type of evidence when no orienting instructions were given. Democrats appeared to do the opposite. When they were oriented towards the importance of evaluating evidence that supported a claim to the victim role, Democrats chose more confirming evidence. However, Democrats did not choose more of either evidence type in the illegitimate victim instructions condition or control condition. Interestingly, members of other political parties did not prefer confirming or disconfirming evidence regardless of the condition.
Ancillary Analyses

Confirming and disconfirming evidence were regressed on moral values, political affiliation, and just world beliefs using stepwise regression to determine whether these individual differences predicted how much of each type of evidence participants chose.

A stepwise regression was calculated to predict the amount of confirming evidence chosen based on moral values, political affiliation, and just world belief. A significant regression equation was found, $F(1, 212) = 14.84, p < .05$, with an $R^2$ of .07. Confirming evidence chosen decreased .26 for each point that conservativeness regarding foreign policy increased. In other words, the more conservative a participant was on their foreign policy beliefs, the fewer pieces of evidence that confirmed the victim role were chosen. No other simple linear regressions significantly predicted confirming evidence.

A simple linear regression was calculated to predict the amount of disconfirming evidence chosen based on moral values, political affiliation, and just world belief. A significant regression equation was found, $F(1, 212) = 7.10, p < .05$, with an $R^2$ of .03. Disconfirming evidence chosen decreased .18 for each point that concern for moral values related to harm increased. No other simple linear regressions significantly predicted disconfirming evidence.

Study 2 Discussion

Study 2 provided evidence that individuals appear to have a general preference to confirm claims to the victim role. Thus, it appears that the robustness of individual’s conceptualizations about the victim role biased participants to seek out evidence to confirm the claim. However, when political party affiliation was included as an independent variable it appears that this result may be an anomaly of the statistics. When given license to seek out
evidence to disconfirm the claim to the victim role, Republicans showed a clear preference for disconfirming the claim. On the other hand, they did not do the same when were to oriented towards the importance of evaluating evidence that supported the claim to the victim role or when no orienting instructions were given. Democrats did the opposite and sought to confirm the claim to the victim role when oriented to do so, but not when oriented towards the importance of evaluating evidence that undermined the claim to the victim role or no orienting instructions were given.
CHAPTER 5: GENERAL DISCUSSION

This study sought to provide insight into people’s thoughts about victims and their reactions to claims to the victim role. This study also sought to test how well-established individual differences in moral values, just world beliefs, and political values influenced these thoughts about and reactions to victims. Study 1 indicated that the victim role is a meaningful social role. Legitimate victims are individuals who have had a misfortunate event happen to them. Illegitimate victims are defined as individuals who are characteristically bad and manipulative. Study 2 indicated that participants sought out evidence that supported claims to the victim role. However, political values appear to be related to whether people prefer disconfirming or confirming evidence. The results of Study 1 and Study 2 refute the hypothesis that people seek to disconfirm the victim role due to social contract concerns.

People appear to be able to define legitimate victims in ways which agree with social scientists. Christie’s (1986) definition of a legitimate victim appears to be in strong agreement with Study 1’s results. Christie said victims were innocent, vulnerable/weak, helping another when the misfortune occurred, defenseless, deserved sympathy, and the person who victimized them was unambiguously bad. In Study 1, participants described legitimate victims as innocent, vulnerable, weak, helpless, abused, attacked, harmed, hurt, injured, at a loss, in pain, sad, scared, taken advantage of, and violated. Moral language related to harm, fairness, and purity was used to describe legitimate victims. Additionally, more past tense words were used to
describe legitimate victims than legitimate victims. This evidence supports the notion that the ideal victim is a person who had something bad happen to them which they did not deserve.

Whereas the legitimate victim appears to be acted upon by a misfortunate event or circumstance, the illegitimate victim chooses to illicitly claim victim status (van Dijk, 2009). The legitimate victim is in a state of misfortune, but the illegitimate victim is characteristically bad. In Study 1, illegitimate victims were defined as attention seekers, fakers, frauds, engaged in illegal actions, liars, and phonies. More present tense words were used to describe illegitimate victims than legitimate victims. This indicates that characteristics and qualities associates with illegitimate victims are enduring. Furthermore, illegitimate victims were defined by their unworthy claim to victimhood. This result indicates that illegitimate victims are defined by their illicit attempts to claim the victim role and are not seen as mistakenly being labeled as a victim.

Participants appeared to think about illegitimate victims in less emotional ways than legitimate victims. Participants used more negative emotions and positive emotions to talk about legitimate victims than illegitimate victims. This could be a result of feeling more empathic towards legitimate victims. Moral language used to describe illegitimate victims focused on the idea that illegitimate victims were acting unfairly. Previous research indicates that illegitimate victims will be treated as pariahs. Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, and Vohs (2001) point out that bad stereotypes form more quickly and are more resistant to disconfirmation than good stereotypes. Research also suggests that vulnerability and suffering are necessary qualities for people to feel pity for someone who suffers from a misfortune (Djiker, 2001). Thus, it is reasonable and supported by the evidence that illegitimate victims are evaluated negatively.
It was suggested that people have criteria by which they judge victim legitimacy. In Study 1, participants generated descriptions of illegitimate and legitimate victims. These descriptions were used to create a set of statements and characteristics which either supported or undermined a claim to the victim role. In Study 2, participants were oriented towards the importance of seeking out information that supported or undermined a claim to the victim role. The results indicated that when participants were oriented to confirm a claim to the victim role, they chose more evidence that was designed to support the claim and when they were oriented to disconfirm a claim to the victim role, they chose more evidence that was designed to undermine the claim. In other words, the legitimate victim and illegitimate victim descriptions translated into evidence that participants recognized as supporting or undermining a claim to the victim role. This result supports the notion that the Study 1 descriptions of legitimate and illegitimate victims are valid descriptions of the victim role and the concept used to describe legitimate and illegitimate victims from Study 1 are related to how people process judgements about victims.

Political affiliation was a significant predictor of participants’ preference for evidence that supported or undermined a claim to the victim role. When Republicans were oriented to detect illegitimate victims, they chose more evidence that disconfirmed the claim to the victim role than supported the victim role. Democrats did the opposite. When Democrats were oriented to detect legitimate victims, they chose more evidence that confirmed the claim to the victim role than undermined the claim to the victim role. However, political affiliation did not change how participants reacted to claims when no orienting instructions were given.
These results indicate that there is a different process by which Republicans and Democrats viewed claims to the victim role. The political divide between Republicans and Democrats has steadily grown. A recent Pew Research study (2014) indicated that the percentage of Americans who have consistent conservative or consistent liberal views has increased from 10% to 21% in the past two decades. Research indicates that conservatives are primarily concerned with moral values related to loyalty, authority, and sanctity, but liberals are primarily concerned with moral values related to harm and equality (Graham et al., 2013).

Study 1 indicated that legitimate victims are seen as innocent people who were harmed, wronged, and taken advantage of and illegitimate victims are seen as pariahs who abuse the social system. Thus, it should almost be expected that prioritizing these moral values would lead Republicans to be wary of or even vigilant against illegitimate victims and Democrats to seek to confirm claims to the victim role.

**The primacy of the victim role**

Social contract theory posits that individuals are naturally suspicious of social exchanges. It was argued that these suspicions would extent to claims to the victim role and this suspicion would be the key concept in people’s thoughts about victims. Thus, it was hypothesized that people would define legitimate victims in terms of negating the illegitimate victim concept.

The evidence strongly refutes this hypothesis. First off, illegitimate victims were described in terms of a failed claim to the victim role in Study 1. Illegitimate victims were primarily defined as fake or fraudulent victims. They were described as actively attempting to usurp the victim role. Second, several intuitive qualifications for the victim role were supported
by Study 1. Legitimate victims were defined as having had certain misfortunate things happen to them that they did not deserve. Furthermore, legitimate victim descriptions from Study 1 consistently line up with how social scientists (e.g., Best, 1997; Christie, 1986; Parsons 1951/1991) and laymen (van Dijk 2009) describe legitimate victims. Third, more descriptions and moral concepts were used to describe legitimate victims than illegitimate victims. A sign test indicated that participants used more descriptions for legitimate victims than illegitimate victims. Moral virtues related to fairness, harm, and purity were more often referenced regarding legitimate victim than illegitimate victims. Moral vices were referenced more in regard to illegitimate victims relative to legitimate victims. This indicates that the victim role is more robust than the idea of illegitimate victims. Fourth, participants preferred evidence that supported a claim to the victim role over evidence that disconfirmed a claim to the victim role in Study 2. Fifth, participants used more negations terms to describe illegitimate victims than legitimate victims. Illegitimate victims were described as not real victims. Thus, it appears that people’s concepts about victims are not based in their suspicions about claims to the victim role. Instead, the victim role seems to be more comprehensive and more influential that the concept of illegitimate victims.

Limitations

Study 1 was a first step into examining how people determine the characteristics of and qualifications for the victim role. Participants were asked to describe legitimate and illegitimate victims. It is possible that participants attempted to describe the idea of legitimacy and illegitimacy in terms of legality. Careful examination of the evidence provides little support for this possibility regarding the legitimate victim descriptions. Legitimate victim descriptions were
related to what happened to the victim and not justice. However, illegitimate victim
descriptions included language related to legal decisions such as “unlawful” and “illegal.” Thus,
it is possible that illegitimate victims may be a conceptual twin to criminals in that both break
social contracts made with social institutions. The former violates social contract agreements
with social groups and the latter violates social contract agreements with the governing body.

In testing Study 2’s primary hypotheses, it was assumed that participants selected
evidence based on the instructions they received and this decision was affected by their values
and beliefs. However, the evidence packets were not tested for valence. Some evidence may
have been particularly compelling or interesting, regardless of the instructions participants
received. For instance, one of the packets stated that it contained information related to
previous requests for assistance. If participants believed that a history of relying on others was
the most important factor in determining victim legitimacy, they may have selected this packet
to decide if its contents would informative enough to make judgments about the claim.

Study 2 was an attempt to create a situation in which participants were motivated to
support claims to the victim role, were motivated to undermine claims to the victim role, or
told to make their own decisions regarding how to analyze claims to the victim role. Previous
social contract theory research indicated that people tend to seek out social exchange cheaters
across circumstances, but they are especially wary in circumstances in which they have a
personal stake. It is possible that participants did not feel as if there were personal
consequences to allowing illegitimate victims to take advantage of the government. Thus, they
may not have been motivated to seek out illegitimate victims. On the other hand, conservatives
value authoritative institutions and may have been especially likely to be wary of people trying
to cheat the government out of money, which may explain their tendency to seek out disconfirming evidence.

**Future Directions**

One of the next steps in studying the victim role is to explore whether individual differences in moral values and political beliefs predict how people react to different kinds of victims and whether prototypical victims can be derived from individual differences. For example, individuals who are concerned about harm and equality may be more likely to be sympathetic towards victims from traditionally marginalized groups (e.g., women, minorities) and liberal views on social values may further increase sympathy for these social groups. Thus, the prototypical victim for these observers may be minority women who have been harmed and treated unfairly.

Study 2 presented a scenario in which participants were told that they would make judgments about victims and were then oriented to seek out evidence to confirm or disconfirm the target’s claim to the victim role. The cover story led participants to believe that they were testing training materials to be used by disaster relief specialists who worked for the government. This is not an everyday task that people perform. Study 2’s procedure could be used in a follow up study to examine whether people have similar reactions to judgments about victims in more common situations. For instance, participants could be oriented to seek out certain kinds of evidence for victims who are discussed in the media or victims with whom they have had personal contact.
Conclusion

People believe the victim role is occupied by individuals who have experienced misfortune. Moreover, the misfortune appears to be the focal point when people conceptualize the victim role. Legitimate victims are in a state of suffering and the suffering is the matter of interest. Illegitimate victims are social system cheaters and are attributed enduring negative traits. Thus, a bad thing happens to the legitimate victim, but the illegitimate victim is a bad person.

This study focused on individuals’ claims to the victim role. However, in the present time many different social groups are striving to be acknowledged as legitimate victims. If the characteristics of and qualifications for the victim role are predictive of sympathy, these factors may explain why some groups succeed in their claims to the victim role and why other groups fail. For instance, some groups call themselves survivors or thrivers to remove the negative connotations associated with the victim label. However, it seems that an important qualification for the victim role is being or having been a sufferer who was taken advantage of. Thus, it is possible that by re-labeling one’s group to remove the negative connotations may actually weaken a group’s claim to the victim role.

In sum, the results of this study show that people are aware of victims and recognize evidence that supports or undermines claims to the victim role. This implies that to some degree people can evaluate victims. Furthermore, the most positive finding from this study indicates that when people evaluate victims they seek to confirm their claims to the victim role. In the end, it appears that the victim role is a social role which can be relied upon by people who have experienced misfortune. The question remain which misfortunes matter.
REFERENCES


research on selective exposure to information. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 80*(4), 557.


APPENDIX A: Study 2 Manipulation Vignettes

These are the instructions that provided as the condition manipulation. The legitimate victim instructions and illegitimate instructions were designed to guide participants to choose evidence that either supported or undermined the target’s claim to the victim role. The control condition was designed to allow the participant’s own biases to guide their decision-making. All statements had the title “General Orientation Statement” at the top of their respective webpage.

Legitimate Victim Instructions Condition

In the wake of a disaster, millions of dollars are poured into affected communities by various government agencies. This money is designed to help affected individuals and businesses recover to a point at which they are once again self-sufficient.

One of the chief threats to this mission is missing people who get lost in the chaos of the post-disaster environment, missing out on needed funds for which they clearly qualify. The primary goal of the disaster response specialist is to carefully evaluate cases to identify those cases that might get lost in the system, but who genuinely need help.

Illegitimate Victim Instructions Conditions

In the wake of a disaster, millions of dollars are poured into affected communities by various government agencies. This money is designed to help affected individuals and businesses recover to a point at which they are once again self-sufficient.
One of the chief threats to this mission is people who try to exploit the chaos of the post-disaster environment to siphon off funds that they do not deserve. The primary goal of the disaster response specialist is to carefully evaluate cases to identify those that attempt to cheat the system, diverting scarce funds away from those who genuinely need help.

**Control Condition Instructions**

In the wake of a disaster, millions of dollars are poured into affected communities by various government agencies. This money is designed to help affected individuals and businesses recover to a point at which they are once again self-sufficient.

One of the chief threats to this mission is disaster response specialists who depart from rules and regulations that are designed to make sure their evaluations are carefully conducted. This is a challenge in the chaos of the post-disaster environment where it may be difficult to locate victims and evaluate their cases. The primary goal of the disaster response specialist is to be thorough, fair, and objective under these difficult conditions.
APPENDIX B: Study 2 Evidence Selection Instructions

The following paragraphs are the instructions participants read before choosing which additional information they would read. The additional information was presented on the same page.

Part of a disaster response specialist’s responsibility is to quickly make judgments about victims’ needs using the information immediately available. Below you will find summaries of reports about a particular individual who claims to have been a victim of the Hurricane Katrina disaster.

After carefully reading each report summary, please select the reports you wish to review before making your initial judgments about the claimant. Each record selected will grant you access to a 1-2 page statement written by experts and summarized by the researchers for training purposes. Experts include experienced disaster response specialists, social service professionals, and law enforcement. After you have selected the statements you wish to review, the statements will appear on the following pages.

You will be asked to make judgments about the claimant. Please select the information you think will be most relevant in making a decision about the claimant's victimization status. Keep in mind, that it may be difficult to read all the reports in a timely manner, so try to remember the general orientation statement as you make your decisions.
APPENDIX C: Confirming and Disconfirming Evidence Packets

Participants were able to choose from twelve pieces of additional information to read. Six supported the target’s claim to the victim role and six undermined the claim. The pieces of evidence were developed from the major themes discovered in Study 1. For instance, the trauma evidence was chosen, because scared was used to describe legitimate victims and criminal activity evidence was chosen, because illegal was frequently used to describe illegitimate victims.

Confirming Evidence

1. **Trauma**: Statement regarding psychological analyses of the presence or absence of claimant's fear and trauma related to the disaster. Information regarding the possible existence of poor mental health based on psychological tests.

2. **Physical injuries**: Description of any injuries the claimant may have experienced during the disaster. Information regarding medical reports.

3. **Basic needs**: Statement regarding the presence or absence of claimant's need for basic necessities.

4. **Coping forecast**: Psychological analyses on the presence or absence of coming deficits. Information regarding the claimant's ability to manage and adapt to post-disaster challenges.
5. **Infringement of essential freedoms**: Assessment of whether the claimant's human rights were violated during the disaster.

6. **Exploitation**: Information regarding whether the claimant experienced theft by deception during disaster. Information regarding any losses, including identity theft or or being taken advantage of by dishonest contractors.

**Disconfirming Evidence**

1. **Criminal activities**: Report of any criminal history that may be relevant to the case, such as applicable misdemeanors and felonies.

2. **Financial responsibility**: Review of whether claimant has previous bankruptcies or loan defaults. Information regarding credit history and spending behaviors that might relate to statements about property loss.

3. **Work history**: Review of the presence or absence of behavioral problems at places of employment. Information regarding whether claimant has a history of attention-seeking or dramatic behavior.

4. **Reported health concerns**: Psychological analysis of the validity of claimant’s biomedical and psychological concerns. Evaluation of claimant’s credibility regarding health concerns.

5. **Proof of residence**: Report regarding whether the claimant possesses evidence of legal residence in area affected by disaster. Information regarding whether claimant has sufficient proof of citizenship or sufficient visa documentation.
6. **Previous assistance requests**: Description of whether previous requests for assistance made to government and non-government agencies exist. If requests exist, information on whether they were accepted or denied.
APPENDIX D: IRB APPROVAL

(SEE ATTACHED)
March 10, 2017

Jerome Lewis
Department of Psychology
College of Arts & Sciences
The University of Alabama
Box 870348


Dear Mr. Lewis:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has reviewed the revision to your previously approved expedited protocol. The board has approved the change in your protocol.

Please remember that your protocol will expire on January 4, 2018.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the assigned IRB application number. Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN
SUBJECTS
REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

I. Identifying information

Principal Investigator: Jerome Lewis
Second Investigator: James C. Hamilton
Department: Psychology
College: A&S
University: UA
Address: 375 Gordon Palmer Hall
Telephone: 348-0189
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Title of Research Project: The Understanding People Project: How Morals, Politics, and Social Economics Affect our Perceptions of Others

Date Submitted: 3/10/2016
Funding Source: N/A

Type of Proposal: ☒ Revision

Please attach a renewal application
Please attach a continuing review of studies form
Please enter the original IRB # at the top of the page

UA faculty or staff member signature:

II. NOTIFICATION OF IRB ACTION (to be completed by IRB):
Type of Review: _____ Full board ☒ Expedited

IRB Action:
____ Rejected Date: __________
____ Tabled Pending Revisions Date: __________
Approved Pending Revisions

Approved-this proposal complies with University and federal regulations for the protection of human subjects.

Approval is effective until the following date: 1/4/18.

Items approved:

- Research protocol (dated ___________)
- Informed consent (dated ___________)
- Recruitment materials (dated ___________)

Approval signature: ___________

Date: 3/10/2017
Informed Consent for Study 3 & 4

Please read this agreement carefully.

Purpose of the research: You are being asked to participate in a research study by Jerome Lewis, a graduate student in Psychology, and Dr. James Hamilton, Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Alabama. The primary goal of the current investigation is to assess whether innovative new training techniques can effectively teach evaluation skills.

Eligibility: You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study. If you are below the age of 18, please discontinue the study now.

What you will do in this study: First, you will receive instructions on what your role as a test subject in this training protocol will be. Next, you will receive the training necessary to complete the evaluations. Then, you will be asked to attend to information relevant to your tasks. Lastly, the effectiveness of the training will be tested. The whole procedure takes approximately 45 minutes.

Risks: There are no anticipated risks associated with participating in this study beyond those encountered in daily life. Although receiving training and evaluating others may generate specific emotions, we do not expect these procedures to produce an emotional state beyond that which would be experienced over the course of a typical day, for example, when reading a novel or watching the daily news.

Benefits: Although there are no direct benefits to you as a participant, you will receive $1.00 for participating in this study. We also hope that you will learn a little about how psychological research is conducted. Additionally, the research may benefit society by helping us to understand how various life events influence individuals and the people around them.

Voluntary Withdrawal: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You may skip over any question or procedures, or you may withdraw by leaving the study website. Your decision to participate, decline, or withdraw participation will have no effect on your status at or relationship with the University of Alabama.

Confidentiality: Although it is generally true that any work that you perform on MTurk can be linked to your public profile page, we have taken several precautions to ensure that your participation in this study will remain confidential. Any identifying information that is collected through this study will not be shared with anyone, and your worker ID will only be used for the purposes of distributing compensation and will not be associated with your survey responses. Your responses will be assigned a code number that is not linked to your name or other identifying information. All data will be stored on a password-protected computer located in a secure lab room. Aggregate results of this study may be presented at conferences and/or published in books, journals, and/or in the popular media.
Further information: If you have questions about this study, please contact Jerome Lewis at jalewis3@crimson.ua.edu or at 254-423-8141. Alternatively, you can contact James Hamilton, Department of Psychology, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487. Email: jchamilt@bama.ua.edu; phone: 205-348-0189.

Who to contact about your rights in this study: If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact Tanta Myles, the University Research Compliance Officer at 205-348-8461 or toll free at 1-877-820-3066; email: rscompliance@fa.ua.edu. You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach website at http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html or email the Research Compliance office at participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu.