

Your Brain on Injustice

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Some people are just more worried about injustice than others. Lisa Simpson, from the animated television show *The Simpsons*, frets over the plight of the Tibetan people and whether it's morally acceptable to eat animals — even when people around her remain relatively indifferent to these causes. And the chances are good that there's a Lisa in your family or circle of friends.

Psychological scientists are trying to determine whether injustice-oriented people like Lisa have a unique way of processing information. In a recent article published in the *European Journal of Personality*, Anna Baumert and her coauthors suggested that people who spend a lot of time mulling over injustice develop powerful and unique conceptions of injustice that influence their attention to,



interpretation of, and memory for information about justice.

The authors point out that in one experiment, individuals who had high *justice sensitivity* (JS) “displayed a memory advantage for unjust information.” In a separate experiment, people who had high JS perceived an ambiguous situation as less just than did people with low JS.

According to the article, JS can exert a powerful effect on a person's cognitive processes: Because justice-related concepts are so accessible to individuals with high JS, ideas about injustice become important parameters for their cognitive functions and potentially lead them to commit more justice-related actions than individuals with low JS.

Reference:

Anna Baumert, Mario Gollwitzer, Miriam Staubach and Manfred Schmitt (2011). Justice sensitivity and the processing of justice-related information. *European Journal of Personality*, 25, 386–397.