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Victimization, Positioning, and Support
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Introduction
From previous research it is known that victimization early in life may result in a number of consequences, resulting in a need of support (e.g. Cater, Andershed, & Andershed, 2014; Finkelhor, Wolak, & Berliner, 2001). However, not all young people have the same availability to support. Instead, they are often met by others in relation to how much they act as a victim, where those who act as a “typical” victim, receive more support.

Aim
The present doctoral project aim to investigate young people’s positioning as victims and its relationship with their self-identified need of help and support after victimization in relation to available informal (e.g. family and friends) or formal support

Method
The project uses a sequential mixed method approach, consisting of a research review, a quantitative survey with 2160 young people, and 19 narrative interviews with young people. The project is divided into four studies, which are presented below.

Study I
The first study consists of an integrative research review of 40 studies concerning victim positioning, consequences post-victimization, and help-seeking and receiving of support. The aim was to explore what is known and identify the gaps in the knowledge about youth victimization and the support they are offered, in relation to how they position themselves as victims. The results show that most research concerning young people do not take into account how they position themselves as victims, instead more or less treating them as study objects. This is problematic as research also stress the different reactions between individuals.

Study II
The second study consists of a survey with 2160 people between 20-24 years old, asked about their experiences of victimization before the age of 18. The aim was to examine whether professional psychosocial and/or social network support meets the needs of young victims of single or multiple types of crime and/or abuse. Using logistic regressions the result show that young people rarely seek professional support, instead turning to their family and friends. However, the tendency to seek support increases in relation to number of types of victimizations. Also, despite receiving support after the victimization, victims show symptoms of post-traumatic stress, especially those who have been victims for several types of victimizations. The reasons for this might be other problems in young adulthood, as well as the support received might not have been right for them to handle the victimization. The later suggesting that the support is not matched with the needs of the individual victim.

Study III
The third study focus on how young people position themselves as victims. Focusing on four young people’s narratives, the study addresses how young people position themselves as victims, and how this affects the availability of support and their receptivity to the support offered. The results show that each young person take on their own victim positioning, where two more try to position themselves towards the ideal victim category (cf. Christie, 2001), while the other two do not. The two that do not, express not having as much support from professionals or family and friends, compared to the other two. The results therefore suggest that how a person position him- or herself, affect the availability of support.

Study IV
The fourth study uses all 19 narrative interviews. The aim was to investigate which needs of support young victims in Sweden express, and how these needs have been matched with, to them, available support services. The preliminary results show the participants wanted understanding from professionals and their family and friends concerning their situation, and information about support and the judicial system. These aspects then laid the foundation for how the victimization was processed.

The continuation of the project
The next part of the project is to combine the four studies, and do an overall analysis of all of them. Preliminary results show that many of the victims do not seek professional support and those that do have often been victims of multiple crimes. These victims also receive support more often than victims of single crimes. Instead, family and friends are the main support providers, which seem to be because they have a greater understanding for the victims’ situation and are physically there compared to professionals. Adding to this, victims are judged in relation to stereotypical images on how victims should act and react. Those who do not act as expected and choose to position themselves in other ways, risk not receiving support. In relation to this, and in line with previous research, it becomes important to see the individual that has become a victim, and not an unidentified object amongst others as there are large variations of how a person reacts, acts, and construct their victimhood.

References