
REPORT

Knowledge about and handling of crime victims in Sweden

– Report from a national gathering on cultural victimology

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Foreword

The report presents the findings from the national conference on cultural victimology, as part of the work within the European network for cultural victimology. The network is funded by the European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST). The report is available in two versions – one in Swedish and one in English.

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Introduction

This report is a compilation of the findings from the national meeting on cultural victimology held on 10 December 2020 at Örebro University. The meeting was arranged at the initiative of COST Action 18121, *Cultures of Victimology*, in collaboration with the research group *Children's and Young People's Relationships*, at the School of Law, Psychology and Social Work at Örebro University. The compilation will serve as a basis for discussions with our research colleagues in other European countries to better understand how crime victim issues are understood and handled in each other's countries. We believe that this report can also offer other interested parties a glimpse into victimology's development in Sweden, and perhaps also stimulate contact between researchers in different fields who wish to learn more about the emergence and development of support for crime victims.

COST Action 18121 – Cultures of Victimology is a primarily European research network formed for the purpose of developing innovative, functional, and general theoretical frameworks for cultural victimology. Victimology is an academic subject that focuses on crime victims and victimhood in various forms, such as in the wake of a crime. The word 'victimology' is derived from the Latin word 'victima', and the subject is classed as interdisciplinary, comprising criminology, psychology, sociology, social work, public health, and other subjects. This means that there is a great deal of breadth in what questions are studied within the subject, because the various disciplines offer different viewpoints and perspectives on crime victims and issues pertaining to them. Cultural victimology is about understanding how victimology is affected by different cultural constructions in order to better understand how a victimological knowledge base about certain types of crimes and geographic regions can be generalized to other regions. A greater understanding of the complexity of this issue can make it possible to identify and investigate new perspectives and research questions. In other words, it is a question of identifying how ways of viewing and understanding various victimological research questions can differ depending on the prevailing culture in the area where the question is being studied. For example, views can differ between different areas on how crime victims should behave to be considered legitimate victims.

As an academic discipline, victimology has grown in recent decades, and even if crime victims no longer can be considered to be neglected by the criminal justice system, there are differences in how victims are viewed between geographic regions and types of crimes. For example, victims of some crimes (violence in intimate relationships and sexual violence) receive the majority of academic and political attention, and the research occurs mainly in North America, Oceania and North-western Europe. This has caused the discipline to be somewhat skewed, with some geographic regions having highly developed victimology, while others are still trying to find answers to fundamental questions.

Sweden has in many respects been considered a leading country in Europe when it comes to developing support and rights for crime victims. One of the first initiatives to benefit crime victims was implemented in the 1960s with the introduction of criminal injuries compensation, which in certain cases could be awarded to crime victims (Kim & Gallo, 2019). Similar initiative in other countries, such as the USA, quickly paved the way for more punitive programmes. In Sweden, however, the first compensation reforms were treated as a form of social insurance, based on a belief that crime victimization was a social risk, just like accidents and natural disasters (Kim & Gallo, 2019).

The Swedish word for crime victim (brottsoffer), however, did not come into use in the language until around 1970 (Österberg, 2002). Crime was a social problem with consequences for society, not a problem for individual victims. At the level of the individual, the focus was on rehabilitation of perpetrators

(Gallo & Kim, 2016), which according to Gallo and Svensson (2019) can partly be explained by the lack of emphasis on crime victims in Swedish welfare and crime policies. Just as in many other countries, the Swedish crime victims' movement has its roots in the women's movement, where roughly speaking crime victim issues began to be discussed more actively starting in the 1970s. Women's rights activists claimed that women subjected to violence by their partners did not receive the help and support that one would expect in a modern welfare society (cf. Svensson, 2007). It was through these lobbying activities that the first women's shelters were established. The women's support centres opened the door for crime victim support and put crime victimization on the political agenda (Svensson & Gallo, 2018).

In the early 1980s, the first local crime victim centres were started. The first two crime victim centres in Stockholm and Malmö had to shut down because of a lack of interest. In 1984 a local police officer and a deacon opened a crime victim support centre in the city of Södertälje. This was the first victim support centre that still exists today. Many of the activities at the centre focused on crime prevention, and mainly targeted various immigrant groups (Gallo & Svensson, 2019). During the 1980s, the victim support centre in Södertälje was followed by several more local victim support centres around the country, and in 1988 these organizations joined together to form a national association of victim support centres which since 2014 is called Victim Support Sweden. At the end of the 1980s the political interest in crime victims also began to rise along with the expansion of criminal law and an increased focus on violence against women. Furthermore, in 1988 the Act on Counsel of the Injured Party (SFS 1988:69) came into force (Lagen om målsägandebiträde), giving some crime victims, especially those who had been subjected to sexual offences, the right to their own counsel in the trial proceedings.

During the 1990s, the interest in crime victims grew dramatically in Sweden. For example, by the end of the 1990s, 110 local victim support centres had been founded (Gallo & Svensson, 2019). In 1994 the Swedish Crime Victim Authority (Brottsoffermyndigheten) and the Crime Victim Fund (Brottsofferfonden) were established, in one of Sweden's largest crime victim reforms. The main goal of the Swedish Crime Victim Authority is to promote crime victims' rights and draw attention to their needs and interests. It is also responsible for criminal injuries compensation and manages the Crime Victim Fund, which allocates funding to research and other projects – volunteer, public, or private – with a crime-victim orientation (Brottsoffermyndigheten, 2020). During the 2000s and 2010s, the interest in crime victims continued to grow in Sweden. A major milestone for crime victims was the 2001 proposition Support to Crime Victims, which clarified the responsibility of the social services for crime victims and expanded the right to counsel for the injured party (prop. 2000/01:79). The support for crime victims has also to a large extent been internationalized, professionalized and standardized, and specialized support has been developed for different groups such as children, young people and the elderly (Gallo & Svensson, 2019).

Researchers have problematized the emergence and growth of the crime victim movement and presented a number of different explanations. Among other things, the movement has been viewed as a reaction to Sweden's post-war crime policy, which is increasingly characterized by demands for liberalization (Lindstedt Cronberg 2002) and as a result of a civilization process with less acceptance of violence and greater emphasis on human rights (Tham 2001). Researchers have also focused on accelerating changes in Swedish welfare and crime policies during the 1980s. According to Demker and Duus-Otterström (2009), it was the loss of a collective vision of society that opened up for a situation where crime was no longer viewed as an attack on society but instead as aggression by one individual against another. Svensson (2006) claims that the retreat of the welfare state also created space for more volunteer social work. Crime victim support on a volunteer basis could thereby play a role in the

decentralization and privatization of the welfare state (Gallo and Svensson, 2019). In other countries, for instance the USA, crime victim organizations have also pushed for tougher policies against crime (Elias, 1993). Research in Sweden has shown that even if crime victim organizations have not explicitly focused on expanding criminal law to the same extent, indirectly they have driven the public discourse on crime and punishment in a neoliberal direction in a number of areas. This is especially the case when it comes to violence against women (Gallo & Svensson, 2019; Tham et al., 2011).

The purpose of this report is to give an account of and discuss the answers that were submitted in connection with the national conference on cultural victimology held in December 2020. The report begins by describing our method and data collection. We then give an account of the responses to three questionnaires that were completed in connection with the meeting. The report concludes with a discussion in which we contextualize the questionnaire answers in terms of research, society, and the historical development.

Method

An invitation to participate in the meeting was sent to around 40 people engaged in research within the fields of social work, sociology, criminology, psychology, and jurisprudence, as well as to practitioners and experts working at Victim Support Sweden (both nationally and locally), the Swedish Crime Victim Authority, support centres for young victims of crime in various municipalities, and children's advocacy centres (Barnahus). Information was also sent to a number of different networks for further distribution, and everyone who was invited was also asked to spread the information further. The invitation included a link to a questionnaire (henceforth called the pre-questionnaire) consisting of six questions judged to be easy to answer in writing rather than verbally during discussions at the meeting. A total of 15 people signed up for all or part of the meeting, and 12 attended.

Four people were invited to give presentations at the meeting: Veronika Burcar Alm, researcher in sociology; Carolina Lunde, researcher in psychology; Carina Gallo, researcher in criminal justice studies; and Carolina Överlien, researcher in social work. Each presenter had 25 minutes at her disposal, including time for discussion with participants or answering questions. Those who wished to receive compensation for their work with the presentations could be offered a small fee of 1250 SEK from COST Action 18121. The presentations are briefly reported in the results section below.

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the original plan was to hold the meeting in a hybrid form, and those participants who were on site would be offered a coffee break and lunch paid for by the social work unit at Örebro university. However, the pandemic restrictions were later sharpened, and the format was changed to being held entirely on Zoom.

Data collection

Ahead of the meeting, COST Action 18121 had asked all participating countries to discuss 12 crime victim issues in terms of their role and development nationally. In Sweden's case, the questions were answered with the help of three questionnaires: one before the meeting, one to be completed during the morning of the meeting, and one to fill in during the afternoon. The pre-questionnaire was sent to the same people who were invited to attend and consisted of six questions. These questions were thought to be less suitable for discussion and easier to answer in writing. The pre-questionnaire was closed for responses on the same day that the meeting was held, meaning that it had been open for over a month. A reminder was sent together with the reminder to sign up to participate in the meeting.

A total of three sets of answers came in, however the system makes it possible to see that several more people had begun filling in the questionnaire but had not submitted it. It is not clear how many people did so, because each time that someone opens the questionnaire it is registered as a unique visit. It is also unclear whether people chose not to submit it because they did not think they could answer the questions, or if they simply neglected to click on the 'submit' button.

The morning and afternoon questionnaires had the same structure, and both were discussed in small groups. The morning questionnaire had a longer discussion session, however, so it consisted of four questions, while the afternoon questionnaire had two questions. Each group answered the questions together, which means that each questionnaire represents a group of 4–5 people. In the morning there were two groups, resulting in two completed questionnaires. In the afternoon fewer people could participate, so the discussion took place in a single group of about 5–6 people (some left early, and others joined in later during the discussion) resulting in one completed questionnaire. The results are reported in the results section below. Answers given to specific questions that appear to actually answer a different one of the questions have been moved, to gather similar answers in a single place, avoid repetition, and improve readability.

	Pre-questionnaire	Morning questionnaire	Afternoon questionnaire
Questions (nos.)	1–6	7–10	11–12
Number of respondents	3	2 groups (9 people in total)	1 group (5–6 people)
Organizations/ occupations (if the information is available)	The questionnaire was sent to around 40 people engaged in research within the fields of social work, sociology, criminology, psychology, and jurisprudence, as well as to practitioners and experts working at Victim Support Sweden (both nationally and locally), the Swedish Crime Victim Authority, support centres for young victims of crime in various municipalities, and children's advocacy centres (Barnhus).	<p><u>Group 1</u></p> <p>Researchers within criminology and social work. A representative from Victim Support Sweden. Representatives from Victim Support Sweden and support centres for young victims of crime.</p> <p><u>Group 2</u></p> <p>A researcher within social work. A representative from the Swedish Crime Victim Authority. Representatives from Victim Support Sweden and support centres for young victims of crime.</p>	<p><u>Group 1</u></p> <p>Researchers within social work and criminology. A representative from the Swedish Crime Victim Authority.</p> <p>Representatives from Victim Support Sweden and support centres for young victims of crime.</p>

Presentations

The first presentation was given by Veronika Burcar Alm, PhD in Social Work, Lund University, who presented her research on violence and conflicts between siblings. The presentation touched on questions about where to draw the line between sibling conflicts, which are often considered common in sibling relationships, and sibling violence, which can involve emotional or physical violence. People

exposed to sibling violence report that their relationships with parents and siblings are strained and that the effects continue for a long time afterward. In addition, violence can even be expressed during adulthood, even if it takes a different form and may be less physical.

The second presentation, about online sexual crimes against children, was given by Carolina Lunde, Lecturer in Psychology, Gothenburg University. Among other things, the presentation highlighted that there is a constant risk for young people because of their high online presence. Young people do the same things as adults online, such as socializing with others. Contacts occur across all the platforms that the children use, from social media to gaming platforms. Consequences of their online victimization can include role confusion, guilt and shame. The perpetrators are often unknown and can contact many children at the same time. This is constantly going on and perpetrators gain access to children's 'safe spaces.

Carina Gallo, Associate Professor of Criminal Justice Studies, San Francisco State University, gave the third presentation, on the growth of the victim support movement. The movement emerged from the women's movement and the struggle for human rights. In the USA, a movement could also be observed that focused on punishment of perpetrators and justice for victims. Together with a colleague, Carina has written a book about the growth of the Swedish victim support movement, Victim Support and the Welfare State, which is available in open access. The victim movement even became a matter of 'saying or doing human rights', making it clear that human rights has been part of the work of Victim Support Sweden (one of the main actors in the victim rights movement in Sweden) all along. Victim Support Sweden did not, however, explicitly talk much about human right early on; instead, the topic was added at a later stage.

The final presentation was given by Carolina Överlien, Professor of Social Work, Stockholm University, and dealt with youth intimate partner violence. Carolina began by describing how violence in young people's intimate relationships falls between the categories of child abuse and violence in intimate relationships, making this group often invisible. This is even though youth intimate partner violence is fairly common, and that the violence can both be serious and escalate quickly. Therefore, adults who are around young people must dare to ask them if everything is ok in their relationships and talk about what a healthy relationship involves. These relationships are in many cases the young people's first love relationships and can set the standard for coming relationships. The violence is often only discovered when other problems come to light such as school absence, social isolation and eating disorders. For this reason, if young people begin to change their behaviour it can be important ask difficult questions about any victimization that might be the actual cause of the behaviour.

Results

Below the results from the questionnaires are reported. The answers are very lightly edited for linguistic correctness, with brief comments or clarifications from the authors. Repetitions have been omitted, along with a small number of answers that were too vague for us to interpret, and the answers are arranged in chronological order.

1. Milestones in the development of crime victims' rights

Answer: When a three-year-old girl was murdered by her stepfather, which led to the founding of BRIS.

Comment: Founded in 1971, BRIS (Children's Rights in Society) is a children's rights organization that supports children, mobilizes society and influences policymakers by making children's voices heard.

Answer: The women's shelter movement.

Comment: The first women's shelters were established in 1978, and in 1984 the National Organization for Women's Shelters and Young Women's Shelters (Roks) was founded in Sweden.

Answer: When abuse of women became subject to public prosecution.

Comment: 1982

Answer: The founding of Victim Support Sweden in the 1980s, when the problem of crime victims not generally receiving enough support was identified.

Comment: The first victim support centre was founded in Södertälje in 1984. In 1988 a national association of victim support centres was founded, which today has the name Victim Support Sweden.

Answer: The creation of the Swedish Crime Victim Authority (Brottsoffermyndigheten) and the Crime Victim Fund (Brottsofferfonden)

Comment: 1994

Answer: The discourse on treatment (of crime victims).

Comment: The government proposition 2000/01:79 Support for Crime Victims expanded the right to counsel for the injured party by removing the restriction to crimes covered by the criminal code and supplemented the Social Services Act to clarify that the social services are responsible for all municipal residents who have been victims of crime and are in need of support and help.

Answer: Children's advocacy centres (Barnahus).

Comment: The children's advocacy centre in Linköping was founded in 2005 as the first in Sweden.

Answer: The 2006 National Safety Survey.

Comment: Each year since 2006, the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention has carried out a National Safety Survey (Nationella trygghetsundersökningen, NTU), to investigate people's exposure to crime, feelings of worry and insecurity, and confidence in the justice system, as well as crime victims' experiences of contact with the justice system.

Answer: Support for crime victims, for example the Pilot Project for Improving the Treatment of Crime Victims, a project about treating victims aimed at prosecutors.

Comment: A pilot project for improving the treatment of crime victims, called the Treatment Project was carried out in 2007. *'Pilot Project for Improving the Treatment of Crime Victims'* (2008) is a report from a collaboration between Umeå University and the Swedish Prosecution Authority's Development Centre in Umeå.

Answer: The EU strategy for crime victims' rights 2020–2025. (2020)

Comment: In addition to what is mentioned above, a series of different information and education campaigns have been undertaken to improve the situation for crime victims and draw attention to their plight and vulnerability. For example, the harmful actions to which crime victims are subjected not only harm individuals, but also are violations of human rights.

2. Instances of crime victimization that have influenced policy and practice

Answer: Well I know that the case of Miss Florence (?) in Skåne (who was swindled out of almost her entire fortune) received a great deal of attention in the early 20th century, but because I wasn't active at the time it's hard for me to assess its role in the development.

Comment: Florence Stephens, 1881–1979, known as the Spinster of Huseby, was the victim of a series of frauds that came to be known as the Huseby Affair, one of the major media events of the 1950s and 1960s in Sweden. We unaware of whether, and if so how this has affected policy and practice.

Answer: In connection with the Catherine da Costa case there was quite a lot of debate about how we view different crime victims.

Comment: A series of trials in Stockholm in 1984–2012 following the discovery of a dismembered corpse received much publicity. The murder remains unsolved and has led to a debate about how people's credibility is judged based on their way of life. We unaware of whether, and if so how this has affected policy and practice.

Answer: After the murders of Pela and Fadime, the movement against honour-based violence and control really got going in Sweden.

Comment: The murders occurred in 1999 and 2002 respectively. They led to the forming of an association called 'Never forget Pela and Fadime', which among other things conducts lobbying activities about the issue of honour-based violence and control in order to disseminate knowledge and change how people work with these questions in practice.

Answer: Lex Bobby – investigations of deaths.

Comment: Bobby Äikiä died at the age of 10 in 2006 after having been subjected to severe abuse and torture by his mother and her partner. The case led to the law referred to as Lex Bobby (2007:606) on the investigation of particular cases of death, which stipulates that a special child-protection investigation shall be carried out if a child has died as a result of violence or another crime and the child was in need of protection. The investigators shall seek to identify systematic failures in the social safety net with the aim of presenting concrete proposals for remedies that can prevent children from coming to harm.

Answer: The terrorist attack on Drottninggatan.

Comment: In 2017 Rakhmat Akilov drove a lorry into people in the pedestrian zone of Drottninggatan street in Stockholm, killing five. While there had been terrorist attacks in Sweden earlier, this was the first time that people other than the perpetrator had been injured or died. This has led, among other things, to discussions about how these people should be supported, as well as how civil damages and crime injuries compensation shall be evaluated. The Swedish Crime Victim Authority is currently carrying out a special government commission to develop information for victims of terrorism. The report from the commission shall be presented during 2021.

Answer: Aftonbladet's series of articles about women murdered by their husbands is fairly recent, but I believe it's important for understanding how much remains to be done to ensure that crime victims are protected.

Comment: For ten years, since 2009, the tabloid newspaper Aftonbladet has been examining cases of murder and manslaughter of women in Sweden who were killed by their husband, boyfriend, or ex-husband. Whether or how the article series has influenced policy and practice is unclear, but it is keeping the topic current in the public debate.

3. Victims and victimization apart from being a victim of crime

Answer: The first thing that comes to my mind is victims of bullying.

Comment: In some but not all cases, bullying is a crime.

Answer: Also want to mention that witnessing parents' violence during childhood has not been a crime, but like crime victims these children have had the right, for example, to support from the social services and criminal injuries compensation from the Swedish Crime Victim Authority.

Answer: Traffic crimes, discrimination, and economic exploitation.

Comment: Traffic crimes, discrimination and economic exploitation are crimes that are beginning to receive more attention from Victim Support Sweden, the Swedish Crime Victim Authority and the Police, among others. Victims of these crimes are often invisible, and they do not always get access to support. It is not that they lack the right to support, but probably has more to do with the traditional idea of a crime victim, which is associated with such crimes as threats, beatings, sexual violence, and so on.

4. Trends in crime victimization during the last 10 years

Answer: Crime is decreasing overall, but certain types are increasing. Maybe a differentiation is taking place, so that people living in some areas are experiencing more crime while the majority in the rest of the country are being affected less and less?

Answer: The increase primarily consists of fraud against the elderly or younger people (children and adolescents). There has even been an increase in robbery and violent crimes against younger people (children and adolescents).

Answer: More combinations of crime prevention and crime-victim supporting initiatives

Child crime victims not seen or listened to, not taken seriously.

Evaluations of protection and support for crime victims

Increased emphasis on especially vulnerable groups of crime victims

Professionalization of certain areas (support for abused women)

Increased funding for civil-society organizations

Efforts to make it simpler for people to get compensation, for example the Swedish Enforcement Authority's online application form for criminal injuries compensation and simplified application form for criminal injuries compensation.

Comment: Over the last ten years victim-support initiatives have increasingly come to be seen as preventive efforts. More evaluations are also being done to develop the activities, but some groups remain invisible, such as children. Despite this, there has been a professionalization of victim-support activities, with more support being provided by professionals, even if the volunteer sector is still an important actor. One reason for this can be that there is an increased focus on especially vulnerable groups. Funding of victim-support initiatives within civil society has increased in recent years, above all regarding intimate partner violence and honour-based violence and control. A further trend is that more public authorities are working to make it easier for crime victims to apply for compensation, for example by simplifying the paperwork.

5. 'New' forms of crime victimization

Answer: Since about 20 years ago, children who witness parents' violence have had increased rights as crime victims.

Answer: The situation for closely related persons has begun receiving increased attention, especially in cases of murder. In a similar vein, victims of different kinds of traffic crimes are beginning to receive more attention (it goes in cycles).

Answer: Teenage girls, victims of terrorism, crimes against people with functional variation, especially neuropsychiatric disorders, honour-crimes, and crimes against democracy.

Comment: Of these groups, children who have witnessed violence committed by or against a closely related person have received expanded rights, from criminal injuries compensation to support from the social services, and now most recently in proposed legislation stipulating that anyone who commits a criminal action against a closely related person shall be convicted of child abuse if the action is witnessed by a child and is intended to harm the child's sense of security or trust in relation to anyone involved. The remainder of these groups have had the same legal status for a long time but are receiving greater attention and understanding.

6. Synonyms of the term 'crime victim'

Answer: 'Vulnerable person' (utsatt). Often used when speaking of children at risk of crime/violence, but also regarding 'vulnerable neighbourhoods', though in a more general sense.

Answer: Crime victim (brottsoffer), person exposed to crime (brottsutsatt), injured party (during a trial) (målsägande), survivor (sexual crime, intimate partner crime), indirect and direct victims / persons exposed to crime.

Answer: There is not so much discussion of people exposed to crime anymore. A crime victim is someone who must live with the negative consequences such as guilt, fear and rage. Words like agency, resistance, and self-empowerment occur less frequently. The concept of a crime victim is broader than just being the victim of a serious crime against one's freedom or person, but the discussion of crime victims is characterized by a focus on violence.

7. The history of victimology

Answer: Within different disciplines since the 1990s as its own sub-course within criminology (which many often apply for).

Answer: Children and adolescents who experience it in the home
Intimate partner violence among youth
Young people's exposure to crime
Much of the research was started in the 1990s or later

Comment: As can be seen in the above answers, the discipline of victimology has primarily developed in Sweden since the 1990s. It originates from criminology, and partly from studies on the situation for crime victims in other disciplines. What also can be seen is that there has been a strong focus on children and adolescents' situation and intimate partner violence.

Comment: When it comes to the most prominent researchers, the following were mentioned (here in alphabetic order):

Answer: Kjerstin Almqvist, Tommy Andersson, Anders Broberg, Maria Eriksson, Carin Holmberg, Margareta Hydén, Staffan Janson, Anna Kaldal, Åsa Källström, Pernilla Leviner, Astrid Schlytter, Carl-Göran Svedin, Kerstin Svensson, Ewa Tiby, Katarina Weinehall and Carolina Överlien.

Comment: Regarding the leading publications, the following were mentioned:

Answer: Slagen dam: Mäns våld mot kvinnor i jämställda Sverige: en omfångsundersökning [Beaten Women: Men's violence against women in gender-equal Sweden: a prevalence study] (2001) by Eva Lundgren, Gun Heimer, Ann-Marie Kalliokoski and Jenny Westerstrand, Utsatta och sårbara brottsoffer [Exposed and vulnerable crime victims] (2004) by Magnus Lindgren, Varför går hon?: Om misshandlade kvinnors uppbrottsprocesser [Why does she leave? On the breaking-up processes of abused women] (2011) by Carin Holmberg and Viveka Enander, Viktimologisk forskning: Brottsoffer i teori och metod [Victimological research: Crime victims in theory and method] (2012) Anita Heber, Eva Tiby and Sofia Wikman (eds), Victim support and the welfare state (2019) by Carina Gallo and Kerstin Svensson, and reports from NCK, e.g. Våld och hälsa: En befolkningsundersökning om kvinnors och mäns våldsutsatthet samt kopplingen till hälsa [Violence and health: A population study of women's and men's exposure to crime and its connection to health] (2014) by Tommy Andersson, Gun Heimer and Steven Lucas.

8. International directives, laws, and agreements

Answer: The Convention of the Compensation of Victims of Violent Crimes

Comment: The Council of Europe's convention on compensation for crime victims entered into force in 1988.

Answer: The Lanzarote Convention on sexual abuse of children

Comment: Sweden signed the convention when it was opened for signature in 2007, but it was not ratified until 2013.

Answer: The Istanbul Convention: GREVIO Report: shortcomings, e.g. prosecution of intimate partner violence, etc.

Comment: Sweden ratified the convention in 2014 and in 2019 received 41 recommendations from the Council of Europe's expert body GREVIO (Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence) which is the monitoring body of the convention. The government shall report on how Sweden has addressed these recommendations in 2022.

Answer: The rights perspective: Crime Victims Directive 2014–2015. Fairly well, but some changes (e.g. interpreters and translation, individual needs assessment).

Comment: The government proposition 2014/15:77 Implementation of the Crime Victims Directive recommended the legal amendments needed to implement Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and the Council establishing minimum standards for the rights of crime victims and for their support and protection (Crime Victims Directive).

Answer: The EU strategy on victims' rights 2020–2025

Comment: 2020

Answer: The Child Convention, will be implemented at the new year, so it's far too early to say, a lot was already statutory already. Interesting to see if this has a greater effect.

Comment: Sweden ratified the Child Convention in 1990, but it did not become Swedish law until 1 January 2020.

9. National documents

Answer: The Criminal Injuries Compensation Act (Lag om brottsskadeersättning), 1978.

Answer: The 1988 Act on Counsel of the Injured Party and amendments (Lag om målsägandebiträde).

Answer: The creation of the Crime Victim Authority and the Crime Victim Fund in 1994 (prop. 1993/94:143 Highlighting the crime victim – a crime victim fund and other measures to strengthen the position of victims of crime [Brottsoffren i blickpunkten - en brottsofferfond och andra åtgärder för att stärka brottsoffrens ställning]).

Answer: The discourse on treatment (prop. 2000/01:79 Support for victims, for example Pilot Project for Improving the Treatment of Crime Victims, a project about how to treat victims aimed at prosecutors).

Answer: Children's Advocacy Centres (2005, proposal of Lex Barnahus 2013)

Answer: The Consent Law (Samtyckeslagen), Crimes committed by individuals that involve serious violations of physical sexual integrity are viewed as human rights violations (hasn't received so much attention)

Answer: The rights perspective: The Crime Victims Directive, the EU strategy on victims' rights 2020–2025.

Answer: The Act on Counsel of the Injured Party (Lag om målsägandebiträde) and Special Advocates for Children (Lag om särskild företrädare för barn), SoL Chap. 11, RB: on support persons, Contact Prohibition Orders (Lag om kontaktförbud), the Law on Criminal Injuries (Brottskadlagen), Preliminary Investigation Notification (Förundersökningskungörelsen) (a section on police informing victims about support, counsel for the injured party, and compensation), the Crime Victim Fund Law (Lag om brottsofferfond), the Law on Civil Damages (Skadeståndslagen), The EU Crime Victims Directive, the Terrorism Directive has sections on crime victims, the Directive on Sexual Exploitation of Children, the Directive on Cooperation on Contact Prohibition Orders within the EU, the Directive on Compensation from the State, the budget proposition includes allocations to the judiciary and mentions crime victim policy, the public authorities' appropriations documents e.g. the Swedish Crime Victim Authority, The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (BRÅ), the county administrative boards, the National Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen), the Convention on Children's Rights (Barnkonventionen), 1995 Women's Protection SOU, the 2007 government action plan on [violence in] close relationships, the government: children's rights handbook on treatment of crime victims and crimes against children, the Board of Health and Welfare's handbooks etc. on intimate partner violence, the Swedish Crime Victim Authority's annual report incl. on civil society and research, [the charity] Allmänna Barnhuset's recurring questionnaire about child abuse/national survey, the safety survey, school studies on sexual abuse.

Answer: Criminal injuries compensation from victim support centres – the right to apply for compensation even in cases where children experience violence in the home IF it has been reported (to the authorities).

The Social Services Act (Socialtjänstlagen) – the principle of voluntariness is strong
LVU (Law of mandatory care of minors)
SOU (Swedish Government Official Reports)
Reports from the National Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen)

10. Actors that offer support and services to crime victims

Comment: The national actors with a legally mandated responsibility for crime victims that were mentioned were:

Answer: The Swedish Crime Victim Authority
The Police Authority
The Social Services

Comment: In addition, several actors were mentioned that have a presence in many parts of Sweden and an explicit, so-to-speak self-imposed responsibility for (among other things) crime victims:

Answer: Children's Advocacy Centres (Barnahus)
Children's Rights in Society (BRIS)
Victim Support Sweden
Child and Youth psychiatry
Women's shelters (e.g. within the national organizations the National Organization for Women's Shelters and Young Women's Shelters [ROKS] and UNIZON)
Girls' helplines (Tjejjourer)

Comment: Finally, a large number of actors were mentioned that often provide support to crime victims, but do not have this as their primary task or target group of their activities.

Answer: BUFFF (Supporting children and young people with a parent in prison)
Första linjen (The first line, a help line for psychiatric advice and support for children and young people)
Shelters.
RFSL (Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender rights)
Save the Children (e.g. online chat)
The Schools.

Comment: Thus, national actors with a legally mandated responsibility for crime victims, several actors with a presence in many parts of Sweden that have an explicit, so-to-speak self-imposed responsibility for (among other things) crime victims, and a large number of actors that often provide support to crime victims, but do not have this as their primary task or target group of their activities were all mentioned.

Answer: Support centres for young victims of crime

Comment: Are in many municipalities, but not all. Clear statistics are lacking on how many support centres exist in Sweden.

Answer: The City Missions
Church of Sweden
Talita
Terrafem
Witness support
Other volunteer organizations

Comment: These answers show that there are several examples in Sweden that together ought to make up a fairly wide safety net.

11. Innovations in support and services to crime victims

Answer: 1000 possibilities is an organization targeting young people and their romantic relationships. They have succeeded in reaching out to young people with their online chat.

Answer: Many municipalities have come far with their work, and the Social Services Act has been successively strengthened.

Answer: The Swedish Crime Victim Authority has conducted several successful campaigns, which is a way to reach out to crime victims. The trial school (rättegångsskolan) was a website for people who were going to participate in a trial and provided information about what the process would be like. Recently brottsofferguiden.se (the crime-victims guide) also appeared, where victims can find support and information.

Comment: During 2013–2014, for example, the Swedish Crime Victim Authority developed an information package on protection and support for children and young people who were crime victims (Jag vill veta, I want to know) which was distributed on a website (jagvillveta.se), a book (Liten – en barnbok om att berätta, Little, a children’s book about telling), and five brochures, and in 2015 a tutorial for preschool staff. During 2017–2019 they developed educational and informational materials to support participants in the democratic conversation who had received or were at risk of receiving threats and hate (Tystna inte, Don’t go silent), which was distributed through seminars and theme days at public authorities and organizations, and through digital marketing to young people and people in need of information about, for example, how to file a police report. During 2017–2018 they launched a website for crime victims (Brottsofferguiden.se), so that crime victims can get appropriate information at the right time. During 2018–2020 they undertook informational and educational initiatives in relation to the new sex crime legislation (frivilligtsex.se and 18 Av fri vilja films on YouTube, etc.).

Answer: Barbro Metell and Birgitta Lyckner lay the groundwork for the work with children who had witnessed violence between close relatives, which then led to a model for supporting children with individual conversations. You have to go back and see where it started. They were out there early, and later had a huge influence on the field.

Comment: Barbro Metell and Birgitta Lyckner ran the first clinic in Sweden that specialized in children who had witnessed violence in the home and described their work in the books Barn som ser pappa slå [Children who see daddy hit] (2001) and Barn som upplever våld [Children who experience violence] (2007).

Answer: The introduction of structured risk evaluations has changed the view on victims. Now there are more concrete indications to make use of in identifying risk factors. There is greater awareness of their vulnerability and victimization. It is taken very seriously; even if we have the same laws, it's hard to prosecute, and resources are scarce.

Comment: The police primarily use [the instruments] SARA:SV, SAM and PATRIARK (for honour-based violence and control) (Rikspolisstyrelsen, 2010), while in the social services FREDA is often used.

Answer: The Act on Counsel of the Injured Party – an important support for crime victims, even if there is disagreement about whether they should provide emotional support. Ideally, they should be present from the preliminary investigation stage. Unfortunately, there are problems, for example that the counsel for the injured party is only available by telephone and is first met with in person 15 minutes before the trial. The Swedish Crime Victim Authority has pointed this out in its annual report, as well as that the counsel for the injured party should receive a wider mandate regarding the damages process.

Answer: The changes regarding damages and criminal injuries compensation (compensation for abuse). There have even been attempts to simplify the procedures.

Comment: These answers to the afternoon questionnaire gave a wide variety of examples of innovations in support and service for crime victims. Because only limited evaluations of these initiatives and innovations have been performed, it is difficult to say to what extent they have been successful.

12. Gaps in support and services for crime victims

Comment: Several brought up that support does not always reach those who need it on a more or less general level, with stress on organizational obstacles:

Answer: People who do not receive help from public authorities or the help they expect. Authorities are not good at explaining how far their mandate goes. Victim Support Sweden sometimes has to try to explain public authorities' mandates, among other things. It can be wearisome to have to deal with authorities and turn to many different places for help.

Answer: Confidentiality is good, but it can make cooperation more difficult. Things need to be done several times because cooperation is made difficult by the lack of cooperation. There is a lot of research about how one can handle this.

Answer: The support centre [for young victims of crime] may not keep records of names, which means they may not write down names and therefore cannot carry out follow-ups. Sometimes it can be about coming in with information regarding another support contact.

Comment: Others specifically mentioned young crime victims, especially about how conversations with young people about difficult experiences can be conducted in an appropriate way:

Answer: Young people sometimes get in touch themselves, but mainly it is the parents who get in touch. One should not feel forced to sit here and talk. The environment can also change – office, walk, car, etc. The young people listen to each other. If one of them has been treated badly and tells others, that causes others not to turn to us. The same applies the other way around. They influence each other. They have to feel safe. It's the same with how they are treated by public authorities and the judicial system. It's very much a matter of reaching them with information and making the people at

the support organizations or authorities into real people who you can turn to. Visiting schools is a good example of this. They don't call, online chat is better.

Answer: The role of the school in talking about sex and what is ok in relationships. How can this be done in a good way, when parents don't talk about things with them? Talk about relationships in school, not just sexuality. People mustn't be afraid to talk with the young people about boundaries, but without being judgmental and saying what they should and shouldn't do. Just because you're together doesn't mean you have to say yes just because your partner wants to. Sex education has to discuss what a good and healthy relationship looks like.

Answer: Parents seem afraid to bring up the topic because they don't know what to say.

Answer: Good conversations – how do you bring it up with young people. A good way to start is perhaps to mention that you've read something or heard something at a lecture, talk about it in general.

Answer: You have to be able to explain in a simpler way. How should you deal with young people, and above all girls, when you are talking about intimate partner violence and they just laugh it off? You have to raise the issue of violence with the parents as well. The fact that violence can occur in several arenas needs to be brought up more, e.g. the sorts of things that happen online. This also applies to adults who behave badly, which means that even adults are victimized online. It's important to talk about how people treat each other.

Comment: The answers to the afternoon questionnaire provided numerous examples of gaps in the support and services available to crime victims in Sweden. Even if previous answers show that much has been done in recent decades, a great deal of work remains to be done when it comes to reaching specific groups affected by crime, and especially young people.

Discussion

The purpose of this discussion is to contextualize the questionnaire answers in relation to research as well as to the societal context and historical development. To begin with, it is worth mentioning that Sweden has a welfare model where several public actors provide help and support, such as the health-care system, but the support is not mainly provided on the basis of recipients being crime victims, but rather because they have an identified need for support. In addition, there are also several actors that specifically focus on crime victim support, which is discussed below.

The answers to the three questionnaires make it clear that there are incidents in Swedish history that have served as catalysts for change in the field of criminal victimization. The concept of 'crime victim' began to be used around 1970, but even previously there was talk of being exposed to or affected by crime. During the 1970s and 1980s the volunteer sector engaging with the issue grew, after it was found that the public welfare actors were unable to meet the needs of all citizens. For example, several different women's shelters were started, focusing on supporting and protecting women exposed to intimate partner violence, as well as lobbying for legislative changes in the area. In a similar vein, Children's Rights in Society (BRIS) was founded to strengthen children's rights and give them a greater voice in societal issues. The first local victim support centres also emerged during the 1980s after weaknesses were found in the support and treatment of crime victims. These then united to form Victim Support Sweden. Volunteer organizations have since pushed through national reforms granting injured parties the right to counsel in many cases, a right that has successively been strengthened. Similarly,

the right to support has been incorporated into the Social Services Act, Chap. 5 § 11 (2001: 453), even if opinions differ about how far the social welfare committee's responsibility extends in relation to crime victims more generally. The question of responsibility is all the clearer, though, when it comes to women exposed to intimate partner violence (cf. Ljungwald, 2011; Thunberg, 2020). The Social Services Act is undergoing revision, and if the proposal passes the text will be made gender neutral, to include more explicitly everyone exposed to intimate partner violence.

Judging by the questionnaire answers, several concepts and terms are used for crime victims in Sweden. The term crime victim is used, but also terms such as person exposed to crime and injured party occur. To these, survivor, indirect and direct victims can be added, and when it comes to children, there is also witnessing violence. In one of the answers, however, it emerges that discussions of terminology are less common today than previously, which can indicate that there is greater consensus around the meanings of the words. It may also suggest that the field of victimology has entered a phase where what words mean is less important than identifying new victim groups. The word 'victim' in the term has been criticized for potentially forcing individuals into roles with which they do not identify (e.g., Burcar, 2005; Jägervi, 2016; Thunberg, 2020). This has led certain organizations to recommend the term person exposed to crime instead of crime victim, because it is experienced as less stigmatizing. People exposed to crime can include more people than just the one who was directly subjected to the crime, such as witnesses and close relations. The term injured party relates to judicial discourse and is somewhat narrower than the term crime victim because it solely refers to those who have been exposed to a crime and then reported it to the police. In other words, injured party is a label that is placed on those who choose to bring the matter to the judicial system. Especially in relation to intimate partner violence and sex crimes the term survivor is also used. However, discussions about these terms and their meanings no longer seem to be an active part of the public conversation in Sweden.

During the 20th century there have been reforms in the compensation awarded to persons exposed to crime (Kim & Gallo, 2019). The current Law of Damages came into force in the 1970s (Skadeståndslag, 1972:207). Perpetrators, however, are not always able to pay awarded damages, for which reason there is also a national compensation system (Criminal Injuries Compensation) to enable crime victims to receive compensation for the damage they have suffered even in such cases. People can apply for criminal injuries compensation if they have reported the crime and do not receive another form of compensation (Brottsoffermyndigheten, 2020b; 2020c). Children who have witnessed violence between close relations also have a right to criminal injuries compensation, even if they are not currently classified as injured parties in the trial process.

Some groups that are considered to be receiving more attention recently but largely have been invisible in the public debate, according to the questionnaire responses, are children who witness parental violence, close relatives of crime victims and their specific situation, victims of traffic crimes, terrorism and crimes based on honour and control, adolescent girls, victims of crime with functional variation, and victims of crimes against democracy. If we look more closely at the various government mandates that the Swedish Crime Victim Authority, among other organizations, has received, it becomes clear that the last-mentioned group is a central area of focus right now, in order to prevent people from being silenced by online threats and harassment, with special emphasis on journalists on public persons such as politicians (Brottsoffermyndigheten, 2020d). In a similar vein, the Swedish Crime Victim Authority is currently developing informational materials targeting victims of terrorism, which is a government mandate that will be reported upon in May 2021 (Brottsoffermyndigheten, 2020d). The reason why this group has not been an active part of the discussion around crime victims may have to do with the fact that Sweden has been somewhat sheltered from this type of crime, but after the 2017

terrorist attack on Drottninggatan street in Stockholm it became clear that this group had previously been invisible. For example, there was no established practice regarding economic compensation or knowledge about their specific support needs. An attack against the state, such as a terrorist attack, also results in more victims than solely those who are directly affected such as witnesses and close relations, which for their part also are groups that historically have not received very much attention in Sweden. The research field about children's exposure to parents' violence in Sweden (and the Nordic countries more generally) received increased attention compared to 20 years ago.

The psychosocial and practical support offered to persons exposed to crime is primarily provided by volunteer organizations. Professional support is also available, for example through the health care system or the social services, but mostly in the case of more serious crimes (alternatively polyvictimization or exposure to multiple forms of victimization) (cf. Brottsförebyggande rådet, 2018; Thunberg & Källström, 2018). In addition to these more formal support interventions, family and friends are also important actors when it comes to providing supportive interventions, and even they have a right to help and support according to Chap. 5 § 11 of the Social Services Act (2001: 453).

Looking back on history from where we stand today, we can conclude that we have come a long way with crime victims' rights and reforms of law and regulations to make it easier for crime victims to get help, and support structures are now in place. Even so, a great deal remains to be done. Some groups do not have the same access to these structures as others. Similarly, the strong municipal autonomy and differing sizes of municipalities in Sweden cause a high level of variation in what support interventions are available in different areas of the country. The volunteer organizations are striving to uphold access to support in the entire country, but they do not have a presence in all municipalities, and therefore cannot offer everyone physical conversations, for example. Instead, support is more often provided by phone or online chat. The difference in size of municipalities (in population) also means that they have unequal prerequisites for offering support, even if they would like to do so. In other words, there is a need to work toward achieving equal-quality support in the whole country, regardless of where you live or what you have experienced.

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