



# **THE VICTIM-OFFENDER AS THE EPITOME OF THE NONIDEAL VICTIM**

BETWEEN HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY AND  
THE BELIEF IN A JUST WORLD

ASHANTI BERREND

# **THE VICTIM-OFFENDER AS THE EPITOME OF THE NONIDEAL VICTIM**

## **BETWEEN HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY AND THE BELIEF IN A JUST WORLD**

**ASHANTI BERREND**

Berrend, A. The victim-offender as the epitome of the nonideal victim. Between hegemonic masculinity and the belief in a just world. *Degree project in Criminology, 30 Credits*. Malmö University: Faculty of Health and Society, Department of Criminology, 2020.

### **Abstract**

The victim-offender overlap has been extensively studied and documented over the last decades. Various studies have identified young men as the most common victims of violent assault, yet the public, the media, but also criminological research have actively favored the discourse on the ideal victim. Consequently, not much is known about how victim-offenders experience and perceive victimization.

The present systematic literature review aims to analyze how violent victimization is experienced and narrated by male victim-offenders in the context of hegemonic masculinity. Secondly, it aims to analyze in how far the public's attitudes of victim blaming and victim concern are affected by a belief in a just world. Collectively, these findings aim to create a better understanding of criminal men's victim identities.

The public's empathy and concern are reserved to the innocent and vulnerable victim; criminal men are perceived as culpable and deserving of victimization. The latter use violence as an instrument of dominance and subordination, in line with hegemonic masculinity beliefs, and reject the victim identity (antithesis of masculinity), forming a new category of the nonideal victim.

*Keywords:* hegemonic masculinity, just world belief, nonideal victim, victim-offender overlap, victim blaming, violent victimization

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
Aims.....	2
Research questions.....	2
BACKGROUND.....	2
Victim-offender perceptions.....	2
The victim-offender overlap.....	3
The male victim.....	4
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	4
The (non)ideal victim.....	4
Just world belief.....	5
Hegemonic masculinity.....	6
METHODOLOGY.....	6
Systematic Literature Review.....	6
Databases and keywords.....	6
Inclusion and exclusion criteria.....	7
First selection round.....	7
Second selection round.....	7
Ethical considerations.....	8
RESULTS.....	9
The victimization of offenders.....	9
Men’s self-perceptions in relation to offending and victimization.....	10
Public’s victim and offender perceptions.....	11
DISCUSSION.....	13
Results discussion.....	13
Strengths and weaknesses.....	16
Recommendations and future research.....	16
CONCLUSION.....	17
REFERENCES.....	19
APPENDIX.....	23

# INTRODUCTION

Over the last decades, the existence of the victim-offender overlap has been studied and documented in various research which has demonstrated that victims and offenders “share significant characteristics and behaviors” (Jennings, Higgins, Tewksbury, Gover & Piquero, 2010, p. 2148). With his work on homicide, Wolfgang (1957) pioneered the concept of victim precipitation, defining a victim-precipitated homicide as an event in which “the role of the victim is characterized by his having been the first in the homicide drama to use physical force directed against his subsequent slayer” (p. 2). Similarities to Wolfgang’s victim precipitation theory can be seen reflected in early victim typologies and victimological analyses (Mendelsohn, 1956; Von Hentig, 1948), where the needs and experiences of victims are ignored to give room to classifications of victim culpability (Van Dijk, 2009; McEvoy & McConnachie, 2012).

While concern and understanding for the victim and their victimization experience have grown over the last 50 years, the preferred focus, especially that of policies and the media, has been on the ideal victim, predominantly the innocent girl or elderly woman, attacked by an unknown stranger far stronger than her (Christie, 1986). In reality, various research has shown that young, urban, single males, especially those residing in economically disadvantaged communities, are at much higher risk to be violently victimized (Cooper & Smith, 2011; Harrel, 2007; Wittebrood & Nieuwbeerta, 1999). As possible explanations, differences in patterns of routine activities and lifestyle (e.g. number of nocturnal entertainments, drug and alcohol use) as well as self-control theory have been proposed and widely discussed in victim-offender overlap research (Jennings et al., 2010, Sampson & Lauritsen, 1990, Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

From this field of study emerges the image that there is a significant connection between victims of violence and violent offenders, yet society tends to separate victims and perpetrators into diametrical categories (Jennings, Piquero & Reingle, 2012). Media and politicians have the power to “work together to portray a group of individuals as dangerous and as constituting a threat to the moral fibre and interests of society, [contributing] to a polarisation of people into the categories ‘us’ and ‘them’ and [creating] stereotyped folk devils” (Heber, 2013, p. 412; Cohen, 1972). Even critical victimology and the victims’ rights movement have not sufficiently aimed their attention at the most victimized individuals in society and have consequently neglected to address the issue of violent victimization among offenders (Farrall & Maltby, 2003; Mancini & Pickett, 2017). Since “acquiring legitimate victim status will be linked to receiving many benefits and resources; from legal aid and compensation, access to justice, through to medical care and counselling” (Fohring, 2018, p. 4), denial, or even non-acceptance of a victim identity, might result in serious and lasting consequences for a victimized person.

## **Aims**

As previously touched upon, a multitude of research has been conducted on the victim-offender overlap, but less on how victim-offenders' status as a victim is perceived by themselves as well as society in general and how this impacts their identity.

The aim of this review is to analyze how victimization is experienced and narrated by male victim-offenders in the context of hegemonic masculinity and how it impacts their self-perception as a victim. Additionally, it aims to analyze in how far the public's attitudes of victim blaming and victim concern are affected by a belief in a just world and in turn impact the perception of victim-offenders' victim status. Collectively, these findings will aim to create a better understanding of male victim-offenders' victim identities as well as depict the complex circumstances that surround being both offender and victim in the context of the ideal victim concept.

## **Research questions**

This review aims at examining the following research questions:

1. How do self-perceptions in accordance with ideas of hegemonic masculinity impact the acceptance of a victim identity among male victim-offenders?
2. Does a strong belief in a just world in individuals lead to stronger victim blaming attitudes towards male victim-offenders?
3. In how far can male victim-offenders be considered nonideal victims?

# **BACKGROUND**

## **Victim-offender perceptions**

In his illustrative article, Melossi (2000) demonstrates and discusses the representation of criminals over the 20<sup>th</sup> century, focusing more specifically on various schools of thought (i.e. Italian Positive School, the 'labelling' theorists of the 1960s and 1970s). Repeatedly, the criminal is portrayed as "a morally repugnant individual (as described by criminologists as well as in 'the public opinion' or in fiction) and is in any case the one who brings a deadly threat to society's moral order" (Melossi, 2000, p. 297). These descriptive portrayals of criminals seem to pursue the objective of orienting public morality. Through the depiction of the criminal as "the producer of evil", an attitude of aversion toward the latter is forged among members of society, disallowing criminals any possibility of empathy (Melossi, 2000, p. 300).

Similarly, Goffman (1990) suggests that an individual with a "discrediting characteristic" may be susceptible to a "social devaluation process" which will leave them labeled and slandered (p. 12). Considering this in the context of situational violence and victimization, some individuals might be perceived as more 'deserving' of the violence they experience, and less deserving of the victim status that they otherwise would be entitled to, due to a lack of "behavioural responsibility for risk avoidance" or a villainized personality (Richardson & May,

1999, p. 309). Thus, the participation in criminal behavior drastically decreases the chances for public sympathy and potentially elevates the likelihood of victim-precipitation accusations and victim blaming attitudes (Darley & Pittman, 2003).

### **The victim-offender overlap**

As previously discussed, existing research has shown similarities between victims and offenders as well as victimization and offending experiences (Jennings et al., 2010). Nonetheless, it is relevant to recognize studies that have found significant differences between victims and offenders. In the case of violent offenses, Schreck, Stewart & Osgood (2008) have identified clear distinctions between offenders and victims. In their study examining college students involved in criminal assault, Mustaine & Tewksbury (2000) found that “victims, offenders, and victim-offenders are three distinct groups, identifiable by varying lifestyle measures” (p. 339). Even though the characteristics and behaviors of victim-only and offender-only groups may differ from each other, the overlap between offenders and victims is evident, “and individuals who are both offenders and victims are a distinct population, one for which understanding the victim-offender overlap may be most important (Jennings et al., 2010, p. 2150).

Various theoretical perspectives have been provided to explain the victim-offender overlap, with routine activity theory being one of the most relevant. Schreck, Fisher & Miller (2004) found that individuals participating in criminal behavior are more prone to come in touch with offending populations and are in turn more at risk to become victimized. Furthermore, research has posited that the more an individual is involved in social activity that lacks structure and supervision, the more likely they are to come across opportunities for criminal behavior (Osgood, Wilson, O'Malley, Bachman & Johnston, 1996). Opportunity and exposure structures, engagement in risky activities (e.g. interaction with potential offenders, alcohol use), and the absence of a capable guardian promote opportunities for offending as well as victimization (Jennings, Piquero, Reingle, 2012; Entorf, 2013).

Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) self-control theory offers another leading theoretical explanation for the victim-offender overlap. The authors themselves argue that inadequate socialization and sensation-seeking behavior with a disregard for long-term consequences is the source of development for criminal behavior (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Additionally, the theory suggests “that both victimization and offending are produced by similar processes and experiences emanating from individuals' socialization and experiences with family” (Jennings et al., 2010, p. 2151). Thus, one could argue that low self-control not only heightens the risk for offending but could also account for victimization experiences (Jennings, Piquero & Reingle, 2012).

A last theory which I deem relevant to discuss in the context of the victim-offender overlap is the theory of the culture of honor, which “proposes that, in certain societies, men must never show weakness and are required to react violently to any perceived threats to their reputation” (Souza, Souza, Roazzi & da Silva, 2017, p. 1). In neighborhoods where there exists a “code-of-street”,

meaning informal rules and norms which dictate interpersonal behavior, often characterized by violence, those members who “seek to increase their status in the neighborhood [must] exert their physical prowess” on others (Jennings et al., 2012, p. 17). Through these behaviors, they not only put themselves at risk to be victimized, but they also find themselves continually vulnerable to violent victimization through other members aiming to improve their social status (Anderson, 1999; Wittebrood & Nieuwbeerta, 1999).

### **The male victim**

Men, especially young men, generally adhere most strongly to those cultures of honor and street credit. In addition to this, they make up a group which spends a lot of their leisure time staying out late at night frequenting pubs or similar locations (Green, 2007). Both, independently but especially interactively, put young men at risk to be violently victimized. Nevertheless, explanations of men’s experiences of criminal violence, especially that suffered through other men, are seldomly found in analyses on the function of power in the context of violence and “are devoid of critical commentary about the structures of men’s lives, unless it be the structure of class against class” (Stanko & Hobdell, 1993, p. 402). Even though men report and seek medical attention for physical assaults, there are clear gaps in the knowledge of how they feel about these victimization experiences, particularly in relation to hegemonic masculinity beliefs (Stanko & Hobdell, 1993).

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **The (non)ideal victim**

By “ideal victim”, Christie (1986) does not mean those individuals most perceiving themselves as victims or those most often victimized, but those individuals who “most readily are given the complete and legitimate status of being a victim” (p. 18). Christie proposes five characteristics of the ideal victim: (1) the victim is weak (old or very young), (2) the victim was carrying out an innocent and respectable task, (3) the incident took place in a location the victim could not be blamed for being, (4) the offender was physically stronger, and (5) the victim did not know or have any kind of personal relationship to the offender. To further illustrate the ideal victim, Christie gives the example of the little old lady who, after having cared for a sick family member, gets physically attacked and robbed in bright daylight by a big unknown man who then uses her money for drugs. Contrastively, Christie paints the archetype of the nonideal victim as a young man at a pub who gets physically attacked and stolen from by someone he knows. He was strong enough to defend himself, of similar strength to the offender who was known to him, and he should have protected himself by not being at the pub, a location where he was not participating in a respectable task.

Christie (1986) elaborates his concept of the nonideal victim through two different groups, which he classifies as witches and workers. Witches are nonideal victims because they had power and “such power is incompatible with the ideal victim, who must be weak and innocent” (Fohring, 2018, p. 3). Workers, on the other hand, are victims of an economic system which they cannot compete with, resulting in a “self-definition as losers rather than victims”, making them weak and helpless (Christie, 1986, p. 24). The lack of a physical offender makes them even more so incompatible with the ideal victim (Fohring, 2018). Considering the aspects of strength and weakness, witches and workers find themselves at the opposite poles. To be an ideal victim and to receive public sympathy in accordance with the victim status, the individual must demonstrate sufficient strength to talk and be listened to, but simultaneously demonstrate enough weakness to not be considered a threat to others (Christie, 1986). Evidently, ideal victims and real victims are two very distinct groups and the man in the bar is without much doubt more commonly victimized than the little old lady (Christie, 1986). While the ideal victim holds a “hero like public status”, the man in the bar deviates from that ideal, is denied the acknowledgment of the harm done to him and is therefore placed in the category of the nonideal victim (Fohring, 2018, p. 2).

One shortcoming of Christie’s work is the presumption that every victim wants to be perceived as such, when there are those who “refuse this label and distance themselves from the identity” (Fohring, 2018, p. 2). Denial or rejection of the victim status goes against the criteria of the ideal victim, and comes with the loss of the rights to empathy and compassion by others, making those victims “the epitome of the non-ideal” (Fohring, 2018, p. 5; Van Dijk, 2009).

### **Just world belief**

The main aspect of Lerner’s (1980) Just World Belief theory argues that people need to believe that the world is an orderly and just place where people get what they deserve. For those individuals demonstrating a strong belief in a just world, these convictions might act as a fundamental part of their perceptions of innocence and culpability and result in “irrational assumptions, such as that only bad people experience bad things” (Tepe, Cesur & Sunar, 2017, p. 183). Consequently, the public might blame victims for the crimes committed against them, regarding them as morally flawed individuals. This thought process serves a simple purpose: If an individual can detect some personal responsibility in the victim’s behavior, which can in turn be perceived as a contributor or even a catalyst to the victimization incident, it might lessen their fear of falling victim to the same misfortune (Mancini & Pickett, 2017). Furthermore, when exposed to a serious incident of injustice (e.g. the suffering of a victim), individuals who have a strong belief in a just world might devalue the victim and try to find ways to blame them for their own distress (Tene, Cesur & Sunar, 2017). For them, these reactions serve as defense mechanisms, but for the victims in question these responses may be experienced as secondary victimization. “By blaming the victims for their fate, we can reassure ourselves we live in a just world (Van Dijk, 2009, p. 13).

## **Hegemonic masculinity**

The concept of hegemonic masculinity refers to beliefs and behaviors that legitimize certain men's dominance and privilege in society and condone the subordination of others. It can be considered an ideal of male behavior which men are expected and encouraged to aim for (Connell, 1987). With men being least likely to report fear of crime while evidence suggests that they are most commonly the victims of criminal violence, it seems appropriate to suggest that men's attitudes towards their own suffering and their reluctance to report 'weakness' is a consequence of masculinity. This silence, and its mere acceptance by many researchers, might partially explain why men have gotten little attention as the victims of violent crime (Green, 2007; Stanko & Hobdell, 1993; Stanko, 1994). The idea of the "invulnerable man" and the inevitability of violence in men's lives has hampered "the explorations of gender as a significant contributor to how [male] victims respond to their experiences of crime and violence" (Stanko & Hobdell, 1993, p. 400). Through the exercise of violence among men, hegemonic masculinity is produced and reproduced, declaring violence as a "resource for the performance of masculinities" (Heber, 2017, p. 62). Especially in honor and street cultures, men involved in criminality and violence often describe the latter as something "unremarkable, unavoidable and sometimes even enjoyable" (Heber, 2017, p. 62), seemingly normalizing it as a part of a daily "masculinity challenge" (Messerschmidt, 2000, p. 13).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Systematic Literature Review**

A systematic literature review offers the opportunity to establish the most comprehensive overview of the existing research about the topics of interest to this paper. Through the identification, critical evaluation and integration of prior relevant findings, potential associations and discrepancies can be revealed and explored, which consequently offers room for new conceptualizations and objectives for future research (Denney & Tewksbury, 2013; Siddaway, Wood & Hedges, 2019).

### **Databases and keywords**

In February 2020, an initial scoping search was conducted on Libsearch, a database which contains various databases, to gain insight into existing research on the victim-offender overlap and victim-offender perceptions and attitudes. The main literature searches were conducted in March 2020 on databases accessible through Malmö University's library, including Psycarticles, Criminology Database, Social Sciences Citation Index and Academic Search Elite. The searches were conducted with the following keywords and variations thereof: "victim-offender overlap" AND "victimization; "victim-offender overlap" AND "victim blaming" OR "victim perception" OR "victim attitudes"; "victim-offender" OR "victim-perpetrator" AND "victimization"; "victim-

offender” OR “victim-perpetrator” AND “victim blaming” OR “victim perception” OR “victim attitudes”; “victim-offender” OR “victim-perpetrator” AND “victim identity”; “victim-offender overlap” AND “masculinity” OR “hegemonic masculinity”; “victim-offender” OR “victim-perpetrator” AND “masculinity” OR “hegemonic masculinity”; “masculinity” OR “hegemonic masculinity” AND “victimization”; “masculinity” OR “hegemonic masculinity” AND “victim identity”; “just world belief” OR “belief in a just world” AND “victimization”; “just world belief” OR “belief in a just world” AND “victim blaming” OR “victim perception” OR “victim attitudes”. Additionally, a wildcard symbol was used, spelling victimi#ation to assure inclusion of both the American and the British spelling.

### **Inclusion and exclusion criteria**

Since this review focuses on two different perspectives on victim-offenders’ victim status, namely the latter’s self-perception and society’s outsider perception, the inclusion and exclusion criteria vary slightly for both categories.

#### *Inclusion Criteria*

For the victim-offender self-perception category, the inclusion criteria were: (1) adult victim-offenders (>18 years old), (2) male sample, (3) qualitative methodology, (4) violent victimization (e.g. assault, mugging), (5) published between 2000 and 2020, and (6) peer-reviewed.

For the society’s outsider perception category, the inclusion criteria were: (1) adults (>18 years old), (2) mixed gender samples, (3) quantitative and qualitative methodology, (4) include victim perception analysis, (5) published between 2000 and 2020, and (6) peer-reviewed.

#### *Exclusion Criteria*

For the victim-offender self-perception category, the exclusion criteria were: (1) adolescent victim-offenders (<18 years old), (2) female sample, (3) non-violent crimes (e.g. property crime, theft), (4) non-western research.

For the society’s outside perception category, the exclusion criteria were: (1) adolescents (< 18 years old), (2) law enforcement sample, (3) non-western research.

### **First selection round**

In the first selection round, title and abstract were screened based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The criteria applied before initiating the search were peer-reviewed and the time frame 2000-2020. For various articles screened during the first selection round, inclusion or exclusion could not be decided on solely by reading the title and the abstract. Those articles were then included in a second selection round for full-text reading.

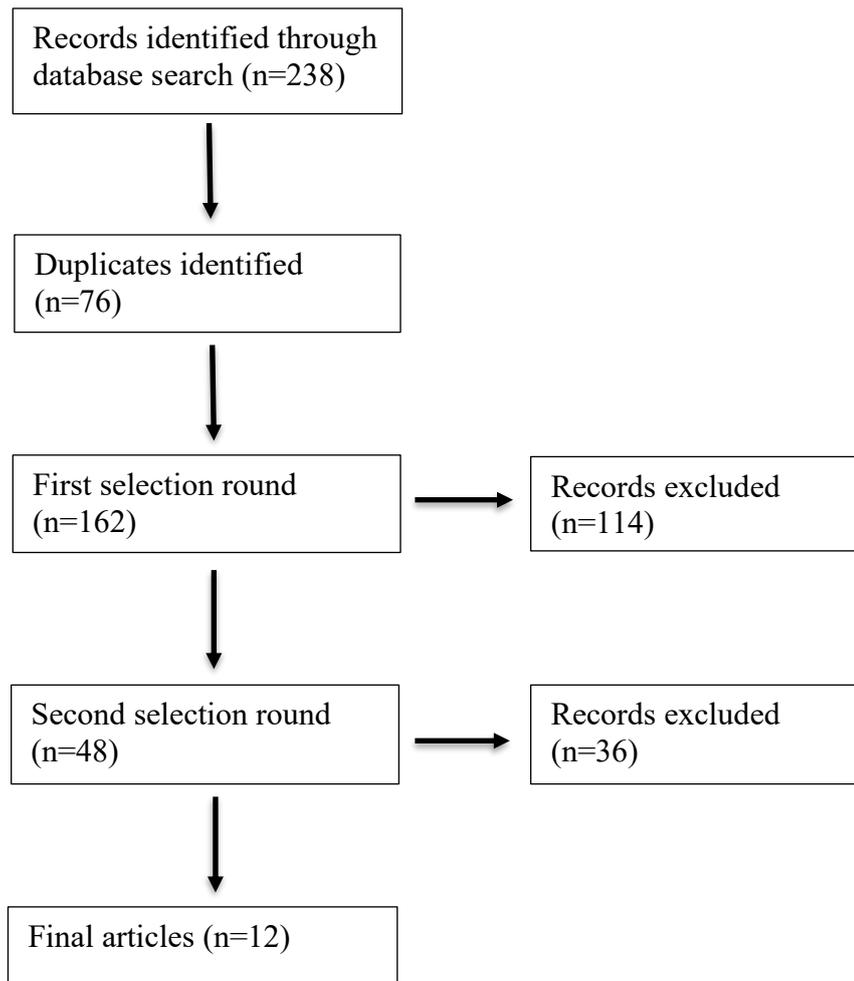
### **Second selection round**

In this step of the selection procedure, the remaining articles were read in their entirety. The aforementioned inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied

depending on the category (self-perception or public's perception) that the article belonged to. Only through the full-text reading became it apparent which articles did not fit the criteria for their correspondent category. Furthermore, the reference lists were scanned to find potentially relevant articles that could be included, but that did not produce any additional findings.

In the final selection, 12 articles were chosen to be included in the eventual review: 5 for the self-perception category, 4 for the public's perception category, and 3 additional ones about the victimization experience of victim-offenders.

### *Flow Diagram*



### **Ethical considerations**

It is of great importance that research recognizes and respects ethical considerations to assure the safety and well-being of the subjects being studied. The method used in this research is a systematic literature review which does not ask for the ethical approval from Malmö University's academic committee. Since the review focuses on previous research which has already been published, it does not need classified documents, informed consent or permission from the research subjects, which consequently does not risk any subject's integrity.

A complete reference list is provided, and sources are cited and referred in a proper way so that locating the used literature is facilitated and the revision of findings and statements can be enabled.

## RESULTS

A total of 12 studies have been included in this review and summarized details and results can be found in the table in Appendix 1. To enable a clear presentation, the articles will be grouped into three categories: (1) the victimization of offenders, (2) men's self-perceptions in relation to offending and victimization, and (3) public's victim and offender perceptions.

### **The victimization of offenders**

This category includes three articles examining the victim-offender overlap and the victimization experiences of offenders.

By comparing a national UK sample and a sample of interviewed probationers, Farrall & Maltby (2003) found that probationers reported statistically higher rates of victimization than the general population. In one of the accounts by a participant called Anthony, the connection between his lifestyle, his offending and his victimization becomes apparent. The locations where he spent his time (pubs), his behavior (alcohol and drug use) and the people whom he socialized with (other young men under the influence) all contributed to and created opportunities for involvement in disputes and physical fights, and consequently for offending and victimization. Wanting to avoid becoming a victim of an attack, Anthony was pushed to fight back and therefrom became an offender. Being known as a local fighter, he was repeatedly targeted for fights and states that "he was unable to avoid hitting back" (Farral & Maltby, 2003, p. 44).

In another participant's narrative, one can observe them "[ricochet] between being a victim and an offender", which leads to believe that one cannot assume the existence of a clear causal direction of offending and victimization for each victim-offender (Farrel & Maltby, 2003, p. 48).

Both examples demonstrate that offending and victimization are "related to certain lifestyle factors, but also to situational circumstances and [the individuals'] reactions when in these circumstances" (Farrel & Maltby, 2003, p. 46).

In her research on the victim-offender overlap in prison, Toman (2019) uses nationally representative data from the Survey of Inmates in States and Federal Correctional Facilities and bi-probit analyses to examine in how far the overlap between misconduct and victimization emerges in the institutional context. Her main results suggest a fairly strong and significant correlation between in-prison misconduct and victimization as well as "common and unique risk factors", proving the existence of the victim-offender overlap in the prison setting (p. 350). Similar to Farrall & Maltby (2003), Felson, Berg, Rogers and Krajewski (2018) found that offenders are more likely to be violently victimized due to their engagement in verbal and physical aggression which increase the risk of violent victimization. In their analysis on why offenders tend to be disputatious and get into fights, Felson et al. (2003) focus on three aspects: self-control, alcohol use, and honor-based attitudes. Resembling Farrall & Maltby's (2003) sampling method, Felson et al. base their analyses on two different samples, self-reports of male inmates and a group of men they know who have never been arrested but

have similar social backgrounds. In comparison to the community sample, inmates, especially those who have been convicted of violent assault, are found to be more disputatious and therefore more likely “to generate anger, insults, and gossip” and demonstrate “lower self-control, they are intoxicated more often, they hold stronger honor-based attitudes, and they are more likely to be assaulted” (Felson, Berg, Rogers & Krajewski, 2018, p. 368; p. 376).

### **Men’s self-perceptions in relation to offending and victimization**

All five articles included in this category have used a qualitative research method to determine how men portray and perceive their identities as criminals and as victims.

Heber (2017) has interviewed 16 men who have both committed violent acts on others (and have been convicted of either assault or manslaughter as a result of assault) and have been exposed to violence themselves. Through the semi-structured interviews, she derives that the men construct gender and violence in the form of discursive struggles between four discourses: the gangster discourse, the developmental discourse, the vulnerability discourse and the family father discourse. The gangster discourse emerges as the most dominant one, containing “expressions of a violent masculinity that, in combination with expressions of dangerousness, are performed within the context of the local street culture” (Heber, 2017, p. 65). Through the emphasis on violence as an omnipresent factor in their lives, the men display their strength and willingness to fight in relation to other criminal men, and portray “violent capital” as a “useful masculinity resource” (Heber, 2017, p. 66).

Related to this, Heber (2012) found that her sample appears to value the use of violence and the reputation and respect that may result from it. Being respected by other criminal men seems to “constitute the greatest reward for those who are involved in the criminal lifestyle” (p. 181). Though the men talked about instances of their own serious exposure to violence, they made a deliberate choice to distance themselves from victimhood or a victim identity through emotionless narrations, short descriptions and circumlocutions. As a man with a criminal lifestyle, victimization is perceived as shameful and is linked to “negative characteristics such as weakness, passivity, and helplessness, and a ‘brought-it-on-yourself attitude’” (Goodey, 2005, as cited in Heber, 2012, p. 184). While they can switch between the role of a criminal and that of a “John Smith” (or “Sven Svensson” in Swedish), meaning a normal, law-abiding man, they entirely reject the role of a criminal victim (Heber, 2012). The acceptance of the “John Smith” role shares similarities to the fatherhood discourse in Heber (2017) in that it “constitutes an alternative expression of masculinity that is in line with more culturally appropriate patterns of masculinities, since it does not involve deviance” (p. 72). Criminal men have nothing to gain from identifying themselves with a victim identity.

Even though men with no prior criminal history are more willing to admit victimization, they balance the contradictory identities of ‘young man’ and victim’ to manufacture a self-presentation that conforms with hegemonic

manliness and a victim status (Åkerström, Burcar & Wästerfors, 2011; Burcar & Åkerström, 2009; Burcar, 2014). Åkerström, Burcar and Wästerfors (2011) argue that such balancing “occurs either when nonpreferred identities for some reason cannot be hidden or subordinated or when both identities harbor some attractions, even if one of them is considered to be more preferable” (p. 104). The victim identity is to some extent attractive, even for men, but it diminishes the integrity of their hegemonic manliness. To counterbalance this, men recite the harm they have experienced in a masculine, emotionally detached way, downplaying the seriousness of the assault. When describing their assailant, they try to “simultaneously portray them as dangerous and to belittle them”, playing the attack and their reactions down in a cool, matter-of-fact manner (Burcar & Åkerström, 2009, p. 48). They describe strength, confidence, courage, and reason; “a kind of hero tale” is spun around the incident of assault to uphold the embodiment of the powerful and dominant man (Burcar, 2014, p. 118, Åkerström, Burcar & Wästerfors, 2011).

To demonstrate their victim legitimacy, the young men emphasize their lack of responsibility in the initiation of the attack, underline their innocence and respectability, and “let others attest or bear witness” to the injuries they have suffered (Åkerström, Burcar & Wästerfors, 2011, p. 117). By relying on witnesses’ stories, the men avoid being perceived as weak, whining or pitiful, and can stick to their cool, manly narrative of the assault (Burcar & Åkerström, 2009). Even if the young men explain how they resisted and disapproved of sympathy, they still inexplicitly and covertly request sympathy and recognition as a crime victim (e.g. careful critique of a victim brochure predominantly oriented towards girls, legitimization of decision to contact the police and file a complaint) (Burcar, 2014). For young men, acknowledging violent victimization means that one has been “beaten in a double sense of the word”: it means physical injury, but also admitting weakness, vulnerability and inferiority (Burcar, 2014, p. 116).

### **Public’s victim and offender perceptions**

In their research on victim-offender overlap perceptions and victim blaming attitudes, Mancini & Pickett (2017) explore in how far the public evaluates victims as offenders and if perceptions of the victim-offender overlap enable the prediction of victim blaming attitudes. Both samples, a recent national survey and a college sample, “substantially underestimate the extent of victim’s involvement in crime”, demonstrating a lack of knowledge about crime patterns among the public (p. 448). Out of the three different crime categories, homicide, burglary and robbery, respondents ascribe the strongest overlap to homicide offenses, potentially perceiving those regularly involved in criminal behaviors and groups (e.g. gang members or drug users) as most likely to fall victim to that type of crime. Furthermore, the perceived victim-offender overlap was identified as “either the strongest or second strongest predictor of victim blaming across both samples” (Mancini & Pickett, 2017, p. 453). Those individuals victimized by street crimes, frequently associated with gang or drug related violence, are more often than not perceived as criminal and therefore considered responsible for the victimization they have suffered, weakening the public’s concern for their

wellbeing. To enable the measurement of concern for victims, Clements, Brannen, Kirkley, Gordon & Church (2006) developed a Victim Concern Scale (VCS). In their analysis, they found that both respondent groups expressed the most concern for vulnerable victims and victims of violent crime and less concern for culpable victims. “Pro-victim attitudes [did] not necessarily predict harsher attitudes towards offenders” and those participants who expressed stronger levels of concern for culpable victims “appeared to de-emphasize a retributive goal for punishment” (Clements et al., 2006, p. 286; 290).

Examining victims’ innocence and blaming attitudes in the context of the belief in a just world (BJW), Correia, Vala & Aguiar (2004) find that the injustice of the suffering of an innocent victim threatens the BJW of the observer more than that of a culpable victim. In their second study, they extend the BJW to an ingroup and outgroup context (e.g. differences in sexual orientation, religious beliefs or ethnicity), which shows that individuals are more concerned for innocent victims they share characteristics with (ingroup) than equally innocent victims they differ from (outgroup), making the latter more likely to be blamed for their victimization.

In consideration of the influential power of politics, crime victim legislation and policies can guide the public’s perceptions of offender and victim. Through the analysis of bills, Heber (2013) examines the political portrayal of victim, offender and victim-offender in Swedish crime policy from parties of the center-right. The included bills portray primarily women and children who have been exposed to relationship and family violence, sexual assault or human trafficking as crime victims. Some other victim categories are touched upon in the bills, such as crime witnesses, police, citizens, and public figures, basically defining anyone as a possible crime victim. Offenders, as described in the bills, can be separated into two distinct categories: the “scoundrels” and the “poor things” (Heber, 2013, p. 9). Poor things are broken individuals, often women, with mental health or addiction issues whose offending behaviors are a result of “insecure childhood conditions, poor care provision and an ill-considered process of release into the community” and who are not given the support that they require (Heber, 2013, p. 9). Scoundrels, on the other hand, are the antithesis of the pitiable, broken criminal. They choose to commit crime, have different norms and values than society, and are indifferent to other people’s suffering. Offenders who have been victimized are categorized in the group of poor things, but they are labeled “offenders who have been exposed to crime, not as crime victims who have committed offences”, meaning that, chronologically, their victimization precedes their offending (Heber, 2013, p. 11). In the discussions on punishment, both poor things and scoundrels are included, and it becomes apparent that “offenders should be punished and [ideal] crime victims should be helped” (Heber, 2013, p. 13). The true crime victim must be innocent and blameless and cannot have committed a crime. Thus, the offender status dominates over the victim status, and once a person has committed a crime, the victim label becomes unavailable to them (Heber, 2013).

# DISCUSSION

## Results Discussion

### *The victim-offender, hegemonic masculinity, and the victim identity*

In some men's lives, violence seems ubiquitous. Especially men engaged in criminal behavior run the risk of being violently victimized with relative impunity (Wittebrood & Nieuwbeerta, 1999). But for many of them, the victim identity signifies more than just mere exposure to violence and crime (Heber, 2012). Criminal men view victimization through a frame of hegemonic masculinity, portraying the victim identity as a shameful and undesirable one, characterized by weakness, passivity and unmanliness. Driven by a culture of honor and the perpetuation of a macho image, experiences of violence are described as "nothing too serious" (Stanko & Hobdell, 1993, p. 404). For these men, engagement in physical violence as a reaction to verbal attacks or disrespect is the appropriate manner to defend their honor and social image. Any other response, especially a nonaggressive one, is not in line with appropriate dispute management and can mean a loss of respect (Felson et al., 2018; Sampson & Lauritsen, 1990). The belief in a "code of the streets", as described by Anderson (1999), appears to have created a set of unspoken laws which can also be seen reflected in the gangster dialogue in Heber's (2017) sample of criminal men. Disputatiousness, the willingness to fight and aggressive responses to any type of provocation are utilized in the challenge for male dominance. Through these constant competitive altercations, the men seem to routinely switch between being the perpetrator and the target of violence. This role shifting is described as being caught up in a vicious cycle by one of Heber's (2012) interview subjects and is illustrated as a self-fulfilling prophecy by another. Nevertheless, it becomes evident that a victim identity does not apply to the life of a criminal, and through violence, the offender identity "is given emphasis as a master status" (Heber, 2012, p. 185). Similar to Stanko and Hobdell's (1993) findings on men's avoidance to talk about victimization, Heber's (2017) interview subjects "preferred to talk about their own use of violence rather than their exposure to violence" (p. 70).

Interviews with young men who have been physically assaulted but do otherwise not partake in a criminal lifestyle have demonstrated that these men reject associations with traditional victim traits and create instead a particularly masculine victim narrative. Through hero tales of strength and courage, they "transform shameful victimhood into culturally accepted, and sometimes even celebrated, expressions of masculinities" (Burcar, 2014; Burcar and Åkerström, 2009). These young men are aware of the negative social stigma and the stereotypes connected to victimization and the victim identity and in turn decide to downplay their injuries and the severity of the assault.

Fohring (2018) interprets the rejection of the traditional victim identity as a "a subconscious process of self-preservation against the negative and typically unwanted emotions associated with victimisation" (p. 11). By utilizing bystanders' and witnesses' narrations of the violent assault, the injuries suffered

and the danger of the incident, the young men succeed in avoiding the open admission of fear, weakness or vulnerability, while still managing to portray the severity of the violence. With the help of this method, the young men can uphold their status as cool, competent and strong men in line with the cultural image of hegemonic masculinity, creating a unique and improved masculine victim (Burcar & Åkerström, 2009; Messerschmidt, 2004).

Criminal men, on the other hand, seem to have nothing to gain from establishing a victim-offender victim status they could or would want to be identified with. Compared to their law-abiding counterpart, they cannot access crime victim benefits, such as injury compensation or mental health treatment nor can they maintain their reputation or gain respect from other criminal men if they display themselves as victims. Consequently, nothing but the negative consequences of being a victim remain, which would expose these men to mockery and force them into subordination (Heber, 2012).

### *The public, the victim-offender and the belief in a just world*

In their research, Mancini & Pickett (2017) found that victim-offender perceptions significantly affect victim blaming attitudes across both their samples. In connection to the concept of the belief in a just world (BJW), this might lead one to believe that victim-offenders are assigned more responsibility, and in turn are more blameworthy for their victimization than individuals who have not committed any crime.

Perceptions of a large overlap between offenders and victims “may induce endorsement of dispositional attributions for victimization”, indicating that many victims of crime do not conform with the characteristics of the “conventional, law-abiding citizens”(Mancini & Pickett, 2017, p. 453). This allows the public to distance themselves from victim-offenders, alleviate their concern about their own risk of victimization and “reinforce a sense of justice”; bad things happen to bad people (Mancini & Pickett, 2017, p. 454). Through this distancing process, victim-offenders are portrayed as “part of a distinct population of deviants who stand apart from the larger population of noncriminally involved citizens” (Mancini & Pickett, 2017, p. 436). So moving from an interindividual level to an intergroup level perspective, where the public perceives victim-offenders as an outside group, it becomes yet less frightening “when something ‘bad’ happens to ‘them’” (Lerner & Goldberg, 1999, as cited in Correia, Vala & Aguiar, 2004, p. 32). Since BJW is most relevant when incidents occur in our world (ingroup), the victimization of offenders does not affect the public and blaming them for their fate becomes a natural occurrence.

Negative traits and culpability among victims “elicit less empathy and more negative attitudes” (Clements et al., 2006, p. 284). The separation of victims and offenders into ‘scoundrels’, ‘poor things’ and the innocent victim appears as a highly simplified categorization, but enables those with a strong BJW to uphold their beliefs that people get what they deserve (Heber, 2013). While scoundrels are portrayed as cold criminal masterminds, poor things are to be pitied since their offending is considered a result of prior victimization, disordered character traits, or a vulnerable situation. Nonetheless, the public’s perceptions of them is tainted

because they have committed a criminal offense, and they will never be allowed access to a legitimate victim status. So through what Richardson and May (1999) call “dehumanising and depersonalising processes of exclusion”, one could assume that the victimization of victim-offenders might be perceived as legitimate, because they demonstrate certain characteristics (e.g. criminal behavior) that make them more deserving, a more “legitimate target” of violence (p. 318). The latter automatically turns the victim-offender into an illegitimate victim, diminishing the public’s empathy, concern and their willingness to help them (Lewis, Hamilton & Elmore, 2019).

### *The victim-offender as the epitome of the nonideal victim*

As Christie (1986) simply puts it: “Offenders that merge with the victims make for bad offenders, just as victims that merge with offenders make for bad victims” (p. 25).

The media and the public tend to put a disproportionate focus on cases surrounding the ideal victim, sometimes described as the “missing white woman/girl syndrome”, where an excessive amount of attention is invested into cases of young, white, middle-class girls and women gone missing (Stillman, 2007, Mancini & Pickett, 2017). “Victims (...) serve to convey the prevailing political agendas of the media” and victim-offenders do not elicit sympathy and concern among the public (Van Dijk, 2009, p. 16). Publicly funded policies to assist crime victims further highlight this issue in that they generally include guidelines of eligibility and ineligibility for victim services and support (Mancini & Pickett, 2017). These guidelines are depictive of the over-simplified classification of innocent victims and culpable victims as repeatedly encountered in various parts of this review. An individual’s victimization experience becomes nil the moment they demonstrate a characteristic or a behavior that makes them responsible and blameworthy for their suffering (e.g. drug use, criminality). Very evidently, the victim-offender coincides in many ways with Christie’s (1986) archetype of the nonideal victim: he is a physically strong man, constantly putting himself in danger from other criminals through his engagement in deviant behavior. An important element of the ideal victim is that they are innocent and cannot be blamed for the victimization they have been exposed to. In a BJW context, “even minor deviations from the expected, passive victim role will raise suspicions and may trigger negative value judgments” (Van Dijk, 2009, p. 25). Victim-offenders, however, appear destined for derogation and apathy. A victim identity is only possible for a law-abiding individual, not only from the public’s perspective, but also from that of criminal men themselves (Heber, 2012). Hegemonic masculinity beliefs, often further fortified by a culture of honor and a code of streets, makes criminal men portray violence and violent victimization as an apparent normality in their everyday lives. Despite the violence experienced, criminal men’s narratives repeatedly express a rejection of the victim identity and a distaste for its inimical repercussions. The victim is stereotyped by weakness and helplessness, and their defenselessness is to be pitied. Victimhood implies femininity and subordination, the loss of respect and reputation, and serves as the contrasting image of a ‘real man’ (Burcar, 2014). Criminal men’s descriptions of

experiences of violence serve only one purpose: to underline and reinforce how dangerous, powerful and manly they are. This active dismissal of the victim identity together with the public's 'they reap what they sow' attitude, places victim-offenders at the "bottom of a hierarchy of victims" and makes them "the quintessence of the non-ideal" (Fohring, 2018, p. 9, 13).

### **Strengths and weaknesses**

This literature review advances the understanding of existing research on victim-offender perceptions in the context of Christie's (1986) concept of the ideal victim. Through the combination of criminal men's self-perceptions and the public's perception of criminal victims, analyzed in the framework of hegemonic masculinity and the belief in a just world, a more complete picture of the complexity of the male victim-offender's victim identity could be created.

A lot of the research on the victim-offender to date has focused on adolescents. While they are "undeniably amongst the most delinquent groups in society", their engagement in a criminal lifestyle is generally short-term and petty (Farrall & Maltby, 2003, p. 36). Focusing on adult victim-offenders limited the research available but enabled me to draw the necessary attention to those individuals who are most strongly exposed to crime and violent victimization. Furthermore, it was of importance to me to include a significant quantity of qualitative research. The sampling procedures of surveys often produce samples that are "drawn from those in stable accommodation and/or who regularly attend educational institutions" yet research shows that those involved in criminal lifestyles generally do not fulfill these criteria (Farrall & Maltby, 2003, p. 36). Through the inclusion of interview studies with male victims and victim-offenders, the focus on the population at interest is assured, and more in-depth inquiries could be made into causal relationships.

Nonetheless, it is important to admit that these directions have certainly limited the research available for this review. While it has enabled to zoom in on partially understudied areas of victim-offender research, it has also led to the need to rely on few studies, some by the same researcher and some even using the same data set. This could be considered a shortcoming as it might lead to biased and/or one-sided results. Yet, the review has allowed for the creation of a more specialized, present-day understanding of the victim-offender as a nonideal victim as coined by Christie (1986).

### **Recommendations and future research**

Especially through a phenomenon such as the victim-offender overlap it becomes apparent that criminality and victimization, offender and victim, are not opposites, black and white, but very often affect the same people over their life course. In our society, it is above all young men who are likely to be involved in crime and violent victimization, and more policies to reduce violent crime should thus put their focus on this high-risk group (Wittebrood & Nieuwbeerta, 1999).

Law enforcement officers are the ones responsible for the intervention and policing of violent assaults and the individuals involved. It could be important for future research to analyze in how far police, predominantly male officers, apply

their own hegemonic masculinity beliefs on incidents of male on male violence and in turn handle the situation and interact with the victim. Research on victim-offender perceptions and judgments of criminal justice professionals, such as police or court actors, could further help understand attitudes such as victim blaming (Mancini & Pickett, 2017; Stanko & Hobdell, 1993)

Through this review, it becomes clear that most men, especially those engaged in a criminal lifestyle, reject the traditional victim identity. The renegotiation of a manly victim identity among law-abiding men seems to demonstrate a wish for recognition. Future research should investigate the ways in which men accept and ask for support after experiencing violence (Burcar, 2014; Stanko & Hobdell, 1993). Traditional victim services and aids are often unavailable to victim-offenders due to their prior offending making them ineligible. In line with this, Mancini & Pickett (2017) suggest “to open such services to those with prior records, but to make participation conditional on abstinence from future offending (e.g. program participants obtain no new arrests)” (p. 458).

Recognizing that beliefs of hegemonic masculinity, seemingly deeply ingrained into young men’s minds, are conducive of violent offending and victimization appears as one of the first steps of crime prevention. It should no longer be the standard to dismiss men’s silence on experienced violence as something natural. By digging deeper into criminal men’s lives, it will be possible to take the first steps towards “an accurate victimology of the victim-offender overlap” (Farrall & Maltby, 2003, p. 34).

## **CONCLUSION**

‘Boys will be boys’ is commonly used as an innocent and humorous expression when boys behave mischievously. Yet undoubtedly, it fosters ideas of hegemonic masculinity from a very young age on, normalizing aggressive behavior and violence and painting vulnerability and victimization as something shameful and undesirable. In the hegemonic masculinity discourse, men are expected to be dominant, powerful and in control. Through expressions of aggression and violence, men are constantly challenged by others to prove their strength and their manliness through verbal and physical altercations. The widespread acceptance of these “‘belligerent masculinities’ [who] produce hegemonic and subordinate as well as oppositional masculinities that define internal group hierarchy” has contributed to the invisibility of the male victim in society as well as in criminological research (Honkatukia et al., 2007, as cited in Burcar & Åkerström, 2009, p. 38).

The public’s idea of the ideal victim is that of a weak, innocent, and vulnerable individual, deserving of concern, empathy, and support. Evidently, the identities of ‘victim’ and ‘man’ are conflicting, if not incompatible. With the expectation imposed on men to be strong and forceful, the victim identity becomes the “antithesis of masculinity” (Sundaram, 2004, p. 66). Victimization is shameful and undesirable, compelling some men to abdicate their right to a victim identity, forming a new category of the nonideal victim. “To require victims to cleave to

the notion of innocence is [...] a politically invidious approach to victimhood that factors blame in the calibration of human suffering and inevitably results in the morally corrosive language of victim hierarchies” in which victim-offenders are placed at the bottom (McEvoy & McConnachie, 2012, p. 535).

## REFERENCES

- Åkerström, M., Burcar, V., & Wästerfors, D. (2011). Balancing Contradictory Identities – Performing Masculinity in Victim Narratives. *Sociological Perspective*, 54(1), 103-124. doi:10.1525/sop.2011.54.1.103
- Anderson, E. (1999). *Code of the street: Decency, violence, and the moral life of the inner city*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Burcar, V., & Åkerström, M. (2009). Negotiating a Victim Identity: Young Men as Victims of Violence. *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention*, 10(1), 37-54. doi:10.1080/14043850902815073
- Burcar, V. (2014). Masculinity and Victimization: Young Men's Talk about Being Victims of Violent Crime. In I. Lander & S. Ravn (Eds.), *Masculinities in the criminological field: Control, vulnerability and risk-taking* (pp. 113-130). Retrieved from <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com>
- Christie, N. (1986). The Ideal Victim. In E. A. Fattah (Ed.), *From Crime Policy to Victim Policy* (pp. 17-30). London: The Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Clements, C. B., Brannen, D. N., Kirkley, S. M., Gordon, T. M., & Church, W. T. (2006). The measurement of concern about victims: Empathy, victim advocacy and the Victim Concern Scale (VCS). *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 11, 283-295. doi:10.1348/135532505X79573
- Cohen, S. (1972). *Folk devils and moral panics*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Connell, R. (1987). *Gender and Power*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Cooper, A., & Smith E. L. (2011). *Homicide trends in the United States, 1980-2008: Annual rates for 2009 and 2010*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- Correia, I., Vala, J., & Aguiar, P. (2006). Victim's innocence, social categorization, and the threat to the belief in a just world. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 43, 31-38. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2005.12.010
- Darley, J. M., & Pittman, T. S. (2003). The psychology of compensatory and retributive justice. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 7, 324-336.
- Denney, A. S., & Tewksbury, R. (2013). How to Write a Literature Review. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, 24(2), 218-234.

- Entorf, H. (2013). Criminal Victims, Victimized Criminals, or Both? A Deeper Look at the Victim-Offender Overlap. *IZA Discussion Papers, No. 7686*. Bonn: Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA).
- Farrall, S., & Maltby, S. (2003). The Victimization of Probationers. *The Howard Journal, 42*(1), 32-54.
- Felson, R. B., Berg, M. T., Rogers, E. M., & Krajewski, A. (2018). Disputatiousness and the Offender-Victim Overlap. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, 55*(3), 351-389. doi:10.1177/0022427817744594
- Fohring, S. (2018). Revisiting the Non-ideal Victim. In M. Duggan (Ed.), *Revisiting the 'Ideal Victim': Developments in Critical Victimology*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Goffman, E. (1990). *Stigma*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Gottfredson, M. R., & Hirschi, T. (1990). *A general theory of crime*. Stanford University Press.
- Green, S. (2007). Crime, victimisation and vulnerability. In S. Walklate (Ed.), *Handbook of Victims and Victimology* (pp. 91-117). London: Routledge.
- Harrell, E. (2007). *Black victims of violent crime*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- Heber, A. (2012). Criminal, Crime Victim, or John Smith? Constructions of Victimhood and Perpetratorship Among Swedish Probationers. *International Criminal Justice Review, 22*(2), 171-191. doi: 10.1177/1057567712443964
- Heber, A. (2013). Good versus bad? Victims, offenders and victim-offenders in Swedish crime policy. *European Journal of Criminology, 11*(4), 410-428.
- Heber, A. (2017). 'You Thought You Were Superman': Violence, Victimization and Masculinities. *British Journal of Criminology, 57*, 61-78. doi:10.1093/bjc/avz117
- Jennings, W. G., Higgins, G. E., Tewksbury, R., Gover, A. R., & Piquero, A. R. (2010). A Longitudinal Assessment of the Victim-Offender Overlap. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 25*(12), 2147-2174. doi: 10.1177/0886260509354888
- Jennings, W. G., Piquero, A. R., & Reingle, J. M. (2012). On the overlap between victimization and offending: A review of the literature. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 17*, 16-26.

- Lerner, M. J. (1980). *The Belief in a Just World: A Fundamental Delusion*. New York: Springer Science + Business Media.
- Lewis, J. A., Hamilton, J. C., & Elmore, J. D. (2019). Describing the ideal victim: A linguistic analysis of victim descriptions. *Current Psychology*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-019-00347-1>
- Mancini, C., & Pickett, J. T. (2017). Reaping What They Sow? Victim-Offender Overlap Perceptions and Victim Blaming Attitudes. *Victim & Offenders, 12*(3), 434-466. doi:10.1080/15564886.2015.1093051
- McEvoy, K., & McConnachie, K. (2012). Victimology in transitional justice: Victimhood, innocence and hierarchy. *European Journal of Criminology, 9*(5), 527-538. doi: 10.1177/1477370812454204
- Melossi, D. (2000). Changing representations of the criminal. *The British Journal of Criminology, 40*, 296-320.
- Messerschmidt, J. (2000). *Nine Lives: Adolescent Masculinities, the Body, and Violence*. Westview.
- Mustaine, E. E., & Tewksbury, R. (2000). Comparing the Lifestyles of Victims, Offenders, and Victim-Offenders: A Routine Activity Theory Assessment of Similarities and Differences for Criminal Incident Participants. *Sociological Focus, 33*(3), 339-362. doi: 10.1080/00380237.2000.10571174
- Newburn, T., & Stanko, E. A. (1994). *Just boys doing business? : men, masculinities and crime*. Routledge.
- Osgood, D. W., Wilson, J. K., O'Malley, P. M., Bachman, J. G., & Johnston, L. D. (1996). Routine activities and individual deviant behavior. *American Sociological Review, 61*, 635-655.
- Richardson, D., & May, H. (1999). Deserving victims?: sexual status and the social construction of violence. *Sociological Review, 47*(2), 308-331.
- Sampson, R. J., & Lauritsen, J. L. (1990). Deviant Lifestyles, Proximity to Crime, and the Offender-Victim Link in Personal Violence. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, 27*(2), 110-139.
- Schreck, C. J., Fisher, B. S., & Miller, J. M. (2004) The social context of violent victimization: A study of the delinquent peer effect. *Justice Quarterly, 21*, 23-48.
- Schreck, C. J., Stewart, E. A., & Osgood, D. W. (2008). A reappraisal of the overlap of violent offenders and victims. *Criminology, 46*, 871-906.

Siddaway, A., Wood, A. M., & Hedges, L.V. (2019). How to Do a Systematic Review: A Best Practice Guide for Conducting and Reporting Narrative Reviews, Meta-Analyses, and Meta-Syntheses. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 70. doi: 10.1146/annurev-psych-010418-102803

Souza, M. G. T. C., Souza, B. C., Roazzi, A., & da Silva, E. S. (2017). Psychocultural Mechanisms of the Propensity toward Criminal Homicide: A Multidimensional View of the Culture of Honor. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8(Article 1872). doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01872

Stanko, E. A., & Hobdell, K. (1993). Assault on Men: Masculinity and Male Victimization. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 33(3), 400-415.

Stillman, S. (2007). The missing white girl syndrome: Disappeared women and media activism. *Gender & Development*, 15, 491-502. doi: 10.1080/13552070701630665

Sundaram, V. (2004). Physical Violence, Self-Rated Health, and Morbidity?. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 58(1), 65-70.

Tepe, B., Cesur, S., & Sunar, D. (2020). Just World Belief and Ethics of Morality: When Do We Derogate the Victim?. *Current Psychology*, 39, 183-193.

Toman, E. L. (2019). The Victim-Offender Overlap Behind Bars: Linking Prison Misconduct and Victimization. *Justice Quarterly*, 36(2), 350-382. doi:10.1080/07418825.2017.1402072

Van Dijk, J. (2009). Free the victim: A critique of the western conception of victimhood. *International Review of Victimology*, 16, 1-33.

Wittebrood, K., & Nieuwbeerta, P. (1999). Wages of Sin? The Link Between Offending, Lifestyle and Violent Victimisation. *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*, 7(1), 63-80.

Wolfgang, M. E. (1957). Victim Precipitated Criminal Homicide. *The Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Police Science*, 48(1), 1-11.

## APPENDIX 1

Results from the articles included in the systematic literature review:

Category	Article	Main results
Men's self-perception	Åkerström, M., Burcar, V., & Wästerfors, D. (2011). Balancing Contradictory Identities – Performing Masculinity in Victim Narratives. <i>Sociological Perspective</i> , 54(1), 103-124. doi:10.1525/sop.2011.54.1.103	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-interviews with young Swedish men who were victims of violence</li> <li>-do not completely reject the victim identity, but modify it to fit their preferred identity</li> <li>-combination of seemingly unfitting identities of the victim and the masculine man through the description of injuries and sympathy from friends and family as well as accounts of defense and/or non-resistance</li> </ul>
	Burcar, V., & Åkerström, M. (2009). Negotiating a Victim Identity: Young Men as Victims of Violence. <i>Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention</i> , 10(1), 37-54. doi:10.1080/14043850902815073	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-based on an interview study with 10 young male crime victims</li> <li>-through specific word choices and their manner of speaking, the young men portray themselves as both strong and masculine as well as criminal victims</li> <li>-negotiation of a victim-worthy identity still in accordance with hegemonic masculinity traits</li> </ul>
	Burcar, V. (2014). Masculinity and Victimization: Young Men's Talk about Being Victims of Violent Crime. In I. Lander & S. Ravn (Eds.), <i>Masculinities in the criminological field: Control, vulnerability and risk-taking</i> (pp. 113-130). Retrieved from <a href="http://ebookcentral.proquest.com">http://ebookcentral.proquest.com</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-the young men present themselves as strong and competent in the face of assault, in line with hegemonic masculinity beliefs</li> <li>-they build a narrative based on rationality, superiority and control</li> <li>-relate to and reproduce hegemonic manliness, even though they do not always agree with it</li> <li>-claim temporary, manly victim status → reconstructing victimization</li> </ul>
	Heber, A. (2012). Criminal, Crime Victim, or John Smith? Constructions of Victimhood and Perpetratorship Among Swedish Probationers. <i>International Criminal Justice Review</i> , 22(2), 171-191. doi: 10.1177/1057567712443964	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-men value the use of violence and the reputation and respect that may result from it</li> <li>-distance themselves from victimhood or a victim identity through emotionless narrations, short descriptions and circumlocutions</li> </ul>

		-men can switch between identity as a criminal and that as a “John Smith” (normal, law-abiding man), but reject victim identity
	Heber, A. (2017). ‘You Thought You Were Superman’: Violence, Victimization and Masculinities. <i>British Journal of Criminology</i> , 57, 61-78. doi:10.1093/bjc/avz117	-analysis of men’s gender performances related to being both offender and victim -4 discourses (gangster discourse, developmental discourse, vulnerability discourse, family father discourse) which men shift between -construction of positions of dominance and subordination based on class, ethnicity, age, gender, and sexuality -emphasize violence as an omnipresent factor in their lives to display their strength, power and willingness to fight
society’s perception	Clements, C. B., Brannen, D. N., Kirkley, S. M., Gordon, T. M., & Church, W. T. (2006). The measurement of concern about victims: Empathy, victim advocacy and the Victim Concern Scale (VCS). <i>Legal and Criminological Psychology</i> , 11, 283-295. doi:10.1348/135532505X79573	-creation of a Victim Concern Scale -both respondent groups expressed the most concern for vulnerable victims and victims of violent crime and less concern for culpable victims -pro-victim attitudes did not necessarily predict harsher attitudes towards offenders -pro-victim attitudes toward culpable victims appeared to de-emphasize a retributive goal for punishment
	Correia, I., Vala, J., & Aguiar, P. (2006). Victim’s innocence, social categorization, and the threat to the belief in a just world. <i>Journal of Experimental Social Psychology</i> , 43, 31-38. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2005.12.010	-analysis of people’s reactions to the suffering of victims in the context of the just world belief (BJW) -study 1 result: only the innocent victim threatens the observer’s BJW -study 2: ingroup victims threaten the observer’s BJW more than an outgroup victim
	Heber, A. (2013). Good versus bad? Victims, offenders and victim-offenders in Swedish crime policy. <i>European Journal of Criminology</i> , 11(4), 410-428. Retrieved from <a href="http://journals.sagepub.com">http://journals.sagepub.com</a>	-analysis of crime policy descriptions of offenders and victims with special focus on politicians’ discussions of the victim-offender overlap

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-depiction of victims as good and innocent, criminals as bad and malevolent, and victim-offenders as pitiful poor things</li> <li>-as a response to crime, both the criminal and the victim-offender deserve to be punished</li> </ul>
	Mancini, C., & Pickett, J. T. (2017). Reaping What They Sow? Victim-Offender Overlap Perceptions and Victim Blaming Attitudes. <i>Victim &amp; Offenders, 12</i> (3), 434-466). doi:10.1080/15564886.2015.1093051	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-out of the 3 different crime categories (homicide, burglary and robbery) respondents ascribe the strongest overlap to homicide offenses</li> <li>-victim-offender perceptions significantly affect victim blaming attitudes across both their samples (strongest or second strongest predictor)</li> </ul>
Victimization of offenders	Farrall, S., & Maltby, S. (2003). The Victimization of Probationers. <i>The Howard Journal, 42</i> (1), 32-54.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-probationers report statistically higher rates of victimization than the general population</li> <li>-offending and victimization are connected to lifestyle factors, situational circumstances and a person's reactions when in these circumstances</li> <li>-not one clear causal direction of offending and victimization</li> </ul>
	Felson, R. B., Berg, M. T., Rogers, E. M., & Krajewski, A. (2018). Disputatiousness and the Offender-Victim Overlap. <i>Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, 55</i> (3), 351-389. doi:10.1177/0022427817744594	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-disputatiousness mediates the connection between victimization and low self-control, frequent intoxication and honor-based attitudes</li> <li>-disputatiousness is responsible for a significant portion of the relation between offending and victimization</li> <li>-disputatiousness and victimization are linked to physical assault offenses</li> </ul>
	Toman, E. L. (2019). The Victim-Offender Overlap Behind Bars: Linking Prison Misconduct and Victimization. <i>Justice Quarterly, 36</i> (2), 350-382. doi:10.1080/07418825.2017.1402072	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-analysis of the victim-offender overlap in the institutional context</li> <li>-importation and deprivation model</li> <li>-fairly strong and significant correlation between in-prison misconduct and victimization</li> <li>-common and unique risk factors for misconduct and victimization</li> </ul>