Who Cares?
A Study of the Social Services’ Responsibility for Crime Victims

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Nyckelord: Brottsoffer, socialtjänstlagen, samverkan, kommunala skyldigheter, hjälp, stöd.
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Always remember that nothing is impossible, obstacles are there to challenge you.
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Abstract  
The Swedish Social Services Act (2001:453) states that crime victims should be a priority group for the social services and that they have a responsibility to ensure that victims receive the needed help and support. The aim with this study was to examine how the Swedish municipal social services fulfil their responsibility for the psychosocial wellbeing of crime victims, by examining the collaboration between Victim Support and the social services. Interviews were conducted with crime victims, crime victim coordinators and social workers. The social services have an overall responsibility for the psychosocial support to crime victims. However, the study show that in reality the social services, in many cases, do not provide this help and support, as there is a view that it is not their responsibility. Instead, the victims are referred to various support organisations such as Victim Support, without really knowing what kind of support they are offering. Furthermore, the social services in some municipalities argue that there is no opportunity for them to collaborate with Victim Support due to confidentiality, even though it is possible in other municipalities. Through collaboration resources can be saved, and knowledge and awareness of the victims’ needs can be increased. This can eventually lead to that victims’ receive better care, which can result in shorter recovery time for crisis that may have occurred due to the experience of crime.  

Keywords: Crime victims, social services act, collaboration, municipal obligations, support, help  

INTRODUCTION  
A cornerstone in a democratic welfare state is that the Government has its citizens’ best interest and wellbeing in mind. In Sweden, approximately 1.4 million crimes were reported to the police during 2012, of which 254 000, crimes included at least one victim (The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention [Brottsförebyggande rådet], Brå, 2013). These victims may need help and support, as becoming a crime victim can be a traumatic experience, leading to for example nightmares, feelings of guilt, shame and fear (Cullberg, 2006). In the Social Services Act (2001:453) [Socialstyrelsen], for example, crime victims are a prioritised group, which means that the municipal social service has a responsibility to give help and support. This includes, for instance, counselling, information about the legal process, help in contact with governmental agencies and mediating contact with a volunteer organisation (The National Board of Health and Welfare [Socialstyrelsen], 2012). In sum, many people become crime victims every year and therefore it is important that they receive adequate help and support in order to minimize human suffering, sick leave and societal costs.  

A problem with the Social Service Act, (in Swedish also referred to as SoL), is the lack of definitions of the municipal social service responsibility for help and support to crime victims. According to the first sentence in section 5:11 SoL, “The social service should act to make sure that crime victims and their relatives get help and support” (author’s translation). There is a controversy on how this should be interpreted. Some social workers have made the interpretation that they only should help crime victims if they cannot get help anywhere else (Ljungwald, 2011). The National Board of Health and Welfare (2012) instead, made the interpretation that the social service at least should inform the crime victim how the legal process works, and where they can get help and support in case of stress. A third interpretation is that the social service can fulfil their responsibility by collaboration with different organisations, to make sure that crime victims get the help and support they need (Government Bill, 2000/01:79). All these interpretations give a vague understanding of what the social service’s
responsibility actually is, in terms of 5:11 SoL. However, according to section 2:1 SoL, the social service is responsible for the help and support for the population in general, as long as no other organisation takes this responsibility. Due to various interpretations, the responsibility for crime victims is unclear and without a clear definition of which responsibility the municipal social service has, crime victims risk standing without any support at all.

The social service can fulfil their responsibility by collaboration with organisations that give help and support to crime victims. The National Board of Health and Welfare (2012) argues that this is one way for the social service to take their responsibility for crime victims. However, they cannot just mediate a contact between a crime victim and a support organisation such as Victim Support [Brottsofferjouren], which is a nongovernmental organisation with long experience of giving support to victims of crime. The collaboration is a way to obtain a holistic view of the crime victims’ needs (Green et al., 2010). For example, a crime victim may need psychological, legal or financial support and therefore, the collaboration may constitute an exchange of information so that the victim receives adequate support from the right person or organisation (The National Board of Health and Welfare, 2012). Ljungwald (2011) implies that social workers’ different views on their responsibilities are a result of the vagueness of the Social Service Act. With collaboration, different governmental and nongovernmental organisations know of each other’s existence and the victim can get help and support one way or another. Collaboration can be a way to ensure that victims of crime get the help and support that they need.

The lack of clear definitions of the social service’s responsibility for crime victims actually provides both obstacles and possibilities. An obstacle can be a too narrow interpretation of the law, which could lead to that social workers fail to see the importance of support to victims of crime. For example, some social workers do not think of their clients as crime victims and they think that this is due to a lack of knowledge of what a crime victim actually is (Ljungwald, 2011). As a result, crime victims might only get the bare minimum from the social service, which is information on where they can get help. If the law would have been explicit, the social service’s responsibility should have been clearer and it would have been easier to see the limits of the law. However, since the limitations are not clear, the social service has a possibility instead to make a wider interpretation of the law and give more support than up until today. They can, for example, treat crime victims as a group in need of more support than the population in general. The social services could have their own victim support services to help crime victims to cope psychologically. Such services have been proven helpful when it comes to coping with the experience of crime, especially for crime victims not feeling secure and feel that they need protection (Bolivar, 2011). Due to the unclear limitations of the law there are, as was mentioned earlier, both obstacles and possibilities. The risk with the vagueness of the Social Services Act is that social workers fail to see the importance of support, but they can also choose to construct their own victim support services and give victims of crime the support they need.

The present study

There is a need of clarity of the social services’ responsibility for help and support to crime victims. Except when it comes to collaboration with support organisations such as Victim Support, neither the Social Services Act nor the guidelines from the National Board of Health and Welfare (2012) clarifies how the responsibility should be practiced in reality. The lack of clarity might affect the assistance given to victims of crime. There is clear evidence that most crime victims go through crisis reactions and are in need of support (e.g. Bolivar, 2011; Green et al., 2010; Shercliffe & Colotla, 2008). However, there is a shortage of research studying how the support should be given and which organisation is to be responsible for it. Also, previous research mainly focuses on one perspective at a time. Lindgren (2004) and Ljungwald
(2011), for example, have a structural perspective, focusing on organisation, financial difficulties, and legislation, while Bolivar (2011) has a crime victim perspective. However, Bussman (2010) argues that legislation needs to be examined through several perspectives to see if it has had effect on society. Consequently, the present study will use three perspectives when examining the social services’ responsibility for support to victims of crime. These perspectives are from crime victims, social workers and crime victim coordinators viewpoints. By using these viewpoints, the aim is to examine the Swedish municipal social services’ responsibility for crime victims.

Aim and research questions
The aim with the present study is to examine how the Swedish municipal social services fulfil their responsibility for the psychosocial wellbeing of crime victims, by examining the collaboration between Victim Support and the social services, which is done through the perspectives of crime victim coordinators, social workers and crime victims.

- How does the social service collaborate with Victim Support?
- According to the respondents, what obstacles and possibilities, has the social services to fulfil their responsibility?

RELATIONSHIP TO RESEARCH FIELDS
The present study is part of two different research fields: victimology and social work. The research in Victimology in Sweden is roughly divided into three main fields: medicine, domestic violence towards women, and sexual assaults (The Swedish Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority [Brottsoffermyndigheten], 2002). However, there are studies within Victimology that do not fall into any of these three fields. For example, Ljungwald (2011) examines the emergence of crime victims in the Swedish Social Services Act, and the study show that the legislation has more of a symbolic value. Furthermore, the study show that social workers from the municipal social services not always see that they are responsible for the psychosocial support to crime victims, which suggests that the social services not always fulfil their responsibilities. Similar results were expressed by Lindgren (2004), who furthermore suggest that the social services’ responsibility and how the support should be financed, needs to be clarified. With this lack of clarity, nongovernmental organisations such as Victim Support, has taken on the responsibility for help and support to crime victims. This voluntarily taken responsibility is, according to Af Sandberg and Ljungwald (2011), a responsibility that Victim Support wants to keep. However, according to the same study, Victim Support expresses that they never want to take over the responsibility that governmental organisations have. They should only be seen as a complement to the services that is offered in the welfare state. This raises the question of which relationship Victim Support should have with governmental organisations (Af Sandberg & Ljungwald, 2011).

There are also main research fields within social work. There are, according to Dellgran and Höjer (2011), four main fields: social phenomena and problems, social right and organisation, methods in social work, and client groups. These fields are then divided into four subjects: child care, healthcare, addiction treatment, and financial assistance. These fields and subjects were concluded, by examining all doctoral dissertations in Sweden in social work between the years 1980-2009, and the trend is that researchers gather around these fields and subjects. However, there are some studies within social work that cannot be classified into these categories.

To my knowledge, victimology rarely has an organisation perspective in their studies, and social work rarely has a focus on crime victims and their needs. In other words, there is a lack of research regarding how organisations, such as the social services and Victim Support, support crime victims. With this in mind, the present study becomes a part of both research fields,
as the aim is to examine how the social services fulfil their responsibilities for the psychosocial wellbeing of crime victims, by examining collaboration between the social services and Victim Support.

**SWEDISH LAW AND LEGAL DOCUMENTS**

This section explores the social service’s responsibility for crime victims who are 18 years or older, according to the Social Services Act and the guidelines from the National Board of Health and Welfare. To reach a greater understanding of the responsibility in relation to the Social Services Act, the foundation of the law, also known as governmental bills, will be examined. Further, both international and national research regarding crime victims’ right to support will be presented. The section begins with defining “crime victim”.

**Crime Victim**

The term “crime victim” has several meanings depending on which perspective is being used. Most people have an opinion of what a crime victim is, but there is no generally accepted definition of the term. Instead, there are various definitions, depending on who is defining it. For example, the judicial definition of a crime victim is “[…] a person who is directly affected by a crime” (Lindgren, Pettersson & Hägglund, 2001, p. 28) (author’s translation). This definition excludes those who indirectly have been affected by a crime, such as relatives, who might need support. There can be both political and professional motives behind the lack of unity on one definition. For example, with a strict definition some victims may not be entitled to support. Also, the possibility for organisations to focus on certain groups of victims, for example children or women experiencing violence within the family, or young crime victims, may be lost (Lindgren et al., 2001). However, according to Lindgren et al. (2001) a definition is needed, to entitle the victim support and compensation. Otherwise, the risk is that crime victims are not recognized at all, which might lead to the result that victims do not get support anyway. There is a need of a definition of what a crime victim is, but the definition cannot be too strict as many people in that case risk standing without support.

One theory is the so-called ideal crime victim. This is a person who is innocent, weak and bares no responsibility for the crime, for example a young woman being attacked and raped for no apparent reason (Christie, 2001, Lindgren et al., 2001; Lindgren, 2004). Using this definition, a person who put himself or herself at risk for crime, for example by hitchhiking, is not seen as a crime victim. This suggests that certain groups of crime victims, such as drug addicts, might find it difficult to get support. The viewpoint of the ideal crime victim can be linked to moralisation in society. Effron and Miller (2012) show that the most vulnerable victims are entitled to more support than those who have been affected to a lesser extent. This also affects the support given to crime victims, as it is only granted to those who are seen as most vulnerable (Effron & Miller, 2012). To be defined as an ideal crime victim, he or she needs to cooperate with the police by reporting the crime and giving evidence. However, the police should not question the victim’s story because of lack of cooperation, as there can be reasons for this such as threats (Lindgren et al., 2001). Instead, the police must investigate these reasons. Crime victims are a heterogeneous group; therefore, in reality the ideal crime victims are rare.

The United Nations (UN) also has a definition of who a crime victim is. This definition includes every person that has suffered physically, psychologically, emotionally, and economically or has had his or her human rights withdrawn without reason (The Association for Victim Support [Brottsofferjourernas Riksförbund], 2006; Lindgren et al., 2001). The definition also includes those who have indirectly been affected by the crime such as relatives and witnesses. Compared with the previous definition, this definition is wider and acknowledges that more people other than the crime victim may need help and support as a result of the crime.
The UN’s definition of who a crime victim is, involves those who have been affected either directly or indirectly by the crime, and is the definition used in the present study.

**Crime Victims’ right to support**

*The Social Services Act*

The social services have an overall responsibility for financial and social support to the population that live in the municipality. This can be seen in the sections 1:1 and 2:1 SoL. However, the social services only have this responsibility as long as no other organisations have it, for example, the police or the healthcare system (2:1 SoL). Also, the person who wants help and support must live in the municipality. In chapter five of the Social Services Act, the social services responsibilities specific groups are described. These groups are prioritised and therefore, the social services have specific responsibilities for them. According to section, 5:11: “The social services should act to make sure that crime victims and their relatives get help and support” (author’s translation). However, this section does not grant crime victims any additional right to support, compared with a person who is not a crime victim. The social services have both an overall and a specific responsibility for crime victims’ psychosocial wellbeing.

Crime victims are a prioritised group in the Social Services Act. The social services both have a responsibility for help and support to all crime victims, but women and children who live in families with domestic violence should be prioritised within the crime victim group (5:11 SoL). As mentioned before, this section does not grant crime victims any special rights compared with the population in general. Instead, the purpose of the law was to change attitudes towards crime victims and emphasize the importance of collaboration between governmental and nongovernmental organisations such as Victim Support (Governmental Bill 2000/01:79). However, the social services are responsible to make sure that victims get help and support, and this includes both material and psychological support. To minimise the risk of crime victims being misinformed, the bill stresses the need of education, to keep the personnel up to date with the latest changes. For the crime victim, the crime is often a once in a lifetime experience, therefore it is important that the victims are treated as individuals, even though reactions often are similar among victims (Governmental Bill 2000/01:79). The social services are responsible for psychological and material support, further they should collaborate with nongovernmental organisations such as Victim Support.

The help and support should be given through aid according to section 4:1 SoL. Through this section, the crime victims can get help and support from the social services. If a person for some reason cannot provide for oneself, then, according to section 4:1 SoL, that person can get help from the social services. The help could be financial help due to financial loss, for example if the victim cannot work or live in their home. Due to the experience of crime, the social services have a possibility to give more financial support than otherwise (The National Board of Health and Welfare, 2012). The crime victim may need other types of support as well, for example information or psychological support. The social services can give this support themselves, but it is important that they have the knowledge needed to assess a crime victim’s needs (The National Board of Health and Welfare, 2012). For example, a crime may need help from the health care system or other organisations, without the correct knowledge crime victims may get incorrect support. To be able to form an opinion of the crime victim’s needs, social workers need to have knowledge of the needs they may have.

The social services have an obligation to collaborate with other organisations to make sure that crime victims get the help and support they need. All organisations involved in the help and support to crime victims, for example social services, police and Victim Support, need to collaborate (Governmental Bill 2000/01: 79). The obligation to collaborate is also expressed in sections 3:4 and 3:5 SoL. The social services can gain valuable knowledge through collaboration with nongovernmental organisations, such as Victim Support (The National Board of
Health and Welfare, 2012). This is because nongovernmental organisations have more experience, working with victims of crime. Through collaboration, the help and support can become better as the most suitable organisation can help and support the victim. One thing that can make collaboration hard is the confidentiality that most organisations have (The National Board of Health and Welfare, 2012). To break the confidentiality, the victim needs to give his or her consent for the collaboration. However, collaboration can still happen as long as no victims are named, and thereby, the confidentiality has not been broken. Collaboration can be a way of exchanging knowledge and information between organisations, which might lead to victims getting better help and support.

The emergence of crime victims as a prioritised group in legislation

The emergence of crime victims in legislation affects the support given to victims of crime. Ljungwald (2011) examined how crime victims became a prioritised group in the Swedish Social Services Act. However, the study shows that in reality, the crime victim group is not prioritised, as the social services’ responsibility for crime victims has not changed. Instead, the law has been given a symbolic value where the importance of support to victims is emphasised. Ljungwald (2011) argues that this could be a result of the financial crisis in Sweden, at the time. Further, it is suggested that the Government is aware of the importance of support to victims, but cannot finance it and therefore does not specify which responsibilities the social services has. This brings vagueness to legislation, and such vagueness might affect the support to victims of crime. A vague law makes it difficult to determine what is legal or illegal, which may lead to crime victims blaming themselves (Miller, Markman, Amacker & Menaker, 2012). Further, it affects the society as a whole, as people try to place blame for the incident. In these cases, when the law is vague, people turn to personal characteristics of the victim and the perpetrator (Miller et al., 2012). In these cases the victim, rather than the perpetrator, risks being the accused by the public. Vague legislation affects attitudes towards crime victims, therefore affecting the support given.

The symbolic value of a law should not be diminished, as it can change attitudes. Ljungwald (2011) argues in her doctoral dissertation that there is a symbolic value in the social services act, but the effect has not yet been seen in the attitudes of social workers within the social services. For example, certain social workers expressed that crime victims do not seek help from the social services; therefore, they do not meet them. However, during the interview, the social workers discussed and concluded that many of their clients have been exposed to crime, though it is not something they talk about with their clients (Ljungwald, 2011). The emergence of crime victims as a prioritised group in the Social Services Act have been given a symbolic value and can change attitudes towards crime victims.

A vague law could also be a response to a welfare state in change. The law has not had the desired effect, as social workers still fail to talk to their clients about experiences of crime and see the importance of support to victims. No change in attitudes has taken place and no governmental organisation takes responsibility for the victims. Svensson (2007) suggests that this has to do with a lack of discussion regarding which organisation should give the support. Instead, this task fell on nongovernmental organisations such as Victim Support. With the political approval of the nongovernmental organisations, the support to crime victims has continued being in these organisations’ care. In Sweden, it is unusual that nongovernmental organisations take on such responsibilities (Svensson, 2007). Previously, the welfare system has taken this responsibility. Due to a changing welfare state, nongovernmental organisations take on more responsibility for support to crime victims.

The social services’ responsibility for crime victims needs to be clarified. Lindgren (2004) discusses that both the police and the social service want to support victims of crime, but they have other assignments that are more important. Further, the social services’ has problems with financing the support to victims. These problems need to be solved. Firstly, the social
services’ responsibilities need to be elucidated, and secondly, the Government needs to contribute financially (Lindgren, 2004). Without a financial contribution, the social services’ budget in separate municipalities will not add up (Lindgren, 2004). In these cases the assignments need to be prioritised, and support for crime victims risk not being one of these. The social services need better financing to be able to support crime victims.

Evaluation of legislation
Evaluation of legislation can be hard as there is implication on several levels in society, for example a law affects both on a structural level and on an individual level. Therefore, it would be hard to evaluate one law in a single study (Bussman, 2010). For example, when it comes to support for crime victims the evaluation can be in various fields such as satisfaction with provided support, collaboration between support organisations and the police, and economic costs due to crimes. This suggests that several studies need to be made to be able to evaluate one single law to see how it affects society. When it comes to the evaluation process, Bussman (2010) suggests two approaches: legislation as social ordering or legislation as social problem-solving. The first approach provides a framework for how persons or organisations should behave in different circumstances. The second approach focuses on correction of a specific behaviour. The Swiss legislation on victim support is a hybrid of these approaches. On one hand the law tells what rights crime victims have at legal proceedings, and on the other hand which support crime victims should have to be reintegrated to society (Bussman, 2010). Legislation need to be examined through different perspectives to be able to conclude if the law is effective.

THE PSYCHOSOCIAL WELLBEING OF CRIME VICTIMS
In this section, crisis theory and coping theory will be presented, as a way to understand the importance of collaboration regarding the help and support to crime victims. To understand the reactions a crime victim may go through, crisis theory will be presented, and coping theory is used to understand how victims can manage and live with their experiences. The theories will be followed by previous research regarding crisis reactions and coping.

Crisis reactions
Experiences of crime may trigger crisis reactions. Being exposed to crime can be seen as a traumatic event, which might lead to crisis reactions and it can take years before a victim has recovered completely (Cullberg, 2006). Compared with a life crisis, which can be expected, a traumatic crisis, such as a crime experience is something unexpected that the victims cannot control (Cullberg, 2006). According to Cullberg (2006) and Hammarlund (2001), the traumatic crisis is then divided into: threat-, loss-, responsibility- and offensive crisis. All of these trigger some kind of reaction. The crisis that is caused by threats towards a person’s physical or psychological wellbeing often gives anxiety as a reaction and it is often caused by for example sickness or accidents. Sorrow is a common reaction when a person has lost something or someone that had a special meaning to him or her. Guilt is the common reaction when a person feels responsible for the incident, for example if a person accidently kills another person due to not paying enough attention to the road while driving. Lastly, shame is often triggered as a reaction when a person has experienced something against their will and that experience is under taboo in society. These four different types of crisis may also cause other reactions. A victim will go through different reactions, depending on which type of crisis the victim is in.

When coping with a crisis, the person often goes through four different phases. These phases do not always follow in a chronological order, and a person can be in several phases at once (Cullberg, 2006; Hammarlund, 2001). In phase I, the person is in shock, which means
that the person has a hard time to grasp what has happened and tries to deny the experience as a way to stay in control. In phase II, the denied reactions to the experience such as anxiety, anger, shame and guilt, start to come. Phase III is about reparation, which is a way to move beyond the traumatic event and the person tries to adapt to the situation. Finally, in phase IV, the experience becomes a memory and no longer affects the person’s everyday life. Phase I and II is often referred to as the acute crisis, while the coping process takes place in phase III and IV. How the crisis evolves depends on personal characteristics, previous experiences and social support, from, for example, family and friends (Hammarlund, 2001). The phases are a way to illustrate the process that a person in crisis may go through.

Elevated risk for Posttraumatic stress disorder

Crime victims often go through crisis reactions when they recover from the experience of crime. Studies show that crime victims become more worried, depressed, angry and suspicious towards other people and have an elevated risk of developing posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), due to the traumatic experience and loss of sense of security (Shercliffe & Colotla, 2009; Kunst, Winkel & Bogaerts, 2011). In their study, Shercliffe and Colotla (2009) compared crisis reactions between crime victims, and workers who had been injured at work and lived with chronic pain. In the study, crime victims were more affected and developed PTSD to greater extent than the workers. It is suggested that crime victims have their experiences with them at all times and therefore, they felt insecure at more places than the crime scene (Shercliffe & Colotla, 2009). It is suggested that it is due to the fact that the perpetrator may move around freely, until he or she is caught. The workers, on the other hand, had no one to blame. Their chronic pain was connected to injuries sustained from machines at work. Machines cannot move on their own as people can, therefore workers did not lose their sense of security to the same extent as crime victims did. Crime victims have an elevated risk of developing PTSD compared with people who have experience traumatic accidents at work.

The type of crime a victim experiences, also affects the development of PTSD. Kunst et al. (2011) show in their study, that the experience of violent crime triggers uncontrolled anger in the victim. Previously this has only been proven with experiences of war, but now it is also proven with civilian crime as well. It is suggested that the crime victim relives the experience of violence and recalls all of the emotions that came with it. These emotions have then been interpreted as symptoms of PTSD. Therefore, in therapy it is important to identify which crime the victims have experienced. All victims of crime cannot be treated in the same way (Kunst et al., 2011). Violent crimes can trigger posttraumatic anger in victims of crime.

Coping

Coping is a strategy to diminish psychological, physical and emotional distress. By doing so, the negative and stressful mechanisms can be reduced and as a result the person improves his or her wellbeing (Snyder & Dinoff, 1999). Effective coping strategies give a long-term improvement of the person’s wellbeing. There are two approaches on how to look at coping: a conscious or a non-conscious process. Some say that it needs to be a conscious process for it to be called coping, but others argue that if a person experience stressors several times the process will be non-conscious as the person’s mind knows how to deal with them (Snyder & Dinoff, 1999). Coping uses defence mechanisms, such as isolation, repression, regression, and turning against the self, ego restriction and identifying with the aggressor, as a way of understanding how a person copes with threats towards the self. The context for the traumatic event is also of importance, as studies show that individuals react differently depending on the context (Snyder & Dinoff, 1999). When coping with traumatic events, both internal processes and the context for the event, are of importance.
There are two major types of coping strategies: the problem-focused strategy and the emotional focused strategy (Snyder & Dinoff, 1999). The first one focuses on control or change of the source that causes stress. This can be done by generating alternative solutions or by learning new skills to be able to deal with the situation. The second strategy instead focuses on the response from the stress, the emotions. Through this perspective, the person might for example seek emotional support or use wishful thinking, to cope with the experience. Both strategies can be used simultaneously and vary between individuals and different contexts (Snyder & Dinoff, 1999). The use of either of the strategies depends on which situation a person is in and the emotional distress it has caused.

It is important to support people who have experienced a catastrophe as a way of coping with the traumatic experience. Another name for a catastrophe is trauma, but some people argue that has to be a severe trauma for it to be called a catastrophe (Peterson & Moon, 1999). Studies show that some predictions can be made when it comes to who will be exposed to a traumatic event, for example, lifestyle and risk-taking are connected to traumatic events. In these cases social support can act as a way of coping with the experience (Peterson & Moon, 1999). Without support there is a risk of developing PTSD, especially if there are previous experiences of traumatic events. To minimize the risk of deepening a crisis, social support can be used as a way of coping.

Support
Crime victims may need support to recover from the experience of crime. Victims are in need of support to cope with the experience, especially when they have lost their sense of security (Bolivar, 2012). Mawby, Gorgenyi, Ostrihanska, Walklate and Wojcik (1999) argue in their study, that those victims who do not get support are more affected by the crime, than those who get support. Therefore, it is of importance that support is available to all crime victims. The question is how this support should be given. Most people have insurances that at least cover economic loss due to the crime (Mawby et al., 1999). However, psychological support may be harder to get. This support is often given through family and friends and most victims find this helpful (Mawby et al., 1999; Bolivar, 2011). Support to victims of crime is of importance, as it helps them to recover from the experience.

Crime victims might find it hard to disclose their experience of crime. Some victims blame themselves for what has happened and have a hard time to talk about the experience. For example, a study where college women who have been sexually assaulted participated, it was concluded that they found it hard to tell anybody about the crime (Orchowski & Gidycz, 2012). It is suggested that this is due to that the victim is unsure of the reactions that could follow a disclosure, especially when the victim knows the perpetrator. When a crime is disclosed, the college women often confide in a female peer, as they have a more supportive relationship. Few of the women tell their parents about the assault, especially not fathers. Orchowski and Gidycz (2012) argue in their study, that the women no longer have a close relationship with their parents, and therefore, peers become more important for support. Further, in a few cases, the women regret the disclosure of the assault, as they did not get the support they expected. Instead of support, they were told not to talk about it and forget it. Bolivar (2012), who examines crime victims in general, reaches similar conclusions regarding the lack of disclosure, but also argues that it has to do with protection of the family. The victim does not want family and friends to go through the same thing as they did; therefore they chose not to disclose what has happened to them. Crime victims do not always get the support that they want from family and peers; therefore they might chose not to disclose their experiences, which might lead to worse wellbeing.
Recovery

To recover from the experience of crime, victims use different coping strategies. In their study, Green et al. (2010) found a correlation between emotion-focused coping strategy and the wellbeing of crime victims, which suggests that managing the emotions from the crime experience is needed for a recovery. There were also indications that avoidance as a coping strategy together with social support improves the wellbeing of the crime victim, although these finding were not statistically significant. As crime victims are a part of several complex systems such as the judicial system, financial resources and victim compensation, it is important that teams consisting of people from the different system collaborate to reach a holistic view of the victims’ needs (Green et al., 2010). That a holistic view is needed is empathised by other studies as well. Sims, Yost and Abbott (2006) argue in their study, that social support is not enough to improve the psychological functioning of the victim, and therefore need to focus on more aspects than the psychological. The treatment also needs to be closer in time to the crime, and the support need to be over a longer period. It is not enough with a few treatment sessions over a short period (Sims et al., 2006). A holistic view is needed, to be able to give the crime victims the support they need to recover from their experience.

COLLABORATION

This section gives an account for collaboration theory and some of its concepts, which is seen as important when working with victims of crime, as a way to help and support crime victims. Both theory and previous research regarding the concept will be presented.

Collaboration – Possibilities and Obstructions

As a way of gaining resources and achieving goals, organisations need to interact with other organisations (Ahrne & Johansson, 1994). Ahrne and Johansson (1994) argue that this interaction can be divided into four patterns: conflict, competition, collaboration and exchange. Both conflict and competition are forms of struggles. The former is a struggle for resources that is in the control of one or both organisations, while in the later; none of the organisations have control over the resources. The last two patterns, collaboration and exchange, are ways of cooperation. Collaboration is used by organisations as a way of gaining resources that none of them possess. Exchange is a similar pattern, but here the organisations trade resources with each other (Ahrne & Johansson, 1994). Interaction is a vital part for an organisation to be able to gain the resources they need.

Collaboration is a way to reach a common goal. According to Ahrne and Johansson (1994) collaboration is a pattern often used by social organisations, as a way of working together for a common cause. Even though it is a pattern of cooperation, struggles often occur especially if there is an imbalance in power (Ahrne & Johansson, 1994). To solve this, negotiations are needed. Through this, the organisations can come to an agreement on how this power can be used to gain resources and to achieve common goals. It is also important that negotiations take place before collaboration is initiated, as a way to know which resources each organisation has at their disposal (Ahrne & Johansson, 1994). Negotiations need to take place before organisations can strive towards a common goal.

Collaboration is a way of gaining power. Although gaining power is not the purpose of collaboration, the organisation that has the resources will be the one with the most power (Ahrne & Johansson, 1994). This is because the resources give an organisation the power to act in a certain situation. Another aspect is the relationship between the organisations. If an organisation has resources that no other organisation needs, then the organisation has no power under those circumstances. In other words, for an organisation to have power it need to have resources that another organisation need and therefore, depends on the organisation with the
resources (Ahrne & Johansson, 1994). The power in collaboration depends on the relationship between the organisations.

**Possibilities**
A holistic view can be reached through collaboration between organisations that give support to crime victims. In a study done by Shepherd and Lisles (1998), it is argued that it is important with collaboration between the police and accident and emergency services (AED). The results from the study show that collaboration could improve the police investigation as it can become more effective, and as a result of that, the collaboration could have a crime preventing effect. Further, the victim support could also be improved by collaboration, as victims of crime are identified sooner and therefore can get support. However, there are some difficulties such as the confidentiality of the patients. It would be wrong for the AED personnel to report victims of crime to the police, without the consent of the victim. The AED personnel emphasised the importance of support to victims of crime, but they did not see it as their responsibility (Shepherd & Lisles, 1998). Instead, the police were seen as responsible. In other words, the roles in the collaboration between the AED and the police were not defined, which affected the collaboration. The roles of those involved in a collaboration need to be defined, otherwise there is a risk that the collaboration fails.

Collaboration could save resources, by avoiding duplication of service and support. In their study, Cooper, Anaf and Bowden (2008) argue that if organisations that give victim support collaborate, resources can be saved. Collaboration can give a holistic view of the crime victim’s needs, and therefore the victims can get adequate support from the right organisation at once, which can save resources. When it comes to support to crime victims, social workers show a more positive attitude towards collaboration than the police (Cooper et al., 2008). This is probably because social workers focus on support and help, to reintegrate the victim to society. The police, instead, focus on investigating and solving the crime. In other words, there is a difference in culture between the two organisations. However, collaboration should be possible as long as the organisations can come to an agreement on how the collaboration should occur, to fulfil the organisations’ goals and values (Cooper et al., 2008). By working together, organisations can get a holistic view of the crime victims need of support, and therefore save resources.

**Obstructions**
There are not just possibilities with collaboration; there are also obstructions such as language and goals of the organisations that are to be involved in the collaboration. As collaboration is between organisations and professions, they speak different languages (DeHart, 2010). Therefore, it is important that those involved come up with a common language that all of them can understand. For example, concepts such as crime victim and support need to be defined. This suggests that certain knowledge is needed to be able to work with these questions, and this knowledge is lacking and according to a study conducted by Lindgren (2004), this lack of knowledge affects the priority of assignments within the organisation. Lindgren (2004) also shows that collaboration becomes affected when the knowledge in the organisations is not coordinated. This is due to the question risk losing its importance, and other questions are prioritised. A further obstruction can be the goal with the collaboration (DeHart, 2010). Before collaboration between organisations is launched, the goal needs to be defined. It is important that the organisations strive towards the same goal; otherwise they risk pulling in separate directions instead of going forward together. Collaboration demands hard work and knowledge for it to function.

Collaboration will fail if not all organisations involved work hard. A special program aiming to keep the crime victim informed of the legal process through collaboration has been evaluated (Bennett Cattaneo, Goodman, Epstein, Kohn & Zanville, 2009). The evaluation
shows that the crime victim feels more comfortable when informed about the process and have a lawyer who represents him or her. The victims volunteer more information in these cases, which may change the degree of the prosecution. The crime victims felt that they were heard and respected for their experiences. However, this form of collaboration between the prosecutor, lawyer and the victim did not function as well as hoped (Bennett Cattaneo et al., 2009). The prosecutor did not participate as much as needed, without any presented reasons, and therefore the collaboration in many cases failed. All participants in collaboration need to do their part for the collaboration to work.

**METHOD**

**Choice of method**

The present study aims to examine how the municipal social services fulfil their responsibility for the psychosocial wellbeing of crime victims, by examining the collaboration between Victim Support and the social services, which is done through the perspectives of crime victim coordinators, social workers and crime victims. Due to the aim of the present study, a qualitative method has been used. According to Silverman (2010), the purpose of a qualitative method is to examine a subjective experience, which is what the present is examining through three different perspectives. The limitation with using a qualitative method is that only the participants subjective view are presented, and therefore no statistical generalisations can be made for the examined population (Bryman, 2008). In other words, the opinions of each participant are their own, and therefore do not represent crime victim coordinator, social workers and crime victims, as groups. In the data analysis a hermeneutic standpoint was taken, as it according to Ödman (2007), is an adequate way of reaching a deeper understanding by the use of the hermeneutic circle.

**Research review methodology**

The collection of research began with an electronic search of the following academic databases: DiVA, LIBRIS, Social Service Abstracts and Summon. Combinations of the following search terms in Swedish and English were employed: crime victim, crime, collaboration, legislation, municipality, PTSD, support, Victim Support, social services, and Sweden. In total, the different combinations resulted in 145 studies. Also, reference lists of the included studies were searched. The inclusion criteria for the studies were that they were in Swedish or English, and had to do with crime victims and the aim with the study. Preferably, the previous studies should have included all of the search terms, but only one study could almost fulfil this criteria. Therefore, studies that included at least four of the search terms were included. Regarding the search term PTSD, only civilian crimes were included. Moreover, only peer reviewed articles and dissertations were used in the review. There was no limit for methodology of the study. However, studies involving crimes against children and studies before 1998 were excluded. This resulted in 19 articles and dissertations from social work, psychology, criminology and jurisprudence.

**Sample**

Participants were chosen through theoretical sampling, which is a purposive sampling method. A theoretical sampling is when participants are gathered until a theoretical saturation is reached (Bryman, 2008). In the present study three groups of participants have been interviewed: crime victim coordinators from Victim Support, social workers from the municipal social services and crime victims. As there are no records over crime victims, as not all crimes are reported, a purposive sampling method was seen as an adequate method for the study.
Regarding the other groups of participants, that is crime victim coordinators and social workers, other sampling methods could have been possible, for example a probability sample. Such a sampling method could have made it possible to do statistical generalisations. However, due to lack of time and the risk of not getting enough participants, a purposive sampling was used for these participants as well. The criterion that was used for crime victims was that they could still in a crisis and that they felt that they could talk about the experience. The criterion for the social workers was that they needed to come in contact with crime victims in some way; either through investigations or that they worked with support to victims of crime. Lastly, the criterion for the crime victim coordinators was that they worked within Victim Support and had done that for a few years. A common criteria for all three groups was that they needed to be 18 years or older for ethical reasons.

The researcher in the present study had established contacts with the local Victims Support due volunteer work. These contacts were then used to come in contact with crime victim coordinators and crime victims, which resulted in two crime victim coordinators and one crime victims. As more crime victims were needed, the researcher used Facebook to come in contact with them. This resulted in five victims showing interest for an interview, but two dropped out in the end. One of these victims was abroad and the other one did not express a reason. Therefore, the use of Facebook resulted in three more victims. Facebook was also used to come in contact with social workers, which resulted in two participants. A crime victim coordinator also recommended a social worker, who the researched contacted directly for an interview. In total, nine interviews were conducted, four interviews with crime victim coordinators and crime victims, which would have been preferable with a few more social workers as their views differ, and therefore might have affected the data. The crime victim coordinators and the crime victims had similar experiences, and due to this the social workers ended up in a disadvantage compared to the other two groups. However, the strength is that the crime victim perspective is quite strong in the study, as all of them had similar experiences of support from Victim Support and the social services, even though they had experiences different crimes. The participants come from three municipalities.

**Procedure**

A general research question often initializes qualitative research, which narrows to a specific research area (Bryman, 2008). In the case of the present study it started with an interest of examining the municipal social services’ responsibilities for crime victims, after going over previous research, the research area narrowed to examining support and collaboration through the perspective of a crime victim, a social worker and a crime victim coordinator. These three groups were chosen as a way to try to get an image of an external reality. To collect data, interviews were conducted, as it can be an adequate method to examine how people experience reality (Silverman, 2010). The interviews were conducted in a place where the interviewees felt secure and relaxed, for example at a café or at the interviewees’ workplace. However, two interviews were conducted over telephone. The interviews were between 30-70 minutes long and were tape recorded. To prepare for the analysis, the interviews were transcribed and coded as soon as possible. The data was analysed using the theoretical framework presented above, which lead to the conclusions of the study. Because of this, a deductive approach was used, as the empirical material was interpreted through the theoretical framework, which then led to the conclusions (Bryman, 2008). Finally, the conclusions were compared with previous research to examine if the conclusions of the study were pointing in the same direction.
Construction of interview guide

The idea of an interview guide is that the interviewer gets a structure of the questions that need to be answered. Three different interview guides were constructed, since three groups of people were interviewed (Appendix A-C). However, the questions resemble each other but they are from different perspectives. Some of the questions in the interview guide were developed from Ljungwald’s (2011) interview guide, as both studies have similar aims. Example of questions that were used is how crime victims are defined and if the social services come in contact with crime victims. The questions were also influenced by previous research (e.g. Bolivar, 2011; Lindgren, 2004; Shepherd & Lises, 1998), for example if collaboration is occurring. It is important that the questions are divided into themes, which gives a flow in the questioning (Bryman, 2008). The interview questions were formulated with the aim of the present study in mind and used a language that was comprehensive for the interviewees. To test the questions, pilot interviews were conducted with people who have experience working with support. However, none of these people worked within Victim Support or the social services, or were victims of crime themselves. Pilot interviews are conducted as preparation, to test the flow of the questions and to see if the language is comprehensible (Bryman, 2008). Most of the questions were open which allowed the interviewees to expand their answers, for example, what kind of support do you offer to crime victims? Some leading questions were used to keep the interviewees on the subject, for example, do the social services offer support to crime victims in general or are you focusing in specific categories?

Data analysis

Silverman (2010) argues that it is important to start as soon as possible with transcribing the interviews and coding the data. Therefore, the interviews in the present study were transcribed and coded directly after the interviews had been conducted. All methods have weaknesses and coding is not an exception as there is a risk of losing the context in which the information occurred, but coding is one way of getting structure in the data, which is hands on and relatively easy to use (Bryman, 2008). The data was read through multiple times to minimize the risk of losing information. A deductive approach was used in the coding process. This means that the coding was guided by the aim and theoretical framework for the present study. The coding led to ten themes that were occurring in all interviews to some extent: The needs of the crime victim, the importance of help and support, how the help and support can evolve in the future, collaboration between organisations, financial difficulties, lack of resources, lack of knowledge, language barriers due to different professions, responsibility, and holistic views.

These themes were then summarised into view on collaboration, holistic view, dependability, common concepts and goals, view on responsibility, knowledge of crime victims’ needs and the judicial system, and needs of the crime victim. These themes are presented in the result section below. All quotations used, have been translated by the researcher.

The themes are all too some extent answering the aim of the present study. View on collaboration answers how social workers within the social service and crime victim coordinators within Victim Support see upon collaboration with each other. Holistic view, dependability, and common concepts and goals, answers what possibilities and obstructions that might occur, if or when these organisations collaborate with each other. Therefore these three themes also answer the aim. View on responsibility, knowledge of crime victims’ needs and the judicial system, and needs of the crime victims, answers if the social services can fulfil their responsibility for the psychosocial wellbeing of crime victims. In other words, all themes are needed to answer the aim. Collaboration and the psychosocial wellbeing need to be connected to fulfil the aim with the present study.

After the coding process, the themes were analysed using a hermeneutic viewpoint. This viewpoint was used to reach a deeper understanding of the themes and they fit together. Both
of these approaches are used within hermeneutic research (Ödman, 2007). Through the puzzling process, a holistic view of the studied area can be reached and understood. Understanding is then reached through interpretations of the data, either by interpreting the data as it is or with help of theories (Ödman, 2007). In the present study, both theories and previous research has been used in the analysis of the empirical material. Further, the researcher had a prior understanding of the studied research area through volunteer work within Victim Support and the police, for example common reactions for crime victims, how to support them and knowledge of the judicial system. My prior knowledge has been a valuable asset, but I have worked not to let it interfere with the analysis of the empirical material. The prior knowledge, the theories and previous research has been used in the hermeneutic circle, to get a deeper understanding of the material. The use of a hermeneutic circle involves changing between parts of the data and the data as a whole (Ödman, 2007). Therefore, in the analysis, the themes were analysed as individual parts and then they were put together to get understanding for the data as a whole, that is the theoretical framework, previous research and the empirical data from crime victim coordinators, social workers and crime victims. The reason for why collaboration, crisis and coping theory was used is due to the aim of the present study. All of these theories are needed to understand the psychosocial wellbeing of crime victims and how they can be supported, and what possibilities and obstructions that might occur when organisations are collaborating. The prior understanding, theories and previous research were combined in a theoretical model, to get an overview on how the concepts fitted together. This model was changed during the research process and combined with the results from the present study, which is illustrated in figure 3 (p. 30).

Validity, reliability and generalisability

Validity is used to determine how trustworthy the conclusions of a study are, and to test it the researcher can seek alternative explanations (Silverman, 2010). By doing so, many different possibilities are tested and all of those who cannot explain the conclusions can be disregarded, which strengthens the trustworthiness of the conclusions of the study. To strengthen the validity of the present study, the principle of alternative explanations has been used. Validity can also be divided into external and internal validity (Bryman, 2008). External validity is to which extent conclusions from the study can be generalized to different social setting, while internal validity examines if there is a good match between empirical observations and the theoretical concepts that the study develops. As the present study use a qualitative method, only moderatum generalisations are possible, which will be discussed further below. To strengthen the internal validity, a theoretical model was developed to get an overview of the theoretical framework and previous research. Later, the empirical data was added to the theoretical model (Figure 3, p. 30). With this model, congruence between the empirical data and theoretical concepts could be found. Through the aim of the study and the theoretical model, the questions to the interview guide were developed. The model did help when the data was coded as it gave an overview of the theoretical concepts of the study.

Reliability is about how well a study examines the area which is being researched (Silverman, 2010). To strengthen the reliability, test interviews were conducted to examine if the interview questions gave the expected answers, that is the questions used examined what they should. The test interviews helped as it became clear that some of the questions were a bit hard to understand, and therefore it became hard for the test people to answer them. These questions were therefore changed to a more comprehensible language. Some of the questions were also excluded as there was no need of them to fulfil the aim with the present study. Reliability, just as validity, is divided into external and internal reliability (Bryman, 2008). External reliability is about how well a study can be replicated by other researches, while internal reliability is about inter-observer consistency when there is more than one observer which is
how the analysis is connected to the aim and theoretical framework of the study and the conclusions. To strengthen the external reliability, the researcher has tried to give clear descriptions on how this study was conducted, so that another researcher could do again. However, external reliability can be difficult to fulfil, as social settings always change and it hard to get exactly the same setting, which suggests that a new researcher will come up with new conclusions. In the present study, researcher has been on her own, therefore, there has been no need to come to an agreement within the research group. However, to keep a link between the aim, through the theoretical framework and the analysis, to the conclusions, the researcher have adapted a theoretical model to have an overview on how the pieces of the study is connected.

Generalisation is about how the conclusions from one study, in one context, can be transferred to other contexts. In qualitative research, statistical generalisations are not possible (Bryman, 2008). However, generalisations can be made, for example, modерatum generalisations, which is when similar aspects from one social setting can be found in another setting (Bryman, 2008). This is a way of showing linkage or patterns between different social settings, for example the hierarchy within a support organisation and a governmental organisation. If similar aspects can be found, then the results can be generalised to a broader setting. In the present study similar aspects have been in previous research (e.g. Ljungwald, 2011), which suggest that the results can be generalised. Further, using previous research, theories and data from the present study, a model has been developed (Figure 3, p. 30), which illustrates the pattern that has been found regarding the responsibility and support to crime victims. This model could possibly be used in other social settings, for example, other municipalities. The reason is that the conclusions are not just applicable for the three municipalities that have been examined in the present study. As I understand, similar problems with support to crime victims occur in other municipalities, therefore the model could possibly be used in other municipalities as well. However, the generalisations are only tentative, and, as mentioned before, not statistically proven.

Ethical considerations

All participants were informed about the study before they were interviewed, both through an information letter that was handed out at the first contact and once again right before the interview started. To inform participants of the study and its aim is one of the four ethical principles that need to be followed in humanistic and social science research (The Swedish Research Council [Vetenskapsrådet], n.d.). All participants consented to be interviewed and were informed that they could withdraw the participation at any time they wanted, which is an ethical principle. Another principle is that the gathered material only can be used for research. It emphasised that the information gathered about a participant can not be sold for commercial use or as a way to force the participant into treatment. The researcher in the present study has informed the participants that the information will be treated carefully and no unauthorized people will have access to the material. The materials were kept in a locked locker, to which only the researcher had keys. Further, participants have been informed that their information will be treated confidentially, which also is an ethical principle in research (The Swedish Research Council, n.d.). However, an ethical dilemma was discovered regarding this principle. Some of the interviewees that work with crime victims could be identified as there are too few of them in the study. To try to resolve this dilemma, no municipal belonging and irrelevant information about these participants have been presented.

To interview crime victims can be a sensitive matter, as the exposure to crime often is a traumatic event. This dilemma was solved in two ways. Firstly, the researcher in this study has experiences from working with crime victims and therefore has some knowledge of reactions that can occur and also where the participant can get support if needed. If the victims would have shown signs of crisis or, for example, PTSD, then the researcher would have
asked to pass on their personal information to Victim Support, so they could get help and support. It would also have been possible for me to give Victim Support’s contact details, to the victim. However, none of the victims showed any signs of this. Secondly, Victim Support saw this study as important and therefore decided, together with the researcher, to be of assistance. For example, they assisted in the contact with crime victims, the researcher could use their facilities for interviews and they could support crime victims who needed help and support.

RESULTS

In this section, the result and analysis of the interviews with crime victim coordinators, social workers from the municipal social services and crime victims will be presented. The section starts with Collaboration with Victim Support, and is followed by Obstacles and Possibilities for the social service to fulfil their responsibility for psychosocial support to crime victims. The sections are then divided into four respectively three themes, which answers the aim of the study. Each theme begins with a presentation of the empirical data and is followed by a quotations, and in the end of the section, the empirical data is analysed.

Collaboration with Victim Support

In this section, the themes view on collaboration, holistic view, dependability, and common concepts and goals, will be presented. These findings come from the interviews with crime victim coordinators and social workers from the municipal social services, and will be answering how the social services fulfil their responsibilities for psychosocial support to crime victims by collaboration with Victim Support.

View on collaboration

The view on collaboration differs between Victim Support and the social services. Victim Support emphasise the importance of collaboration among organisations that work with crime victims. Without it, crime victims risk going without any support at all. Crime victim coordinator B describe that one Victim Support can offer help and support to several municipalities. They try to collaborate with the social services in every municipality, but in many cases it is hard and Victim Support does not know why the collaboration does not work. For some reason the social services do not want to collaborate with them. Furthermore, Victim Support depends on financial contributions from the municipalities, which makes it complicated to criticise the social services, as there is a risk of losing that contribution. When collaboration with the social services is functioning well, Victim Support and the social services exchange knowledge and resources with each other. However, in those municipalities where the collaboration with the social services is not functioning, the social services barely know of their existence. This is illustrated through the following quotation:

To be able to give crime victims better help and support, we need to become more visible, which can be done through collaboration. We are very visible in those municipalities where the collaboration works well, while we in other municipalities are almost invisible (Crime victim coordinator B).

The view on collaboration differs between social services. Some social services see collaboration with Victim Support as important, as Victim Support posses a wide knowledge of crime victims’ needs, which result in an exchange of resources. However, when collaboration is not functioning, the social services see themselves as a last resort, as long as other organisations can offer help and support, then there is no need for the social services to help victims. The social services will only help those victims who cannot get help through other organisations. In these municipalities where collaboration with Victim Support is not functioning, Victim Support is taken for granted and the social services refer all victims to them. The following
quotations illustrate the difference in view between two social services regarding collaboration:

We do not collaborate with Victim Support, as the organisation does not allow it due to the confidentiality of our clients. However, we inform our clients that they can get help and support from Victim Support (Social worker A). We collaborate with Victim Support through the police as they are the ones with a wider knowledge on how to help and support crime victims (Social worker B).

Collaboration between Victim Support and the social services is possible in some municipalities, but not in others. This suggests an unequal support to crime victims, depending on which municipality he or she lives in, which further suggests that he or she must live in the “right” municipality to be certain to get the help and support they need. The lack of collaboration could also result in a loss of resources and more costs for society than necessary. If victims go without help and support, they may, for example, go deeper into the crisis, and as a result of that have a longer recovery time, compared with those victims who get help and support. As no organisation has all the resources they need, collaboration is vital for them to be able to help and support victims. With collaboration, the needed resources can be gained (Ahrne & Johansson, 1994), and it can save resources by avoiding duplication of services (Cooper et al., 2008). In other words, a lot can be gained through collaboration. The social services would know what services Victim Support offers to crime victims and vice versa. Therefore the organisations could help each other with help and support to crime victims, avoid duplication of services, and in a long term perspective, save resources. These saved resources can then be used to develop the support to crime victims and increase the knowledge of victims and their needs, for example, contribute with resources to research. However, it is not easy to collaborate. Before it can be initiated, it needs to be preceded by negotiations where the roles and responsibilities for all participants are clarified (Ahrne & Johansson, 1994). Through these negotiations, agreements can be reached, for example, on how the confidentiality of the clients can be maintained. Perhaps, due to the confidentiality, it is better if the organisations have an exchange of resources instead of a full collaboration. Either way, collaboration between Victim Support and the social services is possible. Without collaboration, Victim Support and the social services risk not having enough resources to help and support crime victims.

Holistic view
Collaboration between the social services and Victim Support can give a holistic view of the crime victims’ needs. Although both crime victim coordinators and social workers agree on this, in reality the holistic view has been hard to reach when it comes to help and support. Victim Support wants to collaborate with the social services, but as it is now, they are not seen as an important partner. Instead, the police are more of importance, as they inform Victim Support of those who have been exposed to crime. With collaboration, it would be easier for Victim Support to refer victims to the social services, for example, if a victim needs financial help. As it is now, the social services are a complicated organisation with several different departments, which makes it difficult to know who to contact with a specific problem. As a result, Victim Support rarely refers crime victims to the social services for help and support. Furthermore, Victim Support does not know what services the social services offer to crime victims. This has resulted in some distrust from Victim Support towards the social services, which is illustrated through the following quotation:

If, for example, a man in a family is murdered and his relatives need support, I would refer them to the healthcare system. I do not believe that the social services have enough experience to be able to give help and support. They are probably better in taking care of children, than grown-ups (Crime victim coordinator A).
The social services do not see the same problem as Victim Support do. The police are an important partner to the social services, just as they are to Victim Support. However, the police only contact the social service if the crime victim is a child or if the crime has occurred in the presence of a child. Therefore, the social services have no knowledge of grown-up crime victims. Instead, the victims have a responsibility to seek help and support on their own, which is illustrated through the following quotation:

When it comes to grown-ups, you think that they have taken other actions firstly, for example sought contact with a counsellor at a local health centre. Grown-ups have a bigger responsibility to seek assistance on their own (Social worker B).

The collaboration between the social services and Victim Support needs to be improved. The police are an important partner to both Victim Support and the social services in their work with crime victims, but the collaboration between each other seems to be failing, which suggests that a holistic view has not yet been reached. The organisations do not know what the other one is doing, which suggests that there is a risk that victims are referred wrongly, and therefore do not get the help and support they need. The social services have a complicated organisation structure, which makes it difficult for Victim Support to refer victims to them for help and support, which makes a holistic view very hard to reach. This is why it is important with the already mentioned negotiations, which can bring an understanding of the structure of the organisations and which resources they have at their disposal (Ahrne & Johansson, 1994), and as a result a holistic view can be reached. Through a holistic view, the support to victims can be improved as well (Shepherd & Lisles, 1998). The improvement has to do with the organisations involved in the collaboration knowing what help and support organisations offer. This suggests that the victim will have adequate help and support earlier than if organisations do not collaborate, and therefore, a holistic view is connected to resources. If organisations have a holistic view, resources may be saved, as victims get help and support quicker. In turn, it might shorten the recovery time, which brings down costs for society, for example, for sick leave. A holistic view will therefore contribute with more effective help and support to crime victims, than if the focus is on only one perspective at a time. Collaboration and a holistic view benefits both organisations working with help and support, and individual crime victims.

**Dependability**

There is an imbalance in power between Victim Support and the social services. Victim Support depends on financial contribution from the municipality; therefore they cannot make the demands they would like to. However, they try and work hard to become visible for the social services. By doing this, there is hope that the social services see the importance of support to victims of crime, and therefore choose to develop the collaboration and perhaps contribute more financially. Due to the dependency that Victim Support is in, they sometimes cannot do as much as they would like to without risking losing the financial contribution. Without these financial contributions Victim Support may be forced to cut down their organisation, which will affect the help and support to crime victims. The following quotations illustrate how power is present in Victim Support daily:

The municipality could contribute more financially and sort of buy the service from us. As it is now, they expect a lot of us and our volunteers, and give us few resources. [...] If it continues like this, we have to cut back on our services and the social services will have to solve that problem (Crime victim coordinator A). We have agreements on collaboration, but they are very general. They give us financial contributions and we take care of their crime victims, but they do not tell us how to do it. The municipality buys themselves free, but in a way Victim Support do it as well, when there is no definitions on how to take care of the victims (Crime victim coordinator B).
The social services do not see the same problem as Victim Support do. The social services lay a lot of the responsibility on individual crime victims; if they want help, they need to seek it themselves. Further, Victim Support is taken for granted and therefore crime victims are referred to them, as they have a wider knowledge of the needs of the victim and the judicial system. There is an acknowledgment that there is not enough knowledge of crime victims and their needs within the social services, but the need of it is questioned. There is also a view that the social services buy the services from Victim Support, which is illustrated through the following quotation:

When it comes to grown-ups, I see it as a service that the municipality buys from Victim Support, which is how I see it (Social worker C).

Collaboration between Victim Support and the social services is hard, due to the imbalance in power. This is probably the result of an uneven dispersion of resources. The social services have resources that Victim Support need, and therefore the social services have power over them. This is also a problem with collaboration between governmental and nongovernmental organisations; nongovernmental organisations such as Victim Support will always depend on financial contributions, and therefore there will always be an imbalance in power. However, the social services do not have the knowledge that Victim Support possesses, which should even out the power imbalance. This can only happen if that knowledge is something that the social services want to have, as an organisation can only gain power if it has resources that another organisation wants or needs (Ahrne & Johansson, 1994). The question is if this knowledge can be a bargaining chip in negotiations, as the need of it is questioned. Due to this, there will be more of a struggle for resources than an exchange, which in the long run can lead to rivalry between the organisations (Ahrne & Johansson, 1994). Furthermore, a struggle for resources may also affect the support given to crime victims, as the focus needs to be moved from supporting the victims to gaining resources. This suggests that the social services indirectly affect the support that crime victims get through Victim Support. The social services needs to even out the imbalance in power and contribute more financially to Victim Support, if they want crime victims to get the help and support they need.

Common concepts and goals
Victim Support and the social services use different terminology. Victim Support defines a crime victim as a person who has been directly affected by a crime and due to this, might need help and support to cope with the experience. However, crime victims are part of a heterogeneous group, and therefore, anyone can become a crime victim. It is not something that is connected to personal characteristics. Furthermore, Victim Support acknowledges that people who indirectly have been affected by a crime, such as witnesses or relatives, may need help and support. The social services have no definition that every social worker follows, but they also see the person who has directly experienced a crime, as a crime victim. However, the term “crime victim” is not used; instead the term “client” is used, which is illustrated through the quotation below:

We do not talk of crime victims. Clients are clients, no matter what they have experienced. They do not have needs because they are crime victims; they just have needs (Social worker A).

The use of different terminology affects how crime victims are perceived. Although, the organisations use the same definition as to who a crime victim is, they use different terminology. Victim Support uses a specific term “crime victim” and that is the group they defend. The social services, on the other hand, use the wider term client, as they meet more people
than just crime victims, for example, addicts. The difference in terminology suggests that the prioritisation also differs, where crime victims are more important to Victim Support than to the social services. For a collaboration to work between these organisations they need to come to an agreement on a mutual language and concepts, otherwise it will be hard to understand each other (DeHart, 2010). A common language is also needed to be able to set up goals for the collaboration. As it is now, Victim Support and the social services strive in different directions, and with collaboration they could instead strive towards a common goal. Even though the social services use the term client, they have to acknowledge that crime victims have needs that other clients might not have. Through collaboration, Victim Support can educate the social services, and together they can set up routines for how to take care of crime victims, which might result in better help and support to victims of crime. By using a common terminology, Victim Support and the social services can set up routines on how to help and support victims of crime.

**Obstacles and Possibilities**

In this section, the themes view on responsibility for crime victims, knowledge of crime victims’ needs and the judicial system, and the needs of crime victims, will be presented. This section will present the viewpoints from all three groups, which are crime victims, crime victim coordinators and social workers from the municipal social services. This section answers which obstacles and possibilities the social services have to fulfil their responsibility for psychosocial support to crime victims.

*The view on responsibility for crime victims*

Victim Support sees it that the social services have the overall responsibility for help and support to crime victims, but they mean that some crime victims are more prioritised than others. These are women and children living in families where violence is or has been present. However, grown-ups who are not in one of the prioritised group may find it hard to get help and support from the social services. Instead, they are referred to Victim Support. Victim Support, which should be used as a complement to the social services’ help and support, is used as a reason not to develop their own support services. This is illustrated through the following quotation:

Victim Support was initiated 25-30 years ago as a response to that the social services did not fulfil their responsibilities, somewhere someone needs to meet the needs of the crime victim. As I see it, if the social services took their responsibilities, we would not have to exist (Crime victim coordinator B).

The social services have a different view in their responsibility than Victim Support do, but it also differs between the social workers. One view is that they have an overall responsibility for help and support to all the people who live in the municipality, but they only have a responsibility as long as no other organisation has it. The other view is that the social services have a large responsibility for crime victims as a group, especially children, but it is not always the social services that should help them. The social services can, however, inform crime victims on where they can get help, for example, from the healthcare system or Victim Support. The different views are illustrated through the following quotations:

If no one else helps the person, than it is up to us to help, to make sure that no one feels left out, but we should not take on responsibility for something that other organisations have responsibility for (Social worker A). A big responsibility, we have a responsibility for all the people in the municipality, every need in the municipality, which means that we have the biggest responsibility (Social worker B). We have a big responsibility to inform crime victims where they can get help...
and support. You can also wonder what happens to all of those victims who never seek support, is there not any need of support or do they not know where to turn (Social worker C).

Crime victims do not know that they can get help and support from the social services. Few of the crime victims knew that they could turn to the social services for help and support because they were victims of crime. Those who had tried to get help and support from the social services had not received it. These victims did not even get information on where they could turn for help or what kind of help the social services offered. The victims that had no experience of the social services did not see it as natural to turn to them for help, instead they had turned to the police and judicial system to get information on where they could get help and support. Victim Support had helped all victims to cope with their experiences, and their support helped them a lot. Following quotations illustrate crime victims’ view on the social services responsibility:

I contacted the social services to get help with a new apartment. They told me that the only way they could help me was if I was psychologically ill, but in that case I would be marked for life. Otherwise, they recommended me to move to a hostel with my two year old boy. I did not get any information on where I could turn for help and support (Crime victim A). I did not know that the social services had a responsibility, but as a crime victim you put a lot of trust in the police. The police are responsible for investigating crimes and therefore they have a responsibility for crime victims, at least I think so (Crime victim D).

There is a difference in view regarding the social services’ responsibility for crime victims. The social services’ viewpoint is that they have an overall responsibility, but only if no other organisation has the responsibility. However, from the viewpoint of Victim Support, they have a greater responsibility, especially as Victim Support only is a complement to their services and should not be the primary service to crime victims, which it is in many cases today. The lack of clarity regarding the responsibility also affects the crime victims. Crime victims do not know where to turn or who is responsible, which could lead to a resistance to seek help and support. The social service viewpoint suggest that they focus more on section 2:1 SoL, than section 5:11 SoL. Although, this it is not completely wrong, they cannot ignore 5:11 SoL. Even though the section does not bring any further rights to the victim, it is stated that the social services have a responsibility for the psychological support and material help to victims (Governmental Bill 2000/01:79). The problem is that it is not stated how this responsibility should be practised. This brings the possibility for the social services to actually develop the support in any way they like, for example have their own services or offer the service through other organisations, for example, Victim Support. If they do the latter, they must collaborate with the organisation, they cannot just refer a victim that has sought help from the social service, to for example, Victim Support (The National Board of Health and Welfare, 2012). As it is now, looking through a crime victim perspective, the social services do not always do what they should. They are more or less invisible to crime victims (Ljungwald, 2011), and in the few cases where a contact has been established, the victims met unprofessionally. Most people know that the social services cannot help everybody. They do an investigation that will show if the victim can get help from them, but in those cases where they cannot help, they could at least inform the victim where they can turn for help, and through collaboration with support organisations the gaps in the support to victims can be filled. The social service needs to become better in supporting and helping victims of crime.

Knowledge of crime victims’ needs and the judicial system
The crime victim coordinators argue that Victims Support, as an organisation, has a wide knowledge of the needs of crime victims and the Swedish judicial system. Victim Support has worked with crime victims for a long time, and due to this they have gained knowledge of
common reactions and needs after experiencing a crime, which volunteers are educated in before they start to work. Further, they regularly educate their volunteers to keep them up to date. To keep up with changes, Victim Support collaborates with the judicial system. Overall, they have a wide knowledge and know how to take care of crime victims, which is illustrated through the following quotation:

I feel that I have the knowledge I need to support crime victims, as long as they do not have any special needs, for example a disability. In these cases, the victim is referred to someone who has better knowledge of their needs, for example the healthcare system (Crime victim coordinator B).

The social service acknowledges that they need more knowledge of crime victims and their needs. Often the knowledge is within the organisation, but not all social workers have it, especially the knowledge of how the judicial system works is lacking, mostly because it is not part of their training. Further, it is questioned if that knowledge is needed, as they work within social work, not law, which is illustrated through the following quotation:

I do not feel that I have the knowledge answer questions about the judicial system, but it is not something that I feel that I miss either. There are a lot of people that come here asking about it, but I feel that it is not the social services’ responsibility (Social worker A).

However, one social worker express that it is important to know the limits of your knowledge, and how you can get the information you need:

I do not have the knowledge I need of crime victims and their needs, but I do know where to turn to get the information I need, for example, if I have a person who needs more help than I can offer, to be able to recover, I can refer him or her to a psychologist. [...] If I have questions about the judicial system, I can turn to Victim Support for help (Social worker C).

Crime victims lack knowledge on where they can turn for help and support and how the judicial system works. Crime victims have little knowledge of where they can get help and support, and it is even worse when it comes to knowing that they can turn to the social services. It does not come naturally to turn to the social services for help due to a crime experience. However, if they would have known that the social services can give them psychological support, then there is a possibility that they would have turned to them. The knowledge is also lacking when it comes to the judicial system. Some of them have weak memories from school, but not enough to feel secure with the situation. The following quotations illustrate crime victims’ knowledge of where they can turn for help and support:

For me, the social services have been anonymous. I think if you want help from them you need to contact them yourself, but that is hard if you do not know that the social services can help you. When you are in psychological distress you do not search where you can get, you do not take the contacts you need for support. It is too hard (Crime victim A). I did not know where to turn for help and support, so I felt a bit alone (Crime victim C).

Knowledge is constantly changing; therefore new education always is needed. The social services and crime victims seem to have a lack of knowledge regarding both support and the judicial system. However, Victim Support has the knowledge they need, and because of this, it probably becomes more natural for crime victims to seek assistance from Victim Support. Further, Victim Support is more visible when it comes to questions regarding crime victims, than the social service is. The social services could therefore, use Victim Support as a source of knowledge. Social workers need to have a lot of knowledge about a lot of things, but there is a reason for it: to be able to help and support people, crime victims are no exception. To be able to work with these questions, those involved need to have knowledge about it (Lindgren,
Without the knowledge, crime victims cannot get the help and support they need. Further, it is not enough to have the information within the organisation, the knowledge needs to be coordinated (Lindgren, 2004). The people with the knowledge are the ones who should be working with it. For example, a person who has a lot of knowledge about addicts and related questions should not be investigating young children and their need of care. That person will be working with addicts. Therefore it is important that the knowledge is coordinated. The person with the most knowledge of victims and their needs will be the one helping and supporting the victim. This knowledge then needs to be kept updated, as knowledge is constantly changing due to the development within the scientific field, otherwise the knowledge will be lacking again. When the social services have the knowledge needed, they can support victims on their own and Victim Support can become a complement to their services as it should be.

The needs of crime victims

According to the data, crime victims have a need of information and to talk about their experiences. When crime victims seek assistance from Victim Support, they usually need to know what is happening in their case. Often, the police have not told them anything about how long an investigation take, therefore the victims feel ignored, as their experiences are not important. The need of information can also help the victim to talk about their experiences, instead of keeping it to themselves. In most cases Victim Support can help the victims, but in some cases they find it hard, for example, if the victims have a disability. They have not got enough knowledge to help them; therefore these victims are referred to other organisations such as the social services or healthcare system.

Many victims call and say that they do not want to talk, they just want information about the judicial system, but then you talk about the experience anyway. However, it is not always the primary. I think there is more of a need to know what is happening know and what I can do (Crime victim coordinator A). Crime victims have a need to be heard, seen and taken seriously. They have a need of information regarding them, through my experience I feel that it is something that is lacking (Crime victim coordinator B).

The social services see the same needs of victims that Victim Support do. When crime victims seek assistance from the social service, they have a need to talk and process what they have experienced. There may also be a need of financial help. However, all victims have different needs and therefore the social services conduct an investigation to examine the needs and how they can be met. This is illustrated through the following quotations:

To talk, the crime victim may not need counselling, but he or she needs to talk about how it feels right now (Social worker A). There is a need of support, often counselling. Otherwise, if you have been robbed, there may be a need of financial help (Social worker B).

According to the data, crime victims feel lost in their situation. Crime victims agree with Victim Support and the social service, they needed information and to talk about their experiences. However, they did not feel the need at the time. At the time there was a greater need of information about what was happening and how the judicial system works. The police investigation took a long time and several times they thought that the investigation had been closed, and they found it difficult to come in contact with someone within the police force that knew what was happening. Victim Support was a great help under these circumstances, while the social services did not offer any help or initiate an investigation of their needs.

A man from Victim Support called me multiple times to talk to me; it helped even though I did not seek the support myself. However, I sought help from the social service, but they said that they could not help me (Crime victim A). My mother tried to get me to talk with a psychologist, but I refused. I did not feel that I needed it, but today I know that it would have helped me cope with the
experience. I isolated myself instead, no one was allowed to come near me, otherwise I panicked (Crime victim B). I would have needed to talk about the experience at the time, but I did not see it then. I would also have needed more information about the police investigation and the support (Crime victim D).

The interviewed crime victims express that crime victims need help and support even though they cannot see it themselves at the time. All participants agree that crime victims need help and support, especially information and to talk about the experience. In some cases, there is also a need of financial help. To be able to help and support crime victims, these needs need to be met. Otherwise, there might be a risk of a longer recovery time. Victim Support has helped the victims a lot, while the social services have not. A reason for this, which already has been presented under a previous section, might be lack of knowledge regarding crime victims and their needs, which affects the social services investigation of the victims’ needs. Another reason might be that the victim may not have expressed all his or her needs, when the social services conducted their investigation, and the social services are not mind readers. However, if they had the knowledge they needed, then they would know that a victim in crisis may not always understand what has happened due to shock and different defence mechanisms (Cullberg, 2006), and without help and support, there is an elevated risk of PTSD (Shercliffe & Colotla, 2009). Therefore, crime victims need to get help and support to cope with their experiences and especially to talk about the emotions that the crime has caused (Bolivar, 2012; Green et al., 2010), which is consistent with the expressed needs of the respondents. Crime victims also want information about their case. Bennett Cattaneo et al. (2009) show that when crime victims are kept informed about their case, they are more comfortable and volunteer more information, which improves the police investigation. This suggests that information can have a supporting effect for crime victims. In other words, when crime victims have their needs met, they have a shorter recovery time and the police investigation is improved.

**CONCLUSIONS**

In this section, the conclusions of the result section will be presented. Furthermore, it will be explained how every theme is connected and answers the aim of the present study.

Under the theme view on collaboration, it is concluded that the crime victim coordinators have a more positive attitude towards collaboration, than the social workers within the municipal social services, which is further developed under the themes holistic view, dependability, and common concepts and goals. A holistic view can be reached through collaboration, but due to that the variance of will to collaborate among social workers, it is hard to reach. Victim Support also depends on financial contributions from the municipality, which might make it hard for them to make too many demands on the social services, as there might be a risk of losing those contributions. Furthermore, in the theme common concepts and goals, it is concluded that there is a lack of a common terminology, which is needed to make collaboration possible. This difference in terminology could be connected with that social workers meet people with different social problems and therefore see all of them as clients, while Victim Support can focus on those who have been exposed to crime. However, lack of common terminology is not the only obstruction for collaboration; the view on responsibility also differs, where social workers, within the municipal social services, not always seeing themselves as responsible for the psychosocial support to crime victims. This might also be connected to the lack of knowledge of crime victims’ needs and therefore social workers do not know how to help them, and therefore refer them to other organisations such as Victim Support. If social workers knew of the crisis reactions that a crime victim might go through, then they would know that it is hard for a person to seek help and support, but this does not mean that the victims do not need it. Therefore, it is important the crime victims get information on where they
can turn for psychosocial support, and that the organisations that work with this support collaborate with each other to minimise the risk of PTSD.

The conclusions from the present study resulted in the figure below (Figure 1). The figure illustrate how the responsibility for the psychosocial support to crime victims is practiced, according to the data from the interviews with crime victim coordinators, social workers and crime victims.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 1.** The figure illustrates how the responsibility for psychosocial support to crime victims is practised, according to data from the present study.

As it is now, the social services have the overall responsibility for the psychosocial support to crime victims (S₁), but mostly they refer the crime victims to Victim Support (VS₁) and let them take this responsibility. Victim Support acknowledges that crime victims (CV₁) have a responsibility for their own health and psychological wellbeing, but they also know that it can be hard to seek help and support when you go through a crisis. Therefore, Victim Support tries to share the responsibility with crime victims. They also try to collaborate with the social services, to share the responsibility for support to victims of crime, with various results. However, in many cases the collaboration is not functioning, which in reality, according to the data, suggests that Victim Support have to take the responsibility for support to crime victims on their own. To my knowledge, no one has illustrated the responsibility for psychosocial support to crime victims with this kind of a figure, which is one my contributions to the research fields victimology and practical social work.

**DISCUSSION**

The aim with this study was to examine the municipal social services’ responsibility for crime victims, who are 18 years or older. Further, the study examines how the social services support can be developed, and how they collaborate with Victim Support.

In sum, data shows that the municipal social services’ have a responsibility to make sure that a crime victim gets the psychological support and material help, they need after experiencing a crime. However, the legislation does not clarify how this responsibility should be practiced in reality. Instead, data shows that the social services often just refer the victims to Victim Support, without knowing what kind support they are offering. Therefore, Victim Support takes a lot of responsibility for the victims. Data also shows that there is a lack of collaboration between Victim Support and the social services, but it differs between municipalities. In some it is functioning well, while in others it is not. There is also a lack of knowledge regarding the importance of support to crime victims within the social services, especially in those municipalities where the collaboration is not functioning. This might affect the
support as the social services in these cases do not offer any support themselves and therefore refer the victims to Victim Support. Furthermore, Victim Support depends on financial contributions, and if the social services do not see the importance of support to the victims, they risk getting fewer contributions from the municipality, which puts their organisation at risk. Due to the lack of collaboration and knowledge, crime victims risk going without adequate support, which might lead to longer recovery times and therefore higher costs for society.

**Limitations and strengths**

The limitations with the present study are that no statistical generalisations can be made and the difficulty to find participants. To make statistical generalisations, a probability sample is needed (Bryman, 2008). However, a probability sample would not have been possible for the crime victim group, as there are no registers for who has become a crime victim. The registers only cover those who have reported a crime or the cases that have gone to court, and only the later register is open for the public. The former is confidential. Further, it was difficult to find participants to the study, especially crime victims and social workers. No reasons for why crime victims did not want to participate have been expressed, but a suggestion is that an interview could have resulted in recollection of bad memories. Another reason may be that they did not feel that they could answer questions about how the social services take care of crime victims, as it is rare that victims turn to the social services for help and support. Instead, they turn Victim Support or family and friends. The social workers expressed a lack of time and a heavy workload, as a reason for not participating in the study. Due to this, no consistent view on how the social services fulfil their responsibility for the psychosocial support to crime victims has been reached.

The strength of this study is that it examines the responsibility for crime victims through three perspectives: crime victim coordinators from Victim Support, social workers from the municipal social services, and crime victims. This is strength as the problem with support to crime victims are seen through multiple perspectives, which brings a depth to the study. Furthermore, the use of multiple perspectives is a strength, as it becomes more obvious that it is important with a common terminology, as a way to strengthen the crime victim perspective. Another strength is that the results can be generalised to some extent, as the results are similar to results from previous research (e.g. Bolivar, 2012; Ljungwald, 2011; Lindgren, 2004). Further, the model for collaboration to support crime victims (figure 3, p. 30) could be used in other social settings as well, for example in other municipalities or by other organisations working with support to victims of crime. The model gives an overview of what can be gained by collaboration, and what can be lost if collaboration is failing.

**Contribution to the research field and future research**

The conclusions from the present study correspond to results from previous studies within victimology. Ljungwald (2011), for example, showed that social workers not always see themselves as responsible for the support to victims of crime. Similar results have been found in the present study as well. Overall, the present study is similar to Ljungwald’s (2011) dissertation, but the present study is more focused on practical social work. Therefore, the present study has examined collaboration between the social services and Victim Support. The results indicate that there is a link between how the social services see upon support to crime victims and, collaboration with Victim Support. Collaboration seems to be occurring more in those municipalities where social workers within the social services, see support to crime as important. This linkage is illustrated in more detail in figure 3 (p.30). Lindgrens (2004) dissertation shows that there are discrepancies between the legislation and how it is interpreted by social workers at social services, which the present study only can confirm. The present study can also confirm the results of a previous study done by Af Sandberg and Ljunwald (2011),
that Victim Support has taken on the responsibility for crime victims, but say that they only
are a complement to the services offered by governmental organisations. In other words, the
conclusions from the present study have confirmed conclusions from previous studies within
Victimology. However, the present study contributes with a new perspective, consisting of
examining the collaboration between the social services and Victim Support. With this new
perspective, the focus can be on how organisations can work together to give psychosocial
support to crime victims.

To my knowledge, there is no previous research within social work, regarding the munic-
icipal social services responsibility for the psychosocial wellbeing of crime victims or how the
social services can collaborate with Victim Support. Further, this area of research is not com-
mon within social work (Dellgran & Höjä, 2011). With this in mind, this study contributes
even more to the research field, as it an unexplored field in research.

With new perspectives on collaboration, new research questions are raised. For example,
how should the municipal social services collaborate with support organisations such as Vic-
tim Support? Which organisations should be a part of the collaboration, for example, should
the police be a part of this collaboration? Another research question to be examined is what
would happen if Victim Support were forced to close because of financial difficulties? As Af
Sandberg and Ljungwald (2011) already show in their study, that Victim Support take a lot of
responsibility for support to crime victims even though they only should be a complement to
other services offered by governmental organisations. This together with the results from the
present study, that the social services often refer victims to Victim Support, brings a problem,
which needs to be examined further by more research. All of the suggested research questions
are a fusion between victimology and practical social work. To summarise, this study brings
new perspectives to two research fields. It is time to think outside the box and try to combine
research fields to get a greater depth on how to organise the psychosocial support to crime
victims.

Practical implications

According to the interpretation made by National Board of Health and Welfare (2012) of sec-
tion 5:11 SoL, the social services should be able to inform crime victims where they can get
help and support, and it is suggested that they should collaborate with support organisations
such as Victim Support, to be able to fulfil their responsibility for victims of crime. However,
this interpretation does not seem to be used within the social services. Instead, data show that
in many cases the social services only help crime victims if they cannot get help anywhere
else, for example Victim Support or the health care system, which also is confirmed by previ-
ous research (e.g. Ljungwald, 2011; Lindgren, 2004). This suggests that the social services do
not take their responsibility for crime victims. No other organisation has this responsibility,
which means that the social services are responsible. Furthermore, collaboration between the
social services and Victim Support is often failing, which might lead to a loss of resources. By
collaboration, organisations know what the other one is doing, and therefore can avoid dupli-
cation of services (Cooper et al., 2008). If the social services and Victim Support develop
their collaboration, then they would know what help and support the other one is offering,
therefore crime victims might be getting adequate support faster. The knowledge of crime
victims and their needs could also increase through collaboration. Individual social workers
have the necessary knowledge, but it is not coordinated within the organisation, which means
that there is a risk that this knowledge will be lost, and according to Lindgren (2004), the col-
laboration may be affected. Those social workers who have the knowledge about crime vic-
tims are the same that actually should be working with them. When coordination is function-
ing within the organisation, then the knowledge of crime victims and their needs can be in-
creased and the support can be developed.
The social services have a responsibility to help and support to crime victims, but how it should be practiced in reality is unclear. In the governmental bill (2000/01:79) for section 5:11 SoL, the responsibility is clarified: the social services should see crime victims as a prioritised group, and therefore they should help and support them. However, section 5:11 SoL do not grant crime victims any more help and support, than those in need who are not victims of crime, but as they are a prioritised group, social workers should have more knowledge about crime victims and how to help and support them. Instead, data show that the social services put a lot of responsibility on the individual crime victim, as well as on Victim Support. In figure 1 (p. 26), it is illustrated how the responsibility for crime victims is practised presently according to the data, while the figure below (Figure 2), illustrate how this responsibility could be practised according to legislation.

**Figure 2.** The figure illustrates how the responsibility could be practised according to legislation.

Today, the social services (S₁) have an overall responsibility, but they argue that individual crime victims (CV₁) have a responsibility to seek assistance if they need help and support. What is lost in this argument is that victims often go through a crisis, which makes it difficult to deal with such things, and it becomes even more difficult if the victim does not know where to turn for help and support, which is indicated through results from this study. The argument from the social services actually suggests that they do not take their responsibility for crime victims, as they do not see themselves as responsible for it. Victim Support (VS₁) also argues that crime victims (CV₁) have a responsibility, but instead, they see it as a joint responsibility between all of those involved in helping and supporting victims. Further, Victim Support try to collaborate with the social services with mixed results. As Victim Support and the social services have different views on the responsibility it might affect the victims. Where should they turn for help, the social services or Victim Support? Figure 2 illustrate how the responsibility could be practiced according to the legislation, where the responsibility is shared between the social services (S₂) and Victim Support (VS₂). However, the overall responsibility will still be the social services’. To be able to use this model, the organisations must collaborate, which might lead to a better understanding for each other, and crime victims might be offered adequate support. Those in need of professional help will be offered help and support from the social services, while Victim Support can offer more practical help or someone to talk to. Crime victims (CV₂) do also have a responsibility for their own health, but they need to know where to turn. As it is now, most do not know this and therefore it becomes problematic to say that they are responsible for getting help and support, especially when they are in a crisis. In order for the population in general to know where to turn for help and sup-
port, the social services and Victim Support must become more visible. Then the population might remember where to turn if they are affected by crime. The police also play a partial role in this, as they often are the ones who meet the victims first, they must inform victims where they can turn for help and support. The victims’ memory is affected by the experience of crime, and according to research within victimology, help and support may affect the victims’ memory positively (Lindgren, 2008), which suggests that the police investigation can be improved. This suggests that the police have a lot to gain by informing crime victims where they can get help and support. Through collaboration, the responsibility can be clarified, which might lead to better help and support to crime victims.

Resources can be saved as a result of collaboration. The figure below (Figure 3) illustrates how collaboration affects the support to crime victims.

**Figure 3.** The figure illustrate the effects that might occur when organisations are collaborating, compared with when there is a lack of collaboration.

Crime victims often go through a crisis due to the experience, which results in reactions (R) and needs (N). These reactions and needs differ between individuals, but data show that most victims are in need of information (N3) and to talk (N2). Sadly, information and support has been hard for victims to get. Through collaboration between the social services and Victims Support, a holistic view (HV) of the victims’ needs, can be reached, but for it to work, all organisations involved need to have knowledge of crime victims and their needs. Victim Support already has a lot of knowledge about this through experience and education, but the knowledge within the municipal social services seems to be lacking. Therefore, they need to be educated and trained in how to take care of victims. For example, when it comes to other areas, such as addicts or children, it is important with special knowledge and experience from that specific area. The same should apply when working with crime victims. If social workers...
should be able to work with all social problems, then they need to have knowledge about everything, which suggests that the social services need to educate their personnel in the matter. Some of this knowledge can be gained through collaboration. Further, today the social services have a complicated organisation structure, which makes it difficult to know where to turn in the organisation for help. Therefore, their structure needs to become easier to understand; otherwise a holistic view can be hard to reach. Other things that can be reached through collaboration are a common language and goals (CLG\textsubscript{1}), which is a vital part, for collaboration (DeHart, 2010; Lindgren, 2004). Without it, the organisations involved will use separate concepts and strive in different directions. Therefore, through negotiations, a common language and goals can be reached (Ahrne & Johansson, 1994). Hopefully, the collaboration will end up in a shared responsibility for crime victims, between the social services and Victim Support (SR\textsubscript{1}). All of these steps will then lead to that the needs of the victims are met (NM\textsubscript{1}), and that the victim has adapted to the situation (AW\textsubscript{1}), and the experience is no longer affecting the victims’ everyday life. The same result can occur when collaboration is failing, but the recovery time is longer (NM\textsubscript{3}). Without collaboration the needs will be met using other sources for help and support, for example family and friends. However, there is an elevated risk for PTSD (PTSD\textsubscript{1}) (Shercliffe & Colotla, 2009; Kunst et al., 2011), as the victim risk going deeper into the crisis (DC\textsubscript{1}), if he or she does not get adequate support from the start. Further, lack of collaboration might lead to there being more resources being spent (Cooper et al., 2008). To summarise, crime victims’ recovery do not depend on collaboration, but collaboration can save resources and shorten the recovery time, as the victim get adequate support from the start.

Another challenge that is lifted is financial difficulties and dependability. Victim Support offers help and support to hundreds of crime victims every year, using very few resources. In many cases they just break even financially. Due to this, they depend on financial contributions and especially contributions from the municipality. The question is what will happen if Victim Support would have to close? The view on the responsibility for crime victims has not changed since the introduction of section 5:11 SoL (Ljungwald, 2011). Therefore, a suggestion is that crime victims will be without support or that the healthcare system will become indirectly responsible for it. There are two solutions to this problem. The first solution is that Victim Support (and other support organisations) is granted financial help from the Government, to make sure that the organisation is stable and can focus on help and support to victims of crime. The second solution is that section 5:11 SoL is clarified, to involve how the responsibility should be practiced. The problem with the first solution is that Victim Support, as a nongovernmental organisation, risk depending on the Government, instead of the municipality, while the problem with the second solution is that the social services’ flexibility is lost. As it is now, they can develop their own services to crime victims, but if it is clarified they might be forced to do it in a certain way. Neither solution is perfect; therefore it would be better if the social services initiated collaboration with Victim Support, and other support organisations. Through collaboration, routines for how to take care of crime victims can be set up, the responsibility can be shared, and crime victims might get the help and support they need.

This study is meant to be an eye-opener, to show that the help and support to crime victims is failing today, even though there is law telling which organisation is responsible for it. Furthermore, there is a hope that the study can get more people to see the importance of support to victims, and that there is a lot of resources to be saved by collaboration. The collaboration, illustrated in figure 3, is perhaps ideal, but it is something that the social services and Victim Support can strive towards. Previous research (e.g. Ljungwald, 2011; Lindgren, 2004) argue that the responsibility and how the support should be financed need to be clarified, and this study can only confirm it. Today it is a problem, but if all organisations involved, including
the Government, understand the importance of support I believe the problem can be solved. In a welfare state such as Sweden, people in need of help and support should be able to get it.
REFERENCES


Social Services Act (2001:453), SoL.


APENDIX A (INTERVJUGUIDE – BROTTSOFFERJOUREN)

1. Kan du berätta lite om hur du tänker kring brottsofferfrågor?
   a. Hur väcktes ditt intresse för dessa frågor?
2. Kan du berätta om dina upplevelser av att möta brottsoffer?
3. Hur länge har du arbetat med brottsofferfrågor?
4. Vad är er definition av ett brottsoffer?
5. Kan du beskriva hur Brottsofferjouren arbetar med brottsoffer och brottsofferfrågor?
6. Hur kommer ni i kontakt med brottsoffer?
7. Hur många brottsoffer stödjer Brottsofferjouren per år?
8. Vilken information ger Brottsofferjouren till brottsoffer om var de kan få stöd och hur rättsprocessen går till (det vill säga från polisanmälan till rättegång)?
9. Vilken typ av stöd erbjuder Brottsofferjouren till brottsoffer?
10. Vilka typer av behov har brottsoffer när de kommer till er?
    a. Kan ni möta detta behov?
    b. Vad händer om ni inte kan möta behovet?
11. Finns det någon form av stöd som Brottsofferjouren har svår att ge till brottsoffer?
    a. Hur löser ni detta?
12. Visste du om att socialtjänsten, enligt Socialtjänstlagen, har ett ansvar för att brottsoffer ska få hjälp och stöd?
13. På vilket sätt tror ni att kommunen kommer i kontakt med brottsoffer?
14. Vilken typ av ansvar anser du att socialtjänsten har för brottsoffer?
15. Borde socialtjänsten ta ett större ansvar för brottsoffer?
    a. På vilket sätt?
16. Känner du att du har tillräckligt med kunskap om brottsoffer för att kunna möta deras behov?
    a. Upplever du att socialtjänsten har tillräcklig kunskap om brottsoffer och deras behov för att kunna ge dem stöd?
17. Känner du att du har tillräckligt med kunskap om rättsprocessen (från polisanmälan till rättegång) för att kunna informera brottsoffer om det?
    a. Hur upplever ni brottsoffers kunskap om detta?
    b. Anser du att socialtjänsten har tillräckligt med kunskaper för att kunna informera brottsoffer om detta?
18. Händer det att du hänvisar brottsoffer till socialtjänsten för att de ska få stöd där istället?
    a. I sådana fall, av vilken anledning?
    b. Vad har socialtjänsten för stödinsatser till brottsoffer?
19. Tycker du att socialtjänsten ger stöd till brottsoffer i allmänhet eller är mer inriktade på vissa kategorier?
    a. Finns det någon kategori av brottsoffer som de i sådana fall arbetar mer med och varför?
20. Hur skulle ni vilja att brottsoffer blev uppmärksammade och fick stöd?
    a. Ska det vara som idag?
    b. Ska kommunen ta ett större ansvar och exempelvis ha egna stödprogram?
    c. Ska det vara en blandning av offentliga och ideella organisationer som tar hand om stödinsatser till brottsoffer?
21. Samverkar ni med kommunen?
    a. Om ja, på vilket sätt?
    b. Om nej, hur kommer det sig?
22. Skulle ni vilja utveckla er samverkan med kommunen?
   a. På vilket sätt?
23. Skulle ni vilja ha en person på kommunen som ni skulle kunna kontakta för att exempelvis kunna ”bolla” ärenden med såsom en samordnare för brottsofferfrågor?
   a. Skulle detta vara något som kan utveckla er verksamhet?
      i. Om ja, på vilket sätt?
      ii. Om nej, varför inte?
24. Samverkar ni med några andra organisationer?
25. Vilken organisation är/skulle kunna vara er viktigaste samverkanspartner?
26. Är det något ni känner att ni skulle vilja tillägga?
APENDIX B (INTERVJUGUIDE – SOCIALTJÄNSTEN)

1. Hur länge har du arbetat inom socialtjänsten?
2. Kan du berätta lite om hur du tänker kring brottsoffrarfrågor?
   a. Är det något som du tycker är intressant?
   b. Är det något som du stöter på i ditt dagliga arbete?
3. Vad/Hur är dina upplevelser av att möta brottsoffer?
4. Vad är socialtjänstens definition av ett brottsoffer?
5. Kan du beskriva hur socialtjänsten arbetar med brottsoffer och brottsofferfrågor?
   a. Hur länge har ni arbetat med brottsofferfrågor?
6. Hur kommer socialtjänsten i kontakt med brottsoffer?
7. Hur många brottsoffer stödjer socialtjänsten per år?
8. Vilken information ger socialtjänsten till brottsoffer om var de kan få stöd och hur rättsprocessen går till (det vill säga från polisanmälan till rättegång)?
9. Vilken typ av stöd erbjuder ni till brottsoffer?
10. Vilka typer av behov har brottsoffer när de kommer till er?
    a. Kan ni möta dessa behov?
    b. Vad händer om ni inte kan möta behovet?
11. Finns det någon form av stöd som socialtjänsten har svårt att ge till brottsoffer?
    a. Hur löser ni detta?
12. Vilken typ av ansvar anser du att socialtjänsten har för brottsoffer?
13. Tycker du att socialtjänsten borde ge mer stöd till brottsoffer?
14. Hur uppfyller socialtjänsten det ansvar som de har för brottsoffer enligt SoL?
15. Känner du att du har tillräckligt med kunskap för att kunna bedöma och möta de behov som ett brottsoffer kan ha?
    a. Om ja, hur har du fått denna kunskap?
    b. Om nej, hur skulle denna kunskap kunna inhämtas och finns det någon som är ansvarig för att ni har rätt kunskap?
16. Känner du att du har tillräckligt med kunskap om rättsprocessen (från polisanmälan till rättegång) för att kunna informera brottsoffer om det?
    a. Om ja, hur har du fått denna kunskap?
    b. Om nej, hur skulle denna kunskap kunna inhämtas och finns det någon som är ansvarig för att ni har rätt kunskap?
17. Händer det att ni hänvisar brottsoffer till stödorganisationer exempelvis Brottsofferjouren, för att de ska få stöd där istället?
    a. I sådana fall, av vilken anledning?
18. Ger socialtjänsten stöd till brottsoffer i allmänhet eller är ni mer inriktade på vissa kategorier av brottsoffer?
    a. Finns det någon speciell anledning till varför socialtjänsten arbetar på detta sätt?
19. Hur skulle ni vilja att brottsoffer blev uppmärksammade och fick stöd?
    a. Ska det vara som idag?
    b. Ska socialtjänsten ta ett större ansvar och exempelvis ha egna stödprogram?
    c. Ska det vara en blandning av offentliga och ideella organisationer som tar hand om stödinsatser till brottsoffer?
20. Samverkar ni med stödorganisationer såsom Brottsofferjouren?
    a. Om ja, på vilket sätt?
b. Om nej, hur kommer det sig?

21. Skulle ni vilja utveckla er samverkan stödorganisationer såsom Brottsofferjouren?
   a. På vilket sätt?

22. Finns det någon inom socialtjänsten som har ett särskilt ansvar för samverkan med
    stödorganisationer såsom Brottsofferjouren?
   a. Skulle detta vara något som kan utveckla er verksamhet och fördjupa kunskaperna kring brottsofferfrågor?

23. Samverkar ni med några andra organisationer?
24. Vilken organisation är/skulle kunna vara er viktigaste samverkanspartner?

25. Är det något ni känner att ni skulle vilja tillägga?
APENDIX C (INTERVJUGUIDE – BROTTSOFFER)

1. Kan du berätta lite om dina upplevelser av stöd som brottsoffer?
2. Vad är det för brott du har blivit utsatt för?
3. Fick du reda på att du kunde få stöd som brottsoffer och i sådana fall hur?

4. Har du varit i kontakt med någon stödorganisation såsom Brottsofferjouren?
   a. Om ja, hur upplevde du stödet?
   b. Om nej, varför inte?
5. Har du varit kontakt med någon stödorganisation såsom Brottsofferjouren tidigare?
6. Under hur lång tid har du fått stöd?
7. Vilken typ av hjälp och stöd har du fått?
8. Känner du att stödet har varit till någon hjälp?
   a. Om ja, vad är det som har varit bra?
   b. Om nej, vad är det du tycker saknas och som behöver utvecklas?
9. Skulle du ha velat ha mer information om vart du kan vända dig för att få stöd?
   a. Hur skulle denna information i sådana fall ha sett ut?
10. Hur skulle du definiera ett brottsoffer?

11. Visste du om att socialtjänsten har ett ansvar för att brottsoffer ska få stöd och hjälp?
12. Anser du att socialtjänsten tar sitt ansvar för hjälp och stöd till brottsoffer?
   a. Om ja, på vilket sätt?
   b. Om nej, varför?
13. Vilka insatser tycker du att socialtjänsten ska erbjuda till brottsoffer?
14. I vilka situationer tror du att socialtjänsten kommer i kontakt med brottsoffer?
15. Finns det någon kategori med brottsoffer som du upplever att socialtjänsten arbetar med?
   a. Vilt så?

16. Tror du att socialtjänsten har tillräckligt med kunskap om brottsoffer och deras behov för att kunna ge stöd och hjälp?
   a. Vad tycker du skulle kunna förändras?
17. Kände du till hur rättsprocessen (det vill säga från polisanmälan till rättegång) fungerade sedan tidigare?
   a. Om inte, hur fick du information om rättsprocessen?
18. Tror du att socialtjänsten har tillräckligt med kunskap om hur rättsprocessen (från polisanmälan till rättegång) går till för att kunna informera brottsoffer om den?
19. Skulle du kunna tänka dig att ta hjälp av socialtjänsten?
   a. Varför?
   b. Varför inte?
20. Vad skulle kunna få dig att ta hjälp av socialtjänsten avseende att du blivit brottssut-satt?
21. Hur skulle du vilja att brottsoffer blev uppmärksammade och fick stöd?
   a. Ska det vara som idag med många ideella organisationer?
   b. Ska socialtjänsten ta ett större ansvar och exempelvis ha egna stödprogram?
   c. Ska det vara en blandning av offentliga och ideella organisationer som arbetar med stöd till brottsoffer?

22. Har du fått hjälp från flera organisationer samtidigt såsom Brottsofferjouren, socialtjänsten och hälso- och sjukvården?
a. Om ja, har de olika organisationerna samverkat och hur upplever du att denna samverkan har varit?

23. Hade du velat ha exempelvis en kontaktperson som har en helhetsbild gällande vad som händer i ditt ärende exempelvis har kontakt med polisen, Brottsofferjouren, sjukvården m.m.?

24. Vilka organisationer tycker du är viktiga för socialtjänsten att samverka med?

25. Är det något du känner att du skulle vilja tillägga?