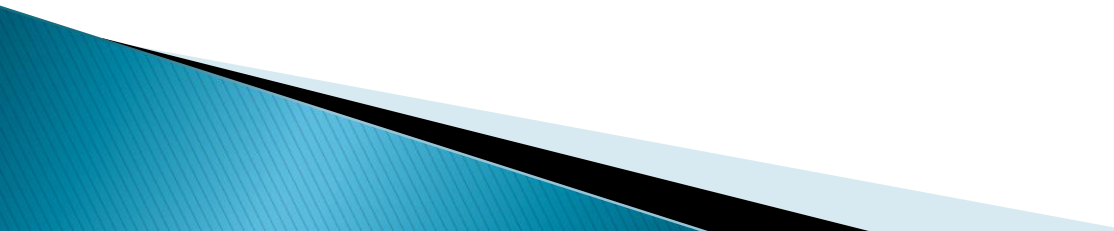




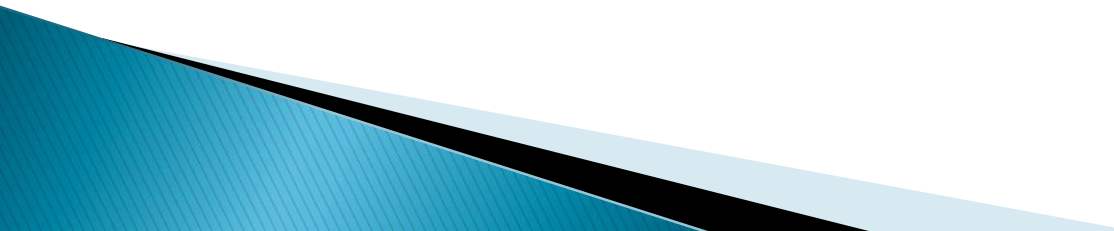
A New Explanation for Non-Reporting and Non- Use of Services

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Outline

- ▶ Non-reporting/use of services: why it matters
 - ▶ Previous research
 - ▶ Introduction to new model
 - ▶ Evidence from the SCJS
 - ▶ Evidence from victims
 - ▶ Conclusions
 - ▶ On-going Research/Contact details
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Why it Matters

- ▶ In Scotland less than 40% of crime is reported to the police
 - ▶ VSS receives over 95% of their referrals from the police
 - ▶ The vast majority of victims are not coming into contact with the criminal justice system, and receiving no formal support.
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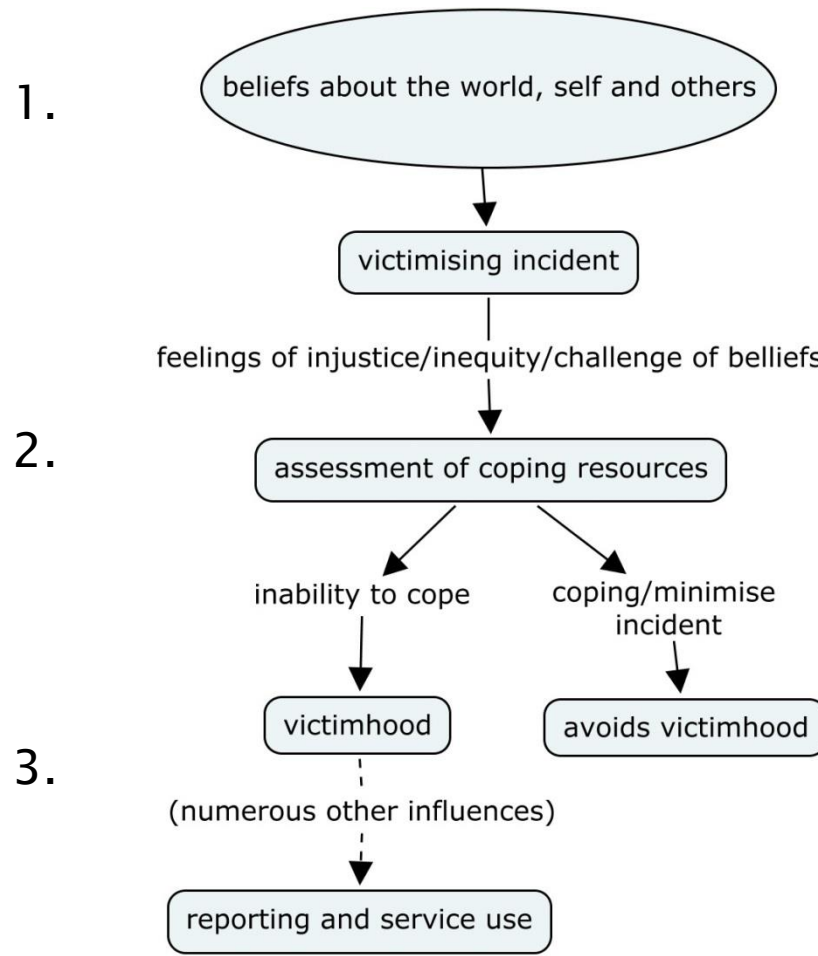
Common explanations for (non) reporting

- ▶ presence of a weapon (+)
- ▶ Injury (+)
- ▶ perceived seriousness of the offence (-)
- ▶ the victims' relationship to the offender (-)
- ▶ the value of items lost or damaged (+)
- ▶ fear of retaliation (-)
- ▶ social influence (+) (BCS data; Skogan, 1984)

Common explanation for non-use of services

- ▶ not knowing that services exist
- ▶ turning instead to family or friends
- ▶ did not need any help/could solve their own problems (Davis et al., 1999; Simms et al., 2006))
- ▶ lack of distress?
- ▶ offending history?

Introducing a New Model....



1. Just-World Theory

In order to function in our daily lives, we must hold a number of neither conscious nor entirely rational beliefs about the world

(Lerner, 1987; Janoff-Bullman, 1998)

- ▶ I am a good person
- ▶ The world is safe
- ▶ The world is just

(Bad things don't happen to good people)



2a. Coping and Crisis Reactions

- ▶ An event is perceived as threatening
- ▶ An assessment/cognitive appraisal is made of available coping resources (to modify or lessen the impact of the stressful event)
- ▶ Crisis ensues if there is a perceived imbalance between the difficulty and importance of the problem and the resources available to deal with it.

(Green and Roberts, 2008; Bard and Sangrey, 1987)

2b. Selective Assessment

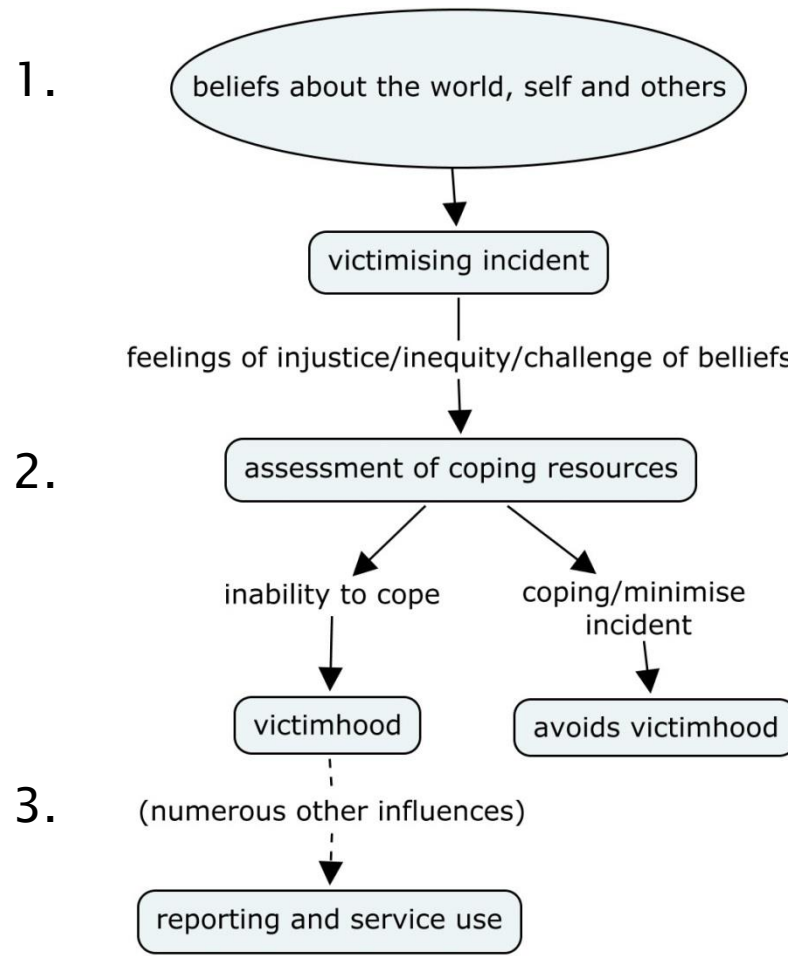
In order to avoid seeing themselves as victims (undesirable for a number of reasons) victims used a number of techniques to avoid a state of “victimhood” (Taylor et al., 1983)

- ▶ belittling the incident
- ▶ downward comparisons
- ▶ imagining worse worlds
- ▶ exceptional coping
- ▶ deriving benefit and/or learning

3. Victim Labelling

- ▶ Labelling theory often used in offending research – shows labels undesirable and detrimental (McAra and McVie, 2007)
- ▶ Victim labelling also shown to be detrimental, associated with blaming and derogation (Wortmen and Lehman, 1983)
- ▶ Continued controversy surrounding the use of the word “victim” versus “survivor”

Introducing a New Model....



Evidence from the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey

Reporting an incident to the police was found to be best predicted by the perception of an incident as a crime/oneself as a victim (irrespective of crime type)

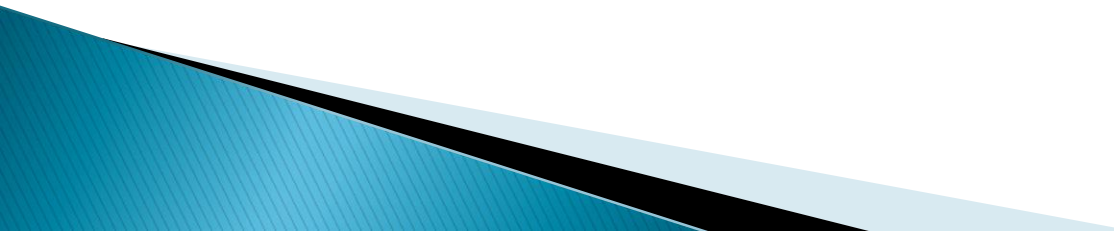
Property crime:

- insurance
- feelings of anger
- shock
- fear
- vulnerability
- difficulty sleeping
- previous violent victimisation

Violent Crime:

- weapon
- injury
- fear
- difficulty sleeping
- gender
- neighbourhoods with higher % deprivation
- % victims

Uptake of victim support services was found to be best predicted by:

- ▶ Injury
 - ▶ Fear
 - ▶ Perceived as crime/victim
 - ▶ Difficulty sleeping
 - ▶ Threat
 - ▶ Series incident
 - ▶ Gender
 - ▶ Age (25+)
- 

Evidence from Victims

- ▶ Participants found to employ all of the defensive mechanisms outlined in Selective Assessment

‘I try and belittle it in my head so it doesn’t sound so bad, it could have been a lot worse you know, they could have had a knife or something, it could have been a lot worse.’

‘It was just my entire arm was purple and scratched....so it wasn’t badly hurt...but that was all it was, just really bad bruising.’

– woman, victim of robbery

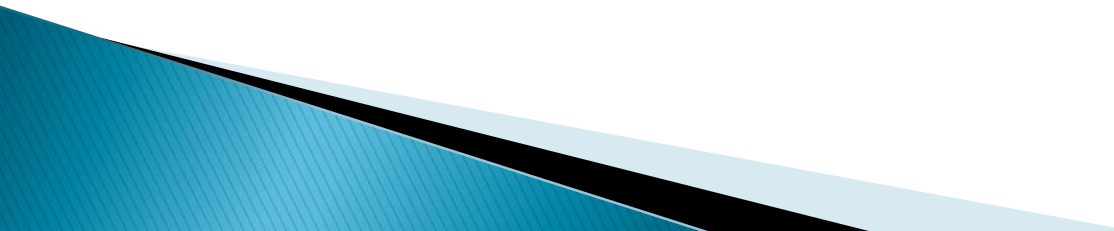
‘I still think I was right to forget it, put it down to life experience.... no I did nothing, these things happen.’

– woman, victim of housebreaking

What can we conclude?

- ▶ Perception of oneself as a victim is undesirable
- ▶ Motivation to avoid this label may be driving non-reporting and under-use of victim services

Further research is needed...

- ▶ New project funded for three years by the British Academy
 - ▶ Will seek to clarify the importance of perception and labelling; the process by which these affect decision making
 - ▶ Currently seeking participants!!!
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Thank you

▶ Queries and questions?

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