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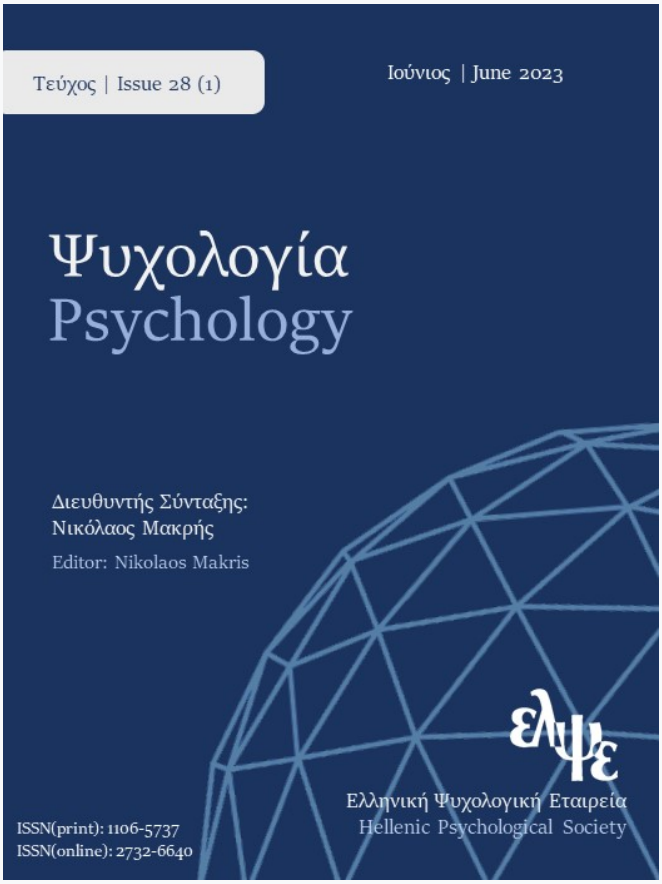


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ΕΜΠΕΙΡΙΚΗ ΕΡΓΑΣΙΑ | RESEARCH PAPER

# The dilemma of non-agency vs. provocativeness in victimhood accounts of young people

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KEYWORDS

Victimhood,
Agency,
Provocativeness,
Discrimination,
Bullying

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ABSTRACT

Psychological theory and research on school violence and bullying have interlinked the victim's profile to vulnerability and irresponsiveness, without alternative constructions of victim's identity being discussed. This strand of research approaches victims as members of low-status groups, and thus as statedly holding a less dominant position among their peers. While social-psychological research drawing on social identity approach has argued that young people who are victimized are likely to build up on a common identity, the present paper discusses how young people in their everyday interactions may be distanced from the non-agentic identity of victim. The purpose of the present study is to analyze how the victim's identity is constructed in young people's interactions regarding bullying and violence. To analyze the data, concepts/tools drawing on discursive psychology and rhetorical psychology are used. Victimhood dilemmas arose in lay interaction, with the main concern of young people being not to be self-positioned as victims. The victim's identity was often related to a lack of agency or even to slight provocativeness. While the perpetrators were very often constructed as irrationally aggressive people, in other cases, the participants were mainly referred to the victim's provocativeness or excessive passivity to justify the persistence of victimizing acts.

## Introduction

The aim of the present study is to analyze constructions of victim's identity in the context of young people's discourse about victimhood within school violence. Light is shed on the participants' local concerns arising in their interaction, concerning how they handle their own stakes and interests, particularly when the issue of victimhood arises.

Over recent years, psychological research has approached bullying as a group or intergroup expression, with young people often being categorized as perpetrators, victims, bystanders, or uninvolved members in this intergroup display (Sentse et al., 2014). Following cognitive-based models, this research has come up with some contradictory findings. As Sentse et al. (2014) argue, while young people may often hold negative attitudes toward violence, an antisocial line of action may be developed, possibly in their effort to dominate the peer group. In this cognitive strand of research, the victim is conceptualized as a powerless person, who cannot react to threats (van Noorden et al., 2017), or who has some trouble responding (Pouwels et al., 2018). Therefore, victims are evaluated as less likeable people with lower social status (Pouwels et al., 2018).

Although it has been argued that, over the recent years, the increasing use of online digital media has been related to great diffusion of insatiable bullying/violence among young people, with no inhibition, this lay belief has been recently challenged by the strand of social identity approach. Based on the social identity model of deindividuation effects (Reicher et al., 1995), it has been argued that even in contexts that there is anonymity or lower prospect for identification, as in the case of cyberspace, social actors would not act irrationally and would not unavoidably lose their sense of control (Klein et al., 2007). In this vein, it has been argued that, in social media interactions, prospects for hostility and flaming (Douglas & McGarty, 2001) might go hand-in-hand with

creative prospects for bonding and mutual support (Wood, 2010). While social identity approach argues that when participating in a group, it is very likely to adopt a common line of action (Jones et al., 2008), this might not necessarily be an antisocial line of action (e.g., aggressiveness), but instead, it can be related to prosocial responses (e.g., defending the victims) (Turner et al., 2014). While research following social identity approach highlights some creative prospects of group-level support and goes beyond the study of the psychological profile of the victim, yet it has not considered how young people might flexibly construct the victim's identity and the state of victimhood in their lay interaction to achieve various rhetorical goals in the local setting, pointing to a gap of the existing research.

To study the constructions of victim's identity in the lay discourse of young people, the current study draws on the conceptual/methodological contributions of discursive psychology (Edwards & Potter, 1992) and Rhetorical Psychology (Billig, 1991, 1996). It further analyzes constructions of group membership categories (Hopkins & Reicher, 2014), as mobilized in discourse on victimhood. In the present paper, we critically review research drawing on the social identity theoretical strand, which analyzes victimhood as a group-level category (e.g., Jones et al., 2008; 2012). The ways young people negotiate the identity of the victim are analyzed, as well as how their interaction on victimhood cases might be related to their stakes and interests (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Further, it is studied how young people contribute to interaction by offering their own arguments (Billig, 1991).

## Understanding school violence and bullying as intergroup expressions: a critical perspective to collective victimhood theory through a constructionist lens

Over the recent years, intergroup aspects of bullying and school violence have been broached by social identity approach, with perpetrators and victims being conceived by this cognitive strand as two competitive groups in conflict (Jones et al., 2012). It is not so clear yet, in this analytic strand, whether the perpetrators and the victims perceive that they share a common identity with their counterparts (other perpetrators and victims), or whether this group categorization is mainly introduced by the analysts (see the critique in Reicher & Hopkins, 2001a). With particular regard to victimhood, the idea of a shared victim identity has been captured by collective victimhood theory, developed by social-psychological research for the interpretation of intergroup phenomena (Noor et al., 2017). Following collective victimhood theory, people sharing a common victimhood experience may develop a shared identity, as a response to direct or structural violence (e.g., unequal access to education) they receive. As argued, the members involved in intergroup conflicts, as perpetrators and victims, may have equal or unequal power relations (Noor et al., 2017). This cognitive strand of identity research suggests that especially the members of the victim group might have common goals, as they often try to restore their agency (Shnabel & Nadler, 2015). However, based on psychological research findings on school violence, the victim is conceptualized as holding less power and as a statedly non-agentic member of the peer group (Guerra et al., 2011). A constructionist approach could shed light on whether social actors are indeed willing to invest in a common group membership that would position them as victims, while interacting on issues of school violence, and which could be the rhetorical implications of such a shared membership (Hopkins & Reicher, 2014).

As argued by the social identity approach, sometimes, ingroup's antisocial action can be delimited by the perceived audience, and thus be readjusted to suit the audience's expectations (Klein et al., 2007). In this vein, it is suggested that when a group develops a line of social action, it has to carefully consider how they will account for that to other groups being present or informed about this action (Klein et al., 2007), especially when it is controversial or hostile. Therefore, following this theoretical outline, extreme displays of violence might be difficult to be accepted and thus be so frequent, especially when there are co-present peers that are likely to criticize this line of action. This evaluation/control of one's action seems to be one-sided (i.e., evaluation of the perpetrator by peers), at least as interpreted by social identity approach, and is not conceptualized as an interacting process involving multiple members, either acting aggressively or not.

On the other hand, a rhetorical psychological analysis focuses on how group identities are used in lay interaction, even when mobilized not strategically/consciously by all members interacting (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), but just in an effort to achieve local goals (Hopkins & Reicher, 2014). In this constructionist approach, the identities of the perpetrator and victim are not predefined and conceptualized as related only to particular people/groups. Open expressions of a violent rhetoric may stigmatize the social actors as intolerant/immoral beings (Billig et al., 1988), and thus a blaming rhetoric towards the victim might be avoided. However, such

possibly controversial opinions on who should be blamed and who should not raise concern not only among the perpetrator group members, as social identity strand of research suggests.

In the case of youth violence, initial theorizations had placed the source of any evil in the group, analyzing mainly the aggressive attacks taking place among young boys' collectives (Olweus, 1979). On the other hand, recent developments drawing on social identity approach have shown that group membership might also have empowering effects, operating supportively for the ingroup members, and dehumanizing instead the outgroup, especially when the latter are perceived as perpetrators (Fousiani et al., 2019). In the related strand of research, it has been indicated that only some members of the ingroup are evaluated extremely negatively when acting as perpetrators, instead of the whole group, especially when this aggressive action is not the prototypical behavior of the group (Jones et al., 2008). This trend might have emphasized the role of mutual support in violent incidents but still has not considered the concerns raised when social actors have to account for their own or their peers' victimization. As discursive psychological research argues, young people could be blamed for oversensitivity and political correctness, and for limiting other youths' freedom of action/speech (Greenland et al., 2018), when accusing them of hostile action against them or their peers.

Following a rhetorical psychological approach, it could be argued that the prospect to invest in alternative group identities within discursive interaction provides people with flexibility (Hopkins & Reicher, 2014) to move beyond a self-positioning related to victimhood and passivity. However, rhetorically, the social actors may try not to devaluate other possible victims as inefficient/irrational, which could make them appear as intolerant and non-sympathetic towards them (Billig et al., 1988).

Our analytic scope goes further than the study of group-positionings defined by social identity approach (e.g., perpetrators, victims). Following a constructionist approach, multiple group identities, and not only those related to the initiation of aggressive acts and victimhood, are studied as rhetorically used in everyday interaction. Besides, as argued by discursive psychological research, social agents are likely to avoid throughout the discursive interaction some group identities considered as stigmatized, such as perpetrator and victim identities (Stevenson et al., 2014; Thunberg & Bruck, 2020), or in other cases confirm these identities, by rhetorically investing in categorizations related to competitive victimhood and inclusive victimhood, depending on the goals in the local interactional context (McNeill & Vollhardt, 2020).

## Constructions of victimhood in lay talk: implications for discourse on youth violence

Drawing on a constructionist analytic lens, Hopkins and Reicher (2014) suggest studying group identities, as mobilized at the local level of interaction and not as static entities, or as perceived by social actors. This theoretical framework is adjusted in the current research to study how social actors mobilize a shared victim's identity in lay talk. In this vein, flexible constructions of victim's identity are of concern, taking into account the variances in the use of this category in lay talk, as suggested in the theorizations of Hopkins and Reicher (2014). In line with a discursive psychological point of view, it is argued that identities are not given/predefined categories, but are formed or mobilized in discursive practice, to achieve local ends, and might also be related to culturally-available ideas. The light is shed on the way in which social actors construct shared categories, with some of them possibly becoming salient in the context of interaction (Hopkins & Reicher, 2014), as is that of the perpetrator and the victim.

Regarding youth violence, the victim is often considered by related psychological research as having less power and fewer chances to dominate (Law et al., 2012), with fewer prospects for prosociality and social engagement (Guerra et al., 2011). This comes in contrast with the analytic outline suggested by social identity approach, following which when young people invest in a common identity (e.g., shared victimhood), they can experience mutual support and relativeness (Haslam et al., 2012). A discursive psychological analysis puts emphasis on whether social actors are willing to invest rhetorically in a common identity with other vulnerable peers, in an effort to handle their own stakes/interests, in the rhetorical context of interaction on violence (Edwards & Potter, 1992). The category of the 'weak victim' might not remain unchallenged in the discursive interaction, as there are counter-positions to the categories used in lay interaction, as argued by a rhetorical psychological line of thinking (Billig, 1996). The constructionist approach suggests avoiding relating an identity to internal entities and traits, and instead analyzing what people are doing while making prominent particular aspects of their identity in lay interaction (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001b).

In social-psychological research, contradictions arise when the person categorized as victim is discharged of blame, but at the same time, is evaluated as unjustifiably passive (Overstreet & Quinn, 2013). In the latter case,

psychologized and stigmatizing representations are mobilized, when the victim is evaluated as less assertive or even as depressed, and thus as not doing anything at all to step out of victimhood (Overstreet & Quinn, 2013). This might also reflect culturally available beliefs relating the victim's identity to provocation or unexplained passivity (Overstreet & Quinn, 2013). The strategy of 'victim blaming' has been captured mainly by research studying intimate partner violence, which illustrates how the victim is often constructed in lay interaction as provocative (Koepke et al., 2014). A contribution of this research is that it highlights that people may not share only a unique value system, but different ones, referring to hostile or benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Nevertheless, constructions of provocative victims and of overt/extreme hostility enacted by irrational perpetrators leave aside more implicit, commonplace expressions of hostility in mundane contexts.

With particular regard to school violence, the related psychological research argues that to categorize minors as victims, they should be perceived as passive people, who had not provoked in any way their peers (Law et al., 2012). The absence of any provocation is thus considered as a condition to categorize a person as a victim, while any controversy might not enable them access to the victimhood positioning. Anything beyond this profile, which is related to weakness and lack of any provocation, might be evaluated as not fitting the criteria to be categorized as a victim. Indicatively, as psychological research on cyberviolence shows, extremely negative assessments of the victim's identity are not only made when they are held responsible for an aggressive incident but also when they are accused of disclosing too much personal experiences/information, thus setting themselves in risk (Schacter et al., 2016). The latter point shows that victim's lack of agency and control are seen as preconditions to get supported against violence (Runions & Bak, 2015). On the other hand, in other cases, the lack of victim's agency is also considered accountable, as the victim could be accused of not doing anything at all to protect themselves against violence. Existing research, following the rhetorical psychological approach, has illustrated how social actors (e.g., young people, parents) are interested in how they construct their own positionings while interacting on issues of school violence and victimization as young people or caregivers (Clarke et al., 2004; Phoenix et al., 2003). While negotiating their own positioning, the social actors may challenge -or leave unchallenged- unjust and hierarchical relations (Clarke et al., 2004).

The study of Phoenix et al. (2003) analyzed constructions of masculinities while young boys in London talked about school violence. It was argued that group discussions among young people was a risky context for them to be humiliated by their co-present peers when being identified as weak or as victims. Throughout their interaction, boys oriented themselves to a masculine and strong profile, in front of their peers. It was not the case that young people mobilized intellectual ideas of hegemonic masculinity, but that they had to be established as rational/efficient people, while also accounting for possible inconsistencies in their lines of argumentation and constructions of identities (Wetherell, 1998).

Another study conducted by Clarke et al. (2004) argued that while LGBTQI+ parents were talking about their children's victimization, it was accountable for them either to admit or reject that their children had been victims of bullying. If they admitted that their children were victims, they could be accused as uncapable parents. If they suggested that it was unlikely for their children to be victimized, they could be accused for operating for their own stakes and interests (Clarke et al., 2004). As argued, accusations that children of LGBTQI+ parents are likely to get harassed could be used to oppose lesbian and gay parenting. On the other hand, rejections of violence also sounded unrealistic.

The current study sets out to analyze constructions of victim's identity in lay interaction of young people, as well as accountability concerns arising in their discursive interaction on school violence/bullying. In addition to that, it is of interest whether there is flexibility to construct victim's identity as a group-level category, shared by multiple participants. The light is shed on the mobilization of victim identity in lay discourse, instead of studying constructions of masculinity (e.g., Edley, 2001; Phoenix et al., 2003), or other hierarchical relations in discourse on violence.

## Method

## Participants

For the purposes of the study, 27 focus groups were conducted with middle school students between October 2019 and March 2020. One hundred twenty-five participants (84 girls, 41 boys), aged between 12-15 years old, took part. The discussions took place in secondary schools in two towns of Northern Greece, located in central Macedonia and Thrace. Two provincial towns of Northern Greece were selected with the goal to broaden the

critical analyses on school violence beyond the central urban areas of Greece, where interventions against victimization frequently take place.

## Sampling procedures

The initial plan was to use purposeful random sampling to deter strategic choices on the part of the school community while suggesting particular students to participate in the discussion groups. Nevertheless, as the research evaluated qualitative aspects of lay talk and did not aim to generalize the findings, the initial plan was revised. A purposeful sampling was followed, recruiting for the group discussions friends or youth who had non-conflictual relations. In the field, we collaborated with educators, appointed by the school principals, often having the institutional role of 'Coordinators of school violence'. Therefore, our sampling was purposeful, as our main idea was to avoid the inclusion of competitors in the same discussion group. Focus groups were conducted in multi-purpose rooms, or available classrooms at the defined time frame.

The study was approved by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (authorization number: 161041/Δ2). Following the suggestions of this institutional body, before the main research, both the school principal and the Teachers' Federation were meticulously informed about the content and methodology of the research. Each school principal broached this issue in a school assembly, while the Teachers' Association was called to approve/reject the conduction of research in their school, given the availability of time and resources. We collaborated with the appointed educators to distribute the parental consent forms to the students. In turn, parents were exhaustively informed about the research process (topic, design, anonymity, prospect of the participants withdrawing from the process any time they wanted) and were called to actively consent to their child's participation. When their response was positive, we proceeded to form groups.

## Materials/tools

Each focus group included 3-9 participants and the duration of each discussion ranged from 23-80 min (M= 44.39). Based on a semi-structured protocol, participants were asked questions about the criteria for including other members in their friend group and about possible fights, insults, and violent or exclusion practices in offline or online settings. In addition, they were asked about how one could cope with adversities (e.g., through institutional and unofficial networks of support). As the approved time frame for the discussions was limited, we did not use a demographic questionnaire to gather information (e.g., gender), and hence this information was documented by the moderator at the start of these discussions.

## Method of analysis

In the present study, tools and concepts drawing on the discursive turn in social psychology were used, and particularly the strand of critical discursive social psychology (CDSP) (Bozatzis, 2014). CDSP sheds light not only on participants' immediate concerns, but also on implicit hermeneutic lines arising from the micro-level of interaction, and focuses also in distal functions of discursive interaction (macro-analytic level; Bozatzis, 2014). Following this methodology, multiple constructs of self/identity were studied, while the participants were talking about victimhood (Wetherell, 1998). Analytic tools drawing on discursive psychology were used to study how participants mobilized psychological categories, while describing how they feel and think to achieve local/interactional goals (Edwards & Potter, 2005), and how they handled their accountability when they could be accused for personal stakes/interests, in cases there were inconsistences in their arguments (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Patterns of accounting (Edwards & Potter, 1992), as well as units of analysis reflecting common places and culturally-familiar themes (i.e., interpretative repertoires), were documented (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Interpretive repertoire is an analytic tool that could illuminate variability in the constructions of the victim's identity. The mobilization of group-level categories related to victimhood was further of interest (Hopkins & Reicher, 2014).

The documentation and organization of themes were facilitated by the use of diagrams. Focus group discussions were audio recorded and transcribed, using selectively some symbols of the Jeffersonian system (see Appendix 1), to illustrate points of interest (Jefferson, 2004). Participants were referred by pseudonyms, and schools were identified by codes. After multiple re-readings of the data, we tracked down the use of common themes and subthemes in the participants' interaction.

## Background to analysis

In Greece, public discussion on youth violence has intensified over the last years. Mainly incidents of severe physical violence towards weak and non-provoking victims are brought into light. On the other hand, some young people are constructed as moral when they are evaluated as willing to defend other victims. As argued, this could have a personal cost, as these people may also find themselves in the position of *victim* afterward. A case in point receiving attention, not only by the local authorities but also by state actors, concerned a young adolescent who was collectively victimized by a group of peers, after trying to defend his sister against her own victimization by this perpetrator group (Me «daskalo empistosunis» apanta to Ypourgeio ston ksilodarmo tou mathiti se sxoleio, 2020). That incident launched a public debate on the need to address 'irrational violence' at a local and national level[1]. While cases of weak victims are of primary concern, limited attention has been paid to how cases of victims who do not lack power/agency would be approached, or cases that the victims' action is evaluated as controversial.

In other cases, the *bullying* category is used rhetorically to implicate some public figures as unfairly receiving malicious comments on social media for their controversial social action, with the latter orienting to the identity of the victim. Accusations of bullying have been so widespread in everyday interactions, that even people holding power can be positioned as victims, mobilizing rhetorically competitive victimhood accounts in their lay interaction (McNeill & Vollhardt, 2020). Indicatively, some people can be referred to their experience of bullying/violence rhetorically, as a complaint to the public critique they received, after making public statements on social media openly expressing their own prejudicial positions (e.g., body shaming comments).

Cultural discourse in Greece on youth violence is not limited only to the above cases but has a longer history (Bibou-Nakou et al., 2012). While related cases are not discussed in detail, we can denote some silences and important omissions in public discourse on youth violence. An incident that was silenced is related to a child's suicide under conditions of repeated homophobic bullying at school, an incident that took place in Athens in 2018[2] (Sintihaki, 2019). A report by Color Youth[3] (Sintihaki, 2019) underlines that it was not only the school that did not get involved with this particular incident. Important institutional omissions in how homophobic violence would be addressed through legal regulations and political decisions are discussed.

Over the last years in Greece, campaigns against youth violence have been launched and psychosocial programs have been designed and sometimes integrated in the curriculum by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and civil society organizations. An official rhetoric that has been developed suggests to any possible victim to raise their voice and reveal their victimizing experiences. A recent campaign entitled "Speak up now", launched by the Institution of Educational Policy and Smile of the Child[4], strongly suggested to the victims to reveal their adverse experiences to access supportive networks (Smile of the Child & Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, 2022). However, it is not clear in this rhetoric how the victim could cope with violence by speaking up against it, the ways in which they could be supported, or the difficulties they may encounter when positioned as victims.

Additionally, some information is provided on how local schools have addressed incidents of school violence. In one of the towns in which the research took place, located in the wider district of Thrace, there was an active institutional body addressing issues of school violence, fitting into the institution known as the 'Counselling Infrastructures for Youth'. This institution collaborates with the Primary and Secondary Education of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace Region, as well as with the Committee of Preventive Action. In the second town the research took place, located in central Macedonia, some school principals have noted that over the days the study took place, educational activities were taking place at school on the occasion of Panhellenic Day Against School

[1] After this incident had gotten publicity, the Minister of Education and Religious Affair announced the provision of psychological support to the school community members. Beyond that, the national strategy to establish an institutional body, called as the “Teacher of Trust”, was announced for the following school year (Me «daskalo empistosunis» apanta to Ypourgeio ston ksilodarmo tou mathiti se sxoleio, 2020).

[2] Homophobic-based bullying includes aggressive acts targeting gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning and intersex students (Moyano, & del Mar Sanchez-Fuentes, 2020).

[3] Color Youth Athens is a collective of LGBTQI+ people, aiming to support community members. It has conducted research concerning aggressive and discriminatory practices in school settings.

[4] Smile of the Child is a non-profit child welfare organization in Greece, with the primary aim to contribute to the protection of children’s rights. Among other issues, it organizes interventions against youth violence (https://www.hamogelo.gr/gr/en/ta-nea-mas/mila-tora-enantia-stin-endoscholiki-via-kai-ton-ekfovismo/).

Violence. Over the last years, activities aiming at youth's psychosocial empowerment have been recommended by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, designed with the collaboration of Greek NGOs.

## Analysis

The analysis discusses how participants orient to two broad themes: the non-agentic victim and the provocative victim. Four subcategories are discussed below. The first concerns the victim that is either non-agentic/vulnerable or that has made a small mistake. The second constructs the victim as hypotonic but partly responsible for their adverse position. The third points to cases of discriminatory-based victimization, as an expression related to perpetrators' irrationality. The last case highlights how participants handle implicit hints of their sexual orientation and their local concern to be positioned as agentic people.

## The non-agentic and mildly provocative victim

Right before the following extract, the moderator had asked whether online attacks might take place between individuals or groups.

**Extract 1. The vulnerable victim or the insignificant victim's mistake**

1. Moderator: [...] Respectively, in there ((in digital space)), will they choose to
2. attack some people or particular groups?
3. Anni: Yes, that might happen becau::use, for example, it could be a group of... of **weak** people [...]
4. And... yes, they may be sensitive people, and they'll target them... because they know they're
5. **sensitive**, and for that reason they'd attack this particular group. They'd be more sensi... sensitive
6. kids, and some of them be **vulnerable**.
7. Moderator: Mh.
8. Anni: That is, there might be a company (.) every child from our class joins a company. It's likely for
9. so... some people to get... get in that group, because they'd believe that they're better. Stro::onger
10. than others.
11. Moderator: Is that related to the issue of power (Anni: Yes.) that you mentioned before...?
12. Anni: Yes... Or, they might target them because something happened in the past. That is, someone
13. could've said... that... Or, they might had joined in the same group, and then one of them moved in
14. another group (Katerina: Mh). And... he/she might've said something that bothered
15. them. **Indeed**. And that... that could have happened for this reason.

(Focus group 2, 3 participants, 7th grade, non-conflictual relations)

Responding to the moderator's query, Anni mobilizes psychological categories (weak people, sensitive, vulnerable; Potter, 2014) to construct the victim as lacking any agency/power to react to violent acts, thus removing any responsibility from the victim for initiating the attack, and assigning it exclusively to the perpetrators. The blame is thus assigned to some irrational perpetrators who, as argued, would not hesitate to attack a vulnerable victim. Anni seems to actively orient to one of the two alternatives offered by the moderator (interpersonal or intergroup expression of aggression) constructing the aggressive act as an intergroup display. While doing this, she draws on the interpretive repertoire of the 'weak victim', which was a commonplace construct invoked throughout the data set. That repertoire might also be related to dominant cultural beliefs categorizing the victim mainly as a non-agentic person. The victim's identity is often constructed, as responding to a weak, irresponsive, or even depressed person (Overstreet & Quinn, 2013). Anni insists on the use of this interpretative repertoire up to line 6 with no alternatives being offered.

On the other hand, the extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) mobilized in line 8 ('**every** child from our class joins a company), is possibly used to moderate the severity of commonplace aggressive displays, as it is implied that while the violent acts could be initiated by groups, it is not the case that they are contained and organized groups (i.e., cliques), acting competitively or extremely violently. This categorization, drawing on a psychological account, constructs the perpetrators as irrational people with a different mindset, with the goal to be established as dominant and better than others (line 9), but this is up to a certain point as it does not concern organized groups acting aggressively.

While victimhood was mainly constructed as a non-agentic state, the participants also mobilized an alternative repertoire, referring to the slightly provocative victim, which was used in variant rhetorical contexts,

and is often part of the blaming rhetoric used against victims. They moderate though the blame attributed to the victims by referring that the latter might have made just a small mistake, which elicited an aggressive *reaction* (lines 12: Or they might target them because something happened in the past). By the use of the extreme case formulation in line 8, by which they argue that *every child* from their class is included in groups, they might imply that they are not referred to extremely violent, organized, contained groups operating in their class. To further moderate the victim's blame, they mobilize an alternative construction of victims as minors who had made insignificant mistakes, possibly giving rise to conflicts.

In the latter case, the perpetrators are not evaluated as completely irrational people, opposed to the earlier point in which irrational perpetrators appeared to attack vulnerable youth. Alternative constructions arise, as on the one hand, the blame lies equally to all members involved in violent acts (line 12), but on the other hand, the discussants are referred to the victim's vulnerability, who remained irresponsive or was slightly provocative. These alternative constructions might point to alternative values, as in the former case the perpetrator(s)' is (are) the only part held responsible for attacking a completely passive and irresponsive person (individual responsibility); in the second case, the blame is shared to all minors involved in aggressive interactions (shared responsibility). That is, as young people are constructed as often shifting friend groups, and the majority of them as being involved in mutual competition and everyday disagreements (lines 12-14), they are all held equally responsible when it comes to low-stake conflicts and tensions arising in their interactions. This categorical distinction into blameworthy and nonblameworthy victims can be used to support that the condition of extreme violence is not applicable to their own relationships in each case, as conflicts might take place among equal parts that can defend themselves and could not concern merely vulnerable victims.

**Extract 2. The hypotonic[5] victim and the contradictions in the victim's social action**

This extract is part of wider interaction in which the participants talked about violent displays characterized by an asymmetric relation between the perpetrator(s) and the victim(s), with the latter being constructed as weak and vulnerable.

1. Manolis: I just **can't – can't feel**[6] that. Why guys, that's not even possible, you can't
2. just lie there and get beat up.
3. [...]
4. Christina: I think tha:at if they've a dynamic character and they're not so:::o....
5. (Maria: And also, get supported...)
6. Vasiliki: hypot... hypotonic, something like that.
7. Christina: Yes, hypotonic. They wo: :on't (Moderator: won't be victimized?), I
8. mean, yes, they won't be victimized. That's it.
9. Moderator: You also said you're using Instagram, Messenger [...] and
10. Discord. Over there, can someone notice violent and aggressive behaviors, or
11. even bullying interactions? And if yes, in what ways?
12. Katerina: Ehm, in... there's an application, the Tellonym, which is anonymous and
13. **everybody**'s using it now on Instagram (Giannis: Oh, yes that...). They swear them ((in there)),
14. they speak very badly about them and it keeps going.
15. Vasiliki: Just because it's anonymous... they don't have the guts to go and
16. confront them. [They just send them stuff.]
17. Manolis: [That's totally **contradictory**.]
18. Moderator: Contradictory...?
19. Manolis: If someone swears you if you... (Katerina: But again...) create a social media
20. account in which someone can **indeed** swear you....
21. Giannis: **You don't – don't know** what's behind... behind all that...
22. Manolis: It's like you're answering calls from masked numbers and the other one
23. swears you, and you just say "Why're they swearing at me?", while you're
24. taking the unknown call. Reject the call (Anastasia: Yes.), block the incoming calls.
25. Vasiliki: **Not everyone though**.... Not every person gets it like that. Someone can
26. be **affected** very much.

[5] Slightly weak; not strong enough

[6] Implying here that he can't get that.

(Focus group 25, 6 participants, 9th grade, different friend groups but some of them in the same company)

In lines 1-8, the participants collaboratively construct victimhood as a weak state, related to the victim's hypotonic character. The psychological category 'hypotonic' is possibly preferred as a moderate categorization, instead of the category of 'weak victim', which connotes a negative evaluation of the victim's identity as totally irresponsive and passive. At that point, Manolis distances himself from the victim's identity. By invoking an emotional rhetoric (line 1: I can't feel that) (Edwards, 1999), he dissociates from victimhood as being a state that he could not even *feel*, implying that each common/rational young person could avoid such troubles; with some victims being just the exception. Up to this point, this view is not problematized, as the victim's identity as a hypotonic person is commonly accepted by the participants (Hopkins & Reicher, 2014).

When the interaction turns though to online attacks, following a related question from the moderator in line 9, the participants mobilized a different line of argumentation. Through an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986), arguing that **everybody** has nowadays an account in Tellonym, they normalize this kind of online interaction, as not an exception but as part of their every day, fun, meaningless interactions. Therefore, nobody can be held accountable for having a Tellonym account, no matter the risks it involves. On the other hand, Manolis raises a (rhetorical) dilemma, regarding the use of this application, by acknowledging a contradiction (line 17: that's totally contradictory). After the repetition of the word 'contradictory' by the moderator, Manolis turns to account for his view. He suggests that while minors are involved in risky activities, they act irrationally. In line 23, Vasiliki though undermines Manolis's argument through the use of the psychological category 'you don't know', implying that he makes overgeneralizations on each possible case of victimizing incident.

To account for his view, Manolis is referred to another case of risky activity. He refers to the case in which a minor takes an unknown call but complains that they are harmed, while that also creates a *contradiction*. As argued, the social actor has agency and thus they could not complain, or have access to the victim's positioning. The use of active voicing "Why're they swearing me?" in line 23 (Wooffitt, 1992) imprints the irrational thoughts of a social actor who complains while taking the risk. The use of imperative form (line 24) strongly suggests avoiding getting involved in any risky activity and attaching liability to any potential victim.

While Manolis calls every young person to be responsible, his co-participants try to restore his argument, rhetorically expressing their sympathy for the victim, as a person experiencing emotional challenges. This rhetorical dilemma, pointing to the victim's responsibility vs. the victim's emotional troubles possibly corresponds to an ideological dilemma of sympathy vs. blame (Billig et al., 1988). Beyond that, the opinion that young people are required to remain silent/disengaged in public spaces to testify their rationality is criticized.

## Discriminatory-based victimization: negotiating blame

Right before this extract, the moderator, based on a comment made by the participants, that they would include in their friend group new members no matter their national identity, asked whether someone could be victimized, due to their difference, such as based on the national background they have mentioned before.

**Extract 3. The irrational perpetrators as triggering discriminatory-based bullying**

1. Michalis: [It's not, it doesn't play a…] when that happens, let's say, a bullying
2. incident it doesn't alwa::ays matter if the child has different col… is from a different
3. country… o:::or, they could be homosexual, let's say. No:::ot (.) no:::ot being
4. interested in, not being interested in stuff the boys or girls do. They believe in
5. something else.
6. Moderator: Ok, and they'll pick this particular person…
7. Michalis: Eh yes. They target them becau::use they're different.

[….]

8. Anna: And instead of seeing them as something special in the group, something
9. new, they prefer not to hang out with them because they don't want…. [because…]
10. Melina: …[to be also stigmatized], let's say.

(Focus group 1, 6 participants, 9th grade, non-conflictual relations)

Responding to the moderator's question concerning whether there are cases of victimization related to the victim's difference, Michalis in lines 1-3 and 6 equates not only 'race' / nation but also other factors such as sexual orientation to this difference, as eliciting bullying behavior. In this rhetorical context, Michalis seems to recognize

the irrational perpetrators as the primary agent and responsible for initiating the aggressive display targeting youth because of their national background, sexual orientation, or as vaguely put, because of their different beliefs, and generally as people not conforming to the norm (line 4). Through this systematic vagueness, regarding the victim's identity, the main responsibility seems to be attributed to irrational perpetrators, who choose to victimize others for various reasons, and not on the victim's difference, whatever this could include.

Anna (lines 7-8) blames the majority for marginalizing minority groups and for not treating their difference as something that would enrich the ingroup and Melina adds that this is due to their fear of being themselves stigmatized. Being in line with Michalis's point of view, they might orient to establish their own sympathy/tolerance towards the victim, at least in this rhetorical context. The construction of unjust acts targeting children from minority backgrounds or generally children with different belief systems could be possibly used to be established as tolerant of Others, whatever that could include (Billig et al., 1988).

Later in this discussion, the participants turned to a different argumentative line, criticizing gender-nonconforming identity expressions in public space as eliciting discriminatory-bullying acts.

**Extract 4. Discriminatory-based bullying towards provocative victims**

1. Michalis: Eh usually, from what I see, they don-don't accept homosexuals that much, becau::use
2. e::eh, they see that as something weird, if I may say so…? E::eh, diff… very different. And… they
3. **react**, usually the::e… the non-homosexuals.
4. Moderator: Mh, ok. So there're some **reactions**…
5. Michalis: Ah yes.
6. Melina: If they provoke, I mean **that particular person**.
7. Giorgos: Eh yes.
8. Melina: Yes. But if someone lives like that on their own and it's just their preference.
9. (Moderator: yes…) that's respected. (Moderator: Mh.) [There's no problem.] (Anna: [Depending
10. on…]) But if they provoke…

(Focus group 1, 6 participants, 9th grade, non-conflictual relations)

Extracts 4 and 5 appear in the same discussion. However, in this extract, specific cases of homosexual people are constructed as eliciting discriminatory-based violence themselves. In lines 1-2, Michalis reinstates the commonality of discriminatory-based bullying targeting minors identified as homosexuals. In his accounting, he takes some distance from the perpetrators, as becomes evident by the use of third-plural form (i.e., they), and appears uncertain when he makes assumptions on their line of thinking (line 2: if I may say so…?), indicating that he is not entitled to speak about that issue. After that, the moderator rephrases Michalis's argument that there are some *reactions* (using Michalis's suggested term) towards homosexual minors, while other participants have argued before that homosexuality at school is normalized today.

Melina in line 6 might try to account for the inconsistence in her view (no homophobic-based bullying at school) and Michalis's opinion (increased homophobic-based bullying), by bringing in an alternative construction of the victim's identity. She refers to *particular* provocative homosexual people who might indeed incite aggression, while the norm is to be tolerant of homosexuality. Through a restoring account (line 6: I mean that particular person) she argues that not all homosexual people should be blamed, but only isolated cases. What is problematized by Melina is not someone's difference but the public expression of someone's gender identity. Melina's point of view expresses tolerance of someone's sexual orientation, but only when they keep their sexual preferences for themselves, otherwise their victimization is inevitable.

It is suggested, here, as a common-sensical belief that they are certain cases of people who provoke, without that though raising any concern to justify why the participants would personally evaluate these actions as provocative in the first place. Therefore, existing norms are naturalized, and no need arises to account for the reasons why they consider some actions as provocative and wrongful.

**Extract 5. Victim's lack of agency instead of difference as related to bullying acts**

In this section, we shed light on the rhetorical techniques used by the participants to be established as agentic/interesting people. In addition, it is analyzed how hints dropped by co-participants are interpreted as playful interaction.

1. Iliana: Yes, it's generally to be different (Moderator: Mh.) and just becau::use…
2. you're different and you don't fit in, the majority of them will comm**e**::ent you and
3. maybe [come to a point to do things that you don't want.] […]
4. Thodoris: [Just the fact you're different…] I don't believe that a different person
5. rec**ei**ves bullying, he/she receives comments of course, I don't kno::ow, they'd
6. comment "Look at them.", you know, "They wear (Giorgos: **You saved the day**..[7])
7. orange all the time.", you know, anything, or "they come ((to school)) with
8. shorter or longer ((skirts))…" and all that stuff. But they don't d**o** bullying to them…
9. make fun of them >you know and all that.< They'll just comment
10. them. (Moderator: Ok.) The child who gets slapped is quieter, who::o >**basically**
11. **that's quieter**<, it **doesn't speak to n**o **one**.
12. Thanasis: This child just sits in the class…
13. Thodoris: That.
14. Moderator: The… so, the qui**e**ter. That is, wh.. why someone to pick that one,
15. usually?
16. Giorgos: Because they know it won't react.
17. Manos: Right.

(Focus group 7, 7 students, 9th grade, intimate relations)

The moderator had asked, right before this extract, whether it's possible for a child who has a different social or cultural background to be victimized. The participants mobilized the interpretative repertoire of the weak victim, which was commonly used in different interactional contexts (see the related comment in extract 1). The victim is constructed by the use of vivid images (Wooffitt, 1992) as a completely passive person who just sits in the class without talking (line 12), lacking any agency. In this way, emphasis is laid not on the irrationality of the perpetrator but on the victim's lack of any reaction. Psychological research on bullying (Guerra et al., 2011) and social-psychological research on collective victimhood (Bilali & Vollhardt, 2019) argue that the victim is often evaluated by others as non-agentic. Nevertheless, in this interaction, the repertoire of the non-agentic/weak victim might be mobilized to establish school community members as tolerant people, especially towards minority groups. Due to the lack of any reaction on the part of the victim or communication of their needs, the speaking subjects cannot be held accountable for the victim's adverse positioning.

A more implicit meaning concerned the participants' orientation to not position themselves in one way or another as victims, even in cases their co-participants dropped hints on them throughout the discussion regarding their sexual orientation. In lines 6-13, Thodoris refers to trivial criteria making someone vulnerable to victimization by using a vivid description (Wooffitt, 1992) of an indicative victim ("Look at them… they wear orange…"), opposing these cases to severe displays of discriminatory-based bullying that would be of high-stake for some social groups (lines 4-5: "I don't believe that a different person receives bullying"). While Thodoris refers to indicative cases of bullying in school, the thoughts of the perpetrators are being presented in active voicing (Wooffitt, 1992), to show how insignificant these comments are, as the speaking subjects could be aware of, based on their real-life experiences. However, while Thodoris refers to these cases, other participants drop hints (line 8: "You saved the day.."). Such hints were dropped to Thodoris throughout the interaction. At other points, participants indicated Thodoris as a gay person, just to give an example of homophobic-based bullying. Therefore, as we argue, in the interaction above, Thodoris self-positioning might also be at stake, as this participant takes some distance from actual victims. In the extract below, Athanasia drops hints to Thodoris, as she also did at other points of the interaction:

**Extract 6. 'The door just opened…'**

1. Thanasis: If they see a child being **weak**, knowing that it keeps everything to themselves, then
2. they won't…=
3. Thodoris: =↑That's not the only type of bullying, you know, but anyway…
4. Moderator: W**e**ak.
5. Mary: Or if you::u're…
6. Thanasis: Verbal but also::o…

[7] In Greek: "Το 'σωσες."

7. Mary: …if you're attracted to people of the same gender.
8. Giorgos: °Eh you've said about bullying.°
9. Thodoris: Eh, like… sexual preferences.
10. Mary: Yes.
11. ((Laughing))
12. Moderator: Ok.
13. Athanasia: Who just came in[8]? **A::ah no one, the door should've opened by**
14. **mistake**.
15. Moderator: Is that happening? Can someone see tha::at it'll be (.)
16. expressed? And w-hy someone would comment on that?
17. Mary: A::as, someone doesn't like tha::at, you know, that she likes girls, some
18. people doesn't like that, and they try to make fun o::of her, to (.) and to… ↑you get
19. that.
20. Moderator: Ok.
21. Thanasis: They're so 'man enough'… (Mary: Yes.), now… °they have to
22. make fun of a child's preferences. °

In this extract, Thanasis mobilizes the interpretative repertoire of the weak victim to describe how any possible victim might be (lines 1-2). However, Thodoris interrupts Thanasis, playfully criticizing Thanasis for making overgeneralizations on how the victim could be (line 3: =↑That's not the only type… but anyway). After Thodoris's intervention, Mary raises the issue of homophobic-based bullying as an alternative case of victimhood. Similarly, at another point of this discussion, in which the participants referred to trash-talking[9] as a commonplace practice in their interactions, Mary pointed to Thodoris as a gay person just to give an example of a person who can be teased, while the other participants emphasized that she just gave an example (referring that: "That's a LIE").

Athanasia, in lines 13-14, makes an ironic comment 'on the door that had just opened', also repeated when Mary gave the example regarding Thodoris's homosexuality. Through this metaphorical, vivid reference to the door which had just opened, that was repeatedly used throughout the discussion, Athanasia possibly dropped a hint about Thodoris's sexual orientation. On the other hand, in lines 17-20, the participants distanced themselves from the irrational, prejudiced perpetrators, by the use of third-plural (e.g., in line 21: **They're** so 'man enough'). Homophobic bullying seems to be a delicate issue that may raise concerns for the possibility of being accused as prejudiced, as indicated by the false starts, pauses, and the use of phrases such as "you know", or "you get this". In lines 17-19 Mary, by the use of these rhetorical strategies, implied that she is based on common knowledge and not personal beliefs. By ironically constructing the perpetrators as too 'man enough', Thanasis showcases their own sympathy towards the victims and their disliking for the irrational perpetrators.

As it seems, the participants in this group discussion playfully commented on each other. While their accounts operated within the norm against prejudice, victimhood is a state related merely to weak and extremely passive people. By positioning themselves as agentic, fun, and friendly people, they get distance from victimhood. Through this argument, an active effort of participants to establish themselves as effortful people, even if they are playfully commented on as different, becomes evident. In this interactional context, neither the bullying incidents nor the covert discriminatory hints were challenged. The playful character of hints (Billig, 2005) makes these comments appear non-aggressive. A person challenging such hints may be positioned as weak, then face the tangible risk of getting victimized.

## Discussion

The current study analyzed constructions of victim's identity while young people (i.e., adolescents) were interacting in focus group discussions on cases of bullying and school violence. Victims were mainly constructed as lacking agency, but in some cases, the alternatives of being slightly provocative or equally involved in the aggressive interaction were also mentioned. In the latter case, it was argued that each person involved in everyday violence should be held equally responsible, and thus the identity of the perpetrator and the victim are not relatable to such interactions. These alternative constructions of victim's identity (i.e., slightly provocative

[8] Use of the Greek slang phrase 'Ποιος ήρθε;' to wonder about what has just happened.

[9] Speak extremely badly about others; in Greek: 'κράξιμο'

victim, equally responsible victim) did not contradict the dominant construction of non-agentic victim, but instead introduced their own limitations. In the latter case, the victim is not only considered agentic (either provoking the aggression or equally involved in competitive relations) but also as sharing part of the blame. Irrational perpetrators were not considered the only people that should be held accountable for the aggressive interaction. The participants showed sympathy for the vulnerable victim, but in other cases, they argued that responsibility should be shared among the members involved in the aggressive display, pointing to a rhetorical dilemma that may correspond to an ideological dilemma of sympathy vs. blame towards the victim (Billig et al., 1988).

In some interactional contexts, the participants collaboratively constructed the victim's identity as weak and hypotonic. On the other hand, the opinion that the victim should be silent and avoid getting involved in risky activities to avoid being attacked was problematized and considered an accountable argument (Edwards & Potter, 1992).

Although attitudes research and studies drawing on social identity approach highlighted some culturally dominant representations of LGBTQI+ youth as provocative (e.g., Burke & LaFrance, 2016; Collier et al., 2012), contradictory opinions arise when following a rhetorical psychological lens. With particular regard to discriminatory-based bullying, the participants often evaluated the perpetrators as people having access to agency, constructing them as irrationally prejudiced people. This implied the speaking subjects' tolerance of victimized young people (Billig et al., 1988), who were evaluated as having done anything at all. On the other hand, discriminatory-based violence was justified when particular minority group students (e.g., LGBTQI+ youth) were considered provocative, especially when they do not keep their identity or their views for themselves, and they express them in the public sphere. At this point, the norm of who was evaluated as provocative and who is not was not problematized.

While one of the participants' main concerns was to be established as unprejudiced people, we argued that they might also have tried to be self-positioned as agentic and fun young people, who would not get offended by other's playful comments (e.g., dropping hints on their sexual identity), and thus as not prospective victims. While the participants were accounting for discriminatory-based violence at school, they did not problematize the victim's difference (e.g., in terms of nationality, 'race', sexual orientation), but mainly the perpetrators' irrationality. However, in some cases, the discussion focused on victims' extreme passivity. The social actors seemed to weigh their options and invest in an agentic self-positioning, that connoted that they could not be real victims.

Social-psychological theorizations have been developed, over the recent years, to support that cross-group friendships can contribute to reducing prejudice, especially for gender minority groups, and increasing positive attitudes towards LGBTQI+ community (Lytle & Levy, 2015; Rampullo et al., 2013). However, as the present analysis showed, things are complex when it comes to the everyday interaction of intimate friends, often including implicit hints. A friendly context makes it easier to drop hints on someone's sexual preferences without these hints being evaluated as accountable positions but as playful, humorous interactions (Billig, 2005). When social actors are constructed as possible victims, their central stake is to testify their agency by being established as fun, careless and agentic people.

It would be remiss not to be referred to the limitations of the current study. While the research was based on open-ended questions, these seemed to have an impact on the participants' answers. However, this impact highlighting the intersubjective interaction was taken into account in the analysis (Potter & Hepburn, 2005). While designing the research, we considered that a possible limitation could arise due to the unequal relation between the moderator and the participants while the former was positioned as an external/adult. While we adjusted the research design to enable equal/friendly relations, some participants remained less active in the discussion. Furthermore, the small number of participants, the type of the study, and the limited areas by which we selected our sample do not allow us to generalize our research findings, which is expected though, given the qualitative nature of the study. For ethical/political reasons, we were trying to avoid a possible encounter of victims with their perpetrators by following a purposeful research design.

## Implications of the study and new avenues

The present study sheds light on alternative constructions of victim's identity in young people's discursive interaction on the topic of violence. The victim is not constructed merely as unable to respond, as culturally dominant constructions of victimhood suggest, but also as too passive, as partly provoking the aggressive display,

or as an equally involved member in competitive acts of violence. The violent act is not seen as unilateral; the perpetrators might be held accountable, but victimized minors are also seen as eliciting the attack or as doing nothing at all to intercept it. In addition, the analysis illustrated how the participants were concerned about how they would construct their own identity to dissociate themselves from the state of victimhood, indicating that talk on violence/victimization was underlined by personal stakes/interests. Future research could shed further light on the rhetorical contexts in which young people may appear compassionate and supportive of the victim, cases in which they rationalize the state of victimhood, or even position themselves as victims. This could illuminate interactional contexts in which dominant constructions of the victim's identity might be challenged by alternative narratives of victimhood.

In conclusion, while alternative or dilemmatic constructions of the victim's identity arise in young people's discursive interaction, the state of victimhood is often related to undesirable characteristics for the participants, such as excessive passivity, irrationality, and provocativeness. In cases of 'everyday/commonplace violence', the involved members were held equally accountable, and thus no one could get access to the victim's positioning. While, very often, the participants took some distance from the irrational perpetrators, it seemed also that they orient to be disengaged from the passivity of victimhood, by being positioned as interesting, fun, and agentic minors.

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***Appendix 1.***

The symbols of the Jeffersonian Transcription system used in the transcribed data and their meaning.

| SYMBOL | DESCRIPTION |
|---|---|
| (.) | Small pause |
| [ ] | Overlapping speech |
| > < | Higher speed of talk |
| < > | Lower speed of talk |
| (( )) | A comment/observation/thought introduced by the analyst |
| Underlining | Emphasized syllable of a word or phrase |
| ↑ | Higher volume |
| ↓ | Lower volume |
| (h) | Laughter in the interaction |
| = | No pause between two different sentences |
| : : : | Stretched sound |
| °word° | Significantly lower volume |
| °°word°° | Whispered talk |

ΕΜΠΕΙΡΙΚΗ ΕΡΓΑΣΙΑ | RESEARCH PAPER

# Το δίλημμα μη αυτενέργειας vs. πρόκλησης στον λόγο των νέων περί θυματοποίησης

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ΛΕΞΕΙΣ ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ

Θυματοποίηση,
Αυτενέργεια,
Προκλητικότητα,
Διάκριση,
Εκφοβισμός

ΣΤΟΙΧΕΙΑ ΕΠΙΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΑΣ

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ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Η ψυχολογική θεωρία και έρευνα στην σχολική βία και στον εκφοβισμό έχει συνδέσει το προφίλ του θύματος με χαρακτηριστικά ευαλωτότητας και την έλλειψη όποιας αντίδρασης, χωρίς συχνά να γίνεται λόγος για εναλλακτικές κατασκευές της ταυτότητας του θύματος. Αυτή η γραμμή έρευνας προσεγγίζει τα θύματα ως άτομα που ανήκουν σε ομάδες χαμηλού κύρους και συνεπώς που κατέχουν μία λιγότερο κυρίαρχη θέση στην ομάδα συνομηλίκων. Ενώ η κοινωνιο-ψυχολογική έρευνα που βασίζεται στη θεώρηση της κοινωνικής ταυτότητας υποστηρίζει πως οι νέοι που θυματοποιούνται μπορεί να επενδύουν σε μία κοινή ταυτότητα, το παρόν άρθρο συζητά πώς οι νέοι στις καθημερινές αλληλεπιδράσεις τους μπορεί να απομακρύνονται από τη θέση του αδύναμου θύματος. Σκοπός της παρούσας μελέτης είναι να αναλύσει τον τρόπο με τον οποίο κατασκευάζεται η ταυτότητα του θύματος στον λόγο των νέων για τον εκφοβισμό και την βία. Για την ανάλυση των δεδομένων, χρησιμοποιούνται έννοιες/εργαλεία της λογο-ψυχολογίας και της ρητορικής ψυχολογίας. Ενώ αναδείχτηκαν ορισμένα διλήμματα θυματοποίησης, βασικό μέλημα των συμμετεχόντων/ουσών ήταν να μην τοποθετηθούν οι ίδιοι/-ες ως θύματα. Η ταυτότητα του θύματος συχνά συνδεόταν με την απουσία αυτενέργειας και με την ήπια προκλητικότητα. Οι θύτες συχνά αξιολογούνταν ως παράλογα επιθετικά άτομα, ωστόσο σε άλλες περιπτώσεις οι συμμετέχοντες/-ουσες τόνιζαν την προκλητικότητα του θύματος ή την υπερβολική του παθητικότητα.