Victims may have a negative social-cognitive style: A systematic review

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‘What is the state of the art in research on social cognition in relation to victimization of bullying?’

Theory & Method:
- **Reaffiliation Theory**: Focusing on positive social cues for reaffiliative purposes.
- **Prevention Theory**: Focusing on negative social cues for preventative purposes.
- **Desensitization Theory**: Insensitivity to social cues in general, due to longer periods of victimization.

**Systematic literature review** on victimization and social cognition in Web of Science, PsycINFO and ERIC databases. From 5876 hits to 88 included articles.

Results:
Victimization seems related to a **stronger emphasis on negative events** or a more negative social-cognitive style, mostly in line with the prevention theory.

Victims showed a **heightened focus** on negative or threatening social cues and represented social cues less accurately. Furthermore, they perceived their peers more negatively, attributed **more hostile intent** and were more **sensitive to rejection** than non-victimized children. However, they did not differ in perspective-taking skills.

Discussion:
- **Development**: Are findings due to pre-existent deficits, to victimization, or both? What is the influence of prolonged or chronic victimization?
- **Neurobiology**: How does victimization relate to neural processing of social information?

References:

Pictures from the Noun Project: Cinnamon stick (Eye), Jens Tärning (Ear), Vladimir Belochkin (puzzle), Icons Producer (human).