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Do anger and having a relationship with the victim influence offenders' willingness to participate in victim- offender mediation?

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Abstract

Research has focused more on the motivations of victims to participate in victim-offender mediation (VOM) than on offenders. The current study tried to fill this gap by investigating whether experiencing anger and having a relationship with the victim factors influence offenders' willingness to participate in VOM. As anger motivates people to approach the other party, it was expected that individuals who felt angry towards the victim were more willing to participate in VOM, than less angry individuals. Similarly, having a relationship with a person is said to motivate people to restore the relationship after a conflict to regain benefits. It was expected that having a relationship with the victim would motivate offenders to restore their relationship by means of VOM.

In total, 195 people were randomly selected to one of four groups and asked to take the perspective of an offender in a scenario about committing a hit-and-run. The scenarios differed regarding the manipulation of anger and the relationship with the victim. The participants found either a blaming note, intended to evoke anger, or an apologizing note of the person whose car they damaged who was either a friend or a stranger. Afterwards, anger, guilt and shame, the evaluation of the relationship with the victim and their willingness to participate in VOM were assessed.

Unexpectedly, results indicated that participants who experienced less anger were more willing to participate. Furthermore, there was a trend found that offenders who are in a relationship with the victim are more willing to participate in VOM, as expected. Additionally, feeling guilty about the hit-and-run was the strongest predictor for the willingness to participate in VOM

This study has some limitations: for instance, the manipulation of anger potentially did not only evoke anger, but also feelings of injustice. This possibly led the participants feeling justified and less guilty for committing a hit-and-run, resulting in a lower willingness to

participate in VOM. Additionally, when less anger was involved, the tone of the apologizing note could have made the impression that a conversation with the victim might end positively, resulting in being more willing to participate in VOM.

Key words: victim-offender mediation, anger, relationship, offender, reconciliation

Samenvatting

In wetenschappelijk onderzoek wordt er meer aandacht besteedt aan de motivaties van slachtoffers om deel te nemen aan herstelbemiddeling (En: "victim-offender mediation" or VOM) dan aan daders. Deze studie probeert deze kloof te vullen door onderzoek te doen naar woede richting het slachtoffer en het hebben van een relatie met de slachtoffer invloed hebben op de bereidheid van daders om deel te nemen aan VOM. Woede motiveert een persoon om de tegenpartij te benaderen, dus het verwacht werd dat daders die woede ervaren eerder geneigd zijn om deel te nemen aan VOM dan minder woedende daders. Echter wordt het hebben van een vriendschappelijke relatie met de andere conflictpartij gezien als een motivatie om de relatie te herstellen om de voordelen van de vriendschap te herstellen. Verwacht werd dat het bevriend zijn met het slachtoffer daders zou motiveren om de relatie te herstellen door middel van VOM.

195 participanten werden willekeurig toegewezen aan één van vier groepen en werden gevraagd om zich in de dader te verplaatsen in een scenario over het doorrijden na een schade geval. De scenario's verschilden met betrekking tot de manipulatie van woede en de relatie met het slachtoffer. De participanten vonden ofwel een verwijtend briefje (om woede op te roepen) of een verontschuldiging briefje van de persoon wiens auto beschadigd werd. Afhankelijk van het scenario is deze persoon een vriend of een onbekende. Vervolgens werden woede, schuld, schaamte, een beoordeling van de relatie met het slachtoffer en de bereidheid van daders om deel te willen nemen aan VOM afgenomen door middel van een questionnaire.

Onverwacht blijkt uit de resultaten dat deelnemers die minder woede ervaren eerder bereid waren om deel te nemen. Zoals verwacht is er een trend gevonden dat daders die bevriend zijn met het slachtoffer eerder bereid zijn deel te nemen aan VOM. Verder lijkt schuld de sterkste voorspeller te zijn om deel te willen nemen aan VOM.

Deze studie heeft een aantal beperkingen: bijvoorbeeld, de manipulatie van woede heeft mogelijk niet alleen woede, maar ook gevoelens van onrechtvaardigheid veroorzaakt. Dit leidde er misschien toe dat de deelnemers zich gerechtvaardigd en minder schuldig voelden na het doorrijden bij schade. Eventueel resulteerde dit in een lagere bereidheid om deel te nemen. Verder heeft misschien de toon van het briefje verwachtingen opgeroepen hoe een potentieel gesprek met het slachtoffer zou eindigen, wat invloed op de bereidheid om deel te willen nemen zou hebben kunnen gehad.

Introduction

Being involved in a criminal offense might have physical and psychological consequences, not only for the victim, but also for potential bystanders and even for the offender him- or herself. Trying to minimize the impact of a crime on the lives of the parties involved is one goal of the field of restorative justice. One practice from this field is victim-offender mediation (VOM) which provides the victims and offenders with an opportunity to interact after crime and provides an environment for reconciliation and reintegration by means of direct communication, on a completely voluntary basis (Menkel-Meadow, 2007).

In the current literature, there seems to be a lack of information regarding the participation of offenders in VOM, since research mostly focuses on victims. Although there are several studies which investigated the effects of VOM on offenders, less is known about their motivations to participate in VOM and factors which possibly influence their decision to participate. The current research therefore focuses on two of those possible factors, namely whether anger and having a relationship with the victim influences the offender's willingness to participate in VOM. Anger and having a relationship with another person are reported to play a significant role in people's willingness to reconcile and the perceived importance to restore the relationship with the other conflict party (Bono, McCullough & Root, 2008; Harmon-Jones & Allen, 1998).

Focusing on the motivations of offenders is important, because a deeper understanding of their motivations to voluntarily participate in VOM might help to improve the counselling methods of offenders within the judiciary system. In addition, offenders might be better educated about the possibilities of an attempt to compensate their actions, so that they are more willing to voluntarily participate in mediated contact. Since participating in VOM is associated with several positive effects on both parties, offenders might be prevented from re-

offending (Sherman, Strang, Woods & Ariel, 2015; Bradshaw, Roseborough & Umbreit, 2006) which then might prevent future victims.

Restorative justice and victim-offender mediation

Restorative justice, being a relatively new approach within the field of justice, differs significantly from the traditional approach in dealing with the consequences of a crime and the person who committed the crime. During restorative justice processes, offenders are held accountable for their actions to the victims of the crime rather than to the state (Umbreit, Vos, Coates & Lightfoot, 2005). In restorative justice approaches, victim and offender seem to have a more active role in the process than in traditional approaches: victims are able to share the emotional, physical or financial consequences the crime had on their lives, experiencing some form of recognition or apology from the offender (Van Stokkom, 2008; Umbreit, Coates & Vos, 2004). Furthermore, encountering the victims, offenders are animated to apologize for their actions and to take responsibility for what their actions have caused (Dhami, 2012; Van Stokkom, 2008). Compared to the traditional approach, punishment does not stand central in the approaches of restorative justice, since punishing the offender might lead to more criminal behavior, due to experiencing increased feelings of emotional misery (Van Stokkom, 2008).

Victim-offender mediation (VOM) is one of the most applied practices from the field of restorative justice. VOM includes a direct or indirect communication between the victim and the offender, supervised by a trained mediator (Menkel-Meadow, 2007; Umbreit et al., 2004). VOM aims to reduce the impacts of criminal offenses on the lives of those people involved which should help the victim to cope with the consequences of the crime by talking to the offender voluntarily in a supervised and safe setting (National Institute of Justice, 2007). During VOM, parties are offered an opportunity to share information about the physical, emotional or financial impacts the crime had on their lives and how they cope with the emotional consequences of that crime (Gumz & Grant, 2009).

Different methods regarding VOM include, for example, exchanging letter and face-to-face conversations (Perspectief Herstelbemiddeling, n.d.), but also new methods have been proposed and tested, such as exchanging e-mails or participating in a video conference (Van Dijk, 2016). Although VOM has been applied to different types of offenses (see Menkel-Meadow, 2007; Sherman et al., 2015), “the four most common offenses referred, in order of frequency, were vandalism, minor assaults, theft, and burglary” (Umbreit, et al., 2004, p.284).

Victim and offender can benefit from this experience: this confrontation might help the victim to find answers to questions regarding the crime and about the motivations of the offender (National Institute of Justice, 2007). Furthermore, mediated contact has the potential “to create a [...] sense of healing and accountability among the involved parties” (Umbreit, 2001, p.141). Other advantages include a reduction of the victim’s fear of being re-victimized (Umbreit, 1994), while offenders report that they appreciate the opportunity to explain their reasons for committing the crime (Menkel-Meadow, 2007). Being subject to an approach from the field of restorative justice processing, juveniles experience less police contact after the crime and the likelihood of juveniles to re-offend is decreased (Bergseth & Bouffard, 2007). In addition, offenders find it in general surprising and eye-opening learning about the suffering they caused to other people (Umbreit, 1991). Umbreit et al. (2004) compared several studies about VOM, summarizing that the satisfaction of victims as well as offenders is generally very high (compared to traditional court proceedings) and that offenders who participate in mediated contact are less likely to re-offend.

Motivations to participate in VOM: The Needs-Based Model

The motivations of victims and offenders differ regarding VOM. Unveiling the circumstances under which victim and offender would be willing to reconcile, Shnabel and Nadler (2015) designed the Needs-Based Model. This model aims to explain the relationships between victim and perpetrator “within the apology-forgiveness cycle” (p. 477). According to Abele

and Wojciszke (2013), two dimensions seem to play an important role in the way how individuals judge themselves and the people around them. The first dimension, the agency dimension, represents “traits such as strength, competence, and influence” (Shnabel & Nadler, 2015, p. 477) while the second dimension, the moral-social dimension, represents “traits such as morality, warmth, and trustworthiness” (Shnabel & Nadler, 2015, p. 477).

Referring to the Needs-Based Model, Shnabel & Nadler (2015) propose that the perpetrator is seeking for a restoration of the moral-social dimension of identity, so his or her moral image is restored and the offender is reintegrated into the social community. Fearing social exclusion due to the committed crime might encourage the offender to seek confrontation in order to be shown empathy and forgiveness by the victim, so that the offender feels assured of his membership to the society (Shnabel & Nadler, 2015). Social disapproval or exposure of a person's (socially) inappropriate behavior or shortcomings is associated with feeling ashamed for one's action (Tangney, Miller, Flicker & Barlow, 1996).

But not only the possible image others might have of the offender seem to motivate people to seek restoration. The self-image of perpetrators is also affected. Feeling guilty is said to be an internal reaction when breaking one's own standards which can affect one's self-image (Tangney et al., 1996). Guilt is also associated with a motivation to offer an apology (McGarty et al., 2005; Howell, Turowski & Buro, 2012). According to Tangney, Stuewig and Martinez (2014), feeling guilty often leads to feeling remorse and tension, which motivate the offender to seek reparation by confessing and apologizing in order to repair the damage caused to the other party. Thus, feeling guilty about the crime might motivate an offender to offer an apology to the victim, possibly by means of VOM

Regarding VOM, offender might participate in victim-offender mediation to experience empathy of his point of view and forgiveness and to be reintegrated into society. Furthermore, an offender's moral image might be improved by showing empathy and by

being open about his or her feelings and motivations behind the crime. In addition, the self-image of the offender might be restored by not only showing others that he or she is able to empathize with the victim, but also convincing oneself of being valuable. Feelings of shame might be reduced by explaining the motivations behind the crime in order to improve the image others possibly have of the offender.

As shown, emotions like shame and guilt are closely connected to the experience of a crime and its aftermath. However, one emotion which has previously seemed to have been neglected in research about VOM is anger among offenders.

Anger

As shown in the following, anger is a strong emotion which influences people's decision-making whether to confront or to avoid other conflict parties. Little research has examined the influence of anger on offender's willingness to participate in VOM. Therefore, studying the effect of anger might offer new insight into motivations why offenders would confront or avoid their victims in the context of VOM.

Anger is the emotional response to threat, provocation or fear, preparing the body to "fight or flight" in a potentially dangerous situation (Videbeck, 2011). Anger can be triggered by perceiving disrespect, by feeling a sense of injustice or insult, by experiencing a threat to one's reputation, authority or autonomy or by experiencing a violation of norms or rules and frustration (Videbeck, 2011; Potegal, Stemmler & Spielberger, 2010). Furthermore, anger has been described as a reaction to the blockage of one's personal goals (Mascolo, Harkins & Harakal, 2000). So, with the intention to actively remove the violation of the goal blockage (Carver & Harmon-Jones, 2009), anger encourages people to approach rather than withdraw or avoid (Harmon-Jones & Allen, 1998; Harmon-Jones & Sigelman, 2001). The social function of anger is said to be the will to achieve an change in another person's behavior by verbally or physically attacking or confronting the other party with whom one is in conflict

(Fischer & Roseman, 2007), which supports the statement that angry people rather approach the other party than avoid them.

In the context of VOM, angry offenders might participate in VOM to approach the victims (rather than avoid them) in order to restore a desired state: removing negative emotions connected to the incidence, like anger or guilt, and possibly resolving the conflict with the other party. Thus, an offender who feels angry with the victim might be more willing to confront the other party in order to achieve a change in the victim's behavior or way of thinking, so that the victim might show more understanding with the offender. In reference to the Needs-Based Model (Shnabel & Nadler, 2015), the offender's moral-social dimension of identity might be restored by sharing thoughts and emotions with the victim, possibly eliminating feelings of injustice, frustration and anger.

As anger, experiencing shame or the disapproval of others might lead offenders to seek social acceptance and reconnection (Braithwaite, 1989). Hejdenberg and Andrews (2011) report that anger and shame correlate positively. When being shamed by others, people seem to have the tendency to defend themselves by externalizing blame and anger onto others (Tangney, Stuewig & Hafez, 2011). In addition, Quigley and Tedeschi (1996) state that the relationship between attributions of blame and anger is reciprocal in which both can increase the other. When being blamed by others, the expected reaction is to become angry and when an individual is angry, he or she is likely to blame others.

Besides externally blaming other persons, justifying one's action is also associated with anger. Harvey, Martinko and Borkowski (2017) found evidence that "attributions linked to the moral emotions of anger and shame will facilitate the justification of deviant behaviors, whereas those linked to guilt will attenuate justification" (p.780). As said before, experiencing injustice arouses anger, which then might lead to the offender justifying his actions. But in order to have a platform where the offender has the opportunity to justify himself, being in

contact with the victim is obviously important. VOM could provide this platform, thus, angry offenders with the intention to justify themselves might consider participating in VOM.

Having a relationship with the victim

Another factor that might influence the willingness to reconcile with the other conflict party is whether there exists a relationship between the offender and the victim. Feeling connected to the offender and being in a committed relationship with the perpetrator is associated with forgiveness and personal well-being (Bono et al., 2008). Feelings of connectedness and closeness are even strengthened when the victims perceives a sincere apology from the offender after a conflict or a transgression. Bachman and Guerrero (2006) support these findings, reporting that people are likely to forgive when they have the feeling that their partner sincerely apologizes.

Restoring the social relationship with the victim might increase the well-being of both parties, since important social-psychological resources which are provided by the relationship, such as emotional support, love and closeness, are then restored (Bono et al., 2008). This finding has been supported by Donovan and Priester (2017): a close relationship between people is connected to a desire to maintain that relationship, which then leads to motivated reasoning and forgiveness. Moreover, according to Finkel et al. (2002), people in a high commitment relationship feel more angry or hurt following betrayal. Thus, having a committed relationship with the other party might motivate people to restore their relationship and to dissolve angry feelings.

As mentioned earlier, within the framework of Shnabel and Nadler (2015), offenders are afraid of being socially excluded, referring to the moral-social dimension of identity. Having a relationship with the victim might therefore increase the offender's need to resolve the conflict in order to regain social-psychological benefits from the relationship with the victim and to restore his or her moral image others might have about the offender. VOM,

offering an opportunity to honestly talk about the transgression, also provides the offenders with a chance to 'set their record straight' and to apologize sincerely to the victim, therefore making it possible to restore the relationship, and thus their moral-social dimension of identity.

As said before, anger evokes an approaching reaction rather than withdrawal. The positive benefits of a relationship might form a motivation for the offender to restore the damaged relationship by resolving the conflict. Thus, the motivation to restore the relationship with the victim is expected to encourage the offender to approach the victim within the context of VOM.

As both, anger and having a relationship with the victim, are expected to lead to an approaching behavior in order to reconcile, an interaction effect is expected. So, potentially, when the offender has more than one motivation to engage with the conflict party, it is expected that a relationship with the victim and being angry will combine to reinforce the willingness to participate in VOM to resolve the conflict.

The current research

The aim of this research is to shine light on the influences of anger and the type of relationship between victim and offender on the offender's willingness to participate in victim-offender mediation. Little is known about the potential effect of a close relationship between victim and offender in the context of VOM and how anger might play a role in this. Understanding the possible factors which might interfere with their willingness to participate in VOM might help improving the education of offenders about the possibilities VOM offers through social workers or other workers from the field of justice. Knowing more about the positive outcomes for the parties involved might increase the overall participation of offenders. Based on the above elaborations, three hypotheses have been formulated:

Hypothesis 1: High (versus low levels of) anger towards the victim increases the offender's willingness to participate in victim-offender mediation.

Hypothesis 2: Being in a relationship with the victim increases the offender's willingness to participate in victim-offender mediation compared to having no relationship with the victim.

Hypothesis 3: The effect of high (versus low) anger towards the victim on the offender's willingness to participate in victim-offender mediation is reinforced by having a relationship with the victim (Interaction effect).

Method

Design

This research used a 2 (anger provoked versus not provoked) x 2 (close relationship to victim versus no relationship) between subjects design. The dependent variable was the offender's willingness to participate in victim-offender mediation.

Participants

This research was conducted mainly among Dutch and German citizens, consisting largely of students from a Dutch university. Approaching people who committed real offences and who were willing to participate in this study was not possible. Therefore, the participants were asked to imagine the role of an offender in a given scenario, before answering several questions.

In total, 195 people participated in this study. The average age of all participants was almost 24 years ($M = 23.55$; $SD = 9.69$), ranging from 18 years to 70 years. Other important demographic characteristics of the participants can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic information of participants (N = 195)

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	129	66.2
	Male	66	33.8
Nationality	German	140	71.8
	Dutch	44	22.6
	Other	11	5.6
Level of completed education	Primary school	1	0.5
	Secondary education	3	1.5
	Higher secondary education	163	83.6
	Bachelor's degree	15	7.7
	Master's degree	12	6.2
	Doctorate degree	1	0.5

Taken into account that the questionnaire was administered in English, while the majority of the participants reported to be German, the participants were asked to evaluate their English reading ability in order to prevent errors. The participants rated their English reading skills largely to be “extremely good” (48.7%) or “somewhat good” (46.2%). In addition, the participants reported to have been “very serious” ($M = 1.73$; $SD = 0.61$) when giving their answers and that they have read the given instruction and questions “very accurately” ($M = 2.08$; $SD = 0.67$).

The participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions. As can be seen in Table 2, between 47 and 50 participants were assigned to each condition. The survey has been mostly distributed among students, by using social media (Facebook) and by sending e-mail invitations. Furthermore, people have been personally asked to participate.

Table 2

Distribution of participants (N = 195)

Condition	Frequency	Percentage
1. High anger – Relationship	49	25.1
2. Low anger – Relationship	47	24.1
3. High anger – No relationship	49	25.1
4. Low anger – No relationship	50	25.6

The participants have been asked whether they ever have been the victim of a crime or whether they have committed a criminal offense. 42.6% indicated that they have been a victim of a crime, while 34.9% said that they committed an offense. The majority (82.1%) reported to know a person who has been the victim of a crime, and two third (66.7%) said that they know someone who committed a crime. Only having the experience of being a victim was reported to influence the willingness to participate negatively.

Independent variables

The scenario involved a fictional situation in which the participant was in a hurry to get to a meeting with his or her boss. However, heading to the car the participants noticed that another person parked in a way which made it very difficult for the participant to leave the parking spot. In the following, the manipulation of anger was implemented. The participants found either an apologizing note or a note in which intended to evoke feelings of anger. Having serious time pressure, the participants tried to leave the parking spot anyway, resulting in damaging the other car.

In the scenario, the participant left without leaving any personal information or calling the police. A bystander saw what happened and called the police which later informed the participant that he or she has been seen committing a hit-and-run. Furthermore, the police officer either informed the participant that the person whose car he or she damaged was a total stranger or that person was a very good friend, thus manipulating the type of relationship the

offender had with the victim. Afterwards, the lawyer informed the participant about victim-offender mediation and its possibilities, asking the participant whether he or she would be willing to participate.

Manipulation of anger. The experience of anger was manipulated by changing the content of the note the participant found on the car window in the given scenario. In the high anger condition, the note stated “You really should learn how to park, idiot! It’s your own fault that I couldn’t park any better!”, while in the low anger condition the note had a more apologizing tone: “I’m very sorry for parking in your way, but I couldn’t do it any better! I’m very sorry for the inconvenience and I’ll leave as soon as possible”. The note in the high anger condition differed in a way that anger was triggered, since anger is said to be triggered by feeling disrespected or frustrated or by experiencing injustice or insult (Videbeck, 2011; Potegal et al., 2010).

Manipulation of the relationship. In order to manipulate whether the participant felt to be in a close relationship with the victim or in no relationship at all, the scenario’s differed regarding the information the participant received from the police officer about who the person was whose car the participant damaged. In the relationship condition, the participant was told that the other person whose car was damaged (‘the victim’) was a very good friend. In the no relationship condition, the victim was said to be a total stranger.

Manipulation check. In order to check whether the manipulations of anger and the type of relationship were successful, participants were asked to rate their agreement on six statements regarding the experience of anger and on five statements concerning the type of relationship the offender has with the victim. These items will be discussed in the following section. The scale ranged from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). During analysis, it was checked whether participants in the high anger condition reported more anger, than participants in the low anger condition. Similarly, it was checked whether participants in the

relationship condition reported a closer relationship with the victim, than the participants in the no relationship condition. Furthermore, it was checked whether the manipulations of anger and having a relationship influenced each other.

Dependent measures

Willingness to participate in VOM. The most important dependent variable was the willingness to participate in victim-offender mediation. The participants were asked, based on the given scenario, to rate their willingness to participate in a mediated contact. These questions included items such as “I want to confront the other person by participating in victim-offender mediation” and “I would like to reconcile with the person whose car I damaged within the context of victim-offender mediation”. Factor analysis showed one component, as expected, which explained 47.31% of the variance. All five items loaded higher than .53 on this factor. The reliability ($\alpha = .70$) of the five items was high enough for further analysis.

Anger. Six questions were used to measure the degree of anger the participant experienced. These questions included items such as “I feel angry with the person whose car I damaged” and “I have the feeling that I was treated unfairly by the person who left a note in my window”. Furthermore, two items were loosely based on the Anger Self Report Questionnaire by Reynolds, Walkey and Green (1994): “In this situation it is useless for me to get angry”, which was reversed for analysis, and “I have an urge to do something harmful or shocking to the other person”. A factor analysis for the construct of anger showed that the six items measured, as expected, loaded on one factor (Eigenvalue > 1), which explained 46.78% of the variance. All items loaded higher than .50 on this factor. Together, these items comprised a reliable scale ($\alpha = .77$).

Relationship with the victim. The participants were asked to assess their relationship with the person whose car they damaged in the scenario by rating their agreement on five

statements. One statement, for example, was "I have a close relationship with the person whose car I hit". The factor analysis of the five items which were intended to assess the relationship between victim and offender showed one component (Eigenvalue > 1) which explained 62.26% of the variance. The reliability of these items was high ($\alpha = .82$). However, although one item ("I feel misunderstood by the person whose car I damaged") was reversed, it loaded very weakly on this factor, having a factor loading of .15. The other four items had a factor loading of .81 or higher. By removing the weak loading item, the reliability was increased ($\alpha = .90$). For further analysis, the measurement of the relationship between offender and victim consisted of four, instead of five, items.

For exploratory reasons, participants were also asked to rate their agreement on several statements which concerned the experience of shame and guilt regarding the hit-and-run.

Shame. The construct of shame was measured by using three items. For example, on statement was "I feel like I am a bad person for leaving the damaged car without saying something." The items were based on the State Shame and Guilt Scale by Marschall, Sanftner and Tangney (1994). The factor analysis for shame also showed one component (Eigenvalue > 1) which explained 67.98% of the variance. All items had at least a factor loading of .81 or higher. Reliability analyses indicated that together, these items formed a reliable scale ($\alpha = .76$).

Guilt. Guilt was measured by using three items. One statement, for example, was "I feel regret for committing a hit-and-run". These items were also based on the State Shame and Guilt Scale by Marschall et al. (1994). Regarding the three items measuring guilt, a factor analysis showed one component (Eigenvalue > 1) and explains 76.47% of the variance. The three items had a factor loading of .85 or higher and formed a reliable scale ($\alpha = .84$).

Furthermore, respondents were asked whether they would be willing to take initiative in participating in VOM on a scale from 1 (definitely yes) to 5 (definitely not), being relatively positive about taking the initiative ($M = 2.57$, $SD = 1.09$). When being asked to rate their willingness to participate when the other person takes the initiative, the participants' willingness was even higher ($M = 1.71$, $SD = 0.75$), when indicated on a scale from 1 (definitely yes) to 5 (definitely not).

Procedure

The online survey was designed using the online program Qualtrics. Participants have been randomly assigned to one of four conditions.

Before being allowed to continue participating in the survey, the participants were given an informed consent. After agreeing to the informed consent, participants were allowed to start reading the scenario. Consequently, they were asked to imagine being in a specific situation in which they committed a hit-and-run. The texts given to the four conditions and the questionnaire which followed can be found in Appendix A.

After imaging given scenario, the participants were asked to answer 40 questions in total, which intended to measure several constructs: anger, shame, guilt, evaluation of the relationship with the victim and the willingness to participate in VOM. Furthermore, the participants were asked to answer some demographic questions about their age, gender, nationality and the highest level of education they have acquired. They were asked to give an indication of their English reading ability on a scale from 1 (extremely good) to 5 (extremely bad). Afterwards, they have been asked whether they have ever been the victim of a crime or whether they have committed an offense in their life and whether they know a person who has been the victim of a crime or a person who has committed an offense. To get an idea how representative the answers of the participants were, the participants were asked to indicate how seriously they answered the given questions and how accurately they have read the

instructions given. At the end of the questionnaire, the participants were debriefed about the actual goal of the questionnaire.

Results

Manipulation check

Before testing the hypotheses, it was assessed whether the manipulation of anger and the type of relationship the offender has with the victim was successful. A two-way ANOVA indicated that the manipulation of anger had a significant effect on the reported anger feelings, $F(1, 191) = 41.62, p = .00$. Participants in the low anger condition ($M = 3.46, SD = 1.02$) reported significantly less angry feelings than participants in the high anger condition ($M = 4.31, SD = 0.87$). However, a two-way ANOVA also showed that the manipulation of the relationship had a significant effect on the reported feelings of anger, $F(1, 191) = 4.60, p = .03$. People in the no relationship condition reported higher feelings of anger ($M = 4.02, SD = 0.99$) than people who were said that they have a relationship with the victim ($M = 3.75, SD = 1.07$). No interaction effect was found between the manipulation of anger and the manipulation of the relationship on reported anger. Not only did the manipulation of anger affected the feelings of anger in the expected direction, but also the manipulation of the relationship influenced the reported feelings of anger.

The participants received the information that the person whose car the participant damaged was either a good friend or a total stranger which manipulated having a relationship with the victim. A two-way ANOVA was conducted, which indicated a statistically significant effect of the manipulation of the relationship on the evaluation of the relationship, $F(1, 191) = 200.56, p = .00$. Participants in the relationship condition ($M = 5.33, SD = 1.04$) reported having a closer relationship with the victim than the no relationship condition ($M = 3.15, SD = 1.15$). Furthermore, after conducting a two-way ANOVA, the evaluation of the relationship with the victim seemed also to be significantly affected by the manipulation of

anger, $F(1, 191) = 10.24, p = .00$. People who are in the low anger condition ($M = 4.45, SD = 1.54$) report significantly that they have a closer relationship to the victim than people in the high anger condition ($M = 3.99, SD = 1.53$). No interaction effect between the manipulation of anger and the manipulation of the relationship was found on the reported relationship between the offender and the victim.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the manipulations of anger and the type of relationship between offender and victim were successful when the participant was asked to take the perspective of the offender. However, the manipulation of anger does not only affect the reported feelings of anger, but also the reported feelings of closeness regarding the relationship between offender and victim. The same goes for the manipulation of the relationship, as it did not only influence the degree to which the offender feels close to the victim, but also on the reported feelings of anger. It is important to keep these conclusions in mind when making any conclusions based on the statistical results.

Testing the hypotheses

The first hypothesis stated that increased anger towards the victim increases the offender's willingness to participate in victim-offender mediation. However, the two-way ANOVA showed that the effect of anger on offender's willingness to participate in VOM was statistically significant, $F(1, 191) = 6.84, p = .01$. Against the expectation, when comparing the average scores on willingness, it was shown that people in the low anger condition ($M = 5.39; SD = 0.86$) are more willing to participate in VOM than people in the high anger condition ($M = 5.06; SD = 0.90$). Thus, the results did not support the first hypothesis: offenders who experienced increased anger towards the victim did not show a higher willingness to participate. Based on the results, people with low anger were more willing to participate in VOM.

The second hypothesis stated that offenders who are in a close relationship with the victim are more willing to participate than people who have no relationship with the victim. After an analysis of variance has been conducted, the effect of the type of relationship with the victim on the willingness to participate in VOM was marginally significant, and showed a trend, $F(1, 191) = 3.20, p = .07$. Analysis showed that people who were told that the victim was a good friend of theirs ($M = 5.33; SD = 0.90$) reported a slightly higher willingness to participate in victim-offender mediation, compared to people who were told that the victim was a total stranger ($M = 5.11; SD = 0.88$). The second hypothesis could therefore not be fully supported. However, analysis has shown that there was a trend: that people with a relationship to the victim were tending to be more willing to participate in VOM, compared to offenders who had no relationship with the victim.

According to the third hypothesis, an interaction effect was expected: the effect of increased anger towards the victim on the offender's willingness to participate in VOM is reinforced by having a close relationship with the victim. However, analysis of variance did not show a significant interaction effect between these two variables on the offender's willingness to participate, $F(1, 191) = 0.60, p = .44$. The third hypothesis could not be confirmed.

Exploratory analyses

In order to gain more insight in the processes that influence offender's decision-making process in participating in VOM, exploratory analyses have been conducted.

The correlations between the reported feelings of anger, shame and guilt, the participants' evaluation of the type of relationship with the victim and their willingness to participate in VOM can be seen in Table 3. Every correlation is reported to be statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 3

Summary of means, standard deviations and correlations (N = 195)

Measure	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Reported anger	3.89	1.04	–				
2. Shame	4.60	1.24	-.19**	–			
3. Guilt	5.49	1.11	-.44**	.65**	–		
4. Evaluation of relationship	4.22	1.55	-.38**	.28**	.38**	–	
5. Willingness to participate in VOM	5.22	0.90	-.17*	.26**	.33**	.33**	–

As supported by research, guilt and shame correlated positively, indicating that people who felt ashamed for what they did also felt guilty. Furthermore, reported feelings of anger correlated negatively with feelings of shame and guilt: angry people felt less guilt and less ashamed and also rated the relationship with the victim more negatively. This has been supported by scientific literature. Moreover, the evaluation of relationship with the victim correlated positively with the offender's willingness to participate in VOM.

It was also investigated whether the experience of being a victim or an offender and knowing somebody who has been a victim or an offender influence the willingness to participate in VOM. The experience of being a victim correlated negatively with the willingness to participate, $r(193) = -.22, p < .00$, indicating that participants who have been a victim reported less willingness to participate. The experience of committing a crime and knowing a victim or an offender did not correlate significantly with the willingness to participate in VOM. An extended overview regarding the correlations can be found in Appendix B.

In order to assess whether the manipulation of anger and the manipulation of the relationship with the victim had an effect on the reported feelings of guilt, a 2 (high vs. low

anger) x 2 (relationship vs. no relationship) ANOVA was conducted with guilt being the dependent variable. Participants in the low anger condition ($M = 5.64$, $SD = 1.19$) reported marginally significant higher feelings of guilt, compared to the people in the high anger condition ($M = 5.33$; $SD = 1.02$), $F(1, 191) = 3.65$, $p = .06$. No significant main effect was found of the manipulation of the relationship on the reported feelings of guilt, $F(1, 191) = 0.06$, $p = .80$. There was no interaction effect found on feelings of guilt.

Similarly to the reported feelings of guilt, a 2 (high vs. low anger) x 2 (relationship vs. no relationship) ANOVA was conducted with, in this case, shame as the dependent variable. No main effects were found of the anger manipulation ($F(1, 191) = 0.00$, $p = .98$) and the manipulation of the relationship ($F(1, 191) = 0.13$, $p = .73$) on reported shame. Furthermore, there was no interaction effect found.

A paired samples t-test was conducted to determine whether the difference in reported shame and reported guilt was significant, $t(194) = -12.52$, $p = .00$. Participants did indeed report significantly more guilt ($M = 5.49$; $SD = 1.11$) than shame ($M = 4.60$; $SD = 1.24$).

A multiple regression was calculated to predict the offender's willingness to participate based on the degree of experienced shame, guilt and anger (Table 4). The results indicated that the predictors shame, guilt and anger explained a significant amount of the variance of the willingness to participate in VOM, $F(3, 192) = 8.30$, $p < .00$, $R^2 = 0.12$, $R^2_{\text{Adjusted}} = 0.10$. Within this model, guilt was the strongest and the only significant predictor of the participant's willingness to participate in victim-offender mediation.

Table 4

Summary of multiple regression analysis for the willingness to participate in VOM ($N = 195$)

Variable	B	SE (B)	β	t	Sig. (p)
Reported anger	-0.33	0.07	-0.04	-0.50	.62
Shame	0.6	0.07	0.08	0.92	.36
Guilt	0.21	0.08	0.26	2.63	.01

Discussion

The main goal of this study was to shine light on the influences anger and the type of relationship between victim and offender might have on the offender's willingness to participate in victim-offender mediation. It was tested whether people who experienced increased anger were more willing to participate in VOM than people who did not feel angry. Furthermore, it was expected that having a relationship with the victim would be a motivator for the offender to participate in VOM in order to restore the social, psychological and potentially financial benefits of the relationship. Because being angry and having a relationship with the victim were both thought to influence the willingness to participate, it was expected that the effect of anger on the willingness would be reinforced when a relationship was present.

It was found that, against expectations, low levels of anger lead to a higher willingness to participate than high levels of anger, and that participants who felt angry reported less feelings of shame and guilt than participants who were less angry. Similarly, participants who were less angry felt more guilty about committing a hit-and-run. As expected, having a relationship with the victim also played an important role: participants who had a relationship with the person whose car they damaged were more willing to participate than participants who damaged the car of a stranger. However, having a relationship did not affect feelings of guilt. Furthermore, it was found that participants who experienced being a victim at some time in their life were less willing to participate in VOM than participants who had not been a victim. Additionally, feeling guilty for committing a hit-and-run was a stronger motivator for participants to participate in VOM than feeling angry with the other person.

According to Fischer and Roseman (2007), anger has the social function to achieve a behavioral change in another person's behavior. When experiencing feelings of injustice, angry feelings might be evoked (Videbeck, 2011), which then might lead to an approaching

response on the side of the offender. Unexpectedly, this research provides support for the opposite: people who were feeling less angry were more willing to approach the other party regarding VOM.

One reason for this finding might be that the note in the low anger group may have made the impression on the offender that the other party, thus the victim, was willing to talk with the offender. Due to the apologizing tone of the note, the expectation might have been evoked that the possible conversation with the other party might end positively, while the other note in the high anger condition might have indicated that a future confrontation, possibly VOM, might have ended in an even bigger escalation due to the extremely negative tone of the other party. However, it was not asked what the expectations and motivations of the participants were regarding VOM. Having the intention to only apologize for one's action, the willingness to participate might be different, compared to when the intention was to justify for one's action and explaining one's side of the story. When the main reason for participating would be to apologize, it might be less important if the other party seemed angry. On the other side, when the intention is to start a conversation with the victim in order to discuss the financial aspects with the expectation to resolve the conflict through a personal conversation, an angry reaction from the other party might be discouraging for the offender, making him less motivated to participate in VOM. Future research could focus on the influence of the offender's expectations regarding VOM on the willingness to participate and to what extent the perceived reaction of the other party plays a role.

Another explanation for the finding that low anger leads to more willingness to participate might be the relationship between guilt and anger. According to analysis, the feeling of guilt for committing a hit-and-run motivated people to consider participating in VOM. In the case when high anger was evoked, participants reported feeling less guilty than when reading the apologizing note in the low anger group. Participants who found the

blaming note possibly experienced more feelings of injustice, which then led to the participant experiencing less guilt about committing the hit-and-run and more anger towards the other party. Ultimately, this might have led to a lower willingness to participate in VOM. On the other side, participants who found the apologizing note might not have had any reason to feel being treated unfairly or angry and the focus might have been more on the actual act of committing a hit-and-run which induced feelings of guilt. When considering anger, guilt and shame, the emotion of guilt was the strongest predictor for the willingness to participate in VOM. And as mentioned earlier, feeling guilty for one's behavior is reported to be an internal reaction to the violation of one's standards, which potentially leads to damage to one's self-image (Tangney et al., 1996). It also leads to experiencing remorse and tension, which then motivates the individual to seek reparation in form of a confession or an apology (Tangney et al., 2014). This research was able to support that guilt leads to the motivation to approach the other party, in this case by means of VOM. By talking to the other party within the context of VOM, the offender is provided with an opportunity to reduce the feelings of guilt through admission of guilt and possibly receiving absolution by the victim in mediated contact. It also provided some support for the findings of Howell, Turowski and Buro (2012): experiencing guilt predicts apologizing.

Another point of discussion regards the offender's justification of being angry. The angry note did possibly not only evoke anger and feelings of injustice, but it might also have given an opportunity to justify committing a hit-and-run. When participants have had the feelings that they were treated unfairly by the other person by receiving a blaming and angry note, people might have felt justified when committing a hit-and-run, leaving the other person with a damaged car. In this case, they possibly were less willing to offer an apology within the context of VOM, because they had the feeling that the other person had brought it on him- or herself. Future research might focus on the concept of justification in the context of VOM:

to what extent are offenders willing to participate when they have the feeling that their criminal behavior was justified? Having the feeling that their actions are justified could possibly lead to being less willing to participate, because they would not feel guilty about their behavior, leaving them with no need to apologize.

Furthermore, a trend was found, that having a relationship with the victim did indeed influence the offender's willingness to participate in VOM, in accordance with the second hypothesis. According to Bono et al. (2008), people are driven to restore the social relationship in order to regain social benefits that come along with that relationship, such as emotional support and closeness. It was expected that the fear of being socially excluded, thus damage to the offender's moral-social dimension (Shnabel & Nadler, 2015), would be a motivator to seek the conversation with the victim within the context of VOM. It was able to provide some scientific support for these findings.

However, this relationship between having a relationship with the victim and the offender's willingness to participate in VOM was not as strong as expected. One possible explanation for this might be that the manipulation of anger also influenced the evaluation of the relationship with the victim. Feeling angry with the other person might have also led to evaluate their relationship with the victim as worse, compared to when being not angry. This also aligns with research from Finkel et al. (2002): being in a committed relationship with the conflict party leads to being more hurt by the other person than when there is no commitment involved in the relationship. Reading a blaming note by somebody close might have had negative influence on the evaluation of the relationship.

It is very important to mention that the manipulations of both anger and having a relationship influenced each other significantly. As mentioned earlier, when being in the angry condition it was very likely that not only anger was manipulated, but that this also had influence on the perceived relationship with the victim. This reciprocal relationship might be

the reason why an interaction effect was not found between having a relationship with the victim and anger. Therefore it was not confirmed that having a relationship with the victim reinforces the effect of anger on the offender's willingness to participate in victim-offender mediation.

Limitations, strengths and implications

However, certain limitations of this study have to be kept in mind when interpreting the given results. Due to the reciprocal influence of both manipulations, it cannot finally be said that low levels of anger alone made offenders more willing to participate in VOM, but that the reported anger was probably affected by the relationship the offender has with the victim. Regarding a possible replication of this study, it is advised to manipulate anger and having a relationship with the victim in a way, that both constructs do not influence each other significantly, so that more convincing research is provided that assesses the influence anger and having a relationship possibly have on the willingness to participate in VOM.

Also, the general demographic information of the participants should be kept in mind. Three third of the sample were 22 years or younger, which made it difficult to draw representative conclusions regarding the general population. In order to make the sample more representative for the general population, it is advised to select participants from different backgrounds and networks, since this sample consisted mostly of students. Possibly age has an influence: maybe older people would react in a different way to a blaming note after a hit-and-run, for example, more considerate and more calmly than younger participants.

Another limitation of this study concerns the manipulation of anger. It is possible that the given note in the anger condition did not only evoke anger, but that the scenario also made the participants to experience a feeling of injustice, which then led people to dissolve that feelings of injustice by confronting the other party. However, it was not measured to what extent the participants experienced injustice. So, the question remains to what extent injustice

motivated participants to participate in VOM and to what extent these feelings had influence on the reported anger. Thus, although the manipulation of anger worked, replicating studies should also include questions about the experienced injustice in order to assess its effect on the willingness to participate and on anger.

Despite several limitations, this study has also strong points. One strength of this study is that several participants reported after participating in the study, that the scenario of committing a hit-and-run and finding a note on the window shield was seen as very plausible. Some mentioned that they have been in a similar situation, which made the scenario very realistic. Besides, the participants said that they have been very accurately when they read the scenario and the given questions and that they have been very serious regarding their answers. So, although it was not possible to include real offenders in this study, it seems that asking the participants to take the perspective of an offender has worked.

One should not oversee the positive added value of this study to the scientific knowledge about the motivations and factors behind offenders' willingness to participate in VOM. Uniquely, this study was able to deliver information not only about the effects of having a relationship with the victim on the willingness to participate, but also about the effect anger has on the willingness to participate when feelings of guilt are present. Anger seems to play an important role, considering that people who are not too angry are more willing to participate in VOM, but guilt seemed to be an even bigger predictor of offenders' willingness to participate. This might help social workers to encourage more offenders to seek reconciliation using VOM, for instance, when noticing that an offender feels particularly guilty about his criminal actions. The potential benefit of feeling less guilty due to a conversation with the victim might motivate more offenders to participate in VOM in the future.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Online questionnaire

Victim-offender mediation

Welcome! Thank you for considering taking part in my research. Before we start, I would like to ask you for your consent to participate in this study about the willingness of offenders' to participate in victim-offender mediation.

Victim-offender mediation (VOM) is a practice within the field of justice which offers the possibility for victims and offenders of a crime to interact in a safe and structured setting on a voluntary basis. Assisted by an objective mediator, victim and offender have the opportunity to discuss the crime and to talk about the emotional, physical or even financial impact of the crime on the lives of the parties involved. The victim is able to ask the offender questions about the motivations behind the criminal act or about his or her perception of the conflict and the offender has the opportunity to take responsibility for what he has done and to set things straight. VOM aims therefore at providing support to the victims and at providing the offenders with an opportunity to learn about the impact he or she left on the victim. Participating in mediated contact might help both victim and offender to develop a plan on how to reduce the negative impact and the harm caused by the crime.

In the following, I will ask you to imagine a fictive situation in which you will take the part of the offender. Afterwards you will be asked several questions about the degree of anger you might have experienced in the given situation and about the relationship you might have with the victim and to what degree you would be drawn to come together with the victim in order to reconcile.

The participation in this study is completely voluntary. There will not be any negative consequences for not participating or for not finishing the questionnaire. You are free to stop at any given time. Your answers and your personal information will be handled anonymously and with confidentiality.

Your given information will only be used within the context of this study and will not be passed on to third parties.

If any questions come up regarding this study, please contact me: Nadja Erdinger:
n.k.erdinger@student.utwente.nl

I have read the information described above and agree with the given terms.

- ☐ I agree (1)
 - ☐
-

Condition 1: High anger – high intimacy

You are planning to step in your car in order to get to an important meeting with your boss. Reaching your car, you see that someone has parked in your way, making it very difficult to

leave your parking spot. However, since the meeting is very important for your future career, you decide to try leaving. As you step into your car, you notice that someone unknown has left a note on your windows which says "You really should learn how to park, idiot! It's your own fault that I couldn't park any better!", indicating that the person who parked in your way is the person who left the note on your window.

Being very angry and frustrated for not being treated fairly since you parked perfectly within the white lines, you try to leave the parking spot, but you hit the other car, breaking his outer mirror. Since the other person insulted you, you leave the scene without leaving your insurance information and without calling the police, not paying attention to what happens to the damage on the other car. However, a bystander sees you damaging the other car and leaving, convinced that you committed a hit-and-run. He calls the police, resulting in you being charged for committing a hit-and-run. A few days later, the police arrives at your door, informing you about the charges and that you were seen by a bystander.

PAGE

As the police officer says the name of the person whose car you damaged and who left the note on your window, you recognize the name immediately, since the other person turns out to be a very good friend of yours.

PAGE

During the juridical process, the lawyer informs you over a practice called "victim-offender mediation" in which you get the opportunity to meet and talk to the friend whose car you damaged in order to talk about the parking situation, how and why it occurred. It offers you a possibility to interact with him in a safe and personal setting, in order to come to an arrangement regarding the hit-and-run and the financial impact on the other person.

The lawyer asks you whether you would like to participate in such a mediated contact.

Condition 2: High anger – low intimacy

You are planning to step in your car in order to get to an important meeting with your boss. Reaching your car, you see that someone has parked in your way, making it very difficult to leave your parking spot. However, since the meeting is very important for your future career, you decide to try leaving. As you step into your car, you notice that someone unknown has left a note on your windows which says "You really should learn how to park, idiot! It's your own fault that I couldn't park any better!", indicating that the person who parked in your way is the person who left the note on your window.

Being very angry and frustrated for not being treated fairly since you parked perfectly within the white lines, you try to leave the parking spot, but you hit the other car, breaking his outer mirror. Since the other person insulted you, you leave the scene without leaving your insurance information and without calling the police, not paying attention to what happens to the damage on the other car. However, a bystander sees you damaging the other car and leaving, convinced that you committed a hit-and-run. He calls the police, resulting in you being charged for committing a hit-and-run. A few days later, the police arrives at your door, informing you about the charges and that you were seen by a bystander.

PAGE

The police officer says the name of the person whose car you damaged and who probably left the note on your window. The person turns out to be a total stranger.

PAGE

During the juridical process, the lawyer informs you over a practice called "victim-offender mediation" in which you get the opportunity to meet and talk to the stranger whose car you damaged in order to talk about the parking situation, how and why it occurred. It offers you a possibility to interact with the stranger in a safe and personal setting, in order to

come to an arrangement regarding the hit-and-run and the financial impact on the other person.

The lawyer asks you whether you would like to participate in such a mediated contact

Condition 3: Low anger – high intimacy

You are planning to step in your car in order to get to an important meeting with your boss. Reaching your car, you see that someone has parked in your way, making it very difficult to leave your parking spot. However, since the meeting is very important for your future career, you decide to try leaving. As you step into your car, you notice that someone unknown has left a note on your windows which says "I'm very sorry for parking in your way, but I couldn't do it any better! I'm very sorry for the inconvenience and I'll leave as soon as possible.", indicating that the person who parked in your way is the person who left the note on your window.

Due to the very important meeting with your boss, you try to leave the parking spot, but you hit the other car, breaking his outer mirror. Having serious time pressure, you leave the scene without leaving your insurance information and without calling the police, not paying attention to what happens to the damage on the other car. However, a bystander sees you damaging the other car and leaving, convinced that you committed a hit-and-run. He calls the police, resulting in you being charged for committing a hit-and-run. A few days later, the police arrives at your door, informing you about the charges and that you were seen by a bystander.

PAGE

As the police officer says the name of the person whose car you damaged and who left the note on your window, you recognize the name immediately, since the other person turns out to be a very good friend of yours.

PAGE

During the juridical process, the lawyer informs you over a practice called "victim-offender mediation" in which you get the opportunity to meet and talk to the friend whose car you damaged in order to talk about the parking situation, how and why it occurred. It offers you a possibility to interact with him in a safe and personal setting, in order to come to an arrangement regarding the hit-and-run and the financial impact on the other person.

The lawyer asks you whether you would like to participate in such a mediated contact.

Condition 4: Low anger – low intimacy

You are planning to step in your car in order to get to an important meeting with your boss. Reaching your car, you see that someone has parked in your way, making it very difficult to leave your parking spot. However, since the meeting is very important for your future career, you decide to try leaving. As you step into your car, you notice that someone unknown has left a note on your windows which says "I'm very sorry for parking in your way, but I couldn't do it any better! I'm very sorry for the inconvenience and I'll leave as soon as possible.", indicating that the person who parked in your way is the person who left the note on your window.

Due to the very important meeting with your boss, you try to leave the parking spot, but you hit the other car, breaking his outer mirror. Having serious time pressure, you leave the scene without leaving your insurance information and without calling the police, not paying attention to what happens to the damage on the other car. However, a bystander sees you damaging the other car and leaving, convinced that you committed a hit-and-run. He calls the police, resulting in you being charged for committing a hit-and-run. A few days later, the

police arrives at your door, informing you about the charges and that you were seen by a bystander.

PAGE

The police officer says the name of the person whose car you damaged and who probably left the note on your window. The person turns out to be a total stranger.

PAGE

During the juridical process, the lawyer informs you over a practice called "victim-offender mediation" in which you get the opportunity to meet and talk to the stranger whose car you damaged in order to talk about the parking situation, how and why it occurred. It offers you a possibility to interact with the stranger in a safe and personal setting, in order to come to an arrangement regarding the hit-and-run and the financial impact on the other person.

The lawyer asks you whether you would like to participate in such a mediated contact

Please keep in mind the fictional scenario you just read and try to think about the way you would feel being in the same situation in real life.

Please indicate your level of agreement with the statements listed below.

OFFENDER'S PARTICIPATION IN VOM: ANGER AND HAVING RELATIONSHIP

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Moderately disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Moderately agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel angry with the person whose car I damaged. (1)							
In this situation it is useless for me to get angry. (2)							
I have an urge to do something harmful or shocking to the other person. (3)							
I feel bitter towards the other person whose car I hit. (4)							
I have the feeling that I was treated unfairly by the person who left a note on my window. (5)							

OFFENDER'S PARTICIPATION IN VOM: ANGER AND HAVING RELATIONSHIP

Please keep in mind the fictional scenario you just read and try to think about the way who you would feel being in the same situation in real life.

Please indicate your level of agreement with the statements listed below.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Moderately disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Moderately agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel like I am a bad person for leaving the damaged car without saying something. (1)							
I want to sink into the floor and disappear for committing a hit-and-run. (2)							
I feel worthless for committing a criminal act. (3)							
I feel regret for committing a hit-and-run. (4)							
I feel like apologizing to the other person for damaging a car and leaving. (5)							
I feel bad about damaging the other car and leaving. (6)							

OFFENDER'S PARTICIPATION IN VOM: ANGER AND HAVING RELATIONSHIP

Being the person who committed a hit-and-run in real life, please indicate your level of agreement with the statements listed below.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Moderately disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Moderately agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I care about the relationship with the person whose car I damaged. (1)							
I have a close relationship with the person whose car I hit. (2)							
I care about the other person's well-being. (3)							
I feel misunderstood by the other person. (4)							
I consider it important to be in a good relationship with the other person. (5)							

The next questions will regard your willingness to participate in victim-offender mediation, considering being in the same situation as the fictional scenario mentioned earlier.

As mentioned earlier: "Victim-offender mediation (VOM) is a practice within the field of justice which offers the possibility for victims and offenders of a crime to interact in a safe and structured setting on a voluntary basis. Assisted by an objective mediator, victim and offender have the opportunity to discuss the crime and to talk about the emotional, physical or even financial impact of the crime on the lives of the parties involved. The victim is able to ask the offender questions about the motivations behind the criminal act or about his or her perception of the conflict and the offender has the opportunity to take responsibility for what he has done and to help the victim to "set things straight".

VOM aims therefore at providing support to the victims and at providing the offenders with an opportunity to learn about the impact he or she has left on the victim. Participating in

mediated contact might help both victim and offender to develop a plan on how to reduce the negative impact and the harm caused by the crime.

Please indicate your level of agreement with the statements listed below.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Moderately disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Moderately agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I want to confront the other person by participating in victim-offender mediation. (1)							
I would like to talk with the other person within the context of victim-offender mediation. (2)							
I would like to reconcile with the person whose car I damaged within the context of victim-offender mediation. (3)							
I would have a problem with sitting in the same room as the other person, regarding victim-offender mediation. (4)							
I would like to be given the opportunity to restore the image the other person might have about me. (5)							

Based on the scenario you read, what is your willingness to participate in mediated contact with the person whose car you damaged?

OFFENDER'S PARTICIPATION IN VOM: ANGER AND HAVING RELATIONSHIP

- Very low (1)
- Low (2)
- Neither high nor low (3)
- High (4)
- Very high (5)

INITIATIVE Being the person who committed the hit-and-run..

	Definitely yes	Probably yes	Might or might not	Probably not	Definitely not
Would you be willing to take the initiative in requesting a victim-offender mediation? (1)					
Would you be willing to participate in victim-offender mediation, when the other person takes the first step and asked for mediated contact? (2)					

What is your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)

How old are you? _____

What is your nationality?

- Dutch (1)
- German (2)
- Other (3)

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Primary School (Basisschool, Grundschule) (1)
- Vocational Education (e.g. LBO, VMBO, Hauptschule) (2)
- Secondary Education (e.g. MAVO, Realschule) (3)
- Higher Secondary Education (e.g. HAVO, VWO, Fachhochschulreife, Abitur) (4)
- Bachelor's Degree (5)
- Master's Degree (6)
- Doctorate Degree (7)

How would you rate your English reading ability?

- ☐ Extremely good (1)
- ☐ Somewhat good (2)
- ☐ Neither good nor bad (3)
- ☐ Somewhat bad (4)
- ☐ Extremely bad (5)

Have you ever been the victim of a crime?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Have you ever committed an offense in your life?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Do you know anyone who has been the victim of a crime?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Do you know anyone who has committed a crime?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

How accurately have you read the instructions you were given?

- ☐ Extremely accurately (1)
- ☐ Very accurately (2)
- ☐ Moderately accurately (3)
- ☐ Slightly accurately (4)
- ☐ Not accurately at all (5)

How serious have you been answering the questions in this survey?

- ☐ Extremely serious (1)
- ☐ Very serious (2)
- ☐ Moderately serious (3)
- ☐ Slightly serious (4)
- ☐ Not serious at all (5)

Thank you for participating in this study!

The exact goal of this study was to examine to what extent angry feelings have an influence on the relationship between offenders' willingness to participate in victim-offender mediation and their relationship to the other conflict party. During this study, all participants read a story about committing a hit-and-run, but only half of the participants read a situation where one received an anger-provoking note on the window shield, while the other half found an apologizing note.

Furthermore, half of the participant read a story where they hit the car of a good friend, while the other half damaged the car of a total stranger. Randomly assigning the participants to different scenarios makes it possible to determine whether feelings of anger (provoked by an

angry note) might have an influence whether people would be ready to meet with the other person in the context of victim-offender mediation.

Furthermore, it might provide an inside whether people were more likely to participate when the other conflict party was a good friend. All participants were asked to answer the same questions after reading the given scenario.

If you have any questions or comments on this study, please contact the main researcher:
n.k.erdinger@student.utwente.nl

Please don't forget to click on the arrow below, so your answers will be recorded!

Thank you!

Appendix B:*Summary of means, standard deviations and correlations (N = 195)*

Measure	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Reported anger	3.89	1.04	–								
2. Shame	4.60	1.24	-.19**	–							
3. Guilt	5.49	1.11	-.44**	.65**	–						
4. Evaluation of relationship	4.22	1.55	-.38**	.28**	.38**	–					
5. Willingness to participate in VOM	5.22	0.90	-.17*	.26**	.33**	.33**	–				
6. Experience being a victim	1.57	0.50	.08	-.20**	-.15*	-.06	-.22**	–			
7. Experience being an offender	1.65	0.48	-.08	-.20**	-.08	-.06	-.11	.44**	–		
8. Know a victim	1.18	0.39	.07	-.05	-.07	-.10	-.04	.35**	.20**	–	
9. Know an offender	1.33	0.47	.08	-.24**	-.21**	-.16*	-.11	.39**	.34**	.41**	–

Note. ** *P* values are significant at the 0.01 level; * *P* values are significant at the 0.05 level