



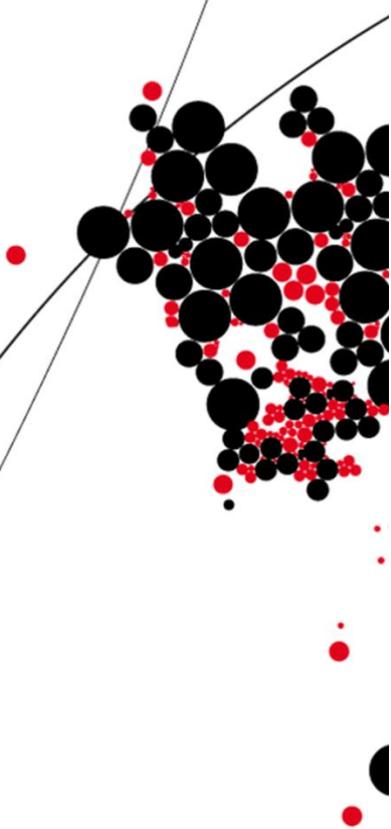
**UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.**

**Participation in Victim-Offender  
Mediation:**

*The effect of strengthening  
offenders' public moral image on  
their willingness to participate*

**Bachelor Thesis  
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## Abstract

The current research aimed to find out what increases the willingness of offenders to participate in restorative justice programs. It was focused on the needs-based model of reconciliation by Shnabel and Nadler (2008, 2015), which states that after a crime, the victim and the offender are both deprived of psychological needs, which are for the former the loss of sense of power, and for the latter a threat to the public moral image. The model assumes that satisfying these needs will lead to a higher motivation to reconcile with the other party. Looking at previous research there is more research on the victim's' role in the process, even though studies have shown that addressing both parties equally is important to achieve a successful reconciliation between offender and victim. Factors that influence an offender's willingness to take part in VOM have not been investigated in detail. The model by Shnabel and Nadler (2008, 2015) is an important theoretical framework when investigating this side of research, which is why it was considered in more detail in the current study. Offenders experience a threat to their public and private moral image because they broke rules belonging to a certain community. Satisfying these psychological needs will, according to the model, lead to an increase of offenders' willingness to engage in reconciliation. In this study, it was expected that the stronger the fulfilment of that need is, the more the offender would want to participate in Victim-offender-mediation. This study focused on the strength of that fulfilment before the mediation took place. To test for this effect, 121 participants were selected via online channels. 67 participants were excluded from the analysis due to unfulfilled criteria. To test the hypotheses, an experimental manipulation was set up which distributed participants over three conditions, to whom they were randomly assigned. These conditions were no moral image fulfilment (control condition), low moral image fulfilment and high moral image fulfilment. The participants were first exposed to a storyline where they had to imagine themselves in the role of an offender. Furthermore, dependent on the condition the participants were assigned to, they received a message of the victim, stating that the victim wants to take part in VOM with the offender. Dependent on the condition participants were assigned to, the strength of the victims' message varied. To see if these different levels of fulfilment exerted an effect, participants filled in a questionnaire after the manipulation about their willingness to take part in face-to-face Victim-offender mediation. Results showed that there was a significant difference between the low moral image fulfilment condition and no moral image fulfilment condition as expected, but unexpectedly there was no significant difference between the low moral image fulfilment condition and the high moral image fulfilment condition found. It was concluded that the willingness to participate is independent of the strength of fulfilment, but that the offender needs to be fulfilled in his/her psychological need to some degree to increase his/her willingness to participate. This is in line with the model of Shnabel and Nadler. Within the results, it must be considered that the manipulation check did not work properly, and participants were unequally distributed among conditions, which could have influenced the outcome.

When a crime takes place, there are usually two parties involved: On the one hand there is the offender and on the other hand the victim of the certain crime. When an act of crime takes place, it makes sense that this event is influencing both parties afterwards in some way. Both victim and offender are affected by the consequences of the event in asymmetrical ways. Victims may, according to a series of studies, experience feelings of anger, loss of self-esteem or perceived behavioural control (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994). Experiencing these emotions can be due to victims feeling of being powerless during the event. This being the case, this deprivation of personal power might lead to a lack of self-dignity and self-respect (Bonesteffer, 2016). That many victims experience these feelings can be traced back to the fundamental human need for power, which forms, together with the human need for love and belonging, the core of interpersonal experience (Bennis & Shepard, 1956, as cited in Shnabel & Nadler, 2008).

The latter construct can be related to what the offender experiences after crime. There is a need for relatedness in every human according to prior theoretical research (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). When humans become offenders of a crime, some might experience feelings of guilt and shame due to the emotional distress they have caused the victim (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). Following Baumeister et al. (1994) (as cited in Shnabel & Nadler, 2008), taking the human need for love and belonging into account, it can be concluded that offenders might also experience an “anxiety over social exclusion”. This contains an offender’s anxiety to be excluded from the social community he/she feels he/she belongs to, due to having broken the moral rules of that community (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). This may not be generalized to offenders of all kinds, as some might not even feel a belonging to a certain community, but when looking at prior research about emotional consequences of crime on victim and the offender, it becomes clear that offenders might often experience these kinds of feelings (Shnabel & Nadler, 2015), and further research on why offenders want to participate in Victim-offender-mediations is necessary (Van Velzen, 2016). The described emotional consequences that the victim and the offender experience are leading to a motivational state in which these consequences become a psychological need that must be fulfilled. These consequences can thus be labelled as “psychological deprivation of needs” (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). The victim feels in this case a need to restore his/her personal sense of power and might engage in power-seeking behaviour. The offender, on the other side, might engage in behaviour that enhances his/her personal view on him/her as an acceptable human due to his/her fear of social exclusion. Looking at this prior literature, it appears necessary to take care of emotional needs of both victim and offenders after crime when wanting to achieve mental well-being in both. For the victim, this is of importance to get back to a normal life and prevent or help trauma. For the offender on the other side, addressing his/her emotional needs is important for a successful learning process, so criminal behaviour does not repeat. Next to that, psychological well-being is ensured (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). As addressing needs of both parties is equally important, the current study focused on the effect that fulfilling the certain psychological needs of the offender has on his/her willingness to participate in interventions for Victims and offenders, which serve as

means of achieving these positive outcomes for both parties. There exist different kinds of interventions which focus on the communication between offender and victim after a crime has been committed.

### *Restorative Justice Programs*

Involving both parties equally and addressing their psychological needs after crime is important for the psychological well-being of the victim, and its process of getting over the crime (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). Even though research has shown the importance of involving *both* parties in several studies, this approach is still not applied to many criminal cases. Instead, punishment is commonly used as the only method to handle the crime (“justice-as-punishment”). This traditional view is due to the believe that we live in a “just” world, where people get what they deserve (Paul & Schenck-Hamlin, 2017).

As both victim and offender suffer from deprivation of psychological needs, there are existing interventions that focus not directly on the punishment of the offender but more on attending to the psychological harm that both parties experience. These programs that shift away from the view of a crime as violation of law to the view that the crime is a violation of people and relationships are called *Restorative Justice programs*. The essence of these programs is to provide relevant reparation of the harm that was caused through the crime (Latimer, Dowden, & Muise, 2005). Restorative justice (RJ) programs hold the belief that offenders are held accountable for their criminal behaviour by repairing emotional harm of the victim with means of restitution and apology, instead of focusing only on the punishment of the offender that leaves out the integration of the victim in the process (Paul & Schenck-Hamlin, 2017). RJ-programs involve practical assistance, crisis intervention as well as an involvement of the victim in the process and counselling of the victim (Umbreit, Vos, & Coates, 2006). Contradictory to traditional justice systems as justice-as-punishment, restorative justice programs focus on addressing “harms, needs, obligations, in order to heal and put things together” (Zehr, 2002 in Bonensteffen, 2016).

Practically, these goals are most commonly strived for voluntarily, and dialogic communication between the victim and the offender are tools to achieve that. During the process, experiences and stories of the offender and the victim are shared with one another and there is a focus on listening empathically and negotiating reparation (Paul, 2015). Offenders must therefore be willing to talk openly about his/her (criminal) behaviour and should be able to take responsibility for the harm he/she has caused victim (Latimer et al., 2005).

Research has shown that RJ-programs are most effective when three elements are considered: 1) Both parties are taking part voluntarily, 2) Both parties are honest when talking about how they experienced the event, 3) The parties talk face-to-face to each other (Llewellyn & Howse, 1998 in Latimer et al., 2005). It was shown that restorative justice programs are beneficial for both victim and offender (Van Velzen, 2016), through encouraging reparation of the victim’s harm through the

offender and enabling reintegration of both parties in a normal life (Latimer et al., 2005). In restorative justice processes, victims get the opportunity to be heard, which is less the case in traditional processes, within victims appear to be less satisfied with the case (Groeneveld, 2016).

In traditional crime processes, crime is defined as being against the state, and the state itself takes the role of the victims. This way, individual needs of the *real* victims are not considered, even though consideration of these is important for the victims' mental health (Zehr, 2002). Punishing the offender might lead to a victim's satisfaction in some cases, but as the victim would have no chance to express and discuss mental states, a reparation of psychological harm cannot take place, leaving the victim with damage (Dhami, 2012). Instead, victims have e.g. a need for information, truth telling, empowerment and restitution according to Zehr (2002).

Next to not considering the victim's' needs after crime, the criminal justice system is giving little attention to enabling possibilities for *offenders* to empathize with the victim and to understand consequences of their behaviour. This way, the creation of a successful learning process is inhibited. Instead, there is focused on the punishment of the offender, and little opportunity to act on his/her responsibility is given (Zehr, 2002).

Studies have shown that after having committed a crime, offenders are concerned about their moral societal image as well as about their view of themselves as a moral citizen (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). The alienation of the offenders from society is only strengthened by the process of punishment and the following prison experience, if that is the outcome of the process (Zehr, 2002). Zehr (2002) argues that taking accountability is not given through punishment only, but through facing the harm offenders have caused, and through getting the possibility to reconcile, e.g. via RJ-programs. To make it possible that the offenders accept their responsibility for the crime, to transform them back to a contributing member of society, their needs must be addressed, too (Zehr, 2002). Thus, the above indicates that, as addressing both parties is of high importance, restorative justice programs are a good way to achieve mental well-being through open communication and reciprocally understanding. Next to repairing the victims harm, the offender has the possibility to reflect on what he has done and to reintegrate into the community from which his/her belonging is threatened (Shnabel & Nadler, 2015).

### *Victim-offender-mediation*

Restorative Justice programs can take in many forms, one well-known intervention is *Victim-offender-mediation* (VOM). These interventions gained more attention among the years and are used in different cases of crime. Mostly, VOM was used for property crimes but is nowadays also more often used for more serious violent crimes (Umbreit et al., 2006; Cannon, 2018, p. 3). During VOM, victims can hold offenders accountable for their behaviour while being assisted by a mediator (Groeneveld, 2017). With the help of a third party, a dialogue driven principle is followed, and emphasis lies on the discussion of the impact of the crime (Bonesteffer, 2016). Victim-offender-mediation was shown to have positive outcomes for both parties. Especially for victims, VOM is seen

as a good opportunity to talk face-to-face with the offender about feelings they have about the crime (Groeneveld, 2017). Through open communication with the offender the victim is getting the chance to understand the offenders' motivation about the crime (Umbreit et al., 2006). Research into VOM showed that it decreases feelings of anxiety and stress among victims and has positive outcomes for the offenders learning process (Groeneveld, 2017). When the offender is listening to the victim's experience of his/her mental states, it enables him/her to see the impact and consequences of his/her behaviour. This enables him/her to learn from his/her behaviour and to make amends of this behaviour. Furthermore, the offender is given the chance to apologize to the victim (Umbreit et al., 2006).

### *Factors that influence participation*

It is essential that there must be focused on factors that influence participation in these programs to ensure a safe, fearless living in a greater sense. Research has shown that there exist different reasons for victims and offenders to take or not to take in VOM. Umbreit et al. (2006), for instance, stated that 58 percent of victims wanted to participate to gather information from the offender, 43 percent wanted the offender to see his/her impact of behaviour and 40 percent were seeking for human contact with the responsible person (Umbreit et al., 2006). On the other hand, offenders appear to be motivated to take part in VOM "make it up" to the victim, to get the event behind them or to apologize to the victim (Umbreit et al., 2006). In Umbreit et al. (2006), 38 percent of offenders wanted to take part to apologize and another 38 percent wanted to help the victim to heal after the crime. Next to that, 74 percent hoped to benefit themselves from the intervention (Umbreit et al., 2006).

Although it is shown that VOM has positive effects, there exist barriers for the offender and the victim to take part in VOM. As stated in van Velzen (2016), mediated contact was established in only 31 percent of cases as the restorative justice organization *Slachtoffer in Beeld* indicated (Slachtoffer in Beeld, 2015 in van Velzen, 2016). Umbreit et al. (2006) name several different reasons for the victim not to take part. For example, the victim might not regard it as necessary as the harm caused by the crime is not that big. Victims might also experience anxiety over facing the offender and therefore refusing to take part (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). Offenders might not be willing to participate because they want to avoid feelings of responsibility (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). Umbreit et al. (2006) mention that offenders reasons to take part or not take part are less frequently explored and it is thus difficult to define these, which is why the current study focused on exploring these factors in more detail.

### *Theoretical Backgrounds*

An urgently important contribution to research on VOM has been through Shnabel & Nadler (2008, 2015), with their *Needs-based-model of reconciliation*.

Within this concept, they pointed out different important factors that contribute to the victims and offenders' willingness to reconcile. This model states that both victim and offender experience deprivation of certain psychological needs after the crime. That both offender and victim are deprived of individual needs was also shown in previous literature (Zehr, 2002; Dhimi, 2012). The model of Shnabel and Nadler (2008) takes a more specific look at these psychological needs. The deprivation of these certain constructs serves as a barrier to take part in reconciliation programs, which is why it is important to address them in the process after the crime. Satisfying these psychological needs will consequently promote willingness to reconcile or take part in mediation interventions. In this model, they are defined as 1) *the victim's loss of sense of power*, and 2) *the threat to the offender's public moral image*. Thinking more holistically, this may of course not be the only need that offenders might experience after a crime, but according to the theoretical concept of Shnabel and Nadler (2008), offenders that are anxious about their role in social communities might experience this need.

Following the model, to increase willingness to take part in VOM, *Empowerment* of the deprived needs must take place. In the case of the victim, this need is their sense of personal power. Giving the victim back its sense of power is made possible through seeing offenders taking responsibility for the injustice they have caused. This way, control is given back to the victims, which increases their willingness to reconcile. The offender, on the other hand, is anxious about his/her public moral image, and experiences feelings of guilt and shame. The offender is generally concerned about being excluded from a social community because he/she broke the rules belonging to that community, which can be defined as fear of social exclusion. Next to that, the offender wants to perceive him/herself as acceptable human and moral citizen. This can be achieved through apologizing to the victim, to show empathy and to take responsibility for the harm he/she has caused. Following the model of Shnabel and Nadler (2008) the offender is also seeking acceptance from the victim. This includes that the victim shows empathy for the offender, so that he/she gains back his/her feeling of being accepted by others and belonging to the community. The empowerment the offender needs to experience to be willing to reconcile is thus acceptance and empathy of the victim, or similar encouragement through the victim.

Next to the model by Shnabel and Nadler, there is not much current research to be found that is dealing with the *offender's* willingness to take part in VOM. However, other theoretical approaches were directed to the Victims participation, as the integration of the *Theory of Planned Behavior* and the *Conflict goal accomplishment* theories in the study of Paul and Schenck-Hamlin (2017). Although their research was mainly based on the willingness of victims to take part in VOM, it may still be of interest when looking at the willingness of offenders. For example, in the context of conflict goal accomplishment, the decision of whether to take part in conflict interventions is a function of the

party's desires to accomplish specific goals, and their beliefs about whether taking part in that intervention will lead to accomplishing this goal (Paul, 2016 cited in Paul & Schenck-Hamlin, 2017). In the case of a victim, for example, their participation would be due to their justice goals and believe to achieve this justice goal by taking part in VOM. What is also of importance here is to see possibilities in VOM that would not be possible in traditional justice procedures (e.g. asking questions to the offender) (Paul & Schenck-Hamlin, 2017). There is no reason not to assume that this model could work in a similar way concerning offenders goals. If one would combine the model of Shnabel and Nadler (2008) with this framework, one could state that the offender had the goal to get acceptance from the victim to restore his/her public moral image. If he/she believes that he/she will accomplish this goal taking part in VOM, participation is more likely. In addition, the theory of planned behaviour could be considered: The attitude towards the behavior (taking part in VOM) is an important element of this framework and serves as a function of believed behavioural outcomes. If the offender might believe that the meeting will help "pushing" his/her moral social image, he/she will be more likely to participate.

Generally, to make sure that VOM is successful in the post-process of a crime, it is necessary to address both parties equally. Looking at previous research there can be seen that there is not much research done on the offender's willingness to take part in these kinds of interventions. Therefore, this issue will be further addressed in the current study.

#### *Current study contents*

Taking part in VOM has been shown to have positive effects on both offender and victim (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008; Paul & Schenck-Hamlin, 2017). Prior research has shown that victims might be willing to take part in Victim-offender-mediation because they have positive attitudes over the outcomes of the intervention (Paul & Schenck-Hamlin, 2017), see the intervention as a chance to gather information about the offenders' intention of the crime (Umbreit et al., 2006), or see a need to restore their sense of power which is made possible through the intervention (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). It is important to address the victim's intention to take part in VOM because their participation is urgent for it. Therefore, there is more research found about a victim's willingness to participate in VOM.

However, there appears to be a gap in research when looking at the offender's willingness to take part in VOM. There is not much research done on factors why they would or would not participate in VOM. One reason for offenders not to participate in VOM is because he might be, following the model of Shnabel & Nadler (2008), be anxious about his/her moral image, and taking responsibility for the crime (which is a necessary requirement of VOM) might increase this anxiety (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). There is furthermore little research done on the factors that might motivate or prevent offenders from taking part in VOM (Umbreit et al., 2006; Groeneveld, 2017). Because VOM cannot take place without the offender's voluntary agreement to it, it appears necessary to look

for determinants that focus on the offender's willingness to participate in VOM. Therefore, the model that was presented is a useful instrument to engage in further research on the offender's role in the post-crime process. In their model, Shnabel and Nadler (2008) have defined the psychological need of the offender and its necessity to be fulfilled to increase willingness of the offender to reconcile. It is obvious that there is no research done yet on the effect of the *fulfillment of the offenders need* and especially the *strength of this fulfillment*. It is questionable, to what extent the offender needs to be fulfilled in his/her psychological deprivation to be willing to take part in Victim-offender-mediation.

The focus of this study was therefore laid on the impact that satisfying the offenders psychological need has, which is restoring his/her public image by experiencing empathy and understanding from the victims' side. Put more specifically, there was looked at the effect that a "promise" to the satisfaction of needs of the offender might have. When further looking at the conflict-goal-accomplishment pointed out by Paul & Schenck-Hamlin (2017), the expectation over a fulfillment of one's goal in the intervention is a thriving factor to take part in it. Therefore, it makes sense to look at the effect that satisfaction of the offenders needs and the strength of this satisfaction. One point which is not made clear in the framework of Shnabel and Nadler (2008, 2015) is what contains the *Willingness to reconcile*. It is questionable whether this is the reconciliation itself or just the acceptance to take part in Victim-offender-mediation. Summarizing, this study looked at the *strength of the satisfaction given to the offenders' needs*. It was assumed that the willingness to reconcile is equal with the willingness to take part in Victim-offender-mediation, instead of the reconciliation itself. Furthermore, it was assumed that this mediation takes place face-to-face, as previous studies have shown that this kind of mediation is the most effective. Summarizing the described contents, the research question was defined as the following:

*"To what extend does the satisfaction of an offender's psychological needs after crime affect his/her willingness to participate in face-to-face Victim-offender-mediation?"*

More specifically, the goal of the study was not just to find out whether this fulfillment/satisfaction had an effect at all, but how strong it must be to increase the offenders' willingness to take part in VOM. As the offender is anxious about his public moral image and his/her self-perception as an acceptable, moral human, he/she might strive for fulfillment of these. His/her willingness might be increased when he/she sees an opportunity to be able to achieve this goal. There can be spoken of a fulfillment of the offenders' needs, known that more specifically the promise to get an opportunity to it are meant. It was assumed that the stronger the satisfaction of the offenders' needs was, the more willing he/she might be to participate in VOM. When the offender is getting the chance to apologize to the victim, he/she can restore his/her personal and public image through restitution. There were three different conditions to see the effect of that strength of fulfillment/satisfaction, which were designed by the researcher herself. Firstly, the offenders' moral image was addressed to a small degree. That

means that the offender got to know that the victims wants to participate and is giving him/her the chance to apologize. Secondly, the victim would state that he/she wants to participate, would like to understand reasons for the behaviour of the offender, and believes that every person is a moral being. This was assigned to the stronger fulfillment condition because next to getting the chance to explain oneself, the victim emphasizes the moral side of the offender and gives him/her a chance to restore this. It was assumed that this gives the offender even more hope to regain his public moral and personal moral image. Thirdly, there was a control condition. It was assumed that the offender only gets to know that the victim wants to participate. This would give him/her the chance to apologize, but he/she would not know the intention of the victim. That means that the confrontation could be full of accusations, leaving him/her with the feeling of his/her threatened moral image, or even making it worse. The condition was also there to retest the effect of any fulfillment, thus to see if there was even any difference between the conditions. This way, there was looked at if fulfillment is even necessary to make the offender wanting to take part in VOM, or if the knowledge about the victim wanting to participate is enough (no fulfillment). Based on the theoretical background, it is assumed that only the knowledge about the victim wanting to participate without any reinforcement of the offender's needs is not enough.

The described framework could be summarized to the following hypotheses:

*H1: Offenders that were not fulfilled in their psychological needs are less willing to participate in face-to-face Victim-offender-mediation than when experiencing a low degree-fulfillment.*

*H2: Offenders whose psychological needs were fulfilled to a high degree are more willing to participate in face-to-face Victim-offender-mediation than when being fulfilled to a low degree.*

## **Method**

### *Design*

To test the hypothesis, there was chosen for a between-groups design. The independent variable was the intensity of satisfaction of the psychological need the participants received, with three underlying conditions (*no moral image fulfilment condition vs. low moral image fulfilment condition vs. high moral image fulfilment condition*). The dependent variable was the willingness of the offenders to take part in face-to-face Victim-offender-mediation. Participants were randomly distributed across the three conditions of the independent variable.

## *Participants*

In total, 121 participants took part in the study. Participants were selected via the online student portal SONA as well as via the social media portal Facebook. While collecting participants, simple random sampling was used to ensure reliability. Of the 121 participants there were 54 participants left over for the analysis after the data was screened. This high dropout rate was due to different reasons. Firstly, data of 40 participants could not be used due to a technical problem in the online survey program, which did not randomize participants to any condition. This data could not be used because these participants did not receive any manipulation. This left 23 participants for the first condition, 19 participants for the third condition and 12 participants for the second condition.

Secondly, one participant was excluded due to his/her indication not to have participated seriously. Another 24 participants were excluded because they did not spend at least 30 seconds on the first, second and/or third page where longer text passages had to be read, which was measured by a timer. It was expected that they did not read the texts properly and could thus not give serious answers to the questions posed. Another participant was excluded due to not having indicated his sex.

Of the 54 participants, 20 were male (37%) and 34 were female (63%). 43 participants were German (79,6%), 5 participants were Dutch (9,3%) and 6 participants categorized themselves as other (11,1%). Among these, there was one Belgian, one British, one French, one Italian, one Portuguese and one Swedish participant. After having participated in the study, the participants furthermore answered questions on their education, current employment status and personal experience with crime. Within the category education, 51,9% of the participants stated to have achieved a high school degree or equivalent, 33,3% have achieved a bachelor's degree, 9,3% have achieved a college degree and only 1,9% of the participants stated to have achieved no degree at all. 72,2% of the participants were students and 18,5% were full-time employed. Looking at these statements it can thus be concluded that the greatest part of the participants was able to understand the instructions and the material given correctly. About their experience with crime, 53,7% of the participants stated that they were a victim of a crime before, 63% stated that someone in their family has been a victim of a crime before and 75,5% stated that one of their friends has been a victim of a crime before.

## *Materials*

*Scenario to induce Storyline.* There was a storyline given to the participants. This storyline contained a scenario in which the participant had to feel into the role of an offender who steals out of being desperate the pocket from an old woman (“*You start walking more slowly and looking at the purse continuously. Then, you start running, passing the old lady standing at the shop, and seeing your hands grabbing her purse...* ”). Secondly, there was a text passage which aimed to increase the feelings that participants had about the crime. More specifically, the second text passage was supposed to increase the threat to the social moral image participants (offenders) experienced. The text passage

was designed by the researcher, stating that the offender feels guilty and ashamed (“*After the crime, you feel guilty and ashamed about what you have done to the woman...*”). Furthermore, it was stated that the public moral image of the offender was in danger as witnesses of the crime were writing hate-messages via a social media portal. It was assumed that an old classmate from the offender had seen the crime and published the incident on Facebook (“*When you take a look at your Facebook account, you suddenly see that you have a lot of messages from unknown people*”).

*Manipulation of degree of satisfaction of need for social moral image.* The third text was the manipulating aspect participants were exposed to. There were three different versions of this text (*low moral image fulfillment condition, high moral image fulfillment condition, no moral image fulfillment condition/control condition*). Participants were told that they received a letter from the Restorative Justice office. This letter contained, dependent on conditions participants were assigned to, different messages from the victim, communicated via a third party which was a fictitious mediator. The message the offender received was the same among all three conditions, except the last text passage that aimed to increase the threat to the social image to a specific extent. In the low fulfillment condition, the mediator let the offender know that the victim wants to talk face-to-face with the offender participating at Victim-offender-mediation and that the victim would like to understand reasons for the behaviour of the offender (“*She would like to participate in that mediation with you and further wants to understand your reasons for committing the crime, of which she is sure there are some*”). In the high fulfillment condition, the message from the victim was longer. Next to stating the content of the first condition, the victim let the offender know that she is not angry (“*She would like to participate in that mediation with you and further wants to understand your reasons for committing the crime, of which she is sure there are some. She also wants to let you know that she is not angry and believes that everyone deserves a second chance*”). In the control condition, the mediator only let the offender know that the victim wants to participate in face-to-face Victim-offender-mediation (“*She would like to participate in that mediation with you*”).

*Pre- and Post-Measures.* Next to the text passages, participants were asked to answer five different questionnaires. With the first questionnaire participants’ experienced level of *guilt* was measured by three items (e.g. “*As the offender, I feel guilty for the harm I have caused...*”). Participants’ level of *shame* (e.g. “*I feel ashamed*”) was measured using three items as well and participants’ *fear of social exclusion* (e.g. “*I am afraid of being excluded by others*”) was measured using four items. In the second questionnaire, their *need for empathy/acceptance* was measured, consisting out of six items (e.g. “*I want the victim to understand my reasons for the crime*”). These questionnaires were filled out by each participant twice, the first time after they had committed the fictitious crime and again after they had received the letter (pre- and post-test). The questions were the same except that in the post-test past tense was used. Participants’ answers were measured after they had been exposed to the

storyline and the manipulation of feelings to be able to see if they experience feelings that offenders would possibly experience in this situation, or to see variations in the responses on these constructs as not every offender might experience these kinds of feelings. The pre- and postmeasures were also a manipulation check, to see if the conditions participants were assigned to have an effect. There was also measured for covariance of the variables to see if there was an existing association between the constructs Guilt, Shame, Fear of social exclusion, Need for empathy to the dependent variable.

*Dependent variables.* The main construct, the *willingness to participate in VOM* consisted out of six items (e.g. “After having received the letter I would like to participate in face-to-face Victim-offender-mediation”). Participants were randomly assigned to the three different conditions. It was assumed that the higher the fulfillment was, the higher the willingness to participate in Victim-offender-mediation would be. The willingness to participate was thus expected to be higher in the high fulfillment condition than in the low fulfillment and no fulfillment condition/control condition, and to be higher in the low fulfillment condition than in the no fulfillment condition/control condition but lower than in the high fulfillment condition. The willingness to participate was expected to be lower in the no fulfillment condition/control condition than in the low fulfillment and high fulfillment condition.

*Evaluation of study.* The fourth questionnaire existed out of an evaluation of the study, consisting out of seven questions, in which participants were for example asked if they could concentrate sufficiently and whether they took part seriously in the study. At last, participants were asked for demographic information. Except the last questionnaire, all questionnaires were constructed with a 7-point Likert scale (1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Somewhat disagree, 4=Neither agree nor disagree, 5=Somewhat agree, 6=Agree, 7=Strongly agree). There was partly oriented on existing questions from a master thesis (Kippers, 2015), but because research on this specific topic has not been conducted yet before, most questions were designed by the researcher herself.

### *Procedure*

The online survey was to be reached via a link which was put into the SONA system as well as via Facebook. With help of the only questionnaire program Qualtrics the study was designed. In the beginning, participants were informed about the purpose and content of the study as well as the time the study took to complete. They were furthermore told that their participation is voluntary, that they can stop any time without specifying a reason for it and that all personal data is kept anonymously and for this research only. The participants were given an informed consent containing all the important information about the study. After having accepted the informed consent, participants were exposed to the storyline in which they were asked to feel into the role of an offender who commits a crime,

followed by the text passage that intensified their feelings after the crime. After every text passage participants had to answer a control question to make sure that they read the text completely. These two text passages were followed by the questionnaire about their experienced level of guilt, shame, and their fear about social exclusion and need for acceptance and empathy the first time. After having answered these questions, participants were randomly assigned among the three conditions. The text that the participants had to read differed in the intensity of the message of the victim. Right after the manipulation had taken place, participants were asked about their willingness to participate in Victim-Offender-mediation. They were then exposed to the first two questionnaires again. At last, participants had to answer questions about the study itself and entered demographic information. The study ended with a debriefing, in which the purpose of the study was explained in more detailed and participants were thanked for their participation.

#### *Data Analysis*

The data was analysed using the statistics software SPSS 24.00. As a first step, the data was screened. A factor analysis was done for all of the measured constructs using principal component analysis with Varimax (orthogonal) rotation. Descriptive statistics for each of the measured constructs were calculated, with the mean score and standard deviation for each construct. There was also a correlational analysis done for the pre-and post-measures. To test the hypotheses, a one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was done with the willingness to participate as dependent variable and the constructs Shame/Guilt, need for social acceptance, Regret, need for empathy and Fear of social exclusion as covariates to see if there can be a significant difference found between the conditions corrected for these variables. Additionally, an ANOVA was done for the willingness to participate scale.

## Results

### Preliminary Analysis

*Validity and Reliability.* To test the questionnaires for their validity, an explanatory factor analysis was done. It was applied to the items belonging to the constructs of *Guilt, Shame, Fear of social exclusion, need for empathy/acceptance* and *Willingness to participate*. By using explanatory factor analysis, it could be observed if the items were measuring the intended constructs. Because the scales were designed by the researcher herself, it was important to take a closer look at the outcome of the factor analysis. The results of that analysis can be seen in *Table 1*. Furthermore, there was a reliability analysis done for each of the constructs using Cronbach's Alpha.

**Table 1.** *Rotated Components Matrix of the Factorial Analysis.*

Items	Components									
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	
I feel guilty for the harm I have caused.	0.82			0.44		0.82				
I regret having committed the crime.	0.46					0.85				
I feel remorse about what I have done to the old lady.	0.59			0.70		0.90				
I feel ashamed.	0.87					0.76		0.45		
I feel shameful for my behaviour.	0.89					0.91				
I feel embarrassed about what I have done.	0.79					0.60		0.57		
I am afraid of being excluded by others.	0.45		0.70					<b>0.69</b>	0.41	
I am afraid that my family does not accept me after the crime.			0.83							0.92
I am afraid that my friends do not accept me after the crime.			0.85				0.41			0.77
<i>I am scared that others think about me as a criminal they do not want to interact with.</i>	0.60									
I want the victim to understand my reasons for the crime.		0.90					0.82			
I want my family to understand my reasons for the crime.		0.89					0.86			
I want my friends to understand my reasons for the crime.		0.88					0.83			
I want people to stop seeing me as immoral (e.g. in social media).					0.70			0.59		
I want people to show empathy for my situation.					0.91	<b>0.82</b>		0.78		
<i>I find it important that the victim knows that I am not a (hardened) criminal.</i>				0.68						

Note: *Cursive* items were excluded from post-test due to unfitting loadings in the pre-test, **bold** factor loadings indicate cross-loadings between concepts, but are further disregarded due to good fit in pre-test.

Sixteen questions related to the constructs were analysed using principal component analysis with Varimax (orthogonal) rotation. In the illustration, pre-measure factors are left-sided (1 to 5) and post-measure factors are right-sided (1 to 4). The analysis of the pre-measure yielded 5 factors using Kaiser-criterion that explained 76% of variance. As can be seen in the illustration (Table 1) items of the constructs *Guilt* and *Shame* (Item 1-6) were loading on the same factor, which is why these were taken together to one variable (*Guilt/Shame*). The reliability of this scale of the pre-measure was .84, which is why it was left for the exploratory factor analysis in the post measure. As can be seen, it was shown that the same items as in the pre-measure loaded on the first factor, which ensures validity of this scale. The reliability of this scale in the post-measure was high with a Cronbach's alpha of .86. Furthermore, the item "*I am scared that others think about me as a criminal they do not want to interact with*" was loading on the factor of the Guilt/Shame scale but was excluded from the post-measure due to its unfitting loading in the pre-test. Of the scale *Fear of social exclusion*, the items "*I am afraid that my family does not accept me after the crime*", "*I am afraid that my friends do not accept me after the crime*" and "*I am afraid of being excluded by others*" loaded on one factor. The last item was also loading on another factor in the post-test, with a higher value (.69) than on the intended factor (.41), but due to its good fit in the pre-test this finding was further disregarded. The scale had a high reliability in both the pre-test (.89) and the post-test (.71). Furthermore, three items of the scale *need for empathy/acceptance* loaded on the second factor in both the pre- and the post-measure "*I want the victim to understand my reasons for the crime*", "*I want my family to understand my reasons for the crime*", "*I want my friends to understand my reasons for the crime*", which shows validity for these items. The reliability for this scale in the pre-measure was .89 and in the post-measure .87. A new scale was conducted out of the items "*I want people to stop seeing me as immoral*" and "*I want people to show empathy for my situation*", as they were loading on the same factor in both the pre- and the post-test. Because both items included the participant's attention on how he/she is seen by other people, the scale was renamed "*Need for social acceptance*". Additionally, there could be seen that the items "*I feel remorse about what I have done to the old lady*" and "*I find it important that the victim know I am not a hardened criminal*" loaded on the same factor in the pre-test but were excluded from the factor analysis in the post test due to very low reliability (.33). It was taken together as a new variable, "*Regret*". At last, there was a factor analysis done on the scale *Willingness to participate*. The outcome of the analysis was that all items except one ("*I would like to return the purse during Victim-offender-mediation*") loaded on one factor. Although the last item loaded high on a second factor (.96), this item was not taken within the following analyses as there could be 51.9% of variance explained when the loading on the second factor was left

out, which appeared to be acceptable. Furthermore, the scale had a quite good reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .70.

## Exploratory Analyses

### *Descriptive Statistics*

**Table 2.**

*Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations of participants feeling into the offender's role (N=54), and experienced Shame/Guilt, Need for social acceptance, Fear of social exclusion, Regret, need for empathy (pre-and post-test) and Willingness to participate.*

	N	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.Shame/Guilt(pre)	54	6.33	.78	-										
2.Need for social acceptance(pre)	54	6.18	.95	.10	-									
3.FearOfSocialExclusion(pre)	54	6.25	.81	.23	<b>.38</b>	-								
4.Regret(pre)	54	6.35	.71	<b>.47</b>	.32	.24	-							
5.NeedForEmpathy(pre)	54	5.59	1.22	.34	.33	.33	.32	-						
6.Shame/Guilt (post)	54	6.37	.74	<b>.89</b>	.22	.22	<b>.57</b>	<b>.36</b>	-					
7.Need for social acceptance (post)	54	6.30	.92	.31	<b>.72</b>	<b>.50</b>	<b>.42</b>	<b>.49</b>	.38	-				
8.FearofSocialExclusion(post)	54	6.18	.82	.19	<b>.42</b>	<b>.88</b>	.24	.27	.26	<b>.48</b>	-			
9. Regret(post)	54	6.30	.82	<b>.72</b>	.15	.11	<b>.64</b>	.20	<b>.81</b>	<b>.35</b>	.14	-		
10.NeedForEmpathy (post)	54	5.80	1.13	<b>.46</b>	.28	<b>.47</b>	<b>.38</b>	<b>.80</b>	<b>.44</b>	<b>.50</b>	<b>.36</b>	<b>.35</b>	-	
11.WillingnessToParticipate	54	6.42	.52	<b>.40</b>	.31	.24	<b>.64</b>	.233	<b>.41</b>	<b>.45</b>	.24	<b>.40</b>	.33	-

Note: **Bold** numbers indicate a significant correlation at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Based on the factor analysis and reliability measures, there were 11 scales constructed for the analysis. Firstly, the mean and the standard deviation of all scales were calculated, as can be seen in **Table 2**. Furthermore, correlations between the variables were calculated. There could be a statistically significant positive high correlation found between the Shame/Guilt pre-test scale and the Shame/guilt post-test scale ( $r(54)=.89$ ;  $p<.01$ ). Also, a medium correlation between Shame/guilt scale (pre-test) and willingness to participate ( $r(54)=.40$ ;  $p<.01$ ). Also noticeable is the statistically significant positive high correlation between the Need for social acceptance scale in the pre-test and in the post-test ( $r(54)=.72$ ;  $p<.01$ ). Furthermore, there is a high correlation found between the pre-and post-test of the scale Fear of social exclusion ( $r(54)=.88$ ;  $p<.01$ ), as well as between the pre-and post-test of Regret ( $r(54)=.64$ ;  $p<.01$ ) and Need for Empathy (pre and post-test) ( $r(54)=.80$ ;  $p<.01$ ). It is also striking that there is a relatively high correlation found between Fear of social exclusion (pre-test) and Need for social acceptance (post-test) ( $r(54)=.50$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Looking at

correlations with the fourth scale (Regret pre-test), it can also be seen that there is a high correlation between this scale and the willingness to participate ( $r(54)=.64, p<.01$ ). Between the post-test-scales there is also a relatively high correlation found between Need for empathy and Need for social acceptance ( $r(54)=.50; p<.01$ ).

Looking at these descriptive statistics, it can be seen that for each of the constructs there is a high correlation between the pre- and post-measure (*Shame/Guilt, Need for social acceptance, Fear of social exclusion, Regret, Need for empathy*). This indicates that the manipulation was not successful as there is no significant difference found between the scores on the pre-tests and the scores on the post-tests.

### Hypotheses Testing

A one-way ANCOVA was conducted to test the main hypotheses:

*H1: Offenders that were not fulfilled in their psychological needs are less willing to participate in face-to-face Victim-offender-mediation than when experiencing a low degree-fulfilment.*

*H2: Offenders whose psychological needs were fulfilled to a high degree are more willing to participate in face-to-face Victim-offender-mediation than when being fulfilled to a low degree.*

This analysis was done to compare the effect of the strength of fulfilment (among three different conditions) on the dependent variable *willingness to participate* whilst controlling for *Shame/Guilt, need for social acceptance, Regret, Need for empathy* and *Fear of social exclusion*. There was a significant difference found between the low, high and control condition when corrected for the covariates [ $F(2, 46) = 8.14, p < .001$ ]. Post hoc tests showed there was a significant difference between the *low moral image fulfilment* (condition 1) and the *no moral image fulfilment/control condition* (condition 3) ( $p = .001$ ), and between *high moral image fulfilment* (condition 2) and the *no moral image fulfilment/control condition* (condition 3) ( $p = .024$ ), but not between the *low moral image fulfilment* and *high moral image fulfilment* ( $p = 1.00$ ). Comparing the estimated marginal means showed that people in *low moral image fulfilment* were similarly willing to participate in VOM ( $M = 6.64; SD = .49$ ) as in *high moral image fulfilment* (high) ( $M = 6.56; SD = .62$ ), and their willingness was lowest in *no moral image fulfilment* ( $M = 6.06; SD = .63$ )<sup>1</sup>. The results showed thus that the first hypothesis

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<sup>1</sup> It has to be considered that these were only small differences among the conditions, which is also confirmed when not correcting for covariates by means of an ANOVA, which shows no significant differences among the conditions [ $F(2, 50) = 1.93, p = .15$ ].

was confirmed: participants that felt into the role of an offender and were fulfilled in their moral image to a low degree, as in the low fulfillment condition, were more willing to participate in VOM than when not being fulfilled at all as in the no fulfillment/control condition. The second hypothesis can be rejected: Participants that felt into the role of an offender were *not* more willing to participate in VOM when being fulfilled to a high degree, as in the high fulfillment condition, than when being fulfilled to a low degree, as in the low fulfillment condition.

Additionally, while correcting for the covariables it was striking that both *Regret* and *Need for empathy* had a significant value, with  $F(1,46) = 25.85, p=.00, 95\% \text{ CI} [.30, .70]$  for *Regret* and  $F(1,46) = 4.40, p=.04, 95\% \text{ CI} [-.25, -.05]$  for *need for empathy*. This shows that the more regret a participant had experienced in the pre-test, the more willingness he/she had to participate in VOM. On the other hand, the more need for empathy a participant had experienced in the pre-test, the less willing was he/she to participate in VOM.

## Discussion

### *Goal and outcome of the study*

The goal of the study was to find out what increases the willingness of offenders to participate in Victim-offender-mediations. The research question that was considered was:

*“To what extent does the satisfaction of an offender’s psychological needs after crime affect his/her willingness to participate in face-to-face Victim-offender-mediation?”*

The theoretical background of the study was the Needs-based-model of reconciliation by Shnabel and Nadler (2008, 2015), stating that offenders of a crime are in a motivational state after crime in which they experience a need to be fulfilled in their public moral image. Among emotions that offenders possess after the crime there can be distinguished between Shame, Guilt, Fear of social exclusion and need for empathy, which are the underlying constructs of the public moral image. Following the theoretical framework, offenders would be more motivated to engage in VOM if they have their public moral image restored, which can be achieved through experiencing empathy and acceptance from the victim. In this study, the *strength of that fulfillment* that offenders need was investigated. It was expected that the higher the fulfillment of the offender’s public moral image would be, the higher their willingness to participate would be.

Analyses yielded that participants were more willing to participate in VOM when they had a *low moral image fulfillment* than when receiving *no moral image fulfillment*, which confirmed the first hypothesis (*Offenders that were not fulfilled in their psychological needs*

*are less willing to participate in face-to-face Victim-offender-mediation than when experiencing a low degree-fulfilment).*

It was also found that participants that received a *high moral image fulfilment* were not more willing to participate in VOM than when receiving a *low moral image fulfilment*, so the second hypothesis was rejected (*Offenders whose psychological needs were fulfilled to a high degree are more willing to participate in face-to-face Victim-offender-mediation than when being fulfilled to a low degree*). It is questionable why there is an existing difference between the *low moral image fulfilment* and *no moral image fulfilment* but not between the *high moral image fulfilment* and *low moral image fulfilment*, as it would be expected that if fulfilment was a thriving factor for increasing offenders' willingness to participate, the higher the fulfilment is, the higher the willingness would be. Another finding was that there was a significant difference between *high moral image fulfilment* and *no moral image fulfilment*, which was not part of the hypotheses.

There are several reasons that can explain the difference between these results when looking at limitations of the study. First, the number of participants needs to be considered, which was low especially for participants that received *high moral image fulfilment*, where only 12 participants were left over after the data screening. The number of participants that received the *low moral image fulfilment* and *no moral image fulfilment* was higher, for the first there were 23 participants left over and for the latter 19 participants. When also considering that it was difficult for some participants to feel into the role of an offender (of the 12 participants that received high moral image fulfilment), this could explain why the willingness was lower than when receiving low moral image fulfillment. Another important point that needs to be considered, is that the manipulation check did not work, and the manipulation thus did not have a (strong) effect on the participants as could be seen by the high correlations between the pre and post measures. Furthermore, it was striking that the scores on the scale of willingness to participate were high in general, which puts the effect of the conditions in question again.

The outcome of the study is in line with the model by Shnabel and Nadler (2008, 2015), which states that reconciliation is made easier for offenders when they are fulfilled in their public moral image by the victim through receiving acceptance and empathy from him/her in some way. Looking at the outcome, participants that were fulfilled to *some* degree (low moral image fulfilment) were more willing to participate when not being fulfilled (no moral image fulfilment), and participants that were fulfilled to a high degree were more willing than when not being fulfilled at all. The model by Shnabel and Nadler is thus supported by the outcome of this study. What is striking, is that the assumption that was made in the current study is not confirmed: The willingness of offenders does not increase

dependent on the *strength* of the fulfilment. There can be thus concluded that any fulfilment on the offenders' public moral image does have an effect on the willingness to participate, as in the low moral image fulfilment, where participants received the following message: "(...) *She would like to participate in that mediation with you and further wants to understand your reasons for committing the crime, of which she is sure there are some*". This view is also supported when looking at the difference between the high moral image fulfilment and no moral image fulfilment. It can be concluded that offenders felt more encouraged through that message (especially in the low fulfilment condition) of the victim than in the no moral image fulfilment, where it was only stated that the victim wants to participate. Shnabel and Nadler (2008) stated that offenders and victims need to receive "emotional commodities through post-conflict interventions" to facilitate reconciliation (as seen as participation in VOM in the current study). *Low* moral image fulfilment, formulated as a message from the victim, seems therefore to be enough for increasing the willingness to participate among offenders, and the strength of that fulfilment does not have a big influence on this willingness.

Still, it is questionable why offenders would not want to participate even more in VOM when given more moral image fulfilment. An alternative explanation could be from the point of view of the *Conflict goal accomplishment Theory* (Paul & Schenck-Hamlin, 2017), that states that people that have existing goals need to have specific beliefs about whether a certain type of behaviour will accomplish this goal. In the case of this study, this could mean that offenders that have the goal to restore their public moral image in general do not see a chance to accomplish this goal via VOM or might not see the message from the victim as a sufficient promise to accomplish this goal in VOM.

Additionally, it was shown that the offenders indeed experienced high levels of Shame and Guilt due to the storyline, which is in line with previous literature. Next to fear of social exclusion and need for empathy, it was also concluded that participants experienced regret and need for social acceptance. This is in line with Shnabel and Nadler (2015) who state that offenders experience these kinds of feelings after a crime. One might conclude that they thus experienced a need to be fulfilled due to their endangered public moral image. However, it was not shown that this existing endangered public moral image can be reduced through showing empathy and acceptance to the offender from side of the victim as it was transferred in this study. In contrast, there was a correlation found between Regret as measured in the pre-test and the willingness to participate in VOM. This was also strengthened by further analyses, that showed that the more regret the participants had, the more they wanted to participate in victim offender mediation. This cannot be explained by the model at hand from Shnabel and Nadler (2015). Instead, there can different theories be considered to explain this finding. For example, there could also be argued from the conflict

goal accomplishment theory that was described before. Umbreit and his colleagues (2006) found that several offenders view it as important to apologize during Victim-offender-mediation, which would be a totally different goal than restoring one's own public moral image. This being the case, one could argue that if the goal of the offender would be to decrease his feeling of regret he/she perceives, and the person views that as possible by participating in VOM, his/her willingness would therefore be high (Paul 2016 in Paul & Schenck-Hamlin, 2017). However, it appears that there is no specific research done yet on the effect of the level of regret of offenders on the willingness to participate in VOM and this could therefore be a necessary topic for future research.

Surprisingly, there was also found that the more need for empathy the participants had experienced, the less willing they would be to participate in VOM. However, there was only a weak effect found which is therefore not striking for criticizing the model of Shnabel and Nadler that states the opposite, namely that the psychological need, if fulfilled, increases the willingness to participate in VOM (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). Still, the effect found can be seen in a broader theoretical framework. The theory of planned behaviour can be related to this unexpected finding. On the one hand, the attitude about the believed behavioural outcomes plays a role (Paul & Schenck-Hamlin, 2017). If participants experience the need for empathy and have a negative attitude towards its reduction in VOM, this would explain why the more need for empathy participants experienced, the less they wanted to participate in VOM. This could indicate that they thus did not feel that taking part in VOM would decrease their negative emotions (negative attitude towards the expected outcome). Furthermore, perceived behavioral control is important when taking the theory of planned behavior into account. There could be stated that participants did not feel capable of taking responsibility during VOM or control their behavior and therefore did not want to participate in it.

### *Strengths and Limitations*

There are several strengths and limitations of the study that need to be considered. Firstly, a strong point of the current study is that it extended the theoretical framework by Shnabel and Nadler by looking at the *strength* of fulfillment that offenders need to increase their willingness to participate in VOM rather than investigating if the fulfilment has an effect at all. This was not considered by the given model before and was thus a new way of taking the model into account. Also, in the model by Shnabel and Nadler, it was not clear whether offenders need to be strengthened by the victim directly or if it would be enough if they had the "promise" to be fulfilled in their psychological need. This was thus also a new way of looking at the model and can be considered as a strong point of the study.

Another strength of the current study was its design of materials, with whom it was tried to see how offenders' willingness to participate in VOM could be increased practically, by using a personal message from a (fictitious) victim. This is a strong point as interventions need to be applied practically in real-life Victim-offender-mediations. The storyline that was given to the participants was designed detailed and coherent.

Furthermore, by measuring several constructs that produced new factors in the factor analysis, more constructs could be made up that showed surprising results (Regret, Need for empathy). This would probably not have been possible when fixed questionnaires would have been used or less constructs would have been measured. Furthermore, the factor analysis yielded a moderate validity for all constructs even though the questionnaire was designed by the researcher herself, and the reliability was quite good for most of the measured constructs.

However, several limitations and future recommendations need to be considered as well. Firstly, the number of participants was reduced to 54 from 121 starting participants due to criteria that were not fulfilled. There arose technical problems with the online program with which the study was designed, which was one of the main reasons why the number of participants decreased to a large extent. There could have been checked more precisely if the online program was working to prevent this so more participants could be included.

Other data of participants was excluded due to only partly filled out questionnaires or because participants stopped the survey in-between. A lot of participants were sorted out due to little time spent on the page where the text passages were shown. This shows that the text passages were probably too long and took too much time to read, so that participants could get distracted or bored. For future research, it would be helpful if there was thus a pilot study done to see if participants view the time that it takes to read the texts as too long or simply evaluate them as boring.

Another point that needs to be considered is that it was probably difficult for participants to imagine to be an offender of the crime, especially because most participants indicated that one of their friends had been a victim of a crime before (75%) and/or one of their family members had been a victim of a crime before (63%). It is imaginable, that these participants have thus more empathy for their family members or friends and can better imagine to be a victim of a crime than an offender. It is also possible that these participants have experienced emotional distress due to their history. This could have influenced the ability to feel into the role of an offender even more. If this would be the case, it would be necessary for future research to only include participants in the study that do not have a history with being a victim themselves or do not have someone in their family or of their friends that has been a victim of a crime before.

A striking limitation is that the manipulation did not work, which was also shown by the manipulation check: The pre- and post-measures correlated perfectly with one another which shows that the conditions participants were assigned to did not have a strong effect. It can be concluded that the individual baseline on the constructs measured was so strong that the manipulation could not stand against it, so the manipulation was probably not strong enough. For future research, the individual baseline (experienced guilt, shame, fear of social exclusion, need for empathy) needs to be taken more into account to be able to design the manipulation strong enough.

### *Future Recommendations*

The limitational points that were stated need to be considered when engaging in future research. Next to that, theoretical issues are important to look at. The model by Shnabel and Nadler is an important theoretical framework when investigating the willingness of both victims and offenders to participate in Restorative justice programs as Victim-offender-mediators. Even though the model was supported by the current research, it is important to further investigate it and look for factors that increase especially offenders' willingness to participate and define them more precisely. By doing this, it is important to know if it is the fulfilment itself that increases the offenders' willingness or the "promise" to the fulfilment.

Furthermore, the current research might be replicated with a bigger sample size to see if there exists no increase in willingness to participate dependent on the strength of the fulfilment, even if the current study has shown its nonexistence. Limitations of the current study should be considered when testing once more if more fulfilment increases offenders' willingness. It is important to look at this effect because there was a significant difference between some levels of fulfilment, and it is not entirely clear why higher fulfilment did not lead to higher willingness. To further improve restorative justice program interventions, this theoretical approach must not be disregarded but further investigated. This could be done with a bigger sample size and a stronger manipulation that is also more practical in its character (thus, not via an online study).

Also, the relationship between experienced regret of the offender and willingness to participate could be considered as well as the relationship between experienced need for empathy and the willingness to participate in VOM as these were surprising results in the current study. To do this, a more accurate definition would have to be made of these constructs. However, it might be interesting to find out if a higher level of regret is indeed increasing offenders willingness to participate in VOM. If this would be the case, future interventions could be developed that would focus on the experienced regret of the offender next to the threatened public moral image. Also, the more need for empathy an offender

experiences, the less willing is he/she to participate in VOM, which might also be considered in follow-up studies. Thus, there should not only be looked for factors that increase the offender's willingness to participate, but also looking at the factors that *decrease* offenders' willingness to participate in VOM, while regarding personal goals of the offenders.

As can be seen, a lot of different fields of research still need to be considered when wanting to find out what increases offenders' willingness to participate in VOM to be able to address these needs correctly. It is entirely important to address victims' psychological needs as well as the ones of offenders to integrate programs like Victim-offender-meditations more into our society. If needs of both parties would be addressed equally and correctly, these interventions can improve greatly. This will ultimately lead to more psychological well-being of both victim *and* offender, ensure a successful learning process of offenders and their reintegration in society, and therefore a safe and fearless living for all through restorative justice.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A**

#### **Informed consent**

Dear respondent,

Thank you for participating in this study, which is in context of my bachelor thesis at the University of Twente, Netherlands. The topic of this thesis is about the contact between a victim and an offender after a crime. There exist several interventions independently from the court process which aim to create conversations between the victim and the offender in which they are able to talk about the motives of the crime, the crime itself and possible consequences of the crime. It enables the victim and the offender to talk openly about thoughts or emotions they might have about the crime which is not possible in a traditional court procedure. The participation in this “Victim-offender-mediation” has to be voluntary from both sides. This study aims to improve those Victim-offender-mediations. For this to be possible, you have to read a storyline in which you are asked to feel into the role of an offender. Please try to do that as good as possible. After that, you are exposed to two more text passages and then need to answer a few questions. It is important that you answer the questions as honest as possible. Please read every text attentively and fully. Your participation in this study will approximately take 15-20 minutes. You can stop with your participation any time without specifying a reason for your break-up. Your answers as well as your data will be kept anonymous, and will be only used in the frame of this study. If you agree with the use of your data, please consent to the following by clicking “Yes, I consent” below.

I hereby declare that I have been informed in a manner which is clear to me about the nature and method of the research. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree of my own free will to participate in this research. I reserve the right to withdraw this consent without the need to give any reason and I am aware that I may withdraw from the experiment at any time. If my research results are to be used in scientific publications or made public in any other manner, then they will be made completely anonymous. My personal data will not be disclosed to third parties without my express permission. If I request further information about the research, now or in the future, I may contact *Isabelle Schöppe*,

*Email: i.c.schoppe@student.utwente.nl.*

## Appendix B

### Storyline and control question

his first text is a short story about an offender who commits a crime. Please try to imagine that you are an offender in this text as good as possible.

*Imagine you are currently in a very difficult life situation. You just lost your job and it appears to be very difficult to find a new job and you do not have a lot of savings left. You already asked for money from your parents and friends, so you have a lot of debts already and can't ask for more. You already went to an aid center for jobless people, but they could not really help you. You start worrying about how to pay your next rent that is coming up the following month. Additionally, to all that misery, your laptop just broke down and you cannot apply for any more jobs. You tried to figure out a way to repair your laptop to find a job quickly, so you are not thrown out of your apartment, but the reparation of your laptop is too expensive. You are thinking: "If I could only find a way to repair my laptop, I could apply for a job at least". Your current financial situation is stressing you a lot and you begin to feel desperate.*

*One day, you go for a walk to think about what to do now. The streets are not very crowded today and you see only a few people. In front of you, you see an old lady browsing the pages of a newspaper outside of a shop. The lady wears jewellery which seems to be very expensive. She is also wearing a fur coat, which you expect to cost a lot of money, too. All in all, she seems to be a wealthy old lady. Suddenly your behaviour feels like it is automatic. You start walking more slowly and looking at the purse continuously. Then, you start running, passing the old lady standing at the shop, and seeing your hands grabbing her purse. Accidentally, you hit the old lady at her legs, she loses her balance and falls on the ground. She looks at you with a scared look on her face and is crying for help. The purse firmly in your hand, you keep on running and running until you reach the next abandoned alley. You catch a breath and run home quickly.*

Control question:

Was the old lady wearing a fur coat?

- Yes, the old lady was wearing a fur coat.
- No, the old lady was not wearing a fur coat.

## Appendix C

### Strengthening feelings after the crime and control question

Please read the following text passage:

*A few days after you stole the purse of the old woman, you feel guilty and ashamed of the harm you have caused her. You have to think of the scared look on her face and the way she cried for help. You are thinking about giving her back her purse, but you are too scared to face her. You are also scared to get caught by the police. You begin to feel like a real criminal, a person who gives harm to others for his own profit. You begin to feel scared about what people you know might think of you. You are sure that from now on, you will be seen as the “criminal” that stole the purse of a helpless, old lady who did not do anything to you. You start to doubt yourself. You cannot help thinking that you acted in an immoral way that cannot be justified by your own despair. You are also scared of the consequences your behaviour will lead to. The worst case you can imagine is that you will end up in prison. Then, nobody will ever see you as a moral citizen of the society again. People will always judge you and think of you as a criminal and a bad person.*

*You take a look at your Facebook messages. You recognize that you have a lot of messages from unknown people. You open one of them and it says: “You are a bad person. How could you harm that old, helpless lady? What kind of human being are you? Go to hell!”. Another message says: “People like you should be in prison forever! Didn’t your mother teach you how to be a moral citizen? You are a threat to our society!”. Now you scroll down, and you see that a girl you know from your old school wrote you a message. She had seen the incident and had published the information about what happened on Facebook, with a photo of you running away with the purse. You take a look at the comments of the post and see that many people you know insult you and are disappointed of you. Your feeling of being an immoral, bad human is growing and growing more. You feel all alone because all of your friends know about what you have done and will probably abandon you. You are scared to ever go out again and face what you have done.*

Control question:

What did your old classmate upload on Facebook?

- A video of me stealing the purse
- A picture of me stealing the purse

## Appendix D

First condition: Low moral image fulfilment

### A message from a mediator

Please read the following text passage:

*Some time has passed after you committed the crime. You still feel bad about what you have done, and your life has completely changed since you have done this horrible mistake. A lot of your friends stated that they don't want to see you anymore, and also the hate messages on Facebook continued. You don't feel like a moral member of society anymore, but more like a criminal. In a few weeks, you will have to go to court and get your judgment for the crime. You check your postbox and see a letter from the 'Restorative Justice Office'. It is an invitation written by a mediator to invite you to a Victim-offender-mediation, a program where the victim and offender can talk openly about what happened, assisted by a third party. The program does not have any influence on your judgment by the court. You would need to see the lady face-to-face and have an open talk with her about what happened. Within that letter, there is a message from the old lady you stole the purse from as well. She would like to participate in that mediation with you and further wants to understand your reasons for committing the crime, of which she is sure there are some.*

Control question:

Is the following statement true or false?

The old lady wants to participate in Victim-offender-mediation with you and wants to understand your reasons for the crime.

- True
- False

## Appendix E

Second condition: High moral image fulfilment

### A message from a mediator

Please read the following text passage:

*Some time has passed after the horrible crime. You still feel bad about what you have done, and your life has completely changed since you have done this horrible mistake. A lot of your friends stated that they don't want to see you anymore, and also the hate messages on Facebook continued. You don't feel like a moral member of society anymore, but more like a criminal. In a few weeks, you will have to go to court and get your judgment for the crime. You check your postbox and see a letter from the 'Restorative Justice Office'. It is an invitation written by a mediator to invite you to a Victim-offender-mediation, a program where the victim and offender can talk openly about what happened, assisted by a third party. The program does not have any influence on your judgment by the court. You would need to see the lady face-to-face and have an open talk with her about what happened. Within that letter, there is a message from the old lady you stole the purse from as well. She would like to participate in that mediation with you and further wants to understand your reasons for committing the crime, of which she is sure there are some. She also wants you to know that she is not angry and thinks that everyone deserves a second chance.*

Control question:

Please answer the following question.

The old lady wants to participate in Victim-offender-mediation with you, understand your reasons for the crime, is not angry with you and believes everyone deserves a second chance.

- True
- False

## Appendix F

Third condition: Control condition/No moral image fulfilment

### A message from a mediator

Please read the following text passage:

*Some time has passed after the horrible crime. You still feel bad about what you have done, and your life has completely changed since you have done this horrible mistake. A lot of your friends stated that they don't want to see you anymore, and also the hate messages on Facebook continued. You don't feel like a moral member of society anymore, but more like a criminal. In a few weeks, you will have to go to court and get your judgment for the crime. You check your postbox and see a letter from the 'Restorative Justice Office'. It is an invitation written by a mediator to invite you to a Victim-offender-mediation, a program where the victim and offender can talk openly about what happened, assisted by a third party.*

*The program does not have any influence on your judgment by the court. You would need to see the lady face-to-face and have an open talk with her about what happened. The letter informs you that the old lady you stole the purse from would like to participate in that mediation.*

Control question:

Please answer the following question.

The old lady wants to participate in Victim-offender-mediation with you.

- True
- False

**Appendix G**  
**Items: Guilt, Shame, Fear of social exclusion (Pre-test)**

Please answer the following statements.

As the offender, I ...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
...feel guilty for the harm I have caused.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...regret having committed the crime.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...feel remorse about what I have done to the old lady.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...feel ashamed.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...feel shameful for my behavior.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...feel embarrassed about what I have done.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...am afraid of being excluded by others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...am afraid that my family does not accept me after the crime.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...am afraid that my friends do not accept me after the crime.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...am scared that others think about me as a criminal they do not want to interact with.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Items: Need for Empathy/Acceptance (Pre-test)**

Please answer the following statements.

As the offender, I ...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
...want the victim to understand my reasons for the crime.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...want my family to understand my reasons for the crime.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...want my friends to understand my reasons for the crime.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...want people to stop seeing me as immoral (e.g. in social media).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...want people to show empathy for my situation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...find it important that the victim knows that I am not a (hardened) criminal.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Items: Willingness to participate

Please answer the following statements.

After having received the letter, I ...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
...would like to participate in face-to-face Victim-offender-mediation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...would like to apologize to the victim during Victim-offender-mediation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...would agree to participate in face-to-face Victim-offender-mediation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...would like to show myself as a worthy individual instead of a criminal during Victim-offender-mediation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...would want to give the victim the chance to talk about her emotions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...would like to return the purse during Victim-offender-mediation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Items: Shame, Guilt, Fear of social exclusion (posttest)

Please answer the following statements.

After having committed the crime, I...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
...felt guilty for the harm I have caused.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...regretted having committed the crime.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...felt remorse about what I have done to the old lady.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...felt ashamed.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...felt shameful for my behavior.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...felt embarrassed about what I had done.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...was afraid of being excluded by others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...was afraid that my family does not accept me after the crime.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...was afraid that my friends do not accept me after this crime.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...was scared that others think about me as a criminal they do not want to interact with.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Items: Need for empathy/acceptance (posttest)

Please answer the following statements.

As the offender, I...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
...wanted the victim to understand my reasons for the crime.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...wanted my family to understand my reasons for the crime.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...wanted my friends to understand my reasons for the crime.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...wanted people to stop seeing me as immoral (e.g. in social media).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...wanted people to show empathy for my situation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...found it important that the victim knows that I am not a (hardened) criminal.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Items: Evaluation of the study

Please answer the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I was able to concentrate sufficiently during the study.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I took part seriously in this study.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I read the text passages completely and concentrated.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I understood the scenario I had to feel in.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I found the story realistic.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I could feel myself in the role of the offender.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I understood the offenders' reasons for the crime.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Items: Demographic Information

Please answer these questions.

What is your age?

.....

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

What is your nationality?

- German
- Dutch
- Other, namely:

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? (If you're currently enrolled in school, please indicate the highest degree you have received.)

- Less than a high school diploma
- High school degree or equivalent (e.g. GED)
- Some college, no degree
- Associate degree (e.g. AA, AS)
- Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)
- Master's degree (e.g. MA, MS, MEd)
- Professional degree (e.g. MD, DDS, DVM)
- Doctorate (e.g. PhD, EdD)

What is your current employment status?

- Employed full time (up to 36-40 hours a week)
- Employed part time
- Unemployed and currently looking for work
- Unemployed and not currently looking for work
- Student
- Retired
- Homemaker
- Self-employed
- Unable to work

Items: Experience with crime

Have you ever been a victim of a crime?

- Yes
- No

Have you ever been an offender of a crime?

- Yes
- No

Was someone in your family ever a victim of a crime?

- Yes
- No

Was someone in your family ever an offender of a crime?

- Yes
- No

Was one of your friends ever a victim of a crime?

- Yes
- No

Was one of your friends ever an offender of a crime?

- Yes
- No