

**Bachelor Thesis**

Expected Versus Unexpected Mediation:  
The Role of Needs and Apologies on Victims

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**Abstract**

The application of victim-offender mediation (VOM) is on its rise within the field of restorative justice as it showed to be effective and helpful for both victims and offenders as a reaction to the aftermaths of a crime. To increase participation rates of victims, influencing factors on the willingness to participate were examined in this study. This research is an answer to the question: "To what extent do psychological needs predict the participation of victims in VOM?" More, the influence of the communication channel on the perceived sincerity was investigated. The question "To what extent does the communication channel used for the apology influence the victims' perceived sincerity of the apology?" is answered.

It was expected that individuals with a higher need for information, need to share victimization and need to receive a genuine apology are more willing to participate in VOM. Perceived sincerity of the offender was expected to be higher when the apology was given through a rich medium, such as through face-to-face contact as compared to letter exchange and phone call. Also, it was proposed that receiving the apology through one's preferred communication form predicts a higher perceived sincerity. This relationship was expected to be explained by the expectations towards the offender's sincerity.

An online questionnaire among 164 German individuals aged above 18 years was used, in which they imagined being a victim in a robbery. Then, questions about the three needs were asked. After explaining the concept of VOM, participants had to indicate to what extent they were willing to participate and which communication form they would prefer. All participants were then randomly allocated to either a visual, audio or written apology of the same (fictitious) offender, which were identical in terms of content. Subsequently, participants received the apology through their preferred or through their non-preferred communication form. Prior to receiving the apology expected sincerity was measured and after receiving the apology perceived sincerity was measured.

The results revealed that the need for information and to receive a sincere apology significantly and positively predicted individuals' willingness to participate in VOM. All other hypothesized relations were not supported. Hence, VOM seems to be equally effective in terms of perceived sincerity in all three communication forms and also in respondents' non-preferred communication forms. Giving in to wishes of the offender does not seem to have negative effects. These results can be used to increase participation rates in the future by considering the needs.

*Keywords:* Restorative justice, Victim-Offender Mediation, Needs, Apology, Sincerity

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### Introduction

Recently, the application of restorative justice programs is growing within the criminal justice system because of many advantages and as a response to victims' dissatisfaction with the traditional criminal justice system (Choi & Severson, 2009). Within restorative justice, directly involved parties of a crime, such as victims, offenders and the community, come together and search for solutions collaboratively (Braithwaite, 2002; Ness, 2004; Zehr, 2015). The aim of restorative justice is to repair harm and relationships between individuals (Zehr, 2015). This is mostly done by means of a constructive dialogue. Often, an apology is given to repair relationships, to right wrongdoings and to provide some form of restoration during these dialogues (Bennet, 2007; Roach, 2000; Zehr, 2005). Restorative justice can be used in addition or as a part of the criminal justice system (Kennedy et al., 2019). In restorative justice, crime becomes a violation of the victim rather than of the state (Dandurand & Griffiths, 2006).

There are several forms of restorative justice practice, such as family group conferencing, restorative circles, and victim-offender mediation (VOM) (Umbreit & Armour, 2010). VOM focuses on the interaction between victims and offenders of a crime and not on interactions between family members or members of the wider community (Sherman et al., 2015; Umbreit & Armour, 2010). VOM is dialogue driven and its aim is to strengthen the connection between victims and offenders, which has promising effects (Lewis & Umbreit, 2015). In VOM, victims and sometimes family members or other supporting persons of criminal offenses have the opportunity to talk with the offender about needs, feelings, and emotions, which should help them to better cope with the crime (Hansen & Umbreit, 2018). All parties take part on a voluntary basis and the conversation takes place in a safe and controlled setting in the presence of a mediator (Hansen & Umbreit, 2018).

In the US and Germany, the procedure of a mediation process is very similar. A typical mediation session is 1-1,5 hours in length and requires a proper preparation of both victims and offenders (Bundesministerium der Justiz und für Verbraucherschutz [BMJV], 2020; Choi & Severson, 2009). In the preparation, the mediator talks separately to the offender and the victim to build trust, to provide information about the mediation process and to learn more about their life circumstances. Also, the victims' and offenders' expectations, fears and hopes are discovered, and the mediator makes sure that their decision to participate in mediation is voluntary (Hansen & Umbreit, 2018). In a typical mediation session, the victim first conveys the impact of the crime. Then, the offender acknowledges the harm and, in the end, both parties develop a written plan to

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repair the harm (BMJV, 2020; Choi & Severson, 2009). During the dialogue the mediator provides guidance and directions in the sessions to ensure that both parties' voices are heard (Choi et al., 2010b).

Participating in VOM is voluntary and not everybody is willing to participate in a mediation process. Possible reasons are that the crime seems to be too unimportant to invest time, victims' fear of meeting the offender, the wish of a harsh punishment for the offender - for example, court - or the time elapsed since the crime is too long for less harmful offenses or too short for more harmful offenses (Coates & Gehm, 1985; Umbreit, 1996; Zebel et al., 2017). However, many victims are glad to get the opportunity to participate in VOM with a participation rate between 40 and 60 percent, even up to 90 percent in some locations (Coates et al., 2002; Umbreit et al., 2001, 2004). In Germany, the participation rate was 55.7% in 2017 and 54.3% in 2018 (Hartmann et al., 2020).

Since participation in VOM has many advantages and is beneficial for the victims' well-being (e.g. Braithwaite, 2002; Choi et al., 2010b; Umbreit, 1991; Umbreit, Coates, & Kalanj, 1994; Umbreit, Coates, & Roberts, 2000; Zebel, 2012; Zehr, 2015), it is of great interest to try to stimulate and increase those rates. It will therefore be examined which psychological factors and more specifically which psychological needs are related to victim participation. If these needs are known, mediators can take these into account and make sure that victims can make a free and deliberate choice to participate in VOM. Therefore, the first research question is: *To what extent do psychological needs predict the participation of victims in VOM?* This research will focus on a German population. Hence, this study is, to our knowledge, the first to examine influencing factors on the willingness to participate with solely German participants.

An essential part of mediation to be successful is an apology, which should be perceived as genuine and sincere by victims (Choi et al., 2012). Choi and Severson (2009) stated that how the apology is given, so the delivery, which includes the communication channel, determines the quality of an apology. In VOM, different forms of mediation are possible, such as visual and written communication (Zebel, 2012), but also auditive communication (Evje & Cushman, 2000). As visual communication contains not only verbal, but also non-verbal cues, it might have different influences on the perceived sincerity of apologies. So, the second research question is: *To what extent does the communication channel used for the apology influence the victims' perceived sincerity of the apology?*

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In the following paragraphs, the advantages of restorative justice are stated and how victims' needs might influence their willingness to participate in VOM. Furthermore, communication forms are presented based on their richness and the link between those channels and the perceived sincerity of an apology is examined.

### **Advantages of Restorative Justice and VOM**

Restorative justice has many advantages compared to retributive justice. To start with, restorative justice differs from traditional justice systems as it is more sensitive towards the victims' needs, which is one of the principles of restorative justice (Choi et al., 2010b; Choi & Severson, 2009). Being sensitive to victims in the mediation process is critical to a successful mediation (Choi, Green et al., 2010a; Choi, Gilbert et al., 2013; Choi & Gilbert, 2010; Choi & Severson, 2009; Umbreit & Armour, 2010). In restorative justice, interpersonal relationships can be restored, emotional suffering can be reduced, and victims can be empowered which is mostly not the case in retributive justice (Braithwaite, 2002; Choi et al., 2010b; Umbreit et al., 1994; Zehr, 2015).

Umbreit and Armour (2010) stated that VOM is the oldest and most popular form of restorative justice in juvenile and criminal justice systems as it is accepted and used worldwide. Both offenders and victims are more satisfied after participating in VOM than going through traditional court prosecution as different studies show (Choi et al., 2010b; Hansen & Umbreit, 2018; Latimer et al., 2005; Umbreit et al., 2000). VOM not only seems to increase victims' satisfaction, but victims also perceive it as more fair than those who participate in court proceedings, because they have a say in the outcome (Hansen & Umbreit, 2018). In addition, victims' fear and anger towards the offender can be reduced by participating in VOM (Umbreit, 1991; Umbreit et al., 2000; Zebel, 2012). Various studies show that participating in VOM lowers the recidivism rate when compared to recidivism rates of individuals who participated in the traditional justice system (Hansen & Umbreit, 2018; Joudo-Larsen, 2014; Nugent, Umbreit et al., 2001; Nugent, Williams et al., 2003). However, there is also critic on these conclusions as it is unclear whether the effects are due to the mediation process itself or due to self-selection bias as participation in VOM is voluntary (Jonas-Van Dijk et al., 2020). Connected to that, VOM is most often less expensive than the traditional criminal justice system as the mediation itself is cheaper than court proceedings, but there are also long-term savings, because of incarceration and possible

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reduced recidivism rates (Hansen & Umbreit, 2018). Although VOM seems to be advantageous for victims and offenders, this research will focus on victims only.

### **Victims' Needs and Participation in VOM**

Considering the advantages, one might wonder why some victims do not want to participate in VOM. Apart from the reasons mentioned above why participants do not want to participate, such as fear or time elapsed since the offense, other psychological factors might influence the willingness to participate, for example, psychological needs. All individuals have their own needs, but three needs are very common among victims, namely asking questions and acquiring answers, sharing victimization and lastly, receiving a genuine apology (Choi et al., 2010b). Asking questions and acquiring answers is a need most victims have. Victims want to get answers to questions like "Why did I become the target of crime?", which helps victims to reduce frustration, confusion, and to restore their lives (Achilles & Zehr, 2001; Bennett, 2007; Choi et al., 2010b; Wemmers, 2002). Asking questions about the reasons for the crime also helps to regain power and control over the own life (Achilles & Zehr, 2001). Sharing victimization refers to communicating current feelings, suffering and the impact upon the victims' life to the offender (Choi et al., 2010b). Many victims would like to address feelings and to have the opportunity to get that off their chest after a crime (Choi et al., 2010b). The last need, receiving a genuine apology, enhances the healing process, because it helps to cope with the crime and helps to restore broken relationships between victims and offenders (Choi & Severson, 2009).

Talking about the needs is important during the mediated encounter of VOM as it can reduce fear of re-victimization as well as anger, and increases feeling of empowerment (Hansen & Umbreit, 2018; Umbreit et al., 1994), but it already becomes important before the mediation process as well. In a study of Umbreit et al. (2001) it turned out that those three needs also serve as reasons or motivations to participate in VOM. Some victims state to participate in VOM to help the offender, some to receive a payback of losses, but many for three reasons: to express feelings about the crime, to receive an apology and/or to receive answers to questions (Umbreit et al., 2001). Participants of the study of Umbreit et al. (2001) identified themselves as Caucasian, African American, Asian, Hispanic, American Indian or mixed ethnicity. In this study, it will be examined if the results do also account for the German population. So, it is hypothesized:

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*Hypothesis 1 (H1): If victims score higher on the need for information, they are more willing to participate in VOM.*

*Hypothesis 2 (H2): If victims score higher on the need to share victimization, they are more willing to participate in VOM.*

*Hypothesis 3 (H3): If victims score higher on the need to receive a genuine apology, they are more willing to participate in VOM.*

### **Effects of an Apology**

One of the three needs is that victims have the need to receive a sincere or genuine apology. It is important that the apology is fitting the needs of victims. There are many different definitions for an effective apology, but most definitions have three components in common, which are: sincerity, empathy, and expressing regret with no excuse (Choi & Severson, 2009). Nonetheless, for an apology to be judged as genuine and sincere depends on the subjective opinion of the individual receiving the apology (Bonesteffer et al., 2020). The perceived sincerity of an apology is important because it is the main aim of the mediation process and is critical for a mediation to be successful (Choi, Bazemore et al., 2012; Choi, Gilbert et al., 2013; Choi & Gilbert, 2010; Choi, Green et al., 2010a; Choi & Severson, 2009; Umbreit & Armour, 2010). Schumann (2012) concluded that perceived sincerity of the apology is positively associated with satisfaction and predicts forgiveness. Often the victims' and the offenders' impressions, perspectives and perceptions of the genuineness differ, which is named perceptual disparity (Choi et al., 2010b; Lee, 2005). Choi et al. (2010b) also state that often offenders think apologies were sincere, but victims perceived it differently. The way in which the apology was delivered, which include factors like not directly looking at the victims or a fast pace accounted for the results (Choi et al., 2010b). Thus, when delivering an apology many factors, such as the communication form, have to be taken into account to make it as sincere as possible (Choi & Severson, 2009).

Different forms of communication can be used in the VOM process between victims and offenders. Those different mediums can be assessed by their media richness, which refers to the information-carrying capacity of a communication form (Dainton & Zelle, 2017). To assess the capacity of a medium, four characteristics should be taken into account, which are speed of the

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feedback, the ability to personalize the message, the availability of cues and the language variety (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Precisely, with speed of feedback the capability of which feedback or answers can be given is meant. Personalization of the message describes to what extent one can individualize the message to the receiver. The availability of cues refers to the presence of non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions or body language, and to verbal cues such as the tone of voice, which transfers information beyond the spoken message. Language variety considers if natural language can be utilized (Daft & Lengel, 1986).

The richest form of mediation, so with a high information-carrying capacity, is face-to-face communication, which is the most used mediation form (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Dainton & Zelle, 2017; Van Dijk, 2016). Here, the victim, offender and mediator are in the same room to have a conversation in which immediate feedback can be given. Natural language can be utilized, which is high in variety. Furthermore, the message can be personalized to another individual and both verbal, such as intonations, and non-verbal cues, such as eye contact and body language, are present. Because of the presence of vocal and visual cues, face-to-face-communication is a direct form of mediation.

Another often used medium in VOM is letter exchange. A letter is low in richness, as messages are not exchanged in real time, but with a delay, so no direct feedback can be given (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Van Dijk, 2016). Although the content of the message can be personalized in a letter by addressing it to the receiver and not writing it anonymous, there is a lack of both verbal and non-verbal cues, which lowers the information-carrying capacity. Nevertheless, also in letter exchange the language can be utilized. Because there are no cues present and no direct contact between victims and offenders, letter exchange is an indirect form of contact.

Next to the above-mentioned forms, which are offered very often, there is sometimes also the possibility to have contact with the offender by phone (Evje & Cushman, 2000). This type of contact might be interesting in the context of VOM as it is a compromise between face-to-face contact and letter exchange. It is a possible option, which has not been used in practice very often until now but may have promising effects. Here, immediate feedback can be given by responding directly in real time on the phone. Also, the message can be personalized to the listener. However, only verbal cues, such as intonations and the voice of the offender, are present, but not non-verbal ones. So, a phone call is semi rich concerning media richness as the information-carrying capacity is neither high nor low (Daft & Lengel, 1986).



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Those different communication options have different effects and that is why it is important to examine different forms of communication (Zebel, 2012). Research shows that direct forms of VOM, such as face-to-face communication, have more beneficial effects on the victims' well-being than indirect forms such as letter exchange (Zebel, 2012). Zebel (2012) found that having direct contact in VOM decreased both feelings of fear and anger and having indirect contact in VOM only decreased feelings of fear. This is probably due to the presence of non-verbal cues, such as bodily communication and facial expressions, in rich or direct forms of communication. Eye contact is an example of a non-verbal cue and is an essential element in communication. It can have crucial influences on the perceived sincerity of the apology, because having eye contact plays a central role in interpersonal relationships and helps to transmit emotions, such as empathy or regret (Chen, 2002; Grumet, 1983). Cunningham (1977) supported that emotions are transferred through non-verbal cues and concluded that facial expressions might even transmit more information than vocal sounds do. Thus, in conversations most communication is non-verbal. So, by seeing and perceiving several facial expressions and emotions, it might be easier to assess or rate the sincerity and genuineness of the message. Choi and Severson (2009) support this view and found a strong impact of vocal and visual input on victims' appraisal of the offender's trustworthiness. Also, studies about the eye contact behavior in liars demonstrate that it has an influence on the perceived sincerity of what was said (Burns & Kintz, 1976; Hietanen et al., 2018; Strömwall & Willén, 2011). Lee (2005) also found this for the effects of an apology and concluded that non-verbal cues determine the sincerity of an apology. In a more current study of Bonensteffen et al. (2020), the importance of non-verbal information, and more specifically visual attention, for the perceived sincerity was demonstrated using eye-tracking.

The three above-mentioned communication forms, namely face-to-face-communication, letter exchange und phone call will be examined within this research. Face-to-face communication is expected to be the richest form of communication, telephone call semi-rich and letter exchange lowest in richness. In line with the above-mentioned literature, Van Dijk (2016) could already confirm that a richer medium leads to higher perceived sincerity of the apology. In this study it is tested whether this effect can be found in this slightly different study set-up. So, it is hypothesized:

*Hypothesis 4 (H4): Apologies delivered through richer mediums are perceived as more sincere than in terms of content identical apologies delivered through less rich mediums.*

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Victims most often have expectations before participating in VOM. They have expectations about the result of the mediation, what to talk about, but also in what way to communicate with the offender (Choi & Severson, 2009). Most expectations or concerns can be communicated and discussed with the mediator prior to the mediation itself, so that victims, but also offenders, know what to expect. However, participants of VOM also reported that actually being in the mediation process is different from what was expected or imagined (Choi & Severson, 2009). Prior to the actual VOM encounter, victims can choose which mediation channel they would prefer. However, it could be that both victim and offender want to participate, but they do not want to use the same form of communication. The question is what the effects of VOM are if victims give in to the wishes of the offender, because they really want to talk to the offender. Therefore, it might happen that victims do not receive VOM through their preferred form of communication, but instead accept the form preferred by the offender. Hence, it would be interesting to examine how evaluations of perceived sincerity change if expectations are not met. Today not much is known about the effects of not receiving the preferred communication channel on the perceived sincerity. It is suggested by Choi and Severson (2009) that an apology is not effective when victims and offenders do not agree on the same method of delivery. In other words, Choi and Severson (2009) concluded that an apology carries only weight if both offender and victim prefer to communicate through the same medium. So, if an apology is not delivered through the victim's preferred communication channel, it cannot be perceived as sincere. Hence, it is hypothesized:

*Hypothesis 5 (H5): If the apology is given through the preferred communication channel, it is perceived as more sincere than not receiving it through the preferred communication channel.*

Having positive expectations about an event predicts a more positive attitude towards that event (Constantino et al., 2011). Getting the preferred communication channel might already positively influence victims' expectations towards the sincerity of offenders. However, it can also be the case the other way around. As an example, it can be the case that participants would prefer to meet the offender face-to-face, but the offender is not willing to meet the victim face-to-face but wants to write a letter. It might be that the victim thinks that the offender will not be that sincere because the offender does not even want to face the victim. Thus, getting to know if the apology will be

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transferred through one's preferred or non-preferred communication form might influence the victims' expectations towards the sincerity of the offender.

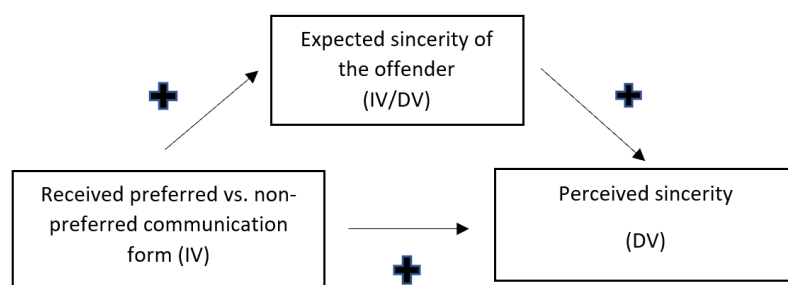
If expectations are not met, victims are disappointed and show a negative attitude, which could have a negative influence on their perceived sincerity (Hansen & Umbreit, 2018). In line with that, Bonensteffen (2018) concluded that previous expectations towards the sincerity of the offender positively predicted the perceived sincerity of the offender's apology. So, the relationship between getting the preferred communication form and the perceived sincerity might be explained by the attitude or expectations towards the sincerity of the apology. This leads to the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 6 (H6): The (expected) positive relationship between receiving the apology through the preferred communication channel and the perceived sincerity of the apology is explained by positive expectations towards the sincerity of the offender.*

The proposed relationships of hypotheses five and six can be found in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Independent and Dependent Variable of Hypotheses 5 and 6*



*Note.* IV = Independent variable, DV = Dependent variable.

### Current Research

In this research, the needs of participants, their willingness to participate in VOM, their preferred communication channel, the expected sincerity of the offender and the perceived sincerity will be examined in an online survey. As participants will read a scenario in which they have to imagine being the victim, this research is a vignette research. In the context of VOM they will

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receive an apology through one out of three forms of communication by random allocation: visual, audio or written. Then participants will receive a questionnaire in which they have to rate the sincerity of the offender and answer other questions investigating the other variables.

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### Method

#### Research Design

This study used an experimental 3 (visual vs. audio vs. written) by 2 (preferred vs. non-preferred) between-group research design, since participants were randomly assigned to one out of three forms of communication: the audio, visual or written communication form, which was their preferred form or not. So, there was one group of participants who received the apology through their preferred form of communication, which was the control group. The other group, who did not receive the apology through the preferred communication form, served as the experimental group. Hence, six conditions in total were created.

The independent variables were the three needs, the richness of the communication form, the preference of the communication channel and the expected sincerity of the offender. Next to the expected sincerity, the willingness to participate and the perceived sincerity were dependent variables as well.

#### Participants

Participants were selected by a non-random convenience sampling method and snowball sampling. The researcher asked individuals from her social surroundings via WhatsApp, Facebook, LinkedIn or telephone calls to participate in the study. In addition, students from the first, second and third Bachelor Psychology Year were asked to participate in the study by using the platform SONA. Here, respondents received 0.25 credit points when participating in this study. In total 253 individuals started the questionnaire, but 167 completed it. Two other individuals had to be excluded as they did not give consent. Because the inclusion criteria were an age of at least 18 years and a German nationality, another individual was excluded because he had the Dutch nationality. So, data of 164 respondents were used for further analyses. Of these participants 68.9 % was female ( $n = 113$ ), 30.5 % was male ( $n = 50$ ) and 0.6 % preferred not to say the gender ( $n = 1$ ). The participants in this research were aged from 18 to 73 years ( $M = 29.11$ ,  $SD = 13.47$ ), all having a German nationality. Next, 24.4 % ( $n = 40$ ) of the individuals were not willing to participate, and 75 % ( $n = 123$ ) of the respondents were willing to participate. Table 1 gives an overview of how many individuals were in the control group and how many in the experimental group in which conditions.

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**Table 1***Distribution of the Amount of Participants per Communication Channel*

	Face-to-face communication	Phone call	Letter exchange	Total
Preferred medium (Control group)	38	7	12	57 (34.8 %)
Non-preferred medium (Experimental group)	18	48	41	107 (65.2 %)
Total	56 (34.1 %)	55 (33.5 %)	53 (32.3 %)	164 (100 %)

Next, 26.8 % indicated that they have been victimized before ( $n = 44$ ) and more than a half (55%) knew anyone in their immediate surroundings who has once been a victim of crime ( $n = 91$ ). Eighteen respondents have committed a crime (11 %) and 45 individuals know anyone who has committed a crime in the past (27.4 %). When asking for prior experiences with VOM, 61.6 % ( $n = 101$ ) indicated that they heard from VOM before, 5.5 % ( $n = 9$ ) were approached and even less (0.6 %,  $n = 1$ ) have ever participated.

To examine if there are significant differences between the control and the experimental group on the background variables, a t-test and Chi-squares were calculated. An independent t-test revealed that there was no significant difference on age ( $t(161) = -.37, p = .71$ ). Chi-square tests of independence showed scores  $p > .05$  for the preference of communication with the background variables gender, education, prior experiences with VOM and previous experiences as a victim or offender (Table 2). Thus, no significant differences between the control and the experimental group on the background variables were found.

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**Table 2**

*Significance of Chi Squares Examining Differences Between the Control and the Experimental Group*

Background variable	<i>p</i>
Gender	.66
Education	.74
Voluntariness of participation	.25
Experiences being a victim	.10
Experiences of friends or family members being a victim	.46
Experiences committing a crime	.66
Experiences of friends or family members committing a crime	.69
Heard of VOM	.80
Approached with VOM	.40
Prior participation in VOM	.43
Somebody in surrounding approached with VOM	.93
Somebody in surrounding participated	.64

*Note.*  $p = .05$  was used.

The research was approved by the Ethics committee of the University of Twente and all participants gave written informed consent prior to participation in accordance with the guidelines of the Ethics committee.

**Materials**

To start with, all participants needed a working internet connection as data was collected online. Conducting the study online enabled a large number of participants in a short time. In the online study, all participants received the same crime story, which was written in the “you” form,

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because participants had to imagine being the victim. The idea of the story stemmed from Kippers (2015) as he conducted a study with a comparable study design in which participants had to imagine being the victim as well. Some sentences and adjectives were added to the version of Kippers (2015) to make the story more vivid for the reader. In this story a violent robbery while getting money from an ATM machine was described. After the victim got money from the machine, the offender hits the victim and wants to have the money. Because the perpetrator has a weapon, the victim does not see another opportunity than to give him the money. This scenario was chosen as it entails the two most frequent crimes addressed in VOM processes, namely a violent offense and a property offense (Slachtoffer in Beeld, 2013 as cited in Kippers, 2015).

Next to the story, apologies were needed for the three different communication forms. As the study took place completely online, the different communication channels had to be adjusted accordingly. For the face-to-face option a video was shown, in which the offender was reading his apology to the victim, using verbal and non-verbal cues such as looking down, putting his hand on his chest and having eye contact by looking into the camera (Appendix A). For the telephone call, an audio tape was presented using exactly the same audio as it was used in the video. For the written apology, a picture of a letter was shown, in which the offender apologizes for his offense (Appendix B). In all three forms, victims saw a photo and a profile with nationality, age and gender of the offender to make sure that all the victims had the same offender in mind and the effects are not due to appearance, race or nationality of the offender. To measure the effects of the three different communication forms properly, the content of the audio, the letter and the video was standardized. The content of the apology was taken from a study of Van Dijk (2016), which was based on the instructions on how to write an apology of Seymour et al. (2001). By that, the apology contained the three components Choi and Severson (2009) stressed, namely sincerity, empathy and expressing regret with no excuse. Although perceived sincerity is in the eye of the beholder, the apology had elements, such as empathy, which increases the likelihood that the apology is perceived as sincere (Bonensteffen et al., 2020).

### **Research Instrument**

The research instrument consisted of a questionnaire (Appendix C). In the following paragraphs the independent and dependent variables and how they were measured are explained. All items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from completely disagree (1) to



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completely agree (7). To make sure that the participants truly read and understood the questions properly, many items were phrased negatively.

### *Independent Variables*

To start with, the extent to which the participants possess the three needs was measured after they had read the scenario but before receiving the apology. “After two weeks, I would feel the need to ask questions about the motive behind the crime scene” is one of four items which measured the need for information. These questions were based on the studies of Bennett (2007) and Wemmers (2002) in which participants indicated which information they want to seek. The factor analysis revealed one underlying factor with an Eigenvalue of 2.48. The item loadings showed to be  $> .50$ , so all items loaded high on this factor. Next to the validity, those items showed to be reliable ( $\alpha = .78$ ).

The need to share victimization was measured by four items, for example “After two weeks, I would feel the need to make the perpetrator aware of the consequences of his actions on your life”. The items were based on the description of the need to share victimization of Choi, Green and Kapp (2010b). An exploratory factor analysis showed one underlying factor with an Eigenvalue of 2.75. All items loaded strongly on this factor ( $IL > .79$ ). So, the items measuring the need to share victimization showed to be valid and also reliable ( $\alpha = .85$ ).

The third need, the need to receive a genuine apology, was again measured with four items, for example “After two weeks, I would feel the need to receive a remorseful apology from the offender”. These items were based on the definition of a genuine apology of Choi and Severson (2009). Measuring the validity, the factor analysis showed one underlying factor with an Eigenvalue of 3.46. All items showed to strongly load on this factor with items loadings  $> .89$ . The scale also showed to be reliable ( $\alpha = .95$ ).

After that, it was explained what VOM is by presenting an original text used in a real mediation by Slachtoffer in Beeld, a Dutch organization that provides VOM. After all three forms of communication were introduced by a short description, participants were asked about their preferred communication channel. They could choose between visual contact, namely face-to-face communication, written contact by letter exchange or having auditive contact by having a phone call with the offender. From literature it became clear that face-to-face communication is the richest medium as direct feedback can be given, the message can be personalized and verbal as well as non-verbal cues are present (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Receiving the apology through a phone call is

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semi-rich because although the message can be personalized and feedback can be given immediately, only verbal and no non-verbal cues are present. Lastly, letter exchange is lowest in richness as neither verbal, nor non-verbal cues are present and no immediate feedback can be given (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Since Dainton and Zelley (2017) as well as Daft and Lengel (1986) already made clear how to assess the richness of a medium, no questions about the perceived richness of the communication form were asked in the questionnaire.

After respondents were told through which communication form they will have contact and if they received their preferred communication form or not, the expected sincerity towards the offender was assessed. This was done by using a scale from Bonensteffen (2018), which was already used in a similar context. One of four items is: “I think that the offender will be trustworthy when making the apology”. A factor analysis testing the validity showed one underlying factor with an Eigenvalue of 2.58. All items loaded strongly on this factor ( $IL > .67$ ). The items measuring the expected sincerity also showed to be reliable ( $\alpha = .79$ ).

### ***Dependent Variables***

The first dependent variable, namely the willingness to participate was measured by a single question. They were not only asked if they want to participate giving a “yes” or “no” answer, but they were asked to what extent they are willing to participate. After indicating their willingness, they were asked for the reason for the decision. The perceived sincerity was measured by nine items. Some of those items were already used in a study of Bonensteffen (2018) or in a study of Van Dijk (2016). An example for an item is “I think he is really sorry for what he did”. To conduct analyses with this variable, it was tested whether the scales are valid and reliable. The factor analysis showed that the items measuring the construct perceived sincerity are valid as the Eigenvalue was 6.69 and all items loaded strongly on this factor with items loadings  $> .71$ . The scale showed to be reliable as well ( $\alpha = .96$ ).

### ***Control Variables***

In the beginning of the questionnaire, demographic questions were asked. More precisely, the gender, age, and nationality were asked to eventually control for those background analyses when testing the hypotheses. Moreover, it was asked whether the participants have been victimized before or if they know someone in their environment who has been victimized. It was also asked if the participant or someone from the social surrounding ever victimized someone else. In the end, it was asked if participants already have had experience with VOM in the past. “Have you ever

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participated in victim-offender mediation before?” This information is important to make sure that the effects are due to the independent variables and not due to other factors like the nationality of the offender or previous experiences. In the end, it was asked if they really could imagine being the victim and if they were distracted while filling out the questionnaire. By that, reliability and validity were ensured.

Next to those variables mentioned above, more items were included to measure other variables as this study is part of a bigger research project. These items included pre- and post-measures about fear and anger, responsibility taking inferences, suffering taking inferences, intention to prevent and repair as well as measuring aspects of a good apology.

### **Procedure**

All participants received a link to the online questionnaire, which was presented in an online platform called qualtrics.com. Respondents had to give consent, in which it was clarified that anonymity is guaranteed and that they can withdraw from the study at any point in time, before the questionnaire started. Participants were asked to choose their mother language or their preferred language. They could choose between English or German as researchers were not sure in the beginning of the data collection whether enough German participants could be reached to draw conclusions. It was also stated that the survey would take approximately 30 minutes, but no time limit was given. Then, the respondents were asked about their demographics as well as experiences with crimes and received a scenario in which they had to imagine being the victim. After that, it was tested to which extent the participants had the need to share victimization, need for information and the need to receive a genuine apology to test hypotheses one, two and three. Then, it was explained what VOM is and which three communication forms are available. Participants had to indicate to what extent and in what form they are willing to participate. After this decision, all participants, also the ones who indicated that they do not want to participate, were randomly assigned to either face-to-face communication, letter exchange or phone call. Hence, they were assigned to their preferred communication form, which was the control group, or to another communication form, which was the experimental group. Then, the expectations towards the sincerity of the offender were measured. After that, the apology was presented either in the preferred communication form or not in the preferred communication form. Participants had to rate the perceived sincerity of the apology and on which criteria their decision was based. After that,

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other variables, like responsibility taking inferences, intention to prevent and repair, suffering taking inferences, aspects of a good apology as well as fear and anger were measured. Next to those variables, some control questions about distractions during filling out the questions, prior experiences with VOM and about the extent to which people could imagine being the victim were asked. In the end, the aim of the study was clarified, and it was stressed that participants are invited to text the researchers if they have questions, remarks or are interested in the results of the study.

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### Results

In the following section, the analyses, which were conducted in SPSS, as well as the results are presented. Before conducting analyses, the data set was cleared by excluding participants, which did not meet the inclusion criteria, for example a German nationality or a minimum age of 18 years. After having the final data set, items, which were negatively formulated, were reversed. All (sub-)scales seemed to be valid and reliable, so they could be used to conduct further analyses. For all analyses an alpha of .05 was used.

### Descriptive Statistics

All items were measured with the help of a 7-Point Likert scale. Scoring 4 on the scale was considered to be neutral as it was labelled as “Neither agree nor disagree” in the questionnaire. Values above 4, so 5, 6 and 7, were considered to be high and values below 4, so 3, 2 and 1, to be low. By looking at the means of the variables, it became clear that people generally scored high on the need for information ( $M = 5.29$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ) and on the need to share victimization ( $M = 4.76$ ,  $SD = 1.41$ ). Respondents scored more neutral on the need to receive an apology ( $M = 4.31$ ,  $SD = 1.66$ ), on the expected sincerity ( $M = 3.75$ ,  $SD = .95$ ) and in the construct measuring perceived sincerity ( $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ). Thus, people did not agree strongly that the apology was sincere. What is notable is the positive moderate correlations between the three needs (.52, .43, .59). Individuals scoring high one need also score high on the other needs. Additionally, all three needs are positively correlated with expected sincerity. Individuals scoring high on the need for information, the need for a genuine apology and the need to share victimization expected the apology to be sincere. Expected sincerity also correlates with perceived sincerity (.35). Thus, respondents expecting the apology to be sincere also seem to actually perceive it as more sincere. Table 3 gives an overview of the means, standard deviations and correlation coefficients of the main variables.

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**Table 3***Descriptives of and Correlations Between the Main Variables*

Variables	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Need for information	162	5.29	1.12	-	<b>.52**</b>	<b>.43**</b>	<b>.19*</b>	.05
2. Need for apology	162	4.31	1.66		-	<b>.59**</b>	<b>.33**</b>	.15
3. Need to share victimization	164	4.76	1.41			-	<b>.18*</b>	.04
4. Expected sincerity	164	3.75	.95				-	<b>.35**</b>
5. Perceived sincerity	162	4.18	1.15					

*Note.* \*\* Correlation is significant at the .001 level (2-tailed). \* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Next, it was determined whether the sample population was drawn from a normally distributed population using the Shapiro-Wilk test. Here, the null hypothesis states that the data follow a normal distribution. For perceived sincerity, the null hypothesis could not be rejected as the p-value was .17, so the population seemed to be normally distributed.

**Hypotheses Testing**

A normal distribution enables researchers to conduct parametric tests. To test hypotheses one, two and three a multiple linear regression analysis was performed to see the unique contribution of every predictor on the dependent variable as the overlap between the predictors are taken into account. Here, the independent variables were the needs, namely the need for information, the need to share victimization and the need to receive a genuine apology, and the dependent variable was the willingness to participate in VOM. In the analysis, it was controlled for the following background variables: age, gender, education, language in which the questionnaire was conducted, prior experiences with VOM and previous experiences as a victim or offender. A

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significant regression equation was found ( $F(3, 149) = 24.44, p < .001$ ) with an adjusted R-squared of .32.

The first hypothesis proposed that a higher need for information predicts a higher willingness to participate in VOM. The need for information was shown to significantly predict the willingness to participate in VOM ( $B = .52, t(160) = 4.38, p < .001$ ). Looking at the results, the first hypothesis was accepted.

The second hypothesis states that the need to share victimization predicts a higher willingness to participate in VOM. Not in line with expectations, this need was shown to not significantly predict the willingness to participate in VOM ( $B = .02, t(162) = .22, p = .83$ ). The results of the multiple linear regression revealed that hypothesis two - if victims score higher on the need to share victimization, they are more willing to participate in VOM - could be rejected.

Next, the need to receive a sincere apology significantly predicted the willingness to participate ( $B = .30, t(160) = 3.40, p = .001$ ). These results suggested that hypothesis three - if victims score higher on the need to receive a genuine apology, they are more willing to participate in VOM - could be accepted.

In this analysis it was controlled for background variables. The background variable “Heard of VOM before” showed to significantly explain the willingness to participate ( $B = -.38, t(162) = -2.38, p = .02$ ). Respondents who have heard of VOM before this study were less willing to participate in VOM.

Accepting the first and third hypotheses means that individuals possessing the need for information and the need to receive an apology to a great extent are more willing to participate in VOM.

A 2 x 3 ANCOVA with preferred vs. non-preferred communication form and face-to-face communication vs. letter exchange vs. phone call with the dependent variable perceived sincerity was conducted to test hypothesis four and five. The voluntariness of participation served as covariate as in a study of Van Dijk (2016) involuntary participation showed to decrease the effects of VOM as the apology was perceived as less sincere.

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**Table 4***Means of Perceived Sincerity*

Communication form	Preferred	Non-preferred	Total
Face-to-face	4.00	4.05	4.03
Phone call	3.50	4.33	3.91
Letter exchange	4.28	4.34	4.31
Total	3.93	4.24	

Hypothesis four states that apologies delivered through richer mediums are perceived as more sincere than in terms of content identical apologies delivered through less rich mediums. Already when comparing the means of perceived sincerity of face-to-face contact ( $M = 4.03$ ), phone call ( $M = 3.91$ ) and letter exchange ( $M = 4.31$ ), it seemed that the hypothesized effect might not be true (Table 4). With the ANCOVA it was examined if there is a statistically significant difference between face-to-face communication, letter exchange and phone call on perceived sincerity controlling for the voluntariness of participation. There was no significant difference in the perceived sincerity for the different types of apologies ( $F(2, 154) = 1.06, p = .35$ ). Hence, getting the apology through richer forms of communication did not significantly predict the perceived sincerity. So, the fourth hypothesis was rejected.

In the questionnaire it was also asked on what the rating of the perceived sincerity was based on. In the face-to-face condition 74.55 % ( $n = 41$ ) reported that their decision was based on the offender's non-verbal behavior, 72.73 % ( $n = 40$ ) on the offender's gestures, 65.45 % ( $n = 36$ ) on facial expressions, 58.18 % ( $n = 32$ ) on the eye contact behavior and 72.73 % ( $n = 40$ ) on the content of the apology. In the phone condition 79.25 % ( $n = 42$ ) indicated that their decision was based on intonations and 73.58 % ( $n = 39$ ) on the content of the apology. In the letter exchange 88.68 % ( $n = 47$ ) indicated that they based their rating on the content of the apology.

The ANCOVA also revealed results about the relationship between the preference of the communication medium and the perceived sincerity. This was done to test hypothesis five, which stated that if the apology is given through the preferred communication channel, it is perceived as more sincere than receiving it through the non-preferred communication channel. Already when looking at the means of perceived sincerity, one can see that the mean in the preferred condition



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( $M = 3.93$ ) is lower than in the non-preferred condition ( $M = 4.24$ ) (Table 4). Not in line with the hypothesis, the ANCOVA showed that the effect was not statistically significant with  $F(1, 154) = 1.92, p = .17$ . Getting the apology through the preferred communication medium did not predict higher perceived sincerity. Therefore, there was no difference between the group who received the apology through their preferred medium and the other group, so hypothesis five was rejected as well. Besides not finding main effects, an interaction effect between the communication form and the preference for a medium was also not found ( $F(2, 154) = 1.12, p = .33$ ).

Because there was no main effect found of the preference of communication channel on the perceived sincerity, there could not be a mediated relation. Hence, hypothesis six - the positive relationship between getting the preferred communication channel and the perceived sincerity of the apology is explained by positive expectations towards the sincerity of the offender - could not be accepted.

Nevertheless, it was tested with a regression analysis if there was a relationship between the preference of the communication form as an independent variable and the expected sincerity of the offender as a dependent variable. The results revealed that neither the model ( $R^2 = .02, F(1, 162) = .30, p = .59$ ) nor the relationship ( $B = .09, t(162) = .55, p = .59$ ) was significant. Therefore, getting the apology through the preferred medium did not predict expected sincerity of the offender. Another regression analysis was conducted to test the relationship between the expected sincerity of the offender as predictor and perceived sincerity as dependent variable. For the independent variable perceived sincerity, the adjusted R-squared value of .12 revealed that the predictor variable explained 12 % variance in the outcome variable with  $F(1, 160) = 22.32; p < .001$ . The expected sincerity of the offender showed to significantly predict the perceived sincerity ( $B = .42, t(160) = 4.72, p < .001$ ). Hence, expecting the offender to be honest predicted perceiving the offender to be honest about what he said.

To conclude, hypotheses one and three were accepted as the effects showed to be significant, but hypothesis two was rejected. That means that individuals possessing higher needs for information and for receiving an apology were more likely to participate in VOM than individuals who scored lower on these variables. Hypothesis four was also rejected, which means that richer mediums did not predict higher perceived sincerity of the apology because no effects could be found. Against expectations, getting the apology through the preferred or non-preferred form of communication did not influence how sincere an apology was perceived, so hypotheses

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five and six were rejected as well. Although the variable expected sincerity of the offender did not serve as a mediator, it significantly predicted perceived sincerity.

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### Discussion

Participation in VOM shows to be effective and beneficial for both victims and offenders. For victims, interpersonal relationships can be restored, emotional sufferings, such as fear and anger towards the offender can be reduced and victims can be empowered, to name just a few benefits (Braithwaite, 2002; Choi et al., 2010b; Umbreit, 1991; Umbreit, Coates, , & Kalanj, 1994; Umbreit, Coates, & Roberts, 2000; Zebel, 2012; Zehr, 2015). Although VOM has many advantages, many individuals are not willing to participate in VOM (Zebel, 2012). Therefore, it is of great interest to examine which psychological needs are related to participation in VOM as mediators can then take them into account and ensure that victims can make a deliberate choice to participate. Knowing the influencing factors of individuals' willingness to participate might increase participation rates. Hence, the first purpose of this study was to find out which factors might influence the willingness to participate in VOM.

In a successful mediation, a genuine and sincere apology should be given (Choi et al., 2012). The quality of the apology is determined by the way in which an apology is given (Choi & Severson, 2009). For the delivery, different forms of communication are available, which have different effects on feelings like anger or fear (Zebel, 2012). Until now, little research has been done on the effects of the different communication forms on the perceived sincerity. Hence, the second purpose of this study was to investigate to what extent the communication channel influenced the perceived sincerity of the apology.

### Discussion of the Results and Limitations

#### *Psychological Needs Predicting the Willingness to Participate in VOM*

To examine the first research question - to what extent do psychological needs predict the participation of victims in VOM - three hypotheses were formulated. It was proposed that psychological needs, more specifically the need for information, the need to share victimization and the need to receive a genuine apology, increase the willingness to participate in a mediation process. In line with expectations, in this study it was found that victims are more willing to participate in VOM when they have a higher need for information. In favor of these findings, Reeves (1989) also stated that one of the reasons victims participate in VOM is that they are curious and want to have information about the motives behind the offense. So, after a crime, individuals

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indeed seemed to have many questions, which they want to ask the offender in a mediation process, as this research shows.

Respondents with a higher need to share victimization were not more likely to participate, which is not in line with expectations. Sharing victimization refers to communicating current feelings, suffering and the impact upon the victims' life to the offender (Choi et al., 2010b). Participants might feel different when some time elapses after the crime as they have more time to think about the offense. Directly after a crime, victims feel weak, helpless, and frightened (Frieze et al., 1987). After some time, other feelings might occur, such as anger, fear of being revictimized or posttraumatic stress (Orth et al., 2006; Umbreit et al., 2000). In this study, respondents were asked for their needs directly after reading the scenario. Thus, it might be that respondents in this study did not have the need to share their feelings in a mediation process as they did not want to show weakness or helplessness towards the offender. Besides that, as victims were asked about their needs directly after reading the scenario, the crime could not have had a big influence on the victims' life already and thus victims may not have had the need to talk about the impact in a mediation session. Thus, results might have been influenced by the limited amount of time between reading the scenario and indicating needs. The effects could have been both stronger or weaker with more time between those stages. As an example, feeling angrier towards the offender or more fearful of being revictimized after some time elapsed might have lowered the willingness to participate.

Not only individuals with a higher need for information but also respondents with a higher need to receive a genuine apology showed to be more willing to participate in VOM. So, these findings are only partly consistent with previous findings of Umbreit et al. (2001). The current paper provides evidence that having the need for information and the need to receive a genuine apology served as motivations and reasons to participate in VOM. It could not be confirmed that respondents having the need to share victimization are likely to participate in VOM. The participants in the study of Umbreit et al. (2001) identified themselves as Caucasian, African American, Asian, Hispanic, American Indian or mixed ethnicity. In this study, it could be partly confirmed that the results do also account for the German population.

It could be shown that the willingness to participate was explained by the fact that some of the respondents have heard of VOM before. People who have heard of VOM before were less willing to participate. Respondents most probably know what VOM is. They might know that

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mediation is much more than sitting in front of a mobile phone or laptop and filling out a questionnaire within approximately 30 minutes. They might know that some components, such as the preparation or a real conversation at least with a mediator are missing. Thus, some of them might have not taken this encounter seriously which had influences on their willingness to participate, but also on their rating of the perceived sincerity.

Besides that, it was also found that individuals who possess one need were very likely to also possess the other needs. In other words, people who would like to receive information about the motive behind the offense were also likely to share how the offender affected the victims' life or wanted to receive a genuine apology. Next to that, having one, two all three needs to a great extent made respondents expecting the offender to be sincere. More research on this relation is needed to draw more specific conclusions. Not only looking at correlations but on the relation would give more reliable results. Also, qualitative research such as interviews might give deeper insights into the exact expectations of respondents.

To answer the first research question, we can say that German individuals with a higher need for information and need to receive a genuine apology are more willing to participate in VOM, as it was already shown in an international population.

### ***Predicting Perceived Sincerity by the Richness of the Communication Channel***

Against expectations, this research revealed that individuals getting the apology through a richer medium, so through face-to-face contact, did not perceive the apology as more sincere than individuals getting the apology through less rich mediums, so through letter exchange or phone call.

There could be multiple explanations for these findings. In literature it was stated that face-to-face-communication is the richest form of communication, a telephone call semi-rich and letter exchange lowest in richness (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Because of that, the researcher relied on what was stated in literature, and thus perceived richness was not examined in the questionnaire. It could be that the result of Daft and Lengel (1986), so that face-to-face contact is the richest form of communication, is not applicable in the context of VOM as the study was conducted in an organizational setting 35 years ago. In a study conducted by Van Dijk (2016) perceived richness was measured and respondents indicated perceiving another form of communication as most rich, namely video calling, and not face-to-face interaction. The fact the apology in the face-to-face

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condition was presented by a video might have not fulfilled respondents' expectations of a face-to-face communication and thus may have lowered their ratings of perceived richness. If participants would have perceived another communication form than face-to-face communication as most rich in this research, results might have been different.

The results contradict to findings of Van Dijk (2016) who could confirm that a richer medium leads to higher perceived sincerity of the apology. In Van Dijk's (2016) study, only respondents in the face-to-face conditions knew what the offender looked like. This is different from this study, as in this research all participants, no matter in which condition they were, knew how the offender looked like by seeing a photo and a profile of the offender including the nationality, age and gender. Facing with the offender might have had more vivid and trustworthy effects, which might have increased the perceived sincerity in the phone condition and in the letter condition.

Individuals receiving the apology face-to-face were asked to what extent their decision about the perceived sincerity was based on non-verbal behavior of the offender. Many respondents receiving the apology per video indicated that their decision was indeed based on the non-verbal behavior of the offender. However, it was neither described what was meant with non-verbal behavior, nor was it asked what respondents understood to be non-verbal behavior. So, the absence or presence of non-verbal cues was not measured. Thus, it could not completely be confirmed that non-verbal cues determined the sincerity, which was stated by Lee (2005). Although Lee (2005) said that sincerity requires non-verbal cues such as body language and facial expressions, which was only present in the face-to-face condition, other aspects which make an apology effective were not present in this study. Lee (2005) also suggested that an effective apology requires voluntariness and appropriate timing. Voluntariness is meant from the offender's side, which was present in the study as he gave his apology on a voluntary basis. However, it might be that participants were convinced that the offender is not real, and thus an actor, which makes the apology seem less authentic and voluntary. Appropriate timing was also not given as the apology did not develop out of a natural conversation, but just in the middle of the questionnaire. Presenting the apology in the middle of the questionnaire might also have impaired the perceived voluntariness of the apology. So, not all virtues suggested by Lee (2005) were considered in this study, which might account for the results.

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Speaking about the offender, the fact that the offender was an actor, but not a real offender might have influenced the results to a great extent. Real offenders might be more excited and especially more involved in the case than actors do. Being more involved, especially emotional involved, might cause the offender to show stronger emotions, like shame, guilt or remorse. Those stronger emotions might be more visible in the face-to-face conditions as the body language might be more expressive, but also in the phone condition the voice of a real offender might be more tremulous than of an actor. For non-real offenders, so for real actors, it might even be that richer communication forms worked even worse as no strong emotions, body language or involvement in the case was shown in the face-to-face condition as it would be with real offenders. Thus, the authenticity of the offender might have affected the results to a great extent. Effects, especially perceived sincerity, are expected to be stronger with real offenders. In future research, questions about the authenticity of the offender would be interesting to examine if the effects are due to the actor skills or due to other variables.

It could also have been the case that the effect of richness of the medium on perceived sincerity would be stronger for real victims than for individuals who imagined being victims. Although respondents indicated that they found the research very realistic and could greatly imagine being the victim in the scenario, it can still not be compared to real victims because of the fictitious nature of this study. Participants knew that it was a fictitious scenario, and that the offender did not really commit a crime. This might have influenced to what extent respondents indicated they possess the needs, the willingness to participate and the perceived sincerity. Some respondents might have rated the statements very high and some very low, which might not be equal to a real victim population. Respondents who indicated that they have been victimized before may have rated the statements close to what real victims would imply. However, estimations of the sample in this study most probably does not reflect answers of a victims' population sample. Real victims are more involved in the case and thus could perceive non-verbal cues to a greater extent, which might have a positive influence on the perceived sincerity as literature with real victims state (Lee, 2005).

In general, the fact that face-to-face communication did not take place in person as it would be in real life might have inhibited the effects. In this study, the face-to-face condition was presented in a video. Here, the offender tried to look in the camera to create eye contact with the victim, but real eye contact could not be given. Also, the body language could be perceived in the

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video only from the upper body of the offender. In a real face-to-face conversation, some aspects or feelings might be stronger. Victims might be more excited when driving to the meeting or when waiting in front of the door. Being in one room with the offender and smelling his perfume might remind the victims to the attack. Also, body language of the whole body can be perceived, such as shaking legs. This might have influenced the results because the main argument for perceiving the apology as more sincere in the face-to-face condition than in other conditions was due to non-verbal cues. Transferring them through a video might inhibit the real perception of the body language.

For some respondents, it seemed that audio or text-based communication was sufficient to evaluate the apology as sincere. Because the apology was perceived as even sincere in all three conditions, all three communication forms might in the end have the same effects on victims' feelings or well-being after receiving the apology. However, the effect of the different forms of communication on the well-being of victims was not measured in this research. Seeing no difference in the effects of the different communication forms in terms of perceived sincerity, one can think of using mediums like letter exchange but especially telephone calls more often in the future.

### ***Predicting Perceived Sincerity by the Preference of the Communication Medium***

Against expectations, it could not be confirmed that respondents getting the apology through their preferred communication channel do also perceive the apology as more sincere. The hypothesis was based on a study by Choi and Severson (2009, p. 7), who stated that an “apology carries no weight if the context for its delivery has not provided for a meeting of the minds on [...] its method of delivery”. Their conclusion could be interpreted wrongly in this study. Here, it was interpreted that with “method of delivery” the communication channel is meant. It was assumed that an apology is only effective if both offenders and victims prefer to communicate through the same medium. However, the method of delivery could also be the way an apology is delivered, meaning which words were used, if the offender showed remorse, expresses responsibility and empathy.

Speaking about matter of the apology, the content of the apology might have influenced the results as well. It could be shown the content of the apology becomes more important in poorer forms of communication as the respondents' rating of the perceived sincerity in the letter condition



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was mainly based on the content of the apology. The apology offered was taken from a study of Van Dijk (2016), which was based on the components for writing an apology given by Seymour et al. (2001). Here, it was presumed that this apology is a good one as Van Dijk (2016) did not find limitations regarding the content of the apology. In this apology, the offender first appreciates the victim's courage to get in contact with him. He tried to be empathetic by mentioning what the victim must have felt and what the impact of the crime must have been. Then, he admits the offense and shows regret for the crime. In the end, the offender apologizes. Although it was supposed that all components suggested by Choi and Severson (2009), namely sincerity, empathy and expressing regret with no excuse were present in the apology used by Van Dijk (2016), it could be that respondents perceived it differently. Bonensteffen et al. (2020) already found out that sincerity is a subjective assessment, which can be manipulated. Thus, some might have perceived it as sincere, but some did not. Also, more research has been done until now and more is known about what to include in an apology. Besides the three components of Choi and Severson (2009), some respondents may have missed components like responsibility-taking inferences or an offer to repair, which were stressed by Dhami (2012).

One could also wonder if the manipulation might not have worked as it was intended, which might also account for the results. In the questionnaire respondents could indicate their preferred communication form and then they were randomly allocated to one of the three forms, so to their preferred one or to one of their non-preferred ones. However, it was not asked: "Did you receive your preferred communication form", which would have ensured that the manipulation worked. Thus, in this research it was not tested whether the manipulation worked. In future research, it should definitely be asked such a question to make sure that the manipulation worked as intended. Also, there was an uneven distribution between conditions due to the randomization within the communication forms. Many more participants received the apology through their non-preferred communication form than through their preferred one. In the future, attention should be paid to an even distribution between conditions.

The findings could also be explained through expectations which were not met. Respondents choosing the face-to-face condition might have expected an interaction with the offender being in the same room, at the same table, looking into each other's eyes. However, participants only received a video of the offender. Thus, expectations were not only manipulated by giving participants another mediation channel than their preferred one, but also by not fulfilling

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their expectations of face-to-face communication, but also of phone calling. This might have lowered their evaluation of the sincerity of the offenders' apology.

Another fact might have negatively influenced the respondents' ratings of perceived sincerity. In literature it is often stressed that proper preparation of both parties is important before mediation processes so that they know what to expect and are not disappointed. However, as means of simplicity participants were not prepared properly in this research as data was only collected in one questionnaire. Choi and Severson (2009) even stated that interpreting an apology as not sincere might be the result of a lack of preparation of both the offenders and victims.

A proper preparation is only possible with the help of a mediator. However, in this research, no mediator was present. A mediator is important for preparation, but Choi et al. (2010b) also stress the importance of the presence of a mediator as she or he provides guidance and direction in a mediation process and ensures that victims' voices are heard. In this study no preparation, guidance or direction could be given as no mediator was present but also because no conversation evolved. This could have damaged the feeling of a real mediation process.

In a real mediation process, it can happen that participants are asked to have contact with the mediator through another medium than their preferred one. Then, victims should be asked whether they still want to participate, as mediation is most effective on a voluntary basis and for ethical reasons. These findings suggest that a mediation process in which victims are giving in the wishes of the offender's preferred communication form, because they really want to talk to the offender is still effective in terms of perceived sincerity. Thus, having contact with the offender through another communication form than the preferred one does not seem to be problematic.

Based on the above-mentioned results the second research question - to what extent does the communication channel used for the apology influence the victims' perceived sincerity of the apology - can be answered. This research showed that the communication channel did not have a great influence on the perceived sincerity of the apology.

### *Other Findings*

On average participants did not agree that the apology was sincere. All the above-mentioned reasons, such as the content of the apology, the fact that the offender was an actor, expectations which were not met, change of feelings over time and in general the nature of the study set-up including the adjusted mediation process might account for this result.

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In this research it was shown that there is no difference between getting the apology through one's preferred communication channel and getting the apology through one's non-preferred communication channel not only in terms of perceived sincerity, but also expected sincerity. It might be that respondents had expectations on the sincerity of the offender already before getting the preferred or non-preferred communication form. These expectations might have greatly influenced their expectations after getting their preferred or non-preferred communication form. Thus, prior expectations might have already influenced respondents' ratings of expected sincerity after receiving the preferred or non-preferred communication form. Also, in this study it was only measured whether respondents received their preferred one or their non-preferred one but not if it is a richer or poorer medium. Effects are expected to be stronger for individuals preferring a rich medium, such as face-to-face communication but receive the apology through a less rich medium, such as letter exchange.

Another finding was that participants perceived the apology as more sincere when they also expected it to be sincere. This is in line with what Bonensteffen (2018) concluded, namely that previous positive expectations towards the sincerity of the offender increases the perceived sincerity of the apology. As the victims' perceived sincerity was on average higher than the expected sincerity, VOM showed to have a positive effect on victims' attitude towards the offender, which changed from being skeptical to being convinced. As a topic for further research, it seems interesting to examine the change of attitude throughout the different stages of VOM in future research projects.

### **Strengths**

This research has its main strength in the uniqueness as there is no such a study with solely German participants. As in Germany the participation rate in VOM slightly decreased from 55.7% in 2017 to 54.3 % in 2018, this study might serve as an inspiration for further work on restorative justice to increase participation rates again as it showed to work with German participants as well (Hartmann et al., 2020). Speaking about the participants, a great age range of the respondents could be observed with ages from 18 to 73 years. Having many participants from different age groups enables a better picture of the population, which makes it easier to generalize the results.

Next, the measurement instruments showed to be valid and reliable. This enables researchers in the future to use the same measurement instrument with similar (sub-) scales.

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Another strength is that compared to a similar study of Van Dijk (2016), in this study all participants saw a profile and a photo of the offender. In the study of Van Dijk (2016) only participants in the face-to-face condition saw how the offender looked like. In this study, respondents in all conditions had insights into the age, gender, nationality and appearance of the offender. Thus, it was ensured that the effects, which were found, are not due to the race or gender of the offender.

### **Implications**

Although VOM is used worldwide, it is more established in Europe and America and even less attention has been given to the promising effects of VOM in other continents. Thus, most research is based on European or American studies and there is a huge research gap studying the effects in other countries with other cultures and values. Also, as this research, most research on VOM is quantitative. There is less research conducted using qualitative methods, so conducting for example interviews with participants of VOM might give a better understanding of what victims really need and on what their rating of the sincerity was based on (Umbreit et al., 2002).

To generalize these findings on the victims' population, the effects that were found could be tested on a small sample of real victims. Real victims might have the need for information, the need to share victimization and the need to receive a genuine apology even to a greater extent, which might even have stronger effects on the willingness to participate. However, this study-design might be ethically problematic for real victims as they should not be manipulated as it was the case in this study. Also, in this study, respondents who were not willing to participate were nevertheless randomly allocated to one condition, which should not be the case with real victims. Real victims should participate on an absolute voluntary basis to ensure that they are motivated to take part in this process and to make it as effective as possible. Face-to-face contact should take place in person and victims should go through all stages with a temporal distance. Doing that, it can be seen if this study has the same promising effects for real victims, so that it can be generalizable to the victims' population as well.

A practical recommendation to use the results of this study would be to inform as many people as possible about these findings. The more people know what VOM is and that victims possess those three needs, which can be met in a mediation process, the more they can consider those needs and recommend participating in VOM. Many victims are likely to visit a psychologist

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after the crime. Psychologists, institutions offering VOM, but especially mediators should be informed about the findings of this study, so they can consider those into their work. It could be advertised that those needs might be met in the mediation process, which does not induce those needs, but the willingness to participate in case victims already possess those needs.

Another possibility would be that victims get the chance to meet other victims who already participated in VOM, so that they can exchange each other. Hence, people who experienced the same harm can talk about their experiences with VOM and that it really helped to meet their needs, which are possessed by most victims. These strategies might make victims aware that there is a possibility to meet the offender in a safe environment, which is very helpful in terms of meeting their needs.

To conclude, this study greatly contributed to the research in the context of VOM as promising results for the practical field of VOM were found. Results can be used to increase the willingness to participate in VOM by considering the needs victims possess as individuals with a high need for information and need to receive a genuine apology are more willing to participate. Next, mediators can consider those needs when offering mediation or when preparing victims for the mediation process. Nevertheless, to generalize the results to the victims' population, more studies on real victims have to be conducted by going through a real mediation process including proper preparation, voluntary participation and enough time for each stage. This study is, to our knowledge, the first who introduces psychological needs increasing the willingness to participants based on a completely German sample. To further develop the field of VOM in Germany, not only more research has to be conducted, but also the criminal justice system has to be improved in terms of openness for the application of VOM within the criminal justice system (Willems & Schmoll, 2017). To enhance the growing field of restorative justice, victims should have the possibility to enter the program which can be supported by considering the needs most victims possess after a crime.

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**Appendices****Appendix A:** Screenshot of the video for face-to-face communication

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### Appendix B: Screenshots of the letters in English and German

Hello,

First of all, I want to thank you for your willingness to get in contact with me. I have a lot of respect for that. I can imagine that it must be very difficult for you to have contact with me in any way. It is also difficult for me. I can also imagine that you have been very anxious since the offense. I would therefore like to say that I really regret it. I know now how wrong the offense was and that it is terrible what I did to you. You have every right to be angry with me, because I should not have done it to you. I should not have done it to anyone. I do not have any excuses for my actions. I would just like to apologize and I hope you accept my apology.

I am sorry!

Hallo,

Zunächst möchte ich mich bei Ihnen für Ihre Bereitschaft bedanken, mit mir in Kontakt zu treten. Ich habe großen Respekt davor. Ich kann mir vorstellen, dass es für Sie sehr schwierig sein muss, in irgendeiner Weise mit mir in Kontakt zu treten. Es ist auch schwierig für mich. Ich kann mir auch vorstellen, dass Sie seit der Tat sehr ängstlich sind. Deshalb möchte ich sagen, dass ich es wirklich bereue. Ich weiß jetzt, wie falsch die Tat war und dass es schrecklich ist, was ich Ihnen angetan habe. Sie haben jedes Recht, wütend auf mich zu sein, denn das hätte ich Ihnen nicht antun dürfen. Ich hätte es niemandem antun dürfen. Ich habe keine Ausreden für meine Taten. Ich möchte mich nur entschuldigen und hoffe, dass Sie meine Entschuldigung akzeptieren.

Es tut mir leid!

## EXPECTED VERSUS NON-EXPECTED MEDIATION

## Appendix C: Online survey presented in Qualtrics



English ▾

Dear respondent,

Thank you for participating in this study, which is part of my Bachelor thesis in the specialisation of Psychology Conflict, Risk and Safety at the University of Twente. There is the possibility to conduct this study in English or German. Please select your mother language or your preferred language in the upper right corner before you continue.

In this study we want to examine the needs and feelings of victims after a crime and what can be done to improve their well-being. A scenario will be presented and you will be asked to take the perspective of the victim imagining being in this situation. Furthermore, a number of questions are asked via a survey. The research focuses on different forms of communication. For this, it is important that you can play sound and videos properly while completing the study. Participation in this study will take approximately 30 minutes. It is important that you fill in the questions truthfully. There is no possibility to switch back and forth between the questions. There are no right or wrong answers. Participation is completely anonymous, you may stop at any time and the results will only be used for this research. This research was approved by the BMS Ethics Committee of the University of Twente. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Thank you in advance for your time and for your help.

Best regards, Maren borchert (m.borchert@student.utwente.nl)

**Consent statement:**

I declare that I have been informed in a clear way about the nature and method of this study. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study and I have the right to withdraw this consent at any time. I know that I am allowed to stop participating at any time and I know that the data and results of this study are processed anonymously and confidentially. If my results are used for scientific publications or otherwise made public, this will be done completely anonymously. My personal data will not be accessed by third parties without my explicit consent.

- Yes, I consent.
- No, I do not consent.

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English ▾

We would first like to ask you some general questions.

With which gender do you identify yourself?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary / third gender
- Prefer not to say

What is your nationality?

- German
- Dutch
- Other:



## EXPECTED VERSUS NON-EXPECTED MEDIATION

What is your age?

What is your highest finished education?

- Hauptschulabschluss
- Realschulabschluss
- Abitur
- Lehrabschluss
- Bachelorabschluss
- Masterabschluss
- Diplomabschluss
- Dissertation
- Andere:

If you are a student of the University of Twente:

Are you participating for credits?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

What is your main daily activity? Choose one that you spent the most time on.

- Studying
- Retired
- Stay-at-home mom/dad
- Unemployed
- (Self)-employed
- Other

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Have you ever been a victim of a crime?

- Yes
  - No
  - No answer
- 

Do you know anyone in your immediate surroundings (family or friends) who has once been a victim of a crime?

- Yes
  - No
  - No answer
- 

Have you ever committed a crime yourself?

- Yes
  - No
  - No answer
- 

Do you know anyone in your immediate surroundings (family or friends) who has ever committed a crime?

- Yes
  - No
  - No answer
- 

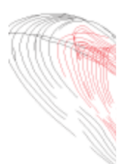


## EXPECTED VERSUS NON-EXPECTED MEDIATION



English ▾

Now, please read the following text carefully. Try to imagine being the victim in this scenario as good as you can. Read the scenario carefully, because once you start completing the questionnaire, you will not be able to return to the scenario.



It's Friday night and you want to withdraw some money as a gift for a friend, whose birthday is tomorrow. You're feeling a bit stressed, because it is already late and you have to be back home before nine in the evening. As you walk to the ATM-machine you notice that it is cold outside and the streets are almost completely empty. It is quiet. When you are at the ATM-machine you are alone. You put your card into the machine and enter your pin. You withdraw 50 euros. You take the money out of the vending machine and want to put it in your wallet. Then all of a sudden you get scared because you hear someone screaming. You feel a loud bang to your head and you are completely disoriented. You stagger and fall on the ground. When you look up a man is pointing a gun at you. 'Give me your money! Give it now or I will shoot!' **he shouts, with a German accent.** You see no other option but to give up your money. The man snatches the money out of your shaking hands and runs away. You're left shocked, lying on the cold ground. When you realize what just happened, you feel blood running down your face. You have a wound to your head. After the robbery, you feel scared and you're more observant. Who was this man? Did he follow me? Did he know that I needed money? Do I know him? What happens if he sees me again?

Based on what you did see and hear, you give the following description of the offender to the police:

Gender: Male

Age: around 50 years

Nationality: seemed German



## EXPECTED VERSUS NON-EXPECTED MEDIATION



English ▾

As a victim, if I would think about the offender when two weeks have passed after this crime, I would feel...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Nervous	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restless	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Panicked	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tensed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Insecure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Angry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Furious	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pissed of	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Frustrated	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fearful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Afraid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

→



EXPECTED VERSUS NON-EXPECTED MEDIATION

<p>....to make the offender aware of the pain he has inflicted on you</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>....to receive a sincere apology from the offender</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>....to make the offender aware of the consequences of his actions on your life</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>....to get answers from the offender about the crime</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>....to make the offender aware of how you are feeling because of what he did</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>....to explain to the offender how you are suffering because of what he did</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>....to receive a remorseful apology of the offender</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>....to get answers about the motive behind the crime scene</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>....to receive a truthful apology from the offender</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



→

## EXPECTED VERSUS NON-EXPECTED MEDIATION



English ▾

After two months you receive a letter that the police managed to catch the offender based on your description.



The offender will be convicted for what he did in a court meeting. However, the public prosecutor thinks as well that it might be helpful for you and the offender to have the opportunity to participate in victim-offender mediation.

## EXPECTED VERSUS NON-EXPECTED MEDIATION

You receive a phone call from a mediator from an organization that organizes victim-offender mediation. This mediator explains that the offender would like to have mediated contact with you. On the phone the mediator explains to you the following about victim-offender mediation:

‘Victim-offender mediation entails voluntary contact between the victim and the offender. As a victim you may experience different emotions like anger, fear or a loss of control after the offense. It might be difficult to cope with these emotions and to find closure after the offense. The mediated contact with the offender may help you to cope with the offense. During the contact you can ask questions and can explain to the offender what the impact of this offense has been for you. This may help to reduce your feelings of fear and anger and may prevent the offender from committing the same criminal acts again in the future. It could also serve as a help to reintegrate in society. A professional mediator will guide the mediation and will try to map and manage the desires, needs and expectations of both parties as good as possible. Together with the mediator you can discuss your desires and wishes regarding mediated contact – there are no financial costs involved for mediation.



The offender has indicated that he would like to have mediated contact with you because he is struggling with what he has done and he would like to apologize. There are three options to get in contact with the offender, namely by letter exchange, face-to-face-mediation and by phone. In the following, these options will be explained in more detail:

**Letter exchange:** You and the perpetrator are in contact with each other by exchanging letters, in which questions can be asked. The other party replies to this letter by writing back a letter. It takes some time for letters to get to the other party. The mediator also reads the letters so that he can intervene in the process if necessary.




## EXPECTED VERSUS NON-EXPECTED MEDIATION

**Face-to-face:** You sit at the table with the perpetrator and the mediator and you have face-to-face contact with each other. This takes place in a safe environment, such as the police station. During the conversation there is a neutral mediator present, who will help you and the offender in the conversation.

**Phone contact:** In this option you receive the message of the offender by phone. You can directly reply to what was said. Here, the mediator is also present to support you and the offender. You will not see the offender in person.

Knowing what victim-offender mediation is and through what communication channel you can have contact with the offender, would you, as a victim, like to have mediated contact in this situation?



I would like to have mediated contact with the offender

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Somewhat disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Somewhat agree   Agree   Strongly agree

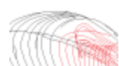
                



English ▾

If you would be willing to have mediated contact, which communication form would you prefer for the mediation process?

- I would like to have face-to-face contact with the offender and the mediator present
- I would like to have a letter exchange with the offender and the mediator present
- I would like to have a phone call with the offender and the mediator present



## EXPECTED VERSUS NON-EXPECTED MEDIATION

To what extent would you agree with the following statements:

I would be willing to participate in victim-offender mediation to...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
...ask questions and get answers about the crime	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...share my feelings and sufferings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...receive a sincere apology from the offender	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>




## EXPECTED VERSUS NON-EXPECTED MEDIATION



English ▾

Thank you for indicating to what degree you would like to participate in victim-offender mediation. We are now interested in how you would respond to an apology of the offender when you would decide to participate in victim-offender mediation. In a moment, the offender in the scenario will give you an apology through a phone call. Afterwards we want to ask you a few questions about how you feel about this apology as a victim.

Before you take part in mediation, think about the offender. How do you rate these statements?

I think that the offender ...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
...will be honest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...will be trustworthy when making the apology	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...will be basically good and kind	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...will tell a lie when he can benefit by doing so	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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# EXPECTED VERSUS NON-EXPECTED MEDIATION

I think the offender is motivated to ensure that he doesn't repeat his actions

I think that the offender has been touched by the consequences of the offense

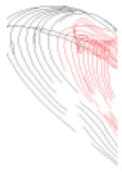
I think the offender wants to prevent himself from repeating his actions

I don't think the offender will offend again

I don't think that the offender feels responsible for his actions

I doubt if the offender is emotionally suffering because of his actions

I think that the offender avoids to be held accountable for his actions



## EXPECTED VERSUS NON-EXPECTED MEDIATION



English ▾

To what extent do you agree with the following statements:

I decided how sincere the apology was based on...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
...his non-verbal behavior	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...his gestures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...his intonations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...his facial expressions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...his eye contact	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...his appearance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...his look	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...the content of the apology	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>





## EXPECTED VERSUS NON-EXPECTED MEDIATION



English ▾

Now, after the apology, we are interested in how you feel.

Please indicate to which extent you agree with the following statements.

If I, as a victim, think about the offender after receiving the apology I would feel:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Nervous	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restless	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Panicky	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tensed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Insecure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Angry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Furious	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pissed of	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Frustrated	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fearful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Afraid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>







## EXPECTED VERSUS NON-EXPECTED MEDIATION



English ▾

Lastly, we would like to ask you some questions about your prior experiences with victim-offender-mediation.

Have you ever heard of victim-offender mediation before?

- Yes
- No

Have you in real-life ever been approached with victim-offender mediation before?

- Yes
- No
- No answer

## EXPECTED VERSUS NON-EXPECTED MEDIATION

Have you ever participated in victim-offender mediation before?

- Yes
  - No
  - No answer
- 

Has somebody in your surrounding been approached with victim-offender mediation before?

- Yes
  - No
  - No answer
- 

Has somebody in your surrounding participated in victim-offender mediation before?

- Yes
- No
- No answer



## EXPECTED VERSUS NON-EXPECTED MEDIATION



English ▾

This is the end of the research. Thanks for participating. This research had two purposes. First of all, look at the relationships between the needs that victims have after a crime and their willingness to participate in victim-offender mediation and actual participation. The second purpose of this study was to see what effects the preference of a communication channel had on the perceived sincerity of the apology.

Now that you know the real aim of study, it might be that you want to withdraw your consent. If that is the case please indicate so in the box below. If you have questions or remarks about the study, please send an email to:

[m.borchert@student.utwente.nl](mailto:m.borchert@student.utwente.nl)

Thank you again for your participation!

Maren Borchert

If you are interested in the results of the research, you can leave your email address below. It is only used to send the results of the study.

! Please click on the arrow at the right side to finish the study !