An Examination of Guilt, Shame, Empathy and Blaming Among a Sample of Incarcerated Male and Female Offenders

Arrick L. Jackson  
Tarrant County College Northwest Campus

Ashley G. Blackburn  
University of North Texas

Peggy Tobolowsky  
University of North Texas

Dana Baer  
Southeast Missouri State University

Abstract

This article examines the relationship among gender, guilt, shame, empathy and blaming among an incarcerated sample of male and female offenders who completed a correction-based Impact of Crime on Victims course (ICVC). A sample of 124 respondents (97 females and 27 males) completed pre- and post-test questionnaires assessing guilt, shame, empathy, victim- and society-blaming. Results overall indicate no significant gender differences among offenders’. Findings do indicate significant differences among violent and non-violent offenders on levels of shame and blaming and suggest that although gender-specific programs that address female issues are necessary, programs that address both criminogenic and non-criminogenic are needed.

Key Words: gender, offenders, guilt, shame, empathy, blaming

INTRODUCTION

Correction-based victim awareness programming has over the last two decades become a staple in prison rehabilitation. Although many versions of these programs exist, the most common and well known programs are victim impact panels (VIT), impact of crime on victim classes (ICVC), and Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) (Gaboury & Ruth-Heffelbower, 2007). Having been heavily influenced by restorative justice principles (i.e., reparation and reintegration) (Braithwaite, 1989), these correction-based programs are viewed as necessary for increasing offenders’ awareness of victims’ experiences resulting from their victimization and for having a significant emotional impact on offender behavior, which is necessary for the reparation of harm (C’ de’ Baca et al., 2001; Jackson, 2009).

As noted by Jackson, Lucas, and Blackburn (2009), reparation of harm begins with the development of the emotion of guilt and a decrease in the emotion of shame (see also Hanson, 1996; Herbst, 2005; Jackson, 2008; Tangney et al., 1992; Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2002). Through the development of these emotions offenders may become more empathetic and may be more likely to accept responsibility for their societal transgressions and less likely to continue to blame the victim (Hanson, 1996; Herbst, 2005; Jackson, 2008; Jackson et al., 2009; Tangney et al., 1992; Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2002). Since these programs are touted as increasing offender sensitivity to victims (Gaboury & Ruth-Heffelbower, 2007; Van Ness, 2005) and as significant for having an “intense and emotional impact” on offenders (C’ de’ Baca et al., 2001, p. 615), the development of guilt, shame, empathy and the acceptance of responsibility then become underlying goals. However, despite the popularity of correction-based victim awareness programs and their success (although limited), they are not without their limitations.

First, critics have suggested that their curriculum emphasis has been primarily male-centered and therefore fails to account for issues that are uniquely female (Covington & Bloom, 2006). For example, many states have decided to implement correction-based programming statewide in their correctional facilities, but have not taken into consideration whether programs should be tailored based on gender. Research indicates that correctional programming should be gender-based because females, in particular, females with children, experience incarceration differently than their male counterparts; this would suggest that males and females are likely to respond to these programs differently (Hubbard & Matthews, 2008; Vanik, 2008).

Secondly, critics have argued that many of these correction-based programs take a “one-size-fits-all” approach to rehabilitation and run the risk of not appropriately classifying offenders based on criminogenic and non-criminogenic needs (Dowd & Andrews, 2000; Cauffman, 2008). The primary criticism is that violent offenders and non-violent offenders may not necessarily benefit from a broad correction-based program curriculum (Dowd & Andrews, 2000; Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2002). In fact, it has been suggested that violent offenders may need a more intensive and comprehensive rehabilitation curriculum because they are the least likely to develop empathy or remorse (Dowd & Andrews, 2000; Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2002).

Finally, with the exception of the work conducted by Jackson and colleagues (Jackson, 2009; Jackson, Lucas, & Blackburn, 2009), to our knowledge, currently there are no empirical examinations of correction-based programs impact on the development of emotions among offenders who participate in these programs. Although research consistently notes that the understanding of whether correction-based programs are having a significant impact on offender emotions is necessary, little has been done to empirically examine this research area. The research conduct by Jackson and colleagues on an incarcerated female sample, who were enrolled in a correction-based ICVC program, indicates that the programs are having some success at significantly impacting offender’s level of guilt, shame, externalization, empathy, and...
blaming. However, they conclude that future research should examine if there are significant gender differences among offenders who participate in correction-based ICVC programs.

The goal of the present study is to address these limitations, specifically those related to the “one-size-fits-all” approach that is currently used in the offering of ICVCs among incarcerated populations. It is important to determine whether gender and other factors impact an offender’s success in these programs. Using data from a sample of incarcerated male and female offenders who were enrolled in an ICVC, we empirically test whether females differ from males and violent offenders differ from non-violent offenders in their development of guilt, shame, empathy and subsequent decreases in their propensity to blame the victim or society.

FACTORS IMPACTING CORRECTIONAL PROGRAMMING

During the past 20 years, the correctional departments throughout the U.S. have experienced a significant increase in its female population. In 2006, the number of women in prison increased 4.5% reaching 112, 498 prisoners. This overall was greater than the male growth rate of 2.7% for 2006 and larger than the entire female annual growth rate of 2.9% from 2000 to 2005 (Sabol & Couture, 2008). Particularly disconcerting is that the crimes for which females are convicted are becoming more violent and in the wake of their incarceration are numerous children. In fact in a recent report, the number of children under the age of 18 with a mother in prison more than doubled since 1991, which is an increase of 131% in comparison to an increase of 77% among fathers in prison (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008).

Despite these daunting statistics and the clear gender demographic change in the prison system, correctional educational programming and intervention continues to remain male-centered. However, there has been a significant impetus (albeit slow) to develop more effective programming for female offenders. The major philosophy driving this change is the research currently being conducted on “gender-specific” or “gender-responsive” issues in correctional institutions (Bloom, Owen, & Covington, 2004; Hubbard & Matthews, 2008).

Researchers argue that due to the specific and well defined gender differences among males and females, programmatic rehabilitation efforts that are accepted as adequate for male offenders may not be appropriate or effective for female offenders. It is further argued that due to gender differences, female’s rehabilitation experience in comparison to males is more likely to be impacted by their experience with violence and by their role as a mother. This is of particular interest since many correctional institutions are currently utilizing correction-based rehabilitation programs that place a significant amount of focus on cognitive-oriented programming designed to have an intense emotional (i.e., develop guilt, shame, and empathy) impact on offenders in order to change offender behavior (California Youth Authority, 2008; Gaboury & Ruth-Heffelbower, 2007; Hanson, 1996). However, without acknowledging the unique experiences of female offenders the impact of these programs may prove to be less than robust. As noted by Cahill (2001), a male-centered paradigm fails to consider the two unique things that make women different from men—their ability to have children and their experience with violence both as a victim and as a perpetrator.

Victimization and Violence

The role of children and violence in women’s lives significantly shapes their concerns about the sociopolitical environment in which they exist (Mackintosh, Myers, & Kennon, 2006; Poehlmann et al., 2008; Vainik, 2008). Women’s concerns about the safety, nurturing, and developing of their children have a significant impact on their ability to be successful in a male-centered structure. Further, since women under a male-centered paradigm are “rapable” and are constantly having to re-negotiate their safety with the males in their lives, their pathways to violence and trajectories after life-changing violent events both as a victim and perpetrator are uniquely different from males (Belknap, 2001; Cahill, 2001; Watterson, 1996). For example Snell and Morton (1994) noted that between 1986 and 1991, the number of violent women sentenced to prison increased from 8,045 to 12,400 despite their overall proportional decrease. Further, when examining the victims of violent females, over two-thirds of the victims were relatives, intimates or someone they knew. Women in prison for homicide were almost twice as likely to have killed a husband, ex-husband, or boyfriend. They were also more likely to have killed relatives (i.e., father, cousin or sibling). Juxtapose these statistics with the amount of physical and sexual abuse that females in prison have experienced throughout their lifetime, and then violence dispensed by women upon intimates and relatives becomes somewhat understandable. In comparison to men, women were more than three times more likely to indicate past physical abuse. For example, more than 4 in every 10 women incarcerated reported that they had been abused at least once prior to incarceration (Snell & Morton, 1994). Additionally, an “estimated 50% of women in prison who reported abuse said they had experienced abuse at the hands of an intimate, in comparison to 3% of men” (Snell & Morton, 1994, p. 6). These statistics highlight the underlying premise of Cahill’s argument that women are “rapable” and due to their vulnerability, much of their violence can be viewed as pre-emptive or defensive. Nonetheless, because of mandatory criminal justice policies and the United States “get tough” approach to crime and violence, women are receiving longer sentences than they have in the past. This outcome directly impacts their relationships with their children.

Children

Female offenders, specifically female offenders with children, experience incarceration differently than females without children and their male counterparts (Bloom et al., 2004; Watterson, 1996). Their experience is often shaped by the fact that they will more than likely lose custody of their children while incarcerated or their ability to visit with their children is severely limited or nonexistent (Vainik, 2008). In fact, “twenty-five states have termination of parental rights or adoptive statutes that are triggered once a custodial parent is incarcerated” (Vainik, 2008, p. 9). Although male offenders have children as well, they, unlike women, are typically not the primary parent upon incarceration. Glaze and Maruschak (2008) report that among parents in state prisons who lived with their children prior to incarceration, mothers were almost three times as likely to indicate that they were the primary caregivers to their children. Thus, upon incarceration, their concern for the whereabouts, safety, and placement of their children significantly impacts their incarceration experience, particularly their success in rehabilitative programming and their subsequent acceptance of responsibility for their crime. For example, Jackson and colleagues (2009) found in their study of female offenders enrolled in an ICVC class, that offenders with children were least likely to develop feelings of guilt, experienced more shame and were more likely to blame society for their incarceration. They concluded that in order for cognitive correction-based programs to be successful at changing offender behavior, particularly among women, there should be an increased emphasis on
developing the emotions of guilt and empathy among offenders and that these programs should also make their curriculums more gender-specific. This argument is also addressed by Bloom et al. (2004) who also stated that “at each stage in the criminal justice process, the differences between female and male offenders affect behavioral outcomes and the ability of the system to address the pathways to offending and thus achieve its goals” (p. 33). Although there are various caveats underlying these arguments (i.e., socialization and women’s focus on relationships) (see O’Leary & Wright, 1986), the two issues that are specifically highlighted are the impact of children on incarcerated women and their experience with violence.

In an attempt to address these programmatic shortcomings many correctional institutions are adopting “gender-neutral” correction-based programming (e.g., ICVC classes) that emphasizes a multi-prong curriculum designed to address both criminogenic and non-criminogenic issues among offenders. It should be noted that gender issues are not intentionally being ignored by correctional program administrators, but due to the shortage of resources (time, money, personnel, and space) gender-neutral programs are currently the best option (Jackson et al., 2009). Therefore, the hope is that by utilizing agender-neutral “one-size-fits all” approach, the program will eventually address some, if not all of the offenders’ needs (Caufmman et al., 2004). However, as pointed out by Bloom et al. (2004), “gender-neutral” or “genderless” multi-prong rehabilitation/intervention programs are still male-based and continue to ignore the issues that are uniquely female and thus ultimately fail to achieve the goal of having an intense emotional impact (i.e., the development of guilt, shame, and empathy) which is necessary for changing offender behavior.

CONCEPTUALIZING GUILT, SHAME, AND EMPATHY

It is well recognized in both academia and popular culture that males and females differ significantly in their experiences and development of guilt, shame, and empathy (Ferguson & Crowley, 1997a; Gray, 1993; Tangney & Dearing, 2000; Toussaint & Webb, 2005). Further, these emotions and the way that with males and females differently have been documented in the literature as being significantly correlated with victim-blaming (Jackson, 2008), forgiveness (Toussaint & Webb, 2005), recidivism (Hanson & Tangney, 1995), aggression (Caufmman et al., 2004; Lutwak, et al., 2001; Tangney et al., 1992), violence (McAlinden, 2005; O’Leary & Wright, 1986), victimization (Eisikovits & Enosh, 1997), and offender behavior (Caufmman et al., 2004). More specifically, current criminal justice research has recognized the emotions of guilt, shame, and empathy as pertinent to offender rehabilitation and reducing recidivism. For example, Hosser, Windzio, and Greve (2008) after interviewing 1,243 offenders from six prisons noted that feelings of guilt at the beginning of the prison term was significantly correlated with reduced recidivism, whereas feelings of shame were correlated with higher rates of recidivism. Prelog and colleagues (2009) using the Shame Guilt Reactivity Index (SGRI) examined the impact of shame on reducing recidivism and noted that although there were issues with construct validity, their results were promising and concluded that more research in this area should be conducted. Tangney and Dearing (2002) in a study examining guilt and shame noted that shame and guilt are significant predictors of crime and concluded that interventions targeting intense emotional development can help in reducing criminal behavior and recidivism. Berman (2004) examined a reasoning and rehabilitation program that evaluated the role of empathy on reducing recidivism and noted that offenders who completed the program were also less likely to recidivate. As research indicates guilt, shame and empathy are significant variables for predicting and preventing crime and depending on which emotion guilt or shame offenders experience they may be more likely to persist or desist in criminal behavior. However, as noted by Jackson and colleagues (2008), these concepts are not easily defined. Therefore, the following sections are designed to conceptualize guilt, shame and empathy for the purposes of this study.

Guilt

The conceptualization of guilt has received varying amounts of attention from a variety of disciplines. Despite the various pedagogic approaches, all fields concur that guilt generates reparative behavior among individuals because of its internal focus. For example, researchers from the field of psychology have defined guilt as a response to the violation of internal norms (Harris, 2003; Tangney, 1991). When individuals are aware of their own personal norm violation, they are also more likely to make some attempt to repair the wrong (Leith & Baumeister, 1998; Tangney, 1991). As stated by Leith and Baumeister (1998), “Guilt stimulates people to counteract the bad consequences of their actions, for example, by confessing, by apologizing, or by making amends” (p. 3). Consequently, individuals who have the emotional response of guilt are more likely to emotionally relate to the victim (i.e., feel empathy) and are more likely to experience a need to repair the wrong (Tangney, 1991). In the process of generating reparative behavior, individuals are also more likely to accept responsibility for their actions and are less likely to ascribe their transgression on others.

Shame

Conversely, when individuals’ attention is externally focused, they are more likely to experience shame. Shame, unlike guilt, often forces individuals to run and hide or avoid situations that force them to confront their wrong-doings (Tangney, 1991). When individuals are shamed, they are more likely to experience feelings of failure and avoidance and develop other behaviors that may lead to further transgressions. Thus, “shame involves critical, painful scrutiny of the self as a whole, and the resultant distress may inhibit any simple or pragmatic effort to deal with the immediate situation” (Leith & Baumeister 1998, p. 3-4). Pattison (2000) concurs with the definition presented by Leith and Baumeister and provides a similar definition of shame:

Shame drastically limits or curtails the scope of concern, involvement and action with regard to other people…. [shame] focuses attention acutely upon the global self and its own self-consciousness, not upon particular acts or possible courses of action. It blocks out awareness of other people and their feelings and needs, except insofar as these impinge upon the self. It inhibits empathy because the self is too engaged in its own internal processes and particularly its own sense of feeling bad (p. 125-126).

Therefore, shame and shame-proneness are self-conscious, self-evaluative emotions that occur in a social context. Shame unlike guilt focuses on a global assessment of the self, while guilt concerns specific behaviors rather than the whole person. People experiencing shame feel less control over particular situations and will often engage in withdrawal behaviors. Shame
can also lead to other negative outcomes such as loss of self-efficacy, increased negative self-appraisal and loss of identity within social groups (Tangney, 1990, 1991, 1994; Tangney et al., 1992). These negative effects of shame can also cause the shamed individual to lose his or her ability to relate to or understand others’ pain or hurt (i.e., empathy). Further, these negative feelings can be exacerbated, depending on the “degree or type” of shameful act committed (Greenspan, 1995). Shame-prone individuals, in particular those who have committed acts that are serious character violations (i.e., murder, rape, or assault) may be more apt to respond with an avoidance reaction (denial of victim or victim-blaming), in lieu of an empathic response. Consequently, shame is not likely to produce the pro-social and relationship-enhancing responses that are attributed to guilt.

**Empathy**

The concept of empathy along with guilt and shame has also been beset with issues regarding conceptualization and empirical measurement. For example, Davis (1983) points out that despite its common use in everyday language, empathy is not easily defined. Davis proposes four basic dimensions of empathy. The first dimension is fantasy in which, individuals are viewed as being able to transpose (imaginatively) themselves into feelings and actions of a fictional character. The second dimension is perspective taking, defined as the ability to place oneself into another’s situation and comprehend his or her experiences. The third dimension is empathetic concern. From this perspective individuals are viewed as being concerned about the welfare of others and are able to share the pain of their adversity. The final dimension is personal distress, which is defined as the anxiety that one develops upon hearing or learning of the suffering or distress of another. Although Davis (1983) identified more than one type of empathy, many researchers have adopted the “perspective taking” dimension as a common definition of empathy (Leith & Baumeister, 1998). Following precedents, for the purposes of this study empathy will be defined as follows:

A shared emotional response between an observer and stimulus person, a response that requires three interrelated skills or capacities: (a) the cognitive ability to take another person’s perspective, (b) the cognitive ability to discriminate or to accurately read cues regarding another person’s particular emotional experience, and (c) the affective capacity to personally experience a range of emotions (because empathy involves the sharing of another’s affective experience in one form or another). (Tangney 1991, p. 598)

Thus empathy would be described as deriving from the emotional feeling of guilt. Through guilt, the transgressor is able to self-reflect and empathize with the victim. This also allows the transgressor to understand his or her role in the causing of harm, which may reduce his or her chances of placing blame on the victim or society at large. Individuals who are guilt-prone are more likely to experience empathy and can begin to understand the true extent of the harm caused by their actions; they are also more likely to be motivated to take moral responsibility for their actions; whereas, individuals who are shame-prone are less empathetic and are also less likely to accept responsibility for their actions. Additionally, and as relates to the present study, the relationship among guilt, shame and empathy is enhanced by gender, children and type of crime committed (i.e., violent versus non-violent). It has been noted in the literature that females in comparison to males are more likely to indicate higher levels of both guilt and shame and are more likely to be empathetic (Toussaint & Webb, 2005). It has also been identified in the literature that violent offenders are less likely to develop empathy and more likely to express increased levels of shame (Jackson, 2008; Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2002).

In summary, despite the debate over conceptualization, researchers continually suggest that in order to develop a thorough understanding of the impact of correction-based rehabilitation programs on offender behavior, empirical and theoretical examinations of the development of emotional responses (i.e., guilt, shame, and empathy) among offenders is necessary (Lutwak et al., 2001; Rojek, Coverdill, & Fors, 2003). Therefore, the primary research objective of this study is to examine a correction-based ICVC program to empirically test if offenders, after participating in the ICVC course experienced a significant emotional change. An additional goal is to evaluate if the relationship among guilt, shame, and empathy with victim-blaming is mediated or accounted for by gender, children and/or offender violence.

**METHOD**

**ICVC Program**

Beginning in 1999, the Missouri Department of Corrections implemented a victim education program, ICVC, based on a program developed by the California Youth Authority (California Youth Authority, 2008). The goals of the ICVC program are the following: (a) teach offenders about the effects of trauma victimization; (b) increase offenders’ awareness of the negative impact of their crime on their victims and the community; (c) encourage offenders to accept responsibility for their harmful actions; (d) provide a forum for victims and victim service providers to educate offenders about their harmful behavior, with the hope of preventing a future re-offending; and (e) build linkages between criminal and juvenile justice agencies. Underlying these goals is an attempt to have an intense emotional impact on participating offenders and to encourage offenders to accept responsibility for their transgression and to decrease their propensity to blame others for their anti-social behavior (Stutz, 1994). ICVCs are currently conducted among incarcerated offenders and offenders sentenced to the various forms of community corrections. The target audiences of ICVCs in the community are young adult felony offenders and offenders who have demonstrated a need for this type of program who are on probation or parole or soon to be released from prison.

The court and community corrections officers select offenders for the classes primarily through referrals. Classes held in the community are taught by corrections staff or private vendors; whereas classes held in institutions are taught by inmate facilitators or correctional staff. Classes vary on meeting times depending on whether the program is community-based, institutionalized, in a male or female facility, or available resources. During the class and consistent with curriculum guidelines, several crime-related issues are addressed: property offenses, drugs and society, domestic violence, child maltreatment, assault, sexual assault, drunk driving, robbery, and homicide. The material is presented by the use of text, videotaped victim stories, and guest victim speakers. When guest victim speakers participate, the program

---

1. Only the goals of the ICVC program are identified in this study because other studies have thoroughly described the Missouri Department of Corrections ICVC program. For a full description of the ICVC program utilized by the Missouri Department of Corrections, see Jackson and Bonacker (2006), Jackson (2008) and Jackson et al. (2009).
resembles the *Victims as Leaders* model, which allows for victims’ voices to be represented through other victims or victim advocate groups without the victims and the offenders meeting face-to-face. This model has been described as giving victims’ voices authenticity and allows victims the opportunity to have a significant impact on offender’s behavior and on the dialogue of healing (Shaheed, 2006).

**Participants**

Data for this study was collected from adult females incarcerated in the Women’s Eastern Reception and Diagnostic Center (WERDC) in Vandalia, Missouri over a period of six months (August 2006 through January 2007) and a sample of adult males incarcerated in the Eastern Reception and Diagnostic Correctional Center (ERDCC) in Bonne Terre, Missouri over a period of twelve months (March 2007 through March 2008). The women and men participating in this program were all due to be released within 120 days. During this time, WERDC conducted four separate one-week ICVC courses serving approximately 240 female offenders or 60 female offenders per one-week class. ERDCC conducted five separate four-week courses serving approximately 125 male offenders or 25 male offenders per four-week class. These study sites were selected because of their proximity and the availability of ICVC classes provided for the offender population.

The participants’ offenses consisted of a range of deviant behavior: manslaughter, burglary, driving under the influence (DUI), drug violations, robbery, assault, fraud, leaving the scene of an accident, and tampering with a motor vehicle. The initial sample consisted of 163 offenders out of the 365 possible participants (125 males and 240 females) who were in the ICVC classes. Due to program attrition, the final sample consisted of 124 respondents (97 females and 27 males) who completed the survey at both pre- and post-test, which equates to an overall response rate of 33.9%. The overall attrition rate for the sample was approximately 24%. This attrition rate within the sample can be attributed to violations, administrative segregation, or failure to complete the class through non-participation (for an overall description of population demographics by gender and pre- and post-test see Table 1).

**Current Focus**

The primary research objective is to examine a correction-based victim awareness program—impact of crime on victims class (ICVC) to empirically test if participants experienced a significant emotional change. A secondary goal is to explore if offenders’ level of guilt, shame, and empathy significantly influences their propensity to blame others. A third goal is to examine if females differ from males and violent offenders differ from non-violent offenders in their development of guilt, shame, empathy, and blaming. A final goal is to examine if offenders’ (children vs. no children, male vs. female and violent vs. nonviolent) level of guilt, shame, or empathy significantly influences their propensity to blame the victim or society. Specifically, we addressed the following questions: (a) Is there a significant difference in offenders’ pre- and post-test scores on guilt, shame, empathy, and blaming?; (b) Do guilt, shame, and empathy yield different estimates of blaming?; (c) Is this difference attributable to gender, violence, or children?; and (d) Do children, violence, and/or gender mediate or account for the influence of guilt, shame and empathy on blaming?

**Administration of Instrument**

The surveys for the ICVC participants were administered in person by the first author who visited both the men’s and women’s facilities after approval had been obtained from the appropriate Missouri State officials. Prior to taking the survey, all participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could choose not to complete the survey or refuse to answer any specific questions. Participants at the beginning of the ICVC class (pre-test) received a booklet that included an informed consent form and a cover sheet with written instructions for completing the survey. ICVC participants were re-tested (post-test) following completion of the class. All survey data were numerically coded by using the last four digits of the offender’s social security number to ensure that the offender’s pre- and post-tests surveys matched.

**Measures**

**Independent Variables**

**Test of Self-Conscious Affect for Socially Deviant (TOSCA-SD)**. The TOSCA-SD is a revision of the adult TOSCA developed for use with incarcerated respondents, as well as individuals from other “socially deviant” groups (Hanson & Tangney, 1995). Although there is some debate about whether the TOSCA is an appropriate measure of guilt and shame, Tangney (1991) concluded that scenario-based measures (such as the TOSCA) are nevertheless adequate measures of guilt and shame proneness (see also Ferguson & Crowley, 1997b). Like the TOSCA, TOSCA-SD employs a scenario-based approach to assess individual differences in shame-proneness and guilt-proneness. The TOSCA-SD consists of 13 scenarios designed primarily to assess the respondent’s shame and guilt reactions to each situation. Each scenario is followed by several alternative responses representing brief phenomenological descriptions of shame, guilt, and defensive responses with respect to the specific scenario. Rather than relying on the often misused terms “shame” and “guilt,” these TOSCA-SD items represent brief phenomenological descriptions of a shame or guilt experience, as defined in the theoretical, phenomenological, and empirical literatures (Lutwak et al., 2001; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Respondents were asked to rate on a 4-point Likert scale (1= very likely to 4= very unlikely), their likelihood of responding in each manner indicated, allowing for the possibility that feelings of shame and guilt may co-occur in connection with a given situation. The TOSCA has been shown to have acceptable internal consistency (alpha = .76 and .66 for shame and guilt, respectively) (Tangney et al., 1992) and the TOSCA shame and guilt scales have been shown to be correlated in previous studies (r = .44) (Tangney, 1990; 1991). TOSCA shame-proneness scores, but not guilt-proneness scores, have been related to a range of psychopathologies (Tangney, 1990, 1991). In a study by Jackson and Bonacker (2006) examining guilt, shame, and empathy development among victim impact training participants, TOSCA-SD reliability for the shame (negative self-appraisal and behavioral avoidance) and guilt measures were .89, .81, and .74 respectively. The reliability scores for this study on shame sub-scales (negative self-appraisal and behavioral avoidance) and guilt were .64 for negative-self appraisal, and .63 for behavioral avoidance and .85 for guilt.

2. The Missouri Department of Corrections was responsible for the funding of this ICVC program. Offenders were encouraged to enroll in the program prior to release on a first-come first-served basis. If the program became a stipulation of the offender’s probation and the offender had not completed the ICVC program while incarcerated, the cost would be the responsibility of the offender. The cost for the ICVC program ranges from $300 to $400.

3. For a complete copy of the TOSCA-SD and its coding sheet see Tangney and Dearing (2002).
Mehrabian Emotional Empathy Scale. The Mehrabian Emotional Empathy Scale (MEES) is a measure of general empathy (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972). It contains 33 statements that respondents are required to rate on a range from +4 (very strong agreement) to -4 (very strong disagreement). In developing this scale, Mehrabian and Epstein (1972) selected only items that did not correlate with the Marlowe Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960). Due to its theoretical importance, it will remain in the final analysis. The MEES has been used in previous research on rapists and sex offenders (Tierney & McCabe, 2001) and has demonstrated a reliability alpha of .84. Due to its length, Jackson (2008) when examining guilt, shame, and empathy among a sample of incarcerated females, modified the MEES from the original 33-items to a scale of 22-items. The modified MEES utilized in his study demonstrated a reliability alpha of .78. Therefore, the same modified MEES scale used to measure empathy in Jackson (2008) was utilized with this sample. The modified scale in this sample consists of 22 items from the original MEES (12 negative and 10 positive) and, unlike the original MEES which was measured on a scale ranging from +4 (very strong agreement) to -4 (very strong disagreement), the scale for this study was modified and measured on a 4-point Likert scale of 1 (very unlikely) to 4 (very likely) of which the negative empathy response items were reverse-scored. Despite the changes, the scale still utilizes the primary questions of each dimension from the multidimensional construct (see Jackson, 2008) for survey constructs. Cronbach’s alpha for the empathy scale for the current sample is .54, which is considerably lower than previous studies using the modified MEES. Due to its theoretical importance, it will remain in the final analysis.

Offender Violence. Offender violence was defined as homicide or as some other violent crime, which included attempted homicide, assault, robbery, kidnapping, or any crime that resulted in physical harm of another person (for precedent see Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2002). Offenders were originally asked an open-ended question about the type of offense that they had committed in order to be placed in prison (i.e., “What offense did you commit to be placed in prison?”). The responses were then dichotomized into the dummy variable “violent offense”: (1) Yes and (2) No. The scale ranging from +4 (very strong agreement) to -4 (very strong disagreement), the scale for this study utilized a scale of 22-items. The modified MEES utilized in this sample demonstrated a reliability alpha of .78. Therefore, the same modified MEES scale used to measure empathy in Jackson (2008) was utilized with this sample. The modified scale in this sample consists of 22 items from the original MEES (12 negative and 10 positive) and, unlike the original MEES which was measured on a scale ranging from +4 (very strong agreement) to -4 (very strong disagreement), the scale for this study was modified and measured on a 4-point Likert scale of 1 (very unlikely) to 4 (very likely) of which the negative empathy response items were reverse-scored. Despite the changes, the scale still utilizes the primary questions of each dimension from the multidimensional construct (see Jackson, 2008) for survey constructs. Cronbach’s alpha for the empathy scale for the current sample is .54, which is considerably lower than previous studies using the modified MEES. Due to its theoretical importance, it will remain in the final analysis.

Dependent Variable(s)

Victim- and Society-Blaming. Part of the goal of the ICVC programs is to get offenders to accept responsibility for their own actions and decrease their propensity to blame others. This study utilizes both a victim- and society-blaming measure to assess offenders’ level of blaming. Modifications of the scale were necessary due to the length of the survey and due to the population being surveyed. The scale has been pre-tested and has demonstrated a consistent Cronbach’s alpha (.78) (see Jackson, 2008).

4. Although it is suggested that an alpha of .70 or greater is desired, Bernardi (1994) suggests that if the scale is necessary for the theoretical argument it is possible to use scales with alphas below .70, particularly since alphas are heavily influenced by sample size. Further, given the restricted nature of the sample (i.e., incarcerated, different facilities, and different program lengths), an alpha of .54 is acceptable for this type of research. Nonetheless, the results are to be interpreted with caution.

6. Typical of studies similar to this one, often when offenders are convicted of multiple offenses in a single arrest and subsequent prosecution, only the most serious offense is used in the analysis (Polaschek et al., 2005). Thus, consistent with prior research, this study also utilized the most serious offense in the analysis. If offenders indicated in their litany of charges a violent offense, their response was categorized as “violent”.

## Table 1. Sample Description and Frequency (N = 124)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Females (N = 97)</th>
<th>Males (N = 27)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>1 = Non-minority 68 (70.1%)</td>
<td>7 (25.9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 = Minority 29 (29.9%)</td>
<td>20 (74.1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1 = No HS Diploma 28 (28.9%)</td>
<td>8 (29.6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 = HS Diploma 30 (30.9%)</td>
<td>14 (51.8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 = Some College 31 (32.0%)</td>
<td>2 (7.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 = College Degree 5 (5.2%)</td>
<td>1 (3.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missing 3 (3.1%)</td>
<td>2 (7.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>1 = Married 17 (17.5%)</td>
<td>5 (18.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 = Not Married 80 (82.5%)</td>
<td>22 (81.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income Before</td>
<td>1 = Below $19,000 59 (60.8%)</td>
<td>14 (51.8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 = $19,000-29,999 25 (25.8%)</td>
<td>8 (29.6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 = $30,000-39,999 4 (4.1%)</td>
<td>2 (7.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 = $40,000-49,999 5 (5.2%)</td>
<td>1 (3.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 = More than $50,000 2 (2.1%)</td>
<td>1 (3.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missing 2 (2.1%)</td>
<td>1 (3.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Felony</td>
<td>1 = Yes 53 (54.6%)</td>
<td>17 (62.9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 = No 44 (45.4%)</td>
<td>9 (33.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missing 1 (1.0%)</td>
<td>1 (3.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent Offense</td>
<td>1 = Yes 25 (25.8%)</td>
<td>20 (74.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 = No 71 (73.2%)</td>
<td>6 (22.2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missing 1 (0.1%)</td>
<td>1 (3.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior ICVC</td>
<td>1 = Yes 13 (13.4%)</td>
<td>7 (25.9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 = No 83 (85.6%)</td>
<td>19 (70.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missing 1 (1.0%)</td>
<td>1 (3.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restitution</td>
<td>1 = Yes 6 (6.2%)</td>
<td>3 (11.1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 = No 91 (93.8%)</td>
<td>23 (85.2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missing 1 (1.0%)</td>
<td>1 (3.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>1 = Yes 34 (35.1%)</td>
<td>14 (51.8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 = No 63 (64.9%)</td>
<td>12 (44.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missing 1 (1.0%)</td>
<td>1 (3.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>1 = Yes 14 (14.4%)</td>
<td>16 (59.2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 = No 83 (85.6%)</td>
<td>11 (40.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Years range 18-66 range 20-56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The scales utilized to measure both victim- and society-blaming were modeled after the stable victim- and society-blaming scales provided by Mulford, Lee, and Sapp (1996). These scales were selected primarily for their demonstrated reliability and their victim-neutral approach to measuring victim- and society-blaming. This was important because of the range of offenses committed by the participants within the sample. Victim-blaming scales that focused on a particular type of victim (e.g., rape, domestic violence or violence in general) would be limited in their application and possibly create a sympathetic perceptual bias toward victims. Subjects were asked to think for a moment about people who are affected negatively by social problems and the society in which these people live. The victim items (“People have poor personalitites”; “People have loose morals”; “They are being punished by God”; and “People have inherited weaknesses”) placed blame on persons who suffer, while the societal items (“Human service agencies are too slow to help them”; “They suffer unintentionally because of actions/personalities of others”; “Turf battles between agencies make matters worse”; and “Federal government doesn’t help them enough”) place blame on the society. Scale items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (highly disagree) to 5 (highly agree). Cronbach’s alpha for the victim-blaming scale was .69 and for the society-blaming scale was .68, which is consistent with previous research (Mulford, Lee, & Sapp 1996).

Socio-demographic Variables. Beyond the inclusion of theoretically relevant variables, this study controls for several demographic factors including offender ethnicity/race, marital status, education, prior ICVC participation, age, prior felony, number of children, restitution, income prior to incarceration, prison employment, and whether the offense was violent or non-violent. In the final analysis, all variables were treated as dummy variables, with the exception of age, education, prior ICVC participation, age, prior felony, number of children, restitution, income between agencies make matters worse”; and “Federal government doesn’t help them enough”) place blame on the society. Scale items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (highly disagree) to 5 (highly agree). Cronbach’s alpha for the victim-blaming scale was .69 and for the society-blaming scale was .68, which is consistent with previous research (Mulford, Lee, & Sapp 1996).

RESULTS

Before the analysis, data were prepared to meet the assumptions of the models (that is homogeneity of covariance, normality, and, whenever possible, outliers). Data collected in the pre- and post-test interviews were analyzed using a multiple analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) approach. A MANCOVA approach allows for the testing of the multiple dependent variables while controlling for Type I errors (see Table 2 and 3 for pre- and post-test means and standard deviations and correlations of guilt, shame, empathy and victim- and society-blaming scales). This approach was chosen because of the the primary unit of analysis selected for the current study was the difference in dependent variables’ post-test scores, taking into account any differences in the pre-test scores (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005). Further, since both current and prior literature indicate that age, race, income, education, prior felony, violent offense, number of children, restitution, prior ICVC participation, and marital status are associated with the dependent variables, they were treated as covariates within the MANCOVA model (Tangney & Dearing, 2002).

Pre- and Post-test Differences on Guilt, Shame, Empathy and Blaming

MANCOVA was conducted to determine if there was a significant effect between the pre- and post-test scores on guilt, shame, empathy, and victim- or society-blaming. MANCOVA results revealed no significant differences among pre- and post-test categories on the combined dependent variables. The covariates restitution (Wilks’ Λ = .936, F(6,193)=2.20, p<.044, multivariate η2 =.064), ethnicity (Wilks’ Λ = .876, F(6,193)=4.56, p<.000, multivariate η2 =.124), and violent offense (Wilks’ Λ = .916, F(6,193)=2.96, p<.009, multivariate η2 =.084) significantly influenced the combined dependent variables. There was also a significant violent offense x gender interaction (Wilks’ Λ = .928, F(6,193)=2.76, p<.013, multivariate η2 =.079) and a significant violent offense x child interaction (Wilks’ Λ = .915, F(6,193)=2.97, p<.008, multivariate η2 =.085) on the combined dependent variables. Analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) were conducted on each dependent variable as a follow-up test to MANCOVA. Restitution (F(1,198)= 8.03, p<.005, partial η2 =.039) category differences were significant for empathy. Felony (F(1,198)=7.32, p<.007, partial η2 =.036) category differences were significant for guilt. Ethnicity category differences were significant for guilt (F(1,198)= 12.35, p<.001, partial η2 =.059) and the shame sub-scale negative self-appraisal (F(1,198)= 24.09, p<.000, partial η2 =.108). Age (F(1,198)= 7.54, p<.007, partial η2 =.037) category differences were significant for society-blaming. Violent offense category differences were significant for empathy (F(1,198)= 8.35, p<.004, partial η2 =.040) and society-blaming (F(1,198)=4.72, p<.031, partial η2 =.023). The violent offense x gender interaction category differences were significant for the shame sub-scale negative self-appraisal (F(1,198)= 5.04, p<.026, partial η2 =.025) and victim-blaming (F(1,198)=7.35, p<.007, partial η2 =.036). The violent offense x children interaction category differences were significant for guilt (F(1,198)= 6.30, p<.013, partial η2 =.031), the shame sub-scale behavioral avoidance (F(1,198)= 5.66, p<.018, partial η2 =.028), empathy (F(1,198)=4.22, p<.041, partial η2 =.021) and society-blaming (F(1,198)=6.27, p<.013, partial η2 =.031). Overall the findings do not indicate that offenders indicated a significant difference between their pre- and post-test scores.
**Table 3. Bivariate Correlations of Guilt, Shame, Empathy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>X1</th>
<th>X2</th>
<th>X3</th>
<th>X4</th>
<th>X5</th>
<th>X6</th>
<th>X7</th>
<th>X8</th>
<th>X9</th>
<th>X10</th>
<th>X11</th>
<th>X12</th>
<th>X13</th>
<th>X14</th>
<th>X15</th>
<th>X16</th>
<th>X17</th>
<th>X18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (Years)</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children (Number)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.224</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restitution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.084</td>
<td>.063</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>**.169</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed (Yes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.084</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>**.176</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior ICVC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>*-.150</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income prior to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.202</td>
<td>.113</td>
<td>.063</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.096</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent Offense</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.202</td>
<td>.113</td>
<td>.063</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.096</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre- and Post-Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>*-.150</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.094</td>
<td>-.032</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>-.081</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>-.193</td>
<td>*-.174</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.047</td>
<td>-.044</td>
<td>**.190</td>
<td>**.404</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.047</td>
<td>-.044</td>
<td>**.190</td>
<td>**.404</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>**-.353</td>
<td>-.008</td>
<td>-.020</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>**-.274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married (Yes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.162</td>
<td>-.045</td>
<td>**-.164</td>
<td>*-.132</td>
<td>.094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>*-.141</td>
<td>-.034</td>
<td>-.135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); BA—Behavioral Avoidance; NSA—Negative Self Appraisal.**

**Guilt, Shame, and Empathy Influences on Blaming**

MANCOVA was conducted to determine the effect of guilt, shame, empathy, gender, pre- and post-test, and violent offense on the combined dependent variables victim- or society-blaming. MANCOVA results revealed significant differences among the shame sub-scale behavioral avoidance (Wilks' Λ = .965, F(6,193)=3.46, p<.033, multivariate η² =.035) and empathy (Wilks' Λ = .961, F(6,193)=3.90, p<.022, multivariate η² =.039) on the combined dependent variables. There were no significant differences among the variables gender, pre- and post-test, guilt or violent offense on the combined dependent variables. There were however significant violent offense x gender (Wilks' Λ = .956, F(6,193)=4.48, p<.013, multivariate η² =.044) and violent offense x children (Wilks' Λ = .966, F(6,193)=3.40, p<.035, multivariate η² =.034) interactions on the combined dependent variables. ANOVA was conducted on each dependent variable as a follow-up test to MANCOVA. Restitution (F(1,194)= 4.37, p<.038, partial η² =.022) and age (F(1,194)= 6.42, p<.012, partial η² =.032) category differences were significant for society-blaming. The shame sub-scale behavioral avoidance category differences were significant for both victim- (F(1,194)= 3.93, p<.049, partial η² =.020) and society-blaming (F(1,194)= 3.98, p<.047, partial η² =.020). Empathy (F(1,194)= 7.36, p<.007, partial η² =.037) and pre- and post-test (F(1,194)= 3.95, p<.048, partial η² =.020) category differences were significant for victim-blaming. There were also significant violent offense x gender category differences for victim-blaming (F(1,194)= 7.79, p<.006, partial η² =.039) and significant violent offense x children category differences for society-blaming (F(1,194)= 4.37, p<.038, partial η² =.022). Overall the findings indicate that offenders that indicated higher levels of shame were more likely to blame both society and the victim for their transgressions, while offenders that indicated higher levels of empathy were less likely to blame the victim.

**Gender, Violence and Children as Mediating Effects on Blaming**

A path model (Figure 1) using Analytic Moment Structures (AMOS) was conducted to determine if violent offense, gender, or children either mediated or accounted for the influence of guilt, shame, and empathy on the combined dependent variables victim- and society-blaming. AMOS provides full information maximum-likelihood estimates of model relationships and allows for the simultaneous testing of the effects of exogenous variables on endogenous variables in the specified structural equation model. This method is preferred over multiple regressions for two primary reasons. First, the statistical indices of the overall fit of the model to the data are generated by regression programs. Second, several noteworthy and informative results are simultaneously calculated by AMOS, including direct, indirect, and total effects (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999). Since pre- and post-test results revealed no significant overall impact among the combined variables guilt, shame, empathy, and victim- and society blaming, the path analysis is unique to post-test results only.

First, we calculated separate variance-covariance matrices for all variables in the model, using a two-tailed test of significance at the .05 level as the criterion. Bivariate correlations indicated that the relationships between variables were in the predicted directions (See Table 3). Preliminary analyses using MANCOVA indicated that gender, violent offense, and children demonstrated a significant interaction on victim- and society-blaming suggesting that the effects were either mediated or accounted for by the offender’s gender, violent offense, or their children.
The results indicate (see Figure 1) that guilt has a small direct negative effect ($\beta = -0.14$) on violent offense, a moderate direct positive effect ($\beta = 0.29$) on victim-blaming and a small direct negative effect ($\beta = -0.10$) on society-blaming. Therefore, offenders who were more guilt-prone were less likely to be violent and less likely to blame the victim, but were more likely to blame society for their transgressions. The shame sub-scale negative self-appraisal demonstrated a small direct negative effect on society-blaming ($\beta = -0.14$) and a moderate direct positive effect on violent offense ($\beta = 0.31$); whereas the shame sub-scale behavioral avoidance demonstrated a moderate direct negative effect on violent offense ($\beta = -0.22$), a direct positive effect on gender ($\beta = 0.14$), a small direct negative effect on victim-blaming ($\beta = -0.18$), and a small direct negative effect on society-blaming ($\beta = -0.16$). These findings indicate that offenders who are shame-prone were more likely to blame both society and the victim. Further shame-prone offenders were more likely to be males and were more likely to have committed a violent offense. Empathy demonstrated a direct negative effect on children ($\beta = -0.11$) and a small direct negative effect on gender ($\beta = -0.13$), indicating that offenders with children and female offenders were more likely to be empathetic. Violent offense demonstrated a moderate direct negative effect on gender ($\beta = -0.42$) and a small direct positive effect on children ($\beta = 0.12$). These results indicate that violent offenders were more likely to be males and were less likely to have children. Gender demonstrated a small positive direct effect on victim-blaming ($\beta = 0.13$), suggesting that women were more likely to victim-blame. Children demonstrated a small negative direct effect on society-blaming ($\beta = -0.10$), indicating that offenders with children were more likely to blame society. Finally, offender violence appears to act as a mediating variable between guilt, shame, and empathy on both victim- and society-blaming. Results indicate a small negative direct effect on society-blaming ($\beta = -0.05$) and victim-blaming ($\beta = -0.06$), suggesting that violent offenders regardless of their emotions or number of children in comparison to non-violent offenders were more likely to blame both the victim and society. Children or gender did not have any mediating influences on victim- or society-blaming.

To determine whether the overall proposed model fits the data adequately, we used several measures of goodness of fit. Specifically, these measures allowed us to assess if the hypothesized variance-covariance structure varies significantly from the observed variance-covariance matrix. A nonsignificant chi-square statistic is desired, indicating that the implied variance-covariance structure of relationships does not vary significantly from the observed variance-covariance matrix. The proposed model according to $\chi^2$ does not fit the data well ($\chi^2 = 9.039$, df = 2, p = 0.011). Even though this finding suggests that the current model departs from the null hypothesis, this may not be as problematic as it appears. As Bentler and Bonett (1980) state,

In very large samples virtually all models that one might consider would have to be rejected as statistically untenable... In effect, a nonsignificant chi-square value is desired, and one attempts to infer the validity of the hypothesis of no difference between model and data. Such logic is well-known in various statistical guises as attempting to prove the null hypothesis. This procedure cannot generally be justified, since the chi-square variate v can be made small by simply reducing sample size. (p. 78)

Although chi-square statistics do not support the model, other goodness of fit indices support the model fit—specifically the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Normed Fit Index (NFI). Both fit measures are adequate fit measures because they are guaranteed to range between 0 and 1 (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999). The CFI, which is identical to McDonald and Marsh’s (1990) relative noncentrality index (RNI), was used as an alternate goodness of fit index and is truncated to fall in the range from 0 to 1. CFI values close to 1 indicate a very good fit. For this model, the CFI value is .99, indicating an adequate fit to the data. The NFI is also truncated to fall in the range from 0 to 1 and the model demonstrated an NFI value of .99, again indicating an adequate fit to the data (Bollen, 1986). Overall, based on these statistics the model used for our analysis is an adequate fit for the data.

![Figure 1. AMOS Path Model: Offender Violence, Gender, and Children as Mediating Influences on Blaming.](image-url)
DISCUSSION

The article set out to examine the following questions (a) Is there a significant difference in offenders’ pre- and post-test scores on guilt, shame, empathy, and blaming?; (b) Do guilt, shame, and empathy yield different estimates of blaming?; (c) Is this difference attributable to gender, violence, or children?; and (d) Do children, violence, and/or gender mediate or account for the influence of guilt, shame and empathy on blaming?

Several findings emanate from our analysis. First, our results suggest that overall the participants in ICVC program did not demonstrate a significant difference among their pre- and post-test scores. Given documented research that offender cognitive-oriented programming does have an intense emotional impact on offenders and has some success in changing offender behavior (C’deBaca et al., 2001; Gaboury & Ruth-Heffelbower, 2007) the results of this study are noteworthy. The findings from this sample would suggest that more comprehensive and expanded programs may be necessary in order to obtain more robust conclusions about the impact of ICVCs on emotional development. Currently, the 1-week and 4-week programs are producing some interesting and positive findings but until research can be conducted with more expanded programs it is difficult to predict with some level of certainty that the ICVC program is accomplishing its underlying goal of changing offender behavior. Second, our results suggest that offenders who indicated higher levels of shame (shame sub-scale behavioral avoidance) were more likely to blame both the victim and society for their transgressions; whereas offenders that indicated higher levels of empathy were less likely to blame the victim. These findings are consistent with previous research that has consistently noted that shame as an emotion encourages individuals to avoid accepting responsibility for their behavior and instead place blame on some external entity (Hanson & Tangney, 1995; Jackson et al., 2009; Tangney, 1990; Tangney et al., 1992); whereas individuals who are more empathetic are less likely to blame the victim and more likely to understand the harm they may have caused (Jackson, 2006; 2008; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Also as noted by Tangney and colleagues, individuals who exhibit shame are more likely to avoid confronting the stimuli that may have led to their “shameful” status. Examining the socio-political environment that prisoners contend with in the U.S., the status of offender in-and-of itself is viewed as failing to abide by societal laws, thus invoking the emotion of shame (Braithwaite, 1989). Further, due to society’s exclusionary treatment of offenders, the role of shame is further exacerbated among individuals under the control of the criminal justice system. This exclusionary process has been consistently noted in the literature as being more conducive to generating blame and anger among offenders rather than healing and reconciliation (Braithwaite, 1989).

Third, our results suggest that overall there were no significant pre- and post-test differences among male and female offenders or among parents and non-parents. However, violent offense did demonstrate a significant impact on the combined dependent variables empathy and society-blaming. Although prior research has noted gender differences have a significant impact on offender participation and success in rehabilitation programming (Covington & Bloom, 2006; Hubbard & Matthews, 2008), our results suggest otherwise. In fact, our results, although contrary to some research, is consistent with Cauffman et al. (2004) and Cauffman (2008) who suggest that although gender-specific treatment methods can be effective for female offenders, researchers should understand that females are not a homogeneous group and thus treatment efforts should be designed to address individual needs and not just gender issues. This is noteworthy because, based upon our results; violent offenders appear to generate the most significant impact on the independent variables. This finding would indicate that programs that are comprehensive and designed based upon offenders’ criminogenic and non-criminogenic needs will more than likely produce more robust outcomes in comparison to the “one-size-fits-all” approach or gender-specific programs (Cauffman, 2008; Dowd & Andrews, 2000). Other research has also suggested that female offenders, specifically female offenders with children, experience incarceration differently than female offenders without children (Mackintosh et al., 2006; Poehlmann et al., 2008). Although this may be the case when examining a female population only (see Jackson et al., 2009) the results are not duplicated among a male and female sample overall. Conversely, violent offense appeared to demonstrate the most significant impact on the combined dependent variables. Based upon our findings and consistent with previous research (Dowd & Andrews, 2000; Gudjonsson & Petursson, 1991; Jackson et al., 2009; Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2002) violent offenders in comparison to non-violent offenders were less likely to develop empathy and more likely to blame society for their transgressions.

Additional points of interest are the significant interactions among the variables violent offense, gender, and children. As our results indicate, there was a significant interaction between violent offense and gender on the shame sub-scale negative self-appraisal, between violent offense and children on guilt, the shame sub-scale behavioral avoidance, empathy, and society blaming. There were also significant interactions between violent offense and gender on victim-blaming and between violent offense and children on society-blaming. These findings suggest that violent females were more likely to negatively self-appraise themselves for having committed a crime that led to their incarceration. Further, non-violent offenders with children experienced more guilt and empathy in comparison to violent offenders without children who experience more shame in the form of behavioral avoidance. Subsequently, non-violent offenders with children were also more likely to blame society for their transgressions; whereas violent males in general were more likely to blame the victim. These findings are consistent with Jackson et al., (2009) who noted that females with children, after completing the ICVC program, were more likely to experience more guilt and shame and were also more likely to blame society for their transgressions. Jackson and colleagues concluded that due to the loss of control over their children, offenders may have found it difficult to focus on bettering themselves when they were not sure of the whereabouts and safety of their children. Further, due to the “state’s” role in the placement of children, the “state” became the scapegoat for the offender’s predicament. According to Fisk and Taylor (1991) when individuals are suffering from the consequences of their wrongdoing, they often look for a third party to attribute blame. Other researchers have suggested that, for women, the role of parenting and how they are viewed as mothers while incarcerated is of ultimate importance (Poehlmann et al., 2008). Due to their incarceration, women in comparison to men are more likely to experience shame, more likely to have been the primary caretaker of children prior to their arrest, and are subsequently more likely to be impacted negatively by the loss of parental rights or control (Belknap, 2001). Other researchers have suggested that violent offenders in general lack empathy and due to the social interaction of violence, many violent offenders may view themselves as the victim who just happened to win the violent confrontation. Thus they are less likely to assume responsibility for their crime regardless of their gender (Gudjonsson & Petursson, 1991; Kroner & Mills, 2004). Nonetheless, based upon our analysis, the role of violence appears to have a significant impact on the results of this study.
These findings are consistent with current research that has noted the difficulty of reforming violent offenders through the utilization of the “one-size-fits-all” curricula (Dowd & Andrews, 2000). Our results also provide further support for the need to develop more comprehensive programs that address both criminogenic and non-criminogenic needs specifically (Dowd & Andrews 2000). Although the AMOS model suggests some weak gender differences on empathy, shame, and victim-blaming, offender violence appears to have the most significant impact on victim- and society-blaming both directly and indirectly. Thus, our results are consistent with Cauffman and colleagues, who noted that although it is important to focus on some gender issues primarily because female offenders in comparison to male offenders are more likely to need mental health counseling and treatment, it is also important to understand that the path and trajectories of violence between males and females are nonetheless similar. Therefore, programs that provide comprehensive treatment for the causes of violence in offenders’ lives may prove to be more productive in changing offender behavior in comparison to programs that are gender-specific.

**Limitations of the Study**

There are several limitations of this study that should be mentioned. First, the survey is a self-report study and is limited by the well documented limitations (e.g., underreporting, exaggeration, incomplete answers, etc.) of self-report surveys (for a complete summary of limitations see Mosher, Miethe, & Phillips 2002). A second limitation is that the sample is an available sample of male and female respondents in the ICVC classes who may have been more inclined to complete surveys. Since the survey was voluntary, only those respondents who were more inclined to complete the survey participated. A third limitation of this study is the Cronbach’s alpha for the empathy scale. Although it is possible to utilize a scale with an alpha below .70, it nonetheless places constraints on the analyses and limits the ability to generalize to other institutions with similar programs (Bernardi, 1994). A final limitation is the overall male sample size and the attrition rate of 24%. However, this sample size is not unusual for studies that utilize a panel-design to evaluate cognitive programs with offender populations or for cognitive programs that utilize males and females as comparison groups (Cauffman et al., 2004; Polaschek et al., 2005). Nonetheless, the sample size has an overall impact on the analysis and results of this study; therefore, the extent to which our results and conclusions generalize to other states and correctional facilities remains an open question.

**CONCLUSION**

Data from the current study indicates that overall, the ICVC program did not significantly impact offenders’ behavior. Although the program has demonstrated minimal impact in previous studies among a female sample (Jackson, 2008; Jackson et al., 2009), the ICVC program among a sample of male and female offenders, appears to be limited in its ability to have an intense emotional impact. This conclusion is noteworthy because ultimately correction-based programs are designed for generating guilt, shame, and empathy—given their heavy focus on explaining the victims’ experience after being victimized. Although, this finding is interesting, it is not unusual. For example research has indicated consistently that intervention programs in the corrections field often have little to no impact on changing offender behavior either due to the implementation process or the methodologies employed to examine programmatic effectiveness (Hubbard & Matthews, 2008).

Greenspan (1995) noted that some acts are so shameful that individuals may never attempt to reconcile their wrongdoings. Based upon our analysis, it may be likely that some offenders, particularly violent offenders, experience higher levels of shame in comparison to non-violent offenders. Violent offenders are also in comparison to non-violent offenders more likely to blame the victim and/or society. Given these findings, ICVC programs that continue to utilize the “one-size-fits-all” curricula are failing to have a significant emotional impact on offenders. Although programs such as ICVC are necessary and conceptually noble, they unfortunately appear to have the same programmatic shortcomings of many of their correctional rehabilitation program predecessors. Until they are better designed to address comprehensively offenders’ criminogenic and non-criminogenic needs, their impact will continue to be minimal at best (Dowd & Andrews, 2000). Thus, future programmatic efforts should be directed at expanding resources for program implementation, providing more comprehensive counseling, and increasing the length of the program. Conversely, future research efforts should be directed toward further examining whether females and males should be exposed to different program curricula or if, with more intensive counseling efforts, both females and males can benefit from a “one-size-fits-all” curriculum that places significant emphasis on addressing the pathways and trajectories to violence.

**REFERENCES**


California Youth Authority (2008).


Hanson, K. R. (1996 November). Coping with culpability. Presentation at the 15th Annual Research and Treatment Conference of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers, Chicago, IL.


**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES**

**Arrick L. Jackson** is currently the Divisional Dean of Public Services and Social and Behavioral Sciences at Tarrant County College Northwest Campus in Fort Worth, Texas. Dr. Jackson received his Ph.D. in Political Science from Washington State University. Most recent publications can be found in International Review of Victimology, Journal of Interpersonal Violence, the Southwest Journal of Criminal Justice, Victims and Offenders, the Journal of Family Violence and the Journal of Offender Rehabilitation.

**Ashley G. Blackburn** is an assistant professor in the Department of Criminal Justice at the University of North Texas. She earned her Ph.D. in Criminal Justice from Sam Houston State University in 2006. Her work appears most recently in the Prison Journal and Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice. Her current research and teaching interests include in-prison sexual victimization, females in the justice system, family violence, and victim-related issues.

**Peggy M. Tobolowsky** is a Professor and the Chair of the Department of Criminal Justice at the University of North Texas. She received her J.D. from George Washington University in 1977. Her research interests include criminal law and procedure, crime victim issues, and capital punishment. She has published Crime Victim Rights and Remedies, Understanding Victimization: Selected Readings, and numerous articles related to her research interests in journals such as the American Journal of Criminal Law, Journal of Legislation, the Prison Journal, and the New England Journal on Criminal and Civil Confinement.

**Dana Baer** is currently a graduate student in the Department of Criminal Justice and Sociology at Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau, Missouri.