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The relation between abuse and violent delinquency: The conversion of shame to blame in juvenile offenders

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Abstract

Objective—While the relationship between abusive parenting and violent delinquency has been well established, the cognitive and emotional processes by which this occurs remains relatively unidentified. The objective of this work is to apply a conceptual model linking abusive parenting to the conversion of shame into blaming others and therefore to violent delinquency.

Methods—A retrospective study of 112 adolescents (90 male; 22 female; ages 12 to 19 years; $M = 15.6$; $SD = 1.4$) who were incarcerated in a juvenile detention facility pending criminal charges, completed measures of exposure to abusive and nonabusive discipline, expressed and converted shame, and violent delinquency.

Results—Findings tend to confirm the conceptual model. Subjects who converted shame (i.e., low expressed shame, high blaming others) tended to have more exposure to abusive parenting and showed more violent delinquent behavior than their peers who showed expressed shame. Subjects who showed expressed shame (i.e., high expressed shame, low blaming others) showed less violent delinquency than those who showed converted shame.

Conclusions—Abusive parenting impacts delinquency directly and indirectly through the effects of shame that is converted. Abusive parenting leads to the conversion of shame to blaming others, which in turn leads to violent delinquent behavior.

Practice implications—For juvenile offenders, the conversion of shame into blaming others appears to contribute to pathological outcomes in relation to trauma. Translation of this work into clinical practice is recommended.

Introduction

Violent delinquency has had devastating effects on all sectors of US society, leaving victims, perpetrators, their families, and communities coping with its aftermath. An estimated 92,300 juveniles are arrested annually for violent crimes such as aggravated assaults, robbery, and forcible rape (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). Given the evidence linking abusive parenting and violent, aggressive behavior (Lansford, Dodge, Pettit, Bates, Crozier, & Kaplow, 2002; Cicchetti & Manly, 2002; Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1998; National Counsel on Crime & Delinquency, 1993), the current study examines a conceptual model proposed by Lewis (1992) in which the relationship between abusive parenting and violent delinquency is mediated by emotional and attributional factors.

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Shame is a state in which negative, global, and stable attributions of the self are made as a result of a perceived failure to meet standards and has been linked to adjustment following exposure to trauma. Phenomenologically, shame is a painful emotional experience and is associated with an overpowering desire to hide or disappear. According to the general conceptual model proposed by Lewis, if a victim's attributions about why the traumatic events occurred are internal, stable, and global (e.g., "This happened to me because I am a bad person") they are most likely to induce intensely negative feelings of shame and increase the likelihood of poor adjustment (Lewis, 1992). How this poor adjustment is manifest—as depressive or aggressive symptoms—depends on a person's *response* to shame. In the present study, we consider two responses to shame, expression and conversion. Expressed shame is associated with negative attributions that are internal, stable, and global and are accompanied by the phenomenology commonly associated with shame. The literature on self-conscious emotions reports associations between expressed shame and internalizing problems, such as withdrawal, depression, low self-esteem, anxiety, and feelings of worthlessness (H. B. Lewis, 1971; Lewis, 1992; Ferguson & Stegge, 1995; Harder & Lewis, 1986; Hoblitzelle, 1987; Tangney, 1991).

Alternatively, feelings of shame may be repressed and converted into other forms, such as "other-blaming" attributions, anger or other emotions (Scheff, 2001; Tangney, Wagner, Fletcher, & Gramzow, 2001). In the present study, converted shame refers to the conversion of shame to blame, a process by which hostility is directed away from the self on to others. For example, a shamed person, unwilling to acknowledge these feelings, might blame others for their own shame-inducing behavior thus insulating themselves from their own intensely negative feelings. Consistent with descriptions of unacknowledged or bypassed shame (H.B. Lewis, 1971, Lewis, 1992), the conversion shame to blame reduces one's own part in the shame experience and allows one to take action in an effort to protect the self. Converted shame has been associated with a host of externalizing problems, such as hostility, anger, and abusiveness (Dutton, van Ginkel & Starzomski., 1995; Ferguson, Eyre, & Ashbaker., 2000; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Lewis's (1992) conceptual model has been explored in various abused populations.

Research with victims of sexual abuse has found that expressed shame and attributions of self-blame mediated the relationship between incidence and severity of abuse, and subsequent forms of psychopathology, such as depression and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (Coffey, Leitenberg, Henning, Turner, & Bennet, 1996; Feiring, Taska, & Lewis, 1998, 2002). One area with particularly strong findings has been relative to sexual abuse. Feiring, Taska, and Lewis (1998) found that sexually abused children's expressed shame mediated the relation between the degree of abuse and the development of depressive and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder symptoms. Immediately after disclosure of sexual abuse, the severity of abuse had a direct effect on behavior problems, but the degree of abuse also had an indirect effect. However, 1 year later, shame and blame-related attributions continued to predict behavior problems, while abuse severity no longer had a direct effect nor was related to attributions and shame. Finally, decreases in expressed shame over time predicted long-term recovery (Feiring et al., 2002). This study suggests that both shame and blame-related attributions are important mediators in explaining the variability in psychopathology following abuse.

Findings from research on emotions and problem behavior in maltreated children suggest a similar process. For example, work by Bennett, Sullivan, and Lewis (2005) found that expressed shame mediated the relationship between maltreatment and anger, and anger, in turn, mediated relationship between shame and behavior problems. More specifically, the abusive parenting associated with maltreatment delivers a consistent message that children are "bad." These global, negative self-beliefs are the primary elicitors of shame. Highly-

shamed individuals are likely to convert their shame to blaming others and thus to show anger toward the individuals they believe to be judging them (Bennett, Sullivan, & Lewis, 2005).

The relation between abusive parenting and violent delinquency has been well established (Dodge, Pettit, Bates, & Valente, 1995; Kelley, Thornberry, & Smith, 1997; Patterson, 1995; Widom, 1992). Physical abuse in childhood is consistently identified with increased risk of violent criminal behavior in adolescence and adulthood (Cicchetti & Manly, 2001; Lansford et al., 2002; Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1998). Compared to non-abused adolescents, juveniles exposed to physically abusive and psychologically aggressive parenting have been found to have high rates of self-reported delinquency, involvement in serious and violent delinquent behavior (Kelly, Thornberry, & Smith, 1997), arrests for criminal acts (Widom, 1992), and recidivism (National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 1999). Research has confirmed the relation between abusive parenting and violent delinquency in community samples (Lansford et al., 2002), samples of maltreated children (Mayfield & Widom, 1996), and in criminal offenders (McCord, 1991). Abused children are 9 times more likely to become involved in criminal activities and to continue their delinquent behavior (Crowley, Mikulich, Ehlers, Hall, & Whitmore, 2003; Wiebush, Freitag, & Baird, 2001). These studies highlight the link between abusive parenting and violent delinquent behavior.

Other studies provide support for the connection between the tendency to blame others, and aggressive and violent behavior. Blaming others for one's own harmful behavior has been linked with delinquent behavior (Cramer & Kelly, 2004; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Dodge, McClaskey, & Feldman, 1985). Blaming others often provides justification for aggressive responses (Averill, 1982). Lochman (1987) found that when compared with their non-aggressive peers, delinquent boys were more likely to blame others for being aggressive during conflict situations. Research has confirmed the association between violent delinquent behavior and the tendency to blame others in conflict situations (Cramer & Kelly, 2004; Zelli, Dodge, Lochman, Laird, & CPPRG, 1999). Several authors report that shame-prone individuals tend to exhibit high levels of hostility and abusiveness (Dutton, 2002; Tangney, Wagner, Hill-Barlow, Marschall, & Gramzow, 1996) and others have identified repeated patterns of shame and rage as "the motor" that drives violent behavior (Retzinger, 1991; Scheff, 2001). While these studies have focused on attribution of blame, they appear to support our view that abusive parenting leads to converted shame, and in turn to aggression.

Two types of shame reactions are possible, expressed shame and converted shame. We believe that converted shame is measured by avoiding blame and by blaming others, while expressed shame is measured by the amount of shame expressed on shame scales. The model we propose to test is seen in Figure 1.

In Figure 1, solid lines indicate the expected relations between components in the model. As can be seen in Figure 1, we propose that abusive parenting—that utilizes physical and verbal aggression—will have a direct effect on violent delinquency. We also propose that the relation between abusive parenting and violent delinquency will be positively mediated by converted shame and negatively mediated with expressed shame.

The purpose of this study is to apply a conceptual model linking abusive parenting to converted shame and violent delinquency. To test this model, data were collected from a population of juvenile offenders.

Method

Participants

Participants were 112 adolescents (90 male; 22 female; ages 12 to 19 years; $M = 15.6$; $SD = 1.4$) who were incarcerated in a detention facility pending criminal charges and who were referred for court-ordered Mental Health Evaluations. These evaluations are ordered by the judiciary for a wide variety of reasons (i.e., from lack of social or familial background information, suspected mental illness, the need for dispositional recommendations). Previous work regarding the characteristics of individuals referred for Mental Health Evaluations have found few differences between these youths and those in the general incarcerated population (Rogers, Powell, & Strock, 1998). Thirty percent (30.4%) of adolescents were Hispanic/Latino, 31.3% were African-American, and 38.4% were of White/European ancestry. Adolescents' estimated annual household income ranged from 0 to \$50,000+, with a mean of less than \$20,000 per year. The majority of adolescents (59.8%) were from single parent households. The mean grade level completed was 6.63 ($SD = 1.7$) and 27.7% of adolescents had special education classifications

Procedure

Following referrals from Family Court, Master's level clinicians conducted interviews for Mental Health Evaluations. The approximately 1.5-hour interviews took place in private interview-rooms at the detention center where adolescents were incarcerated. In addition to gathering information concerning pertinent historical information (e.g., the behavior that precipitated the adolescent's criminal charges, family and academic histories, peer relationships, patterns of substance abuse, etc.), the trained clinicians administered measures of violent delinquency, parental disciplinary practices and the Test of Self-Conscious Affect-2 (TOSCA-2, Tangney, Ferguson, Wagner, Crowley, & Gramzow, 1996). Given the poor reading skills of many of the adolescents, all measures were administered as interviews. This research analyzed de-identified, extant data and received approval from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey's Institutional Review Board.

Measures

Abusive parenting—Parental disciplinary practices were assessed using the Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scale---Child Assessment (CTSPC-CA, Straus, Hamby, Finkelhor, Moore, & Runyan, 1998). The CTSPC-CA uses a child's report to assess the type, rate, and severity of their exposure to parental maltreatment. Its subscales include: Nonviolent discipline, psychological aggression, and physical assault. The Nonviolent Discipline scale measures the use of parenting techniques such as explaining why a given behavior was wrong, use of "time-out," and taking away privileges. The Psychological Aggression scale provides data on practices intended to provoke fear or emotional distress (e.g., threats of physical violence). The Physical Assault scale includes a range of behavior, from forms of corporal punishment (e.g., spanking) to severely abusive acts (e.g., punching or kicking a child). Abusive parenting was derived from the Physical Assault and Psychological Aggression scales which were summed.

Nonabusive parenting was derived from the Nonviolent Discipline scale. Respondents reported how frequently, in the previous year, they had been exposed to each type of disciplinary practice.

In pilot testing this measure in this population, we found that while some subjects could provide the numeric responses required by the CTSPC-CA, others could not. As a result, we accepted both numeric (i.e., "once," "once a week," "every day") and non-numeric (i.e., "rarely," "pretty often," "all the time") responses. Numeric responses were divided into

quintiles, with each category representing approximately 20% of the total distribution. Category (1) corresponded to 1 to 10 abusive incidents; (2), 11 to 18 episodes; (3), 19 to 51 incidents; (4), 52 to 156 episodes; and (5), 157 to 365 or more incidents. Non-numeric responses (i.e., “rarely,” “pretty often,” “all the time,” etc.) also were divided 5 categories: (1) Low---statements such as “rarely” and “very little”; (2) Low-mid---responses of “sometimes” or “occasionally”; (3) Mid---statements such as “periodically”; (4) Mid-high---reports of “pretty often,” and “numerous”; and (5) High---statements such as “all the time,” and “very often;” 18.2% of subjects fell into the low abuse category (1 to 10 incidents); 20.0% into the low-mid abuse category (11 to 18 episodes); 21.4% in the mid abuse category, (19 to 51 incidents); 18.8% into the high-mid category (52 to 156 episodes); and 21.6% in the high category (157 to 365 incident or more).

For the current data set, the internal consistency (alpha coefficients) of the CTSPC-CA the Nonviolent Discipline scale was .61, the Psychological Aggression scale was .72, and the Physical Assault scale was .77. Although the CTSPC-CA relies on the child’s account of maltreatment, several studies have found agreement between the reports of children and their parents. Significant agreement between mothers’ and childrens’ reports of disciplinary practices have been found in both clinical and community samples (Jouriles & Norwood, 1995; Kruttschnitt & Dornfeld, 1992). McCloskey and Figueredo (1995) reported significant relationships between mother and child scores regarding fathers’ aggressive behavior (correlations ranging from .30 to .50). Other studies (McCloskey & Walker, 2000; Richters & Martinez, 1993) have shown similar agreement between children and their parents’ reports of domestic violence based on their responses to the CTSPC.

Expressed and converted shame—The Test of Self-Conscious Affect–2 (TOSCA-2, Tangney, Ferguson, Wagner, Crowley, & Gramzow, 1996) was used to assess expressed and converted shame. Individuals are asked to imagine themselves in 16 brief scenarios (11 negative, 5 positive) and to rate how likely they would be to engage in a variety of responses. Responses are associated with the affective/attributional states and adolescents respond on a scale of 1 (not likely) to 5 (very likely) for each item. Converted shame was derived from scores for the Externalizing and Detachment subscales which were combined. An Expressed Shame score was derived from TOSCA-2 Shame subscale.

In the current data set, the alpha coefficient for the Expressed Shame scale was .82 and .87 for the Converted Shame scale. While later versions of the TOSCA are available, the TOSCA-2 was used because it contains a larger pool of items specifically targeting the emotion of shame. As the TOSCA-2 presents common day-to-day scenarios that illustrate normative situations that occur in specific contexts they are considered less likely to provoke subjects’ defensive or deceptive responses (Tangney & Dearing, 2002).

Violent delinquency—Violent delinquency was measured using an adapted version of the Delinquency Scales previously used in longitudinal studies including: Child Development Project (CDP; United States), Christchurch Health and Development Study (New Zealand), Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study (New Zealand), and two large Canadian studies, Montreal and Quebec provincial (Broidy, Nagin, Tremblay, et al., 2003). Violent delinquency is considered behaviors such as threatening others, starting physical fights, weapons use, committing robbery, physical cruelty to others, and forcing others into sexual activity. Data was collected for each adolescent’s total number of violent acts committed in the previous year.

The Delinquency Scales were administered in an interview format. As was the case with the CTSPC-CA, most subjects provided numeric responses (i.e., “once,” “once a week” = 52, “every day” = 365). Numeric responses again were divided into quintiles, with each

category representing approximately 20% of the total distribution. Category (1) 1 to 10 incidents; (2) 11 to 18 episodes; (3) 19 to 51 incidents; (4) 52 to 156 episodes; and (5) 157 to 365 or more incidents. Again, some subjects answered questions with non-numeric responses (i.e., “rarely,” “pretty often,” “all the time,” etc.). In these cases, reports were organized into 5 delinquency categories: (1) Low---statements such as “rarely” and “very little”; (2) Low-mid---responses of “sometimes” or “occasionally”; (3) Mid---statements such as “periodically”; (4) Mid-high---reports of “pretty often,” and “numerous”; and (5) High---statements such as “all the time,” and “very often.” All subjects then fell into the following delinquency categories: (1) Low = 1 to 10 incidents; (2) Low-mid = 11 to 18 episodes; (3) Mid = 19 to 51 incidents; (4) High-Mid = 52 to 156 episodes; and (5) High = 157 to 365 or more incidents.

Institutional disciplinary reports were used to confirm the validity of self-reported violent delinquency. Since the use of self-report in the context of an evaluation may result in under-reporting or inflated estimates of behavior, we considered institutional disciplinary reports a reliability measure for self-reported violent delinquency. Frequently used in studies of incarcerated individuals (see meta-analyses by Guy, Edens, Anthony, & Douglas, 2005, Walters, 2003), these reports reflect the adolescents’ violation of detention center rules and were divided into those considered violent (i.e., aggressive or assaultive behavior, weapons possession, etc.) and nonviolent (i.e., defiance, insubordination, possession of contraband, etc.). Total numbers of violent delinquent behavior correlated with institution disciplinary reports of violent behavior ($r = .33$, $p < .01$). That this correlation is significant but relatively low raises the question of whether our measure of violent delinquency was reliable. However, since institutional disciplinary reports reflect rule violations in a controlled environment and differ from self-reports in their focus and threshold for report, a modest correlation would be expected and appear to support that this scale is a reasonable measure of individual differences in adolescents’ reports.

Data analytic strategy

In order to test the conceptual model that expressed and/or converted shame mediate the relation between parenting and violent delinquency, we conducted a series of hierarchical regression analyses using mediational procedures described by Baron and Kenny (1986) and Kenny, Kashy, and Bolger (1998). First, the dependent variable (DV) was regressed onto the independent variable (IV). Second, the mediator must be regressed on the IV. Finally, for full mediation, the DV should no longer be significant when regressed onto the IV, while controlling for the effects of the mediator. However, partial mediation may be attained when the pathway is reduced in absolute size but to non-significant levels. We tested the significance of partial mediators using the resampling method suggested by MacKinnon, Lockwood, and Williams (2004). Resampling reduces the skew commonly found in finite or small samples, by forming a bootstrap distribution of random samples from the original data set. Bias-corrected confidence estimates are then used to test mediational hypotheses (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). In the following analyses, a true indirect effect is estimated with 90% confidence. If zero is not in 90% confidence interval, we can conclude that the indirect effect is significantly different from zero at given level of significance (Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

To further explore the relations between variables, 4 groups were created using a median split for the variables of expressed and converted shame (1 = low expressed, low converted shame; 2 = low expressed, high converted shame; 3 = high converted, low expressed shame; 4 = high converted, high expressed shame). Group differences were investigated, with particular interest on Groups 2 and 3 which most closely matched our conception of Converted shame (low shame, high blame others) and expression (high shame, low blame

others). Due to the distribution of parenting and delinquency data, group differences were examined using parametric and non-parametric tests, respectively.

Results

Descriptive statistics for abusive parenting, nonabusive discipline, expressed and converted shame, violent delinquency as well as the relations between variables are presented in Table 1. Adolescents exposed to abusive parenting exhibited more violent delinquent behavior as well as more converted shame and less expressed shame. No significant relation was found between nonabusive parenting and violent delinquency nor expressed and converted shame. There was a significant negative correlation between converted and expressed shame. In addition, converted shame was positively related to violent delinquency. More abusive parenting was related to more converted shame, while there was a trend for nonabusive parenting to be related to expressed shame. No gender effects were found and will not be considered further.

Mediation effects on violent delinquency

For the hierarchical regression model of violent delinquency, Table 2 summarizes measures of beta, the standard error, and the partial standard beta weight for each step of the regression. Given the correlation between abusive and nonabusive parenting, subsequent analyses controlled for the influence of nonabusive discipline when testing models involving abusive parenting. There was a significant effect of abusive parenting on violent delinquency, $F(1, 360) = 4.41, p = .04$. In the second step, converted shame was added to the equation, and accounted for a non-significant amount of variance. However, since converted shame was hypothesized as a mediator between abusive parenting and violent delinquency we confirmed this mediational hypothesis using the bootstrapping method with bias corrected confidence interval, with a point estimate of .0017 and a 90% CI of .0003 to .0043, which did show a mediational effect.

Group differences: Converters vs. expressers

Given attribution theory and the negative correlation between expressed and converted shame, looked at adolescents that express shame as opposed to those who convert shame. To do this, 4 groups were created using a median split for the variables of expressed and converted shame (1 = low expressed, low converted shame; 2 = low expressed, high converted shame; 3 = high converted, low expressed shame; 4 = high converted, high expressed shame). Group differences were investigated, with particular interest on Groups 2 and 3 which most closely matched our conception of converted shame (low shame, high blame others) and expressed shame (high shame, low blame others). Mean scores for abusive parenting, nonabusive parenting and violent delinquency for the four groups are presented in Table 3.

Two 1-way Analysis of Variances (ANOVA) were conducted to examine the associations between abusive and nonabusive parenting by expressed and converted shame groups. Results of the ANOVA for abusive parenting suggested a trend in the expected direction, $F(3, 108) = 2.58, p = .058$. No effects were found for nonabusive parenting. An analysis of the differences between the 4 groups indicates that subjects who convert shame (Group 2) were exposed to more abusive parenting than those in Group 3 who express shame ($p < .007$).

Because the violent delinquency data were not normally distributed, Kruskal-Wallis tests were used to examine differences among the groups. An overall difference in the amount of violent delinquency was found between groups ($p < .04$). A follow-up Mann-Whitney *U* test

found that Group 2, the converters, showed significantly more violent delinquency than (the expressers) Group 3 ($p = .008$). No other differences between the groups were significant.

Discussion

The results indicate that abusive parenting impacts violent delinquency directly and indirectly through the effect of converted shame. Subjects who converted shame in to blame others (Group 2—low shame, high blame others) had significantly more exposure to abusive parenting and showed significantly more violent delinquent behavior than those who expressed shame (Group 3—high shame, low blame others). Although not significant, subjects who expressed shame received more nonabusive parenting and showed less violent behavior than their peers who converted shame. Thus, the conversion of shame leads to more violent delinquency than expressed shame.

The path to violent delinquency was not simply explained by abusive parenting, but that abuse exerts its influence on violent behavior through the conversion of shame. The link between shame and blaming others is a critical one. Previous conceptions such as unacknowledged or bypassed shame, propose that when shame cannot be tolerated, it may be repressed and converted into other forms. Based on previous work (Feiring et al., 1998; Bennett, Sullivan, & Lewis, 2005) and the associations between blaming others and antisocial behavior (Cramer & Kelley, 2004), the data suggest that the conversion of shame to blaming others is one mechanism implicated in the development and maintenance of violent delinquency.

By this view, violent delinquency can be considered a pathological response to trauma. Conversion of shame is a protective, seemingly-functional response given an individual's consistent exposure to abusive parenting. Converting shame allows the shamed person to direct their focus—and behavior—away from the self, insulating them from their own intensely negative feelings. This process may help explain the low rates of expressed shame and high rates of recidivism associated with chronic, violent juvenile offenders (Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention, 1998; Coolbaugh & Hansel, 2000).

Research on the therapeutic process identifies the acceptance of responsibility for one's own behavior is essential to the process of change (Prochaska, Velicer, Prochaska, Delucchi, & Hall, 2006; Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992). But, for individuals who avoid self blame and see others as responsible for conflict, there is little motivation to alter their violent behavior, in part, because blaming others protects them against feeling shame. Consistent with descriptions of a "hostile attribution bias" (see review by Orobio de Castro, Veerman, Koops, Bosch, & Moonshouwer, 2002) the conversion of shame into blaming others may be at the core of the reported difficulties in successfully altering the developmental trajectory of adolescents who engage in chronic and violent behavior.

How does the conversion of shame in to blaming others come about? Our data suggest that converters (the low expressed shame, high blaming others group) received more abusive parenting than the expressers (the high shame, low blaming others group). This suggests that exposure to abusive parenting may be key to whether children express shame or convert shame into blaming of others. Abusive parenting is not only assaultive and serves as a model of violence toward others, it also produces high levels of shame ("What's wrong with me that my parent beats me?") which may be intolerable. By modeling violence toward others, the abusive parent may also be reinforcing the conversion of shame into blaming of others.

Other factors such as temperament may also play a role in the conversion process. Temperament may act as an added feature to the relation between abusive parenting and violence. Kochanska (1995) suggests that anxious and fearful temperament children, when

abused are likely to externalize. A combination of temperament and abuse are likely to play a role in the conversion of shame to blame. Further research on the topic of shame conversion is needed.

Work with the TOSCA (and TOSCA-2) have examined the relation between shame and substance abuse, in both poverty and incarcerated samples (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). They find a positive correlation. There are few reports of the relation between shame and violent behavior. While there is a positive correlation between expressed shame and substance usage, our findings of a negative relation between expressed shame and violence is unique. Given the view of conversion of shame into blaming others, and blaming others to violence, the findings reported here are consistent with attribution theory. Only further work can confirm whether these are reliable findings. If one considers substance abuse as a victimless crime, rather than violence against others, the reported data are consistent with our sample of adolescents.

While research on the TOSCA has reported a positive relation between expressed shame and blaming others in normative samples (i.e., non-incarcerated adolescents exposed to nonabusive discipline) a relation between expressed shame and blaming others may exist given the abusive parenting seen in delinquent samples. The level of abuse may well skew the association. Little work has been done with the TOSCA-2 and incarcerated adolescents. As mean scores for expressed shame and the tendency to blame others have been shown to vary in regard to other group factors such as age, SES, ethnicity (Tangney & Dearing, 2002), our findings may be accurately assessing shame and blaming others in this subpopulation. Furthermore, our results are consistent with attribution theory, which would predict a negative relation between expressed shame and blaming others (Lewis, 1992).

Although the results are consistent with theory and studies in the area of trauma, shame and delinquency, the magnitude of variance accounted for was small. Although small, it is consistent with other studies looking at shame and trauma (Feiring, Taska, & Lewis, 1998; 2002). Although small, significant effect sizes can have important outcomes for understanding and treating juvenile offenders. As this work is cross-sectional and relies largely on retrospective self-report, we cannot determine causality or the temporal sequence among variables. Unfortunately, direct parental reports of abusive discipline were not available. While previous work with the measure of abusive discipline has found a close association between the reports of children and their parents (McCloskey, 1995; McCloskey & Walker, 2000), the best measure would be parental report, despite its own inherent problems. Our small effect size also may have been impacted by our inability to accurately measure shame in this special population. However, results with small, significant effect sizes can have important outcomes, if they are replicable (Trusty, Thompson, & Petrocelli, 2004). In this case, replication of this work albeit with small, significant effect sizes, may have implications for understanding and treating juvenile offenders.

The context in which this data was collected has potential to impact key variables. Although some over-reporting of abuse was possible, rates of reported abuse were within the range reported by other studies of incarcerated youth (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2001). While self-reported violent delinquency may have been understated, the significant association between self-reported delinquency and institutional disciplinary reports makes this unlikely to be a major problem. While assessments of blaming others may have been affected by subjects' attempts to justify past behavior, since the TOSCA-2 presents common day-to-day situations that occur in socially-normative situations, they are considered less likely to provoke subjects' defensive or deceptive responses (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Since our sample was composed of incarcerated juvenile offenders, the extent to which these findings directly apply to broader population and other subgroups requires further study.

Nevertheless, the current study lends supports to the conceptual model of expressed and converted shame as mediators of psychopathology in response to trauma. Examining the conversion of shame in to blame of others elucidates the complex nature of shame and has clinical implications. Understanding of these processes would likely improve our approach to identifying and treating high-risk adolescents with a goal of altering the developmental trajectories associated with violent delinquency.

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Figure 1. General mediation model between parenting type, converted and expressed shame, and violent delinquency. Note: Solid lines indicate expected relation; dotted lines indicate no expected relation.

Table 1

Correlations between abusive parenting, nonabusive parenting, adolescents' expressed and converted shame, and violent delinquency

	M (SD)	Abusive Parenting	Nonabusive Parenting	Expressed Shame	Converted Shame	Violent Delinquency
						(N = 112)
Abusive Parenting	1.81 (1.19)	—				
Nonabusive Discipline	2.85 (1.60)	.20 *	—			
Expressed Shame	2.82 (.89)	-.21 *	.17 ‡	—		
Converted Shame	2.87 (.68)	.26 **	.04	-.28 **	—	
Violent Delinquency	4.28 (8.20)	.31 **	-.07	-.13	.22 *	—

**
p < .01,

*
p < .05,

‡
p < .06,

‡
p < .08

Table 2

Hierarchical regression models testing mediating effects of attributions of avoiding blame and blaming others predicting violent delinquency (V) and expressed shame predicting nonviolent delinquency (NV)

Variables Step:	R ²	ΔR ²	B	SE	β	t
DV: Violent delinquency (V)						
1. Abusive parenting predicting V	.10	.10	2.14	.63	.31	3.41**
2. Avoids blame/blames others predicting V	.12	.02	1.86	1.12	.16	1.66
____ Abusive parenting predicting V			1.86	.64	.27	2.89*

Note: When testing models involving abusive parenting, analyses controlled for the influence of nonabusive parenting.

*
 $p = .001$,

**
 $p < .01$,

†
 $p < .05$

Table 3

Means & standard deviations for Parenting and Delinquency scores by shame/blame others groups

Shame/blame others groups	Abusive Parenting	Nonabusive Discipline	Violent Delinquency
Group 1 (low shame, low blame others) n = 21	1.88(1.33) ^b	2.37(2.03)	2.65(5.19) ^{b, c, d}
Group 2 - Converters (low shame, high blame others) n = 36	2.16(1.13) ^{a, c, d}	2.99(1.59)	6.19(9.0) ^{a, c, d}
Group 3 - Expressers (high shame, low blame others) n = 36	1.40(1.07) ^b	2.95(1.16)	3.46(9.43) ^{a, b, d}
Group 4 (high shame, high blame others) n = 19	1.85(1.18) ^b	2.94(1.84)	4.07(6.55) ^{a, b, c}
ANOVA, $F(3, 108)$	2.58 [*]	.80	-

^{*}
p = .058

^aDifferent from group 1

^bDifferent from group 2

^cDifferent from group 3

^dDifferent from group 4