

Do Criminal Attitudes Reflect Evaluation of Crime? ¹

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Attitudes ³

- An attitude is a relative evaluation of behaviour and refers to the extent to which a person has a favourable or unfavourable appraisal of that behaviour (Azjen, 2001).
- Therefore attitudes towards crime can be described as evaluations of crime
- It has been suggested that attitudes play a role in behavioural outcomes (Azjen, 1991, 2001)

Attitudes ⁴

- Behaviour models reflect this assumed relationship (Azjen, 1985; Theory of Planned Behaviour, Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2007)
- In a meta-analysis a large correlation was found between attitudes and behaviour (Glasman & Albarracin, 2006)
- However, measures of attitudes often measure other constructs (such as excuses and justifications)

Current Study ⁵

- Purpose
- Correlations were performed between the Measures of Criminal Attitudes and Associates (MCAA) with evaluative ratings of crime (semantic differential scale)

Participants ⁶

- Undergraduate Students in Psychology at Carleton University ($N = 212$)
- 144 female participants 64 male participants (4 did not provide their gender)
- Median age = 18-19 years of age
 - Range 17-54

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Measures of Criminal Attitudes and Associates (MCAA; Mills & Kroner, 2001)

- 46 items
- 4 subscales
 - **Attitudes Towards Violence**
 - It is understandable to hit someone who insults you
 - **Anti-social Intent**
 - I could easily tell a convincing lie
 - **Attitudes Towards Entitlement**
 - Taking what is owed to you is not really stealing
 - **Attitudes Towards Associates**
 - I have friends who have been to jail

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Crime Semantic Differentials

Doing Crime Is...

Negative	Neutral	Positive
Immoral	Neutral	Moral
Bad	Neutral	Good
Not enjoyable	Neutral	Enjoyable
Wrong	Neutral	Right
Not fun	Neutral	Fun

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Analysis

- Crime semantic differential scores were correlated with MCAA total scores and MCAA scales
- Correlations were performed between each item of the MCAA and the semantic differential total scores (CSD)

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MCAA subscales & CSD Correlations

	CSD Total
MCAA Total	.55**
Violence	.30**
Entitlement	.22**
Intent	.57**
Associates	.50**

** Significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

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Correlations > .25

MCAA Items	CSD
36. I have committed a crime with friends	.48**
19. I would be open to cheating certain people	.47**
43. I will not break the law again	.44**
39. For a good reason, I would commit a crime	.43**
16. I would not steal, and I would hold it against anyone who does	.38**
11. I could see myself lying to the police	.38**

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Correlations > .25

MCAA Items	CSD
46. I would be happy to fool the police	.35**
20. I always feel welcomed around criminal friends	.33**
15. In certain situations I would try to outrun the police	.32**
4. I have a lot in common with people who break the law	.32**
3. I am not likely to commit a crime in the future	.31**
2. Stealing to survive is understandable	.30**

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Correlations > .25

MCAA Items	CSD
40. I have friends who are well known to the police	.29**
27. Rules will not stop me from doing what I want	.27**
32. None of my friends has ever wanted to commit a crime	.27**
8. None of my friends have committed crimes	.26**
12. I know several people who have committed crimes	.26**
9. Sometimes you have to fight to keep your self respect	.26**
28. I have friends who have been to jail	.25**

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Correlations < .25

MCAA Items	CSD
33. It is not wrong to fight to save face	.23**
31. I would not enjoy getting away with something wrong	.23**
35. I would run a scam if I could get away with it	.23**
21. It's all right to fight someone if they stole from you	.22**
30. Taking what is owed you is not really stealing	.22**
23. I could easily tell a convincing lie	.22**
44. It is reasonable to fight someone who cheated you	.20**

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Correlations < .25

MCAA Items	CSD
5. There is nothing wrong with beating up a child molester	.19**
6. A person is right to take what is owed them even if they have to steal it	.16*
41. There is nothing wrong with beating up someone who asks for it	.16*
37. Someone who makes you really angry shouldn't complain if they get hit	.15*
17. People who get beat up usually had it coming	.15*
13. Someone who makes you really angry deserves to be hit	.14*

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Correlations < .25

MCAA Items	CSD
14. Only I should decided what I deserve	.13
1. It's understandable to hit someone who insults you	.08
7. I would keep any amount of money I found	.07
10. I should be allowed to decide what is right and wrong	.07
45. A lack of money should not stop you from getting what you want	.07
22. It's wrong for a lack of money to stop you from getting things	.04

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Correlations < .25

MCAA Items	CSD
24. Most of my friends don't have criminal records	-.03
18. I should be treated like anyone else no matter what I've done	-.03
38. A person should decide what they deserve out of life	-.01
42. No matter what I've done, It's only right to treat me like everyone else	-.01

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Discussion

- 44% of MCAA items showed correlations to total CSD scores over .25
- 56% of items showed correlations to total CSD scores under .25
- 76% of items were significantly correlated with total CSD scores
- 24% of items were not correlated with the CSD total scores

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Discussion

- Evaluation of crime measure was strongly correlated with the MCAA total score
- Moderate to large correlations were found between the semantic differential total scores and all the of the four scales of the MCAA
- The smallest correlations were with the attitudes towards entitlement and violence scales

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Discussion

- The MCAA overall does appear to measure criminal attitudes
- The 25 items showed correlations under .25
- Items not correlated with the CSD may be measuring other criminal cognitions

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Limitations

- MCAA item 25 was missing
- Student sample
- Measurement of evaluation of crime

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Future Research Directions

- Future research should attempt to determine what other constructs are being measured with the MCAA
- Future research should attempt to clarify the distinction between more general cognitions related to criminal behaviour

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Thank You

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