



Nunes, K. L., Hermann, C. A., Blank, C. (2015, June). What do we really know about attitudes towards violence? In K. L. Nunes (Chair), *Violent cognitions*. Symposium conducted at the 3rd North American Correctional and Criminal Justice Psychology Conference, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

**Evidence for Distinctiveness and Relevance of Evaluation of Violence**

- Nunes, Hermann, Maimone, & Woods (2015)
  - Evaluation of Violence Scale vs.
  - Attitude Towards Violence Scale of the Revised Measures of Criminal Attitudes and Associates (MCAA-R-V; Mills & Kroner, 2007)
  - Criminal Attitudes to Violence Scale (CAVS; Polaschek et al., 2004)



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- Nunes, Hermann, White, Pettersen, & Bumby (2015)
  - Evaluation of Rape Scale vs.
  - RAPE Scale (Bumby, 1996)



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**Questions**

- Do scales often interpreted as measures of attitudes towards violence actually assess evaluation of violence?
- Are the cognitions assessed by these measures and evaluation of violence independently associated with violent behavior?



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**Evaluation was Distinct**

- Measures of evaluation of violence formed a distinct factor from measures often interpreted as assessing attitudes towards violence



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**Evaluation was Relevant**

- Measures of evaluation of violence and the other measures were independently associated with violent behavior
- Together, evaluation and the other measures were more strongly associated with violent behavior than either one alone



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**Interpretation**

- Our preliminary results suggest that evaluation of violence may not be assessed by widely used measures thought to assess attitudes towards violence, and both evaluation and these other cognitions may be relevant for understanding violence.



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**If Not Evaluation, Then What?**

- Excuses to mitigate perceived responsibility?
- Stereotypes about violence and victims?
- Perceived normative behavior?
- Perceptions of base rate of violence?

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**Conclusion**

- Despite the ubiquity of the term “attitude” in the criminological literature, evaluation of violence may have been largely overlooked in theory, research and practice

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**Why Does This Matter?**

- Different types of cognitions may have different causal associations with violent behavior and may be responsive to different interventions

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**Next Steps**

- More research on measurement of evaluation and its relevance for violent behaviour
- Attend to and build on more established areas
- Increase clarity and precision of operational definitions
- Construct validity
  - Do scores on the measure correspond to independent indicators of the construct of interest?

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**Trivial or Foundational?**

- Increasing precision and clarity of conceptualization and measurement
  - better understanding of causes
  - better assessment and intervention → reduce violence

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**For more information:**

- Nunes, K. L., Hermann, C. A., Maimone, S., & Woods, M. (2015). Thinking clearly about violent cognitions: Attitudes may be distinct from other cognitions. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *30*, 1322-1347. doi: 10.1177/0886260514540329
- Nunes, K. L., Hermann, C. A., White, K., Pettersen, C., & Bumby, K. (2015). *Attitude may be everything, but is everything an attitude? Cognitive distortions may not be evaluations of rape*. Manuscript submitted for publication.



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