Do Criminal Attitudes Reflect Evaluation of Crime?

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Attitudes

- 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

- 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

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

Participants

- 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

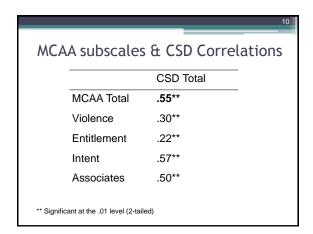
Measures of Criminal Attitudes and Associates (MCAA; Mills & Kroner, 2001) 46 items 4 subscales Attitudes Towards Violence It is understandable to hit someone who insults you Anti-social Intent I could easily tell a convincing lie Attitudes Towards Entitlement

· Taking what is owed to you is not really stealing

Attitudes Towards Associates
 I have friends who have been to jail

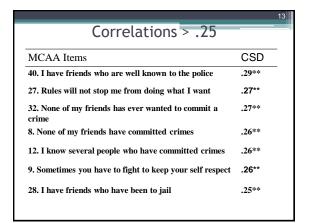
Crime Semantic Differentials **Doing Crime Is...** Neutral Positive Negative Immoral Neutral Moral Bad Neutral Good Not enjoyable Neutral Enjoyable Wrong Neutral Right Not fun Neutral Fun

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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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**



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**

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*

1
CSD
.13
.08
.07
.07
.07
.04

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

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 -.01 like everyone else

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

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

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

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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