

Nunes, K. L. (2018, April). *Attitude check: What about evaluative attitudes towards violence?* Keynote presentation at the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Risk and Recovery Forensic Conference, Hamilton, Ontario.

**Attitude Check: What About Evaluative Attitudes Towards Violence?**

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**Kevin L. Nunes**  
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**Attitudes in Forensic Theory, Research, and Practice**

- “Lots of people are out to get you”
- “A lot of times, sexual assaults are not planned . . . they just happen”
- “I see myself as a violent person”
- “Rape is unlikely to happen in the woman’s own familiar neighborhood”
- “Sometimes you have to threaten people to get them to do the right thing, even if you don’t like doing it”

**at-ti-tude**  
/ˈadə,t(y)ood/  
noun

a settled way of thinking or feeling about someone or something, typically one that is reflected in a person's behavior.  
"she took a tough attitude toward other people's indulgences"

synonyms: **view, viewpoint, outlook, perspective, stance, standpoint, position, inclination, temper, orientation, approach, reaction**

**Attitudes in Social Psychology**

- “Degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior” (Ajzen, 1991)
- Attitudes = evaluations

**Violence is bad**

**“Lots of people are out to get you”**

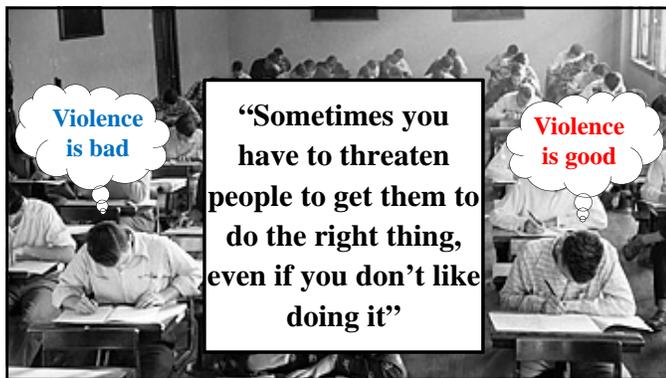
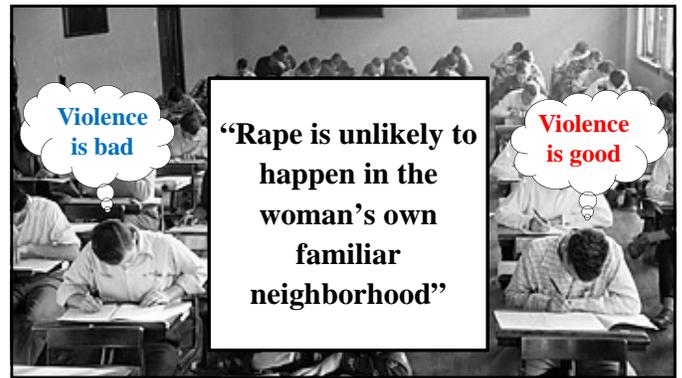
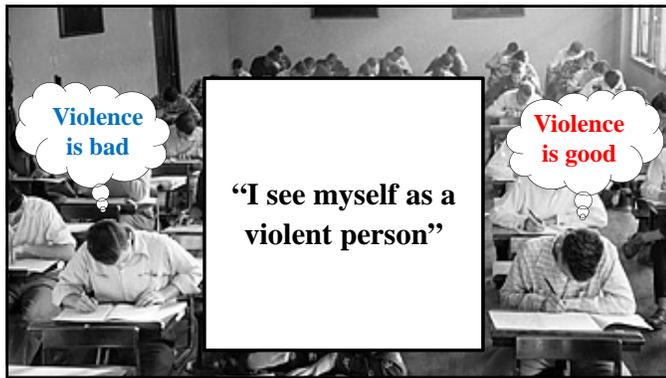
**Violence is good**

**Violence is bad**

**“A lot of times, sexual assaults are not planned . . . they just happen”**

**Violence is good**

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**Questions**

- Do measures of attitudes towards violence assess evaluative attitudes?
- Are both attitudes and evaluative attitudes independently associated with violent behaviour?

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Article

**Thinking Clearly About Violent Cognitions: Attitudes May Be Distinct From Other Cognitions**

Journal of Interpersonal Violence  
2015, Vol. 30(8) 1322–1347  
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Sacha Maimone,<sup>1</sup> and Mandie Woods<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract**  
The purpose of the current study was to explore whether measures such as the Violence Scale of the Revised Measures of Criminal Attitudes and Associates (MCAA-R-V) and the Criminal Attitudes to Violence Scale (CAVS) assess attitudes toward violence (i.e., evaluation of violence) and whether attitudes and the cognitions assessed by the MCAA-R-V and CAVS are independently associated with violent behavior. Participants

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**Evaluation of Violence Scale**

Violence is ...

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very						Very
negative						positive

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**MCAA-R Violent Attitudes Scale**  
(Mills & Kroner, 2007)

Sometimes you have to fight to keep your self-respect

1	2	3	4
Disagree			Agree



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**Criminal Attitudes to Violence Scale (CAVS)**  
(Polaschek et al., 2004)

Fighting between men is normal

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree				Strongly agree



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**Violent Behaviour Scale (VBS)**

From when you were 16 years old to today, how many times have you started a physical fight with someone?

Never	3 times	6 times
Once	4 times	7 times
Twice	5 times	8 times
	9 times or more	



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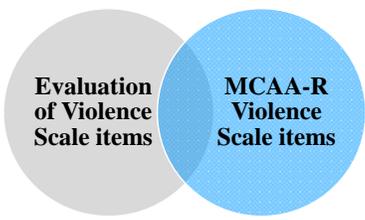
**Measuring the Same Thing or Different Things?**

- Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)



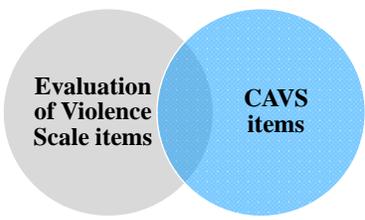
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**Measuring Different Things: Two Factors**



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**Measuring Different Things: Two Factors**



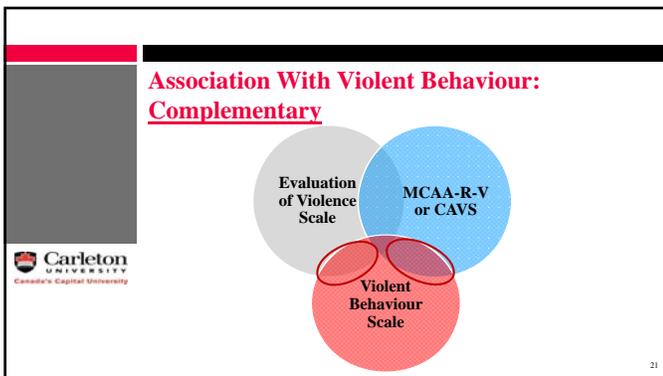
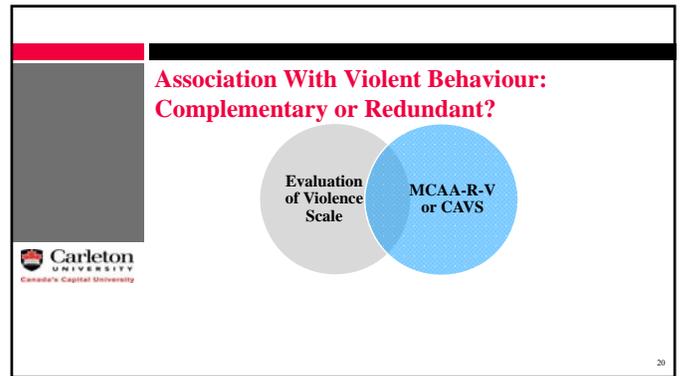
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**Correlation with Violent Behaviour**

	Past violent behaviour
Evaluation of Violence Scale	.37*
MCAA-R-V	.37*
CAVS	.43*

\*  $p < .05$



**Attitude May Be Everything, But Is Everything an Attitude? Cognitive Distortions May Not Be Evaluations of Rape**

Sexual Abuse  
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**Abstract**  
Cognitive distortions are often referred to as attitudes toward rape in theory, research, and clinical practice pertaining to sexual aggression. In the social-psychological literature, however, attitudes are typically defined as evaluations: thus, in this context, attitudes

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**Evaluation of Rape Scale**

Rape is ...

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very negative						Very positive

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**RAPE Scale (Bumby, 1996)**

Victims of rape are usually a little bit to blame for what happens

1	2	3	4
Strongly disagree			Strongly agree

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**Modified Coercive Sexuality Scale**  
(Rapaport & Burkhart, 1984)

Since age 16, how many times have you touched a female's genital area against her will?

Never	3 times	6 times
Once	4 times	7 times
Twice	5 times	8 times
	9 times or more	



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**Likelihood to Rape**  
(Malamuth, 1981)

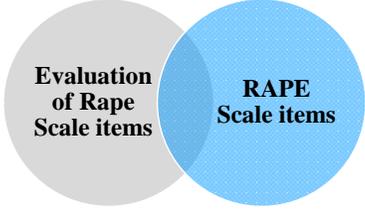
What is the likelihood that you would rape someone if you could be assured of not being caught and punished?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all likely				Very likely



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**Measuring Different Things:  
Two Factors**




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**Correlation with Sexually Aggressive Behaviour**

	Past sexual aggression	Likelihood to rape
Evaluation of Rape Scale	.25*	.32*
RAPE Scale (cognitive distortions)	.26*	.35*

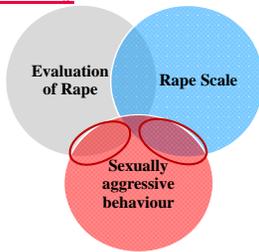
\*  $p < .05$

**Association With Sexual Aggression:  
Complementary or Redundant?**




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**Association With Sexual Aggression:  
Complementary**




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**Replication and Extension**

- Hermann, C. A., Nunes, K. L., & Pedneault, C. (2016). *Further evidence that evaluation of sexual aggression may be distinct from cognitive distortions*. Manuscript in preparation.
- Hermann, C. A., & Nunes, K. L. (2016). *Implicit and explicit evaluations of sexual aggression predict subsequent sexually aggressive behavior in a sample of community men*. Manuscript submitted for publication.



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**Summary: Evaluative Attitudes were Distinct**

- Measures of evaluative attitudes towards violence formed a distinct factor from other measures



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**Summary: Evaluative Attitudes were Relevant**

- Measures of evaluative attitudes towards violence and the other measures were independently associated with violent behaviour
- Together, evaluative attitude scales and the other measures were more strongly associated with violent behaviour than either one alone



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**Typical violent attitude measures may not assess evaluative attitudes**



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**But, how well did our measures assess evaluative attitudes?**

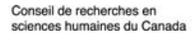
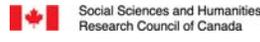


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**Evaluation of Violence Questionnaire (EVQ): Development and Validity**



Chantal Hermann      Chloe Pedneault



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You hitting (for example, punching or kicking) a guy who hurts someone you care about.

Very negative      A bit negative      A bit positive      Very positive

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You threatening to physically hurt a guy who owes you money.

Very bad      A bit bad      A bit good      Very good

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You using a weapon (for example, a baseball bat, knife, or gun) on a guy who has sex with your girlfriend/wife or boyfriend/husband.

Very unpleasant      A bit unpleasant      A bit pleasant      Very pleasant

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**Does the EVQ Measure Evaluative Attitudes Towards Violence?**

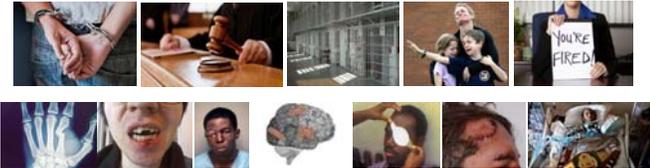
- If so, then its scores should change in response to established attitude-change procedures
- Randomized experiment
  - Attitude-change condition
  - Control condition

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**Attitude-Change Condition**

- Violence is a “lose-lose” situation, with negative consequences for everyone involved.



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You hitting a guy.

*bad*

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You hitting a guy who hurts someone you care about.

*sad*



43

You hitting a guy who steals from you.

*spoil*



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**Control Condition**

- The Grand Canyon is an impressive site with something for everyone to enjoy.



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You hitting a guy.

*bridge*



46

You hitting a guy who hurts someone you care about.

*page*



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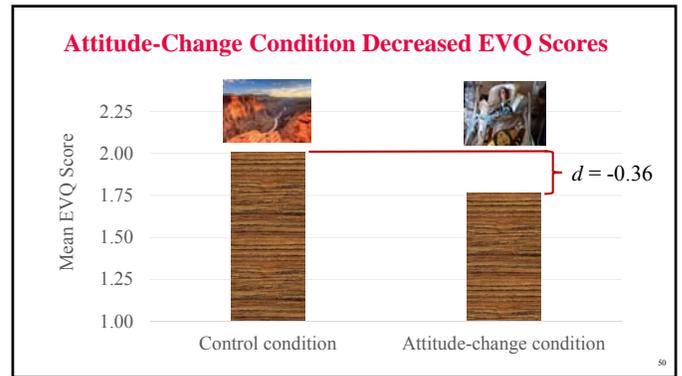
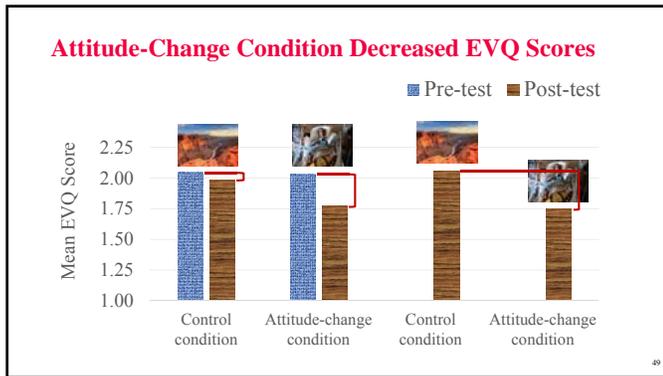
You hitting a guy who steals from you.

*section*



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**Results suggest that the EVQ does assess evaluative attitudes towards violence**

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**Next Steps**

- Further tests of construct validity
- Further tests of distinctiveness
- Causal effect on violent behaviour?
- Alternative approaches; e.g., implicit, interview
- Other types of violence and populations; e.g., sexual violence, IPV, women

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**Conclusion**

- Evaluative attitudes towards violence may have been overlooked, but may be relevant
- EVQ promising for further research
- Precision and clarity of conceptualization and measurement → better understanding of causes → better assessment and intervention → reduce violence

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**Aggressive Cognitions and Behaviour Research Lab**

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