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**Evaluative Attitudes Toward Violence:
Conceptualization, Measurement, and
Relationship with Violent Behaviour**

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Kevin L. Nunes
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Outline

- Definitions and distinctions
- New measures of evaluative attitudes toward violence and violent behaviour
- Relationship with violent behaviour

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Attitudes in Forensic Theory, Research, and Practice

- “Lots of people are out to get you”
- “I see myself as a violent person”
- “Sometimes you have to threaten people to get them to do the right thing, even if you don’t like doing it”

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at·ti·tude
/'adə,t(y)oʊd/
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

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Attitudes in Social Psychology

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

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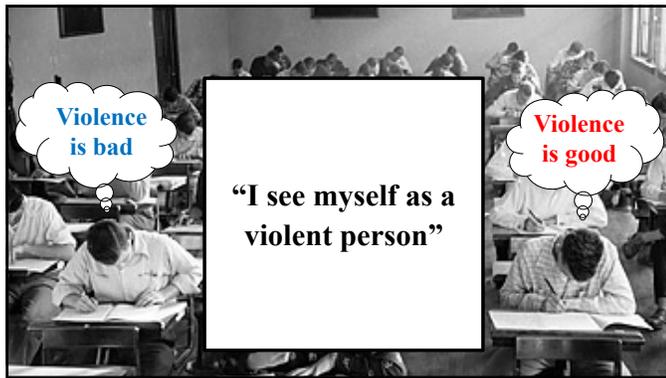
Violence is bad

Violence is good

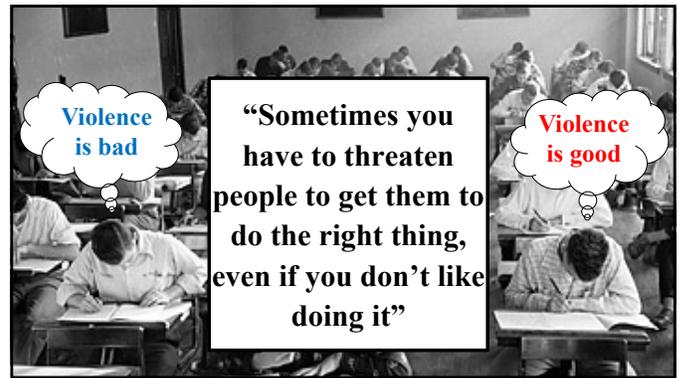
“Lots of people are out to get you”

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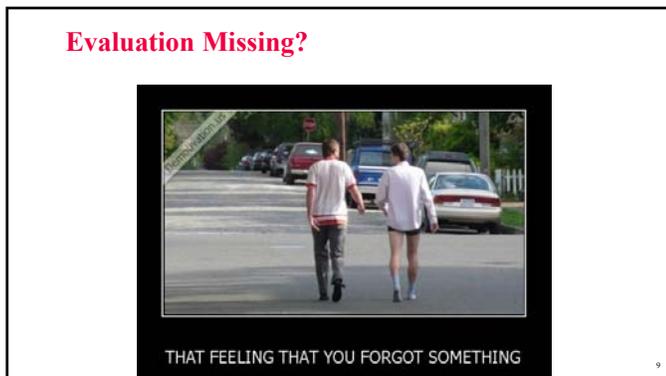
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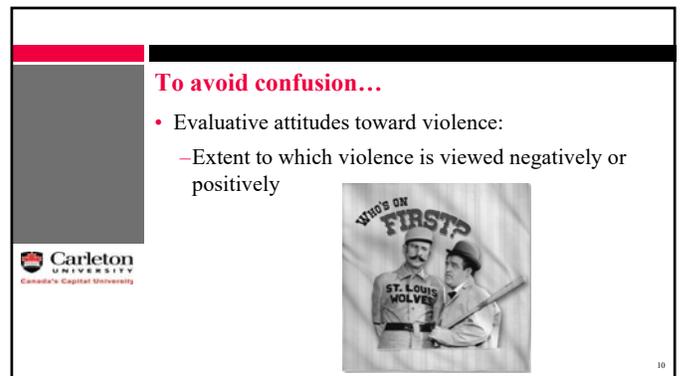
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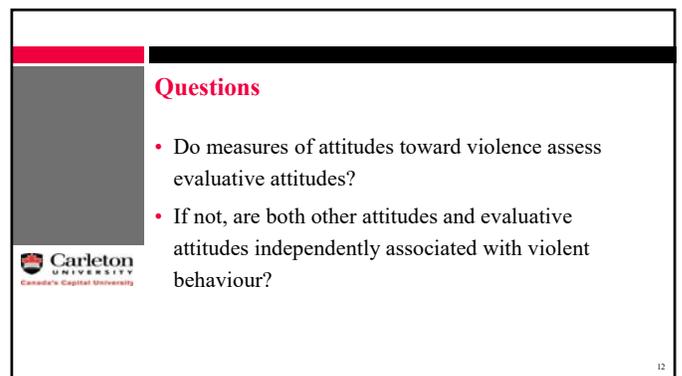
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Evaluation of Violence Semantic Differential Scale

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 | | | | Strongly |
| disagree | | | | 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

Evaluation of violence semantic differential scale items

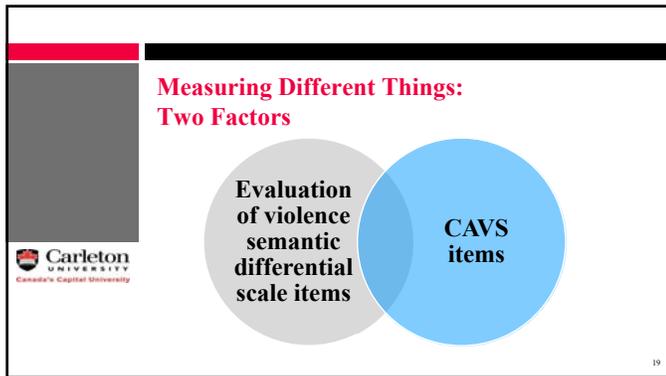
MCAA-R Violence Scale items



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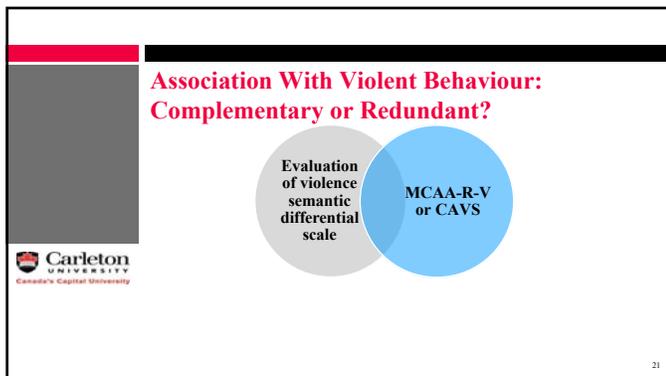
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Correlation with Violent Behaviour

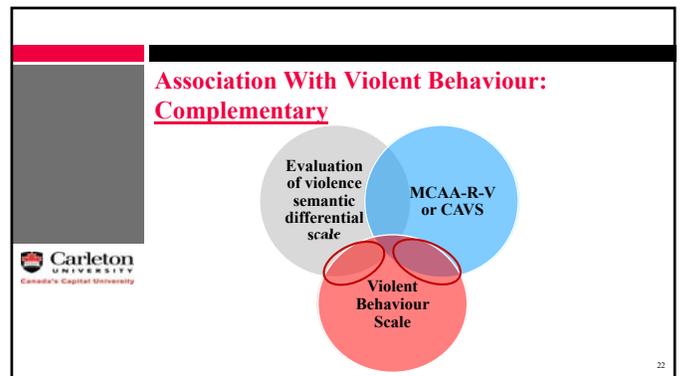
| | Past violent behaviour |
|--|------------------------|
| Evaluation of violence semantic differential scale | .37* |
| MCAA-R-V | .37* |
| CAVS | .43* |

* $p < .05$

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Summary: Evaluative Attitudes were Distinct

- Measure of evaluative attitudes toward violence formed a distinct factor from other measures

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Summary: Evaluative Attitudes were Relevant

- Measure of evaluative attitudes toward violence and the other measures were independently associated with violent behaviour
- Together, evaluative attitude scale 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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Alternative Interpretations

- Separate factors may reflect measurement issues
- Semantic differential measure designed to assess evaluative attitudes toward violence
 - Abstract, ambiguous, extremely positively skewed, and no tests of construct validity
- Violent Behaviour Scale (VBS)
 - Extremely positively skewed and no tests of construct validity

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Psychology of Violence

The Evaluation of Violence Questionnaire (EVQ): Development and Validity of a Self-Report Measure of Evaluative Attitudes Toward Violence

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Objectives: We developed a self-report measure to assess men's evaluative attitudes toward violence (i.e., extent to which violence is viewed negatively or positively) and explored the construct validity of its scores. **Method:** In Study 1, we created a large pool of items, which we administered to two separate online samples of men from the community ($N = 318$; $N = 226$). In Study 2, we conducted a randomized experiment as an initial test of the construct validity of the retained items with a new online sample of 510 men from the community. If the measure assesses evaluative attitudes toward violence, then its scores should change in response to established evaluative-attitude-change procedures. Participants were randomly assigned to a condition to make evaluative attitudes toward violence more negative or to a control condition. Results: In Study 1, we retained 17 items to create the Evaluation of Violence Questionnaire (EVQ); selection was based primarily on item variance (to avoid floor effects), inter-item correlations (to eliminate redundancy), and factor structure (to ensure unidimensionality). In Study 2, EVQ scores significantly decreased from pre- to posttest for participants in the experimental condition, but did not change for participants in the control condition (comparisons of change between conditions: Cohen's $d = -0.52$, 95% CI [-0.70, -0.29]). Similarly, positive EVQ scores were significantly lower for participants in the experimental condition than for participants in the control condition (Cohen's $d = -0.36$, 95% CI [-0.54, -0.17]). **Conclusion:** These results provide initial support for the construct validity of EVQ scores.

Keywords: attitudes, violence, construct validity, measurement

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Evaluation of Violence Questionnaire (EVQ)

- Designed to measure men's evaluative attitudes toward their own (real or hypothetical) violence against other men

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EVQ Development

- Augmented semantic differential scale structure with more concrete and clear descriptions and provocations
- Large pool of items administered to two separate samples of men from the community ($N = 318$; $N = 226$)
- Retained 17 items that were least skewed and non-redundant
- One-factor structure; less skewed
- Each EVQ item is rated on one of three response scales:
very negative/unpleasant/bad to very positive/pleasant/good

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Sample EVQ Items

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 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



39

39

You hitting a guy who hurts someone you care about.

page



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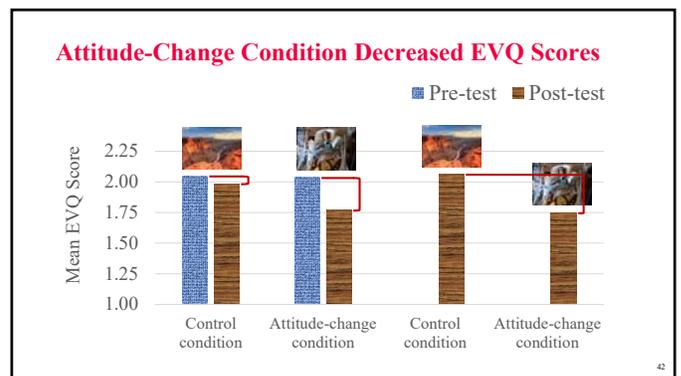
You hitting a guy who steals from you.

section



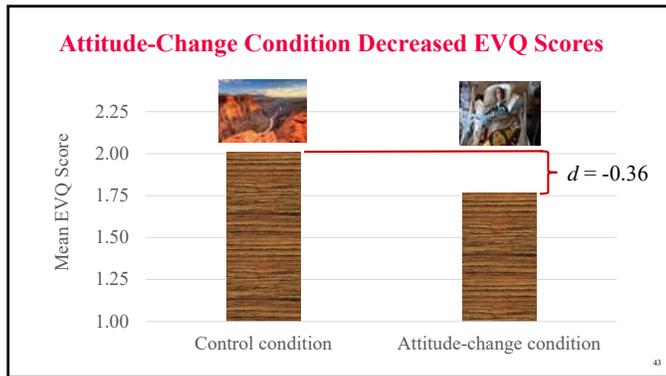
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Results suggest that the EVQ does assess evaluative attitudes toward violence

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Methodology, Scales, and Measures

The Violent Behavior Vignette Questionnaire (VBVQ): A Measure of Violent Behavior for Research in Forensic and Non-Forensic Settings and Populations

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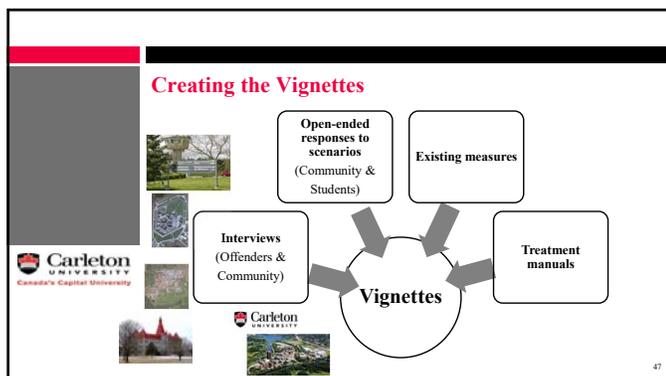
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Violent Behavior Vignette Questionnaire (VBVQ)

- Designed to measure men's current criminal violent behaviour against other men

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VBVQ

- 10 vignettes
- Say what you really would do if you were actually in that situation right now
 - Initial scenario
 - First response
 - Reaction from antagonist
 - Second response

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Response Options: "What do you do?"

- **Report it to someone** – report what he's doing (or what he did) to someone like the manager, police, or security, and ask them to deal with the problem
- **Talk it out** – without insulting him, say something to let him know you're not okay with what he's doing (or what he did) and to try to work things out peacefully
- **Insult him** – say something insulting to him, like swearing at him or calling him a name
- **Joke about it** – joke about it to yourself or other people around you
- **Shove him**
- **Hit, punch, kick, or tackle him**
- **Threaten to hurt him**
- **Ignore it** – don't do or say anything about it
- **Leave** – go somewhere else to get away from the person or situation

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Illustration of Procedure with Vignette 9

- You're at a bar standing beside your girlfriend/wife when a guy strolls up to her, puts his arm around her, and starts trying to pick her up. He acts like you aren't even there.
- What do you do?
 - Report it to someone
 - Hit, punch, kick, or tackle him
 - **Talk it out**
 - Insult him
 - Threaten to hurt him
 - Joke about it
 - Ignore it
 - Shove him
 - Leave

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- You say to him, "Buddy, what are you doing? You know she's with me. Go talk to someone else."
- He ignores you, steps between you and your girlfriend/wife, turns his back to you, tells her that you're a loser, and asks her to dance.
- What do you do?

| | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Non-violent | • Report it to someone | • Hit, punch, kick, or tackle him | Violent |
| | • Talk it out | • Threaten to hurt him | |
| Violent | • Insult him | • Ignore it | Non-violent |
| | • Joke about it | • Leave | |
| | • Shove him | | |

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- VBVQ scores were strongly associated with other self-report measures of aggressiveness and violent behavior in community ($N = 471$) and offender ($N = 52$) samples
- VBVQ scores were less positively skewed than VBS scores in community sample

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EVQ Correlated with Violent Behaviour?

- Maimone (2021) found medium to large correlations in a variety of samples of men (students, community, offenders)
- Violent Behaviour Scale (VBS) $r = .42 - .45$
- Violent Behavior Vignette Questionnaire (VBVQ) $r = .42 - .70$
- Physical Aggression scale of Aggression Questionnaire $r = .66 - .76$
- Violence Risk Appraisal Guide (VRAG) $r = .37$
- Violence Risk Appraisal Guide-Revised (VRAG-R) $r = .31$

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Do Attitudes Toward Violence Affect Violent Behavior?
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ABSTRACT
Attitudes toward violence are important in theoretical explanations of violent behavior and efforts to reduce violent behavior. Though an association between attitudes and violent behavior has been demonstrated, most studies have used correlational/observational research designs. We conducted a randomized experiment to test the effect of attitudes toward violence on violent behavior with 285 men from the community. Participants were randomly assigned to receive material to

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KEYWORDS
Attitudes; violence; randomized experiment

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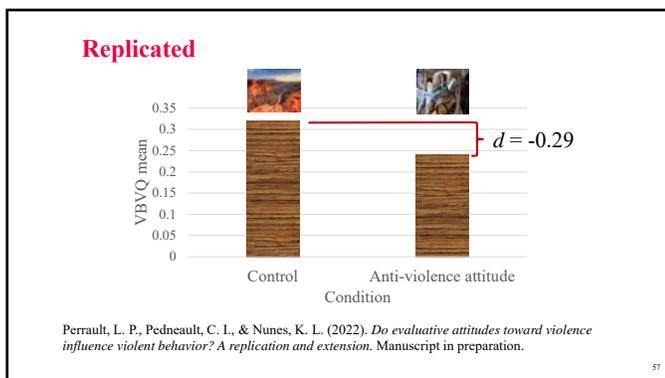
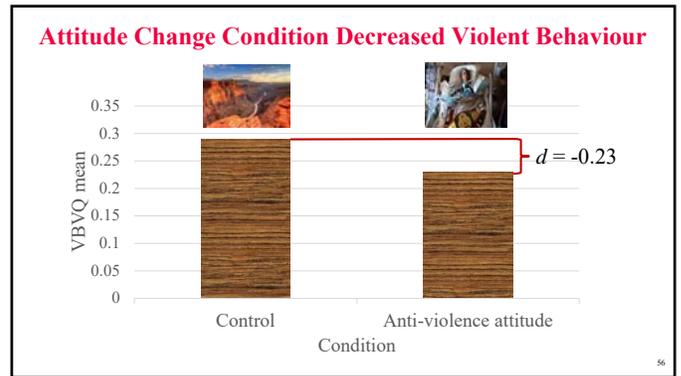
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But do Evaluative Attitudes Affect Violent Behaviour?

- Randomized experiment
- 285 men (Qualtrics Panel from Canada and USA)
- Same manipulation as in EVQ development and validity study
- Violent Behavior Vignette Questionnaire (VBVQ)



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Evaluative Attitudes toward Violence...

- ...may have been largely overlooked in the correctional/forensic area
- ...are correlated with violent behaviour
- ...may provide complementary info relevant to violent behaviour
- ...may play a causal role in violent behaviour



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Next Steps

- Further tests of distinctiveness
- Further tests of effect on violent behaviour
- Forensic application?
- Other types of violence and populations; e.g., IPV, women



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Thank you!

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- SSHRC, Carleton, and The Royal's Institute of Mental Health Research, Correctional Service of Canada, and Solicitor General (Ontario)






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