

Do Attitudes Affect Violent Behaviour?

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Department of Psychology's
70th Anniversary Celebration



1

Correlation vs. Causation

- Attitudes toward violence are thought to be important for the explanation, prediction, and reduction of violent/aggressive behaviour
- Research has demonstrated that attitudes toward violence **correlate** with and **predict** violent/aggressive behaviour
- But few experimental tests of whether violent attitudes play a **causal** role



2

Our First Test

- 285 men (online panel from Canada and USA)
- Randomized experiment
 - Anti-violence message and evaluative conditioning
 - Control condition
- Violent Behavior Vignette Questionnaire (VBVQ)

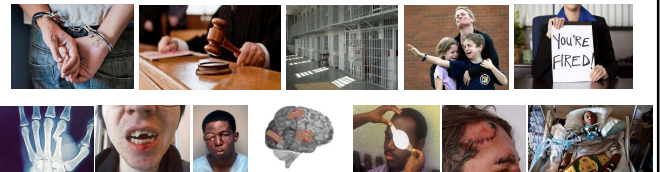
• Nunes et al. (2022)



3

Anti-Violence Attitude Condition

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



4

You hitting a guy.

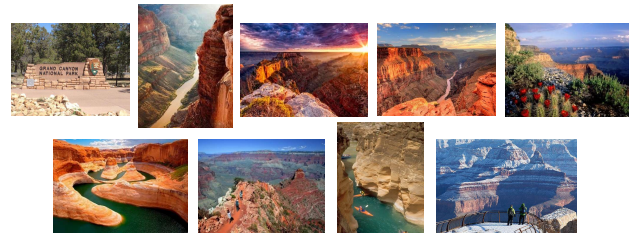
bad



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Control Condition

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



6

You hitting a guy.
bridge

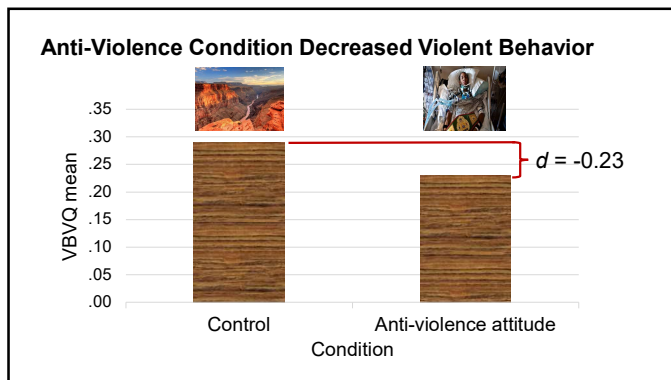


7

Violent Behavior Vignette Questionnaire (VBVQ)

- 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
 - Threaten to hurt him
 - Insult him
 - Ignore it
 - Joke about it
 - Leave
 - Shove him

8




9

Our Second Test

- 351 men (online panel from Canada and USA)
- Replicated effect on violent behaviour with message only (no evaluative conditioning)
 - Cohen's $d = -0.29$

Nunes et al. (2024; Study 1)




10

Our Third Test


- Improvements to anti-violence attitude message
 - Added voiceover reading message
 - Added questions before and after message
- Additional aggressive behaviour measure

Nunes et al. (2024; Study 2)



11

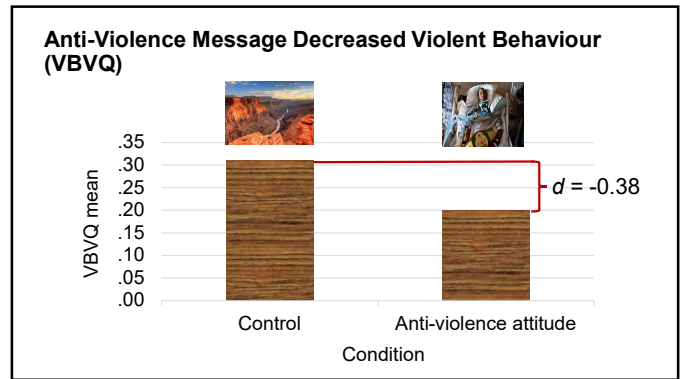
- 705 men (online panel from Canada and USA)
- Randomized experiment
 - Anti-violence attitude message
 - Control condition
- Violent Behavior Vignette Questionnaire (VBVQ)
- Doll Aggression Task (DAT)



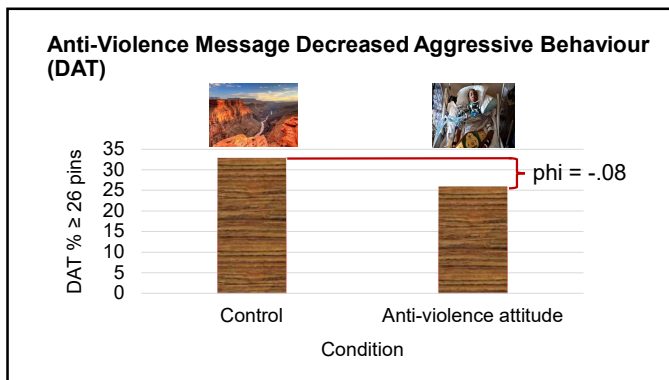
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13



14



15

Conclusions

- Anti-violence attitude manipulation reduced violent/aggressive behaviour
- Supports theory and clinical assumptions that violent attitudes play a causal role in violent behaviour

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16

Limitations and Future Directions

- Violent/aggressive behaviour measures
- Duration of effect
- Other populations

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17

Thank you!

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18