

Nunes, K. L., Pedneault, C. I., Hermann, C. A., & Fraser, J. M. (2023, June 23-25). Do violent attitude measures assess evaluative attitudes toward violence? In K. L. Nunes (Chair), *Measurement and effects of evaluative attitudes toward violence* [Symposium]. Fifth North American Correctional and Criminal Justice Psychology Conference, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Do Violent Attitude Measures Assess Evaluative Attitudes Toward Violence?

Kevin L. Nunes, Chloe I. Pedneault, Chantal A. Hermann, and Julia M. Fraser


N5 2023



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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



2

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
/ˈədə,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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To avoid confusion...

- Evaluative attitudes toward violence:
 - Extent to which violence is viewed negatively or positively

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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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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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Questions

- Do measures of attitudes toward violence assess evaluative attitudes?
- If not, are both other attitudes and evaluative attitudes independently associated with violent behaviour?




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Semantic Differential Scale (SDS)

Violence is ...

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Very negative Very 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




9

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

Fighting between men is normal

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree Strongly agree




10

Correlations Between Attitude Measures

	MCAA-R-V	CAVS
SDS	.49*	.56*
MCAA-R-V		.76*

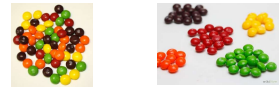

* $p < .05$



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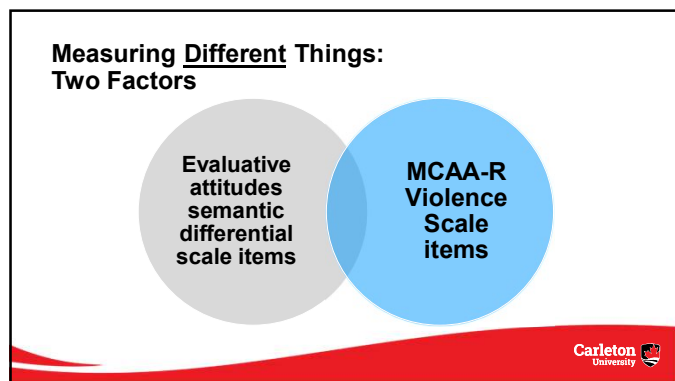
Measuring the Same Thing or Different Things?

- Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

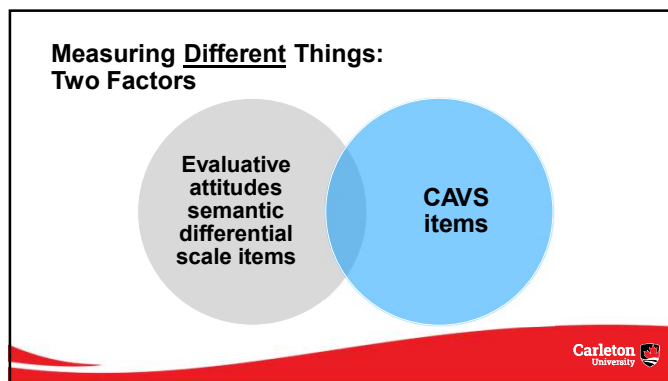



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Violent Behaviour Scale (VBS)

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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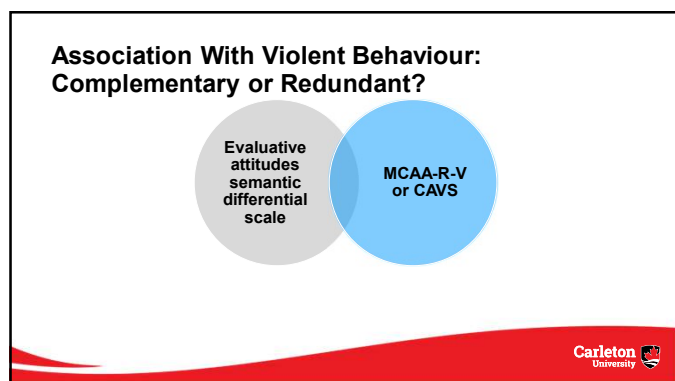
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Correlation with Violent Behaviour (VBS)

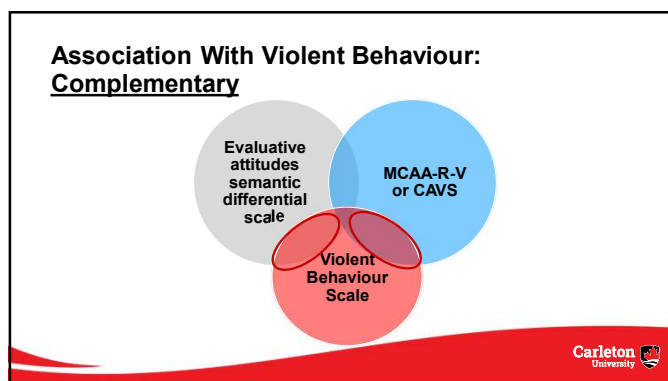
	Past violent behaviour
SDS	.37
MCAA-R-V	.37
CAVS	.43

all $p < .05$

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Maybe typical violent attitude measures do not assess evaluative attitudes?



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Alternative Interpretations

- Separate factors may reflect measurement issues
- Semantic differential scale (SDS)
 - 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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Present Study

- Replication and extension of Nunes et al. (2015)
 - Online panel of 342 men from the general community in Canada and the USA
 - Additional measures of evaluative attitudes and violent behaviour

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Attitude Measures

- Evaluative attitudes toward violence
 - Semantic Differential Scale (SDS)
 - Evaluation of Violence Questionnaire (EVQ)
- Attitudes toward violence
 - Criminal Attitudes To Violence Scale (CAVS)
 - Violent Attitude Scale of the Revised Measures of Criminal Attitudes and Associates (MCAA-R-V)

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Evaluation of Violence Questionnaire (EVQ; Nunes et al., 2021)

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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Correlations Between Attitude Measures

	EVQ	MCAA-R-V	CAVS
SDS	.59	.61	.62
EVQ		.75	.75
MCAA-R-V			.76

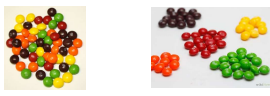
all $p < .05$

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Measuring the Same Thing or Different Things?

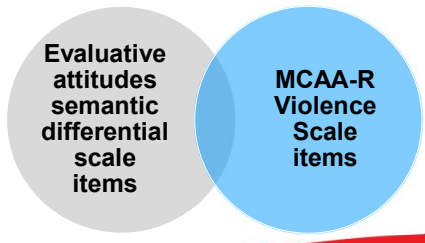
- Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)



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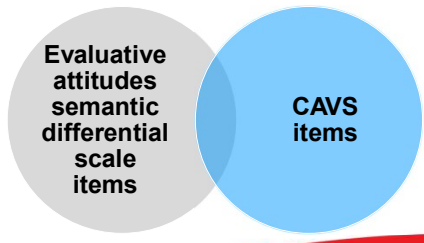
**Measuring Different Things:
Two Factors**



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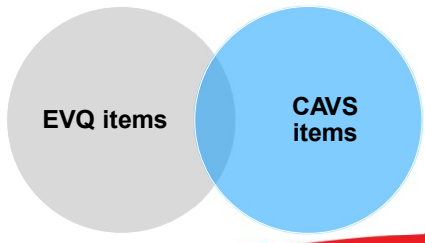
**Measuring Different Things:
Two Factors**



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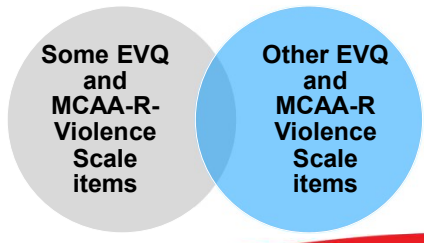
**Measuring Different Things:
Two Factors**



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**Measuring Same Things?
Two Factors**



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Violent Behaviour Measures

- Violent Behaviour Scale (VBS)
- Violent Behavior Vignette Questionnaire (VBVQ)

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Violent Behavior Vignette Questionnaire (VBVQ; Nunes et al., 2021)

- 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

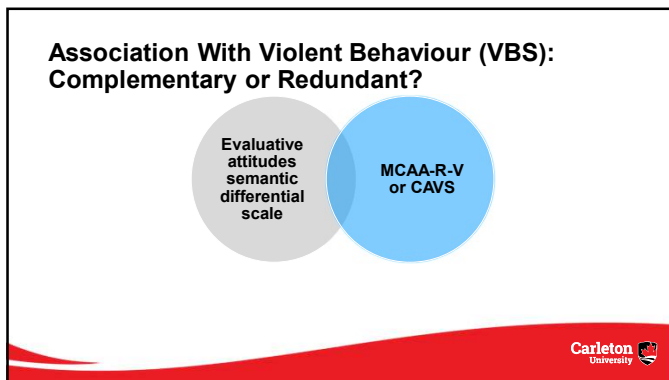
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Correlations with Violent Behaviour

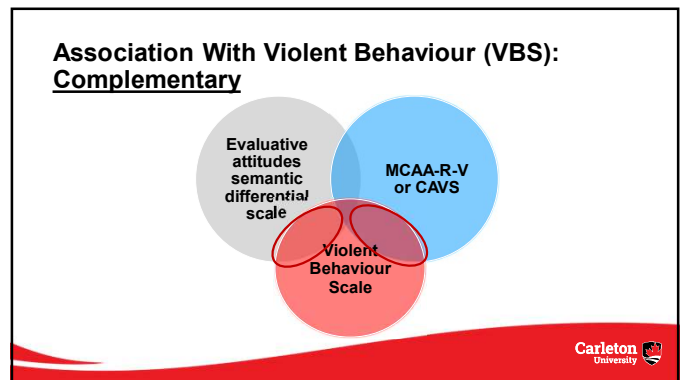
	SDS	EVQ	MCAA-R-V	CAVS
VBS	.40	.46	.40	.42
VBVQ	.42	.60	.61	.57

all $p < .05$

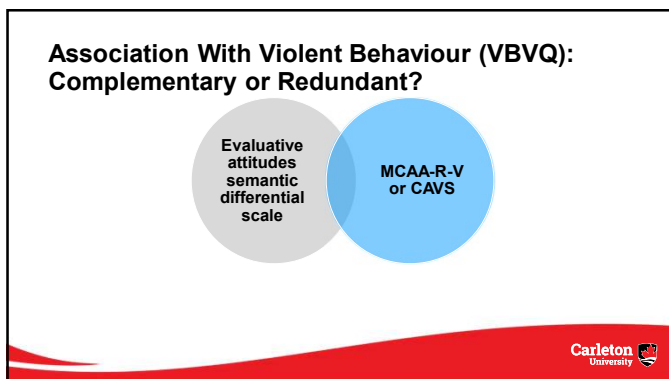
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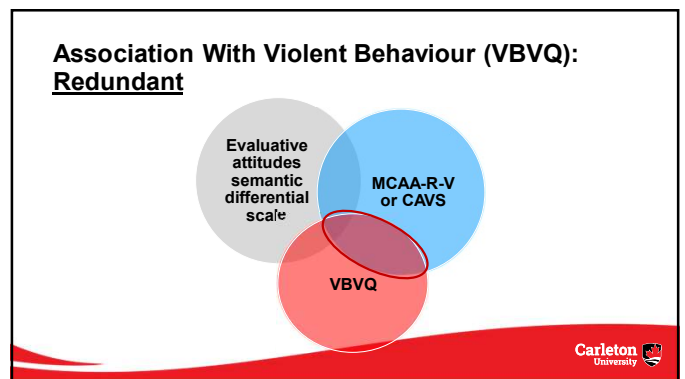
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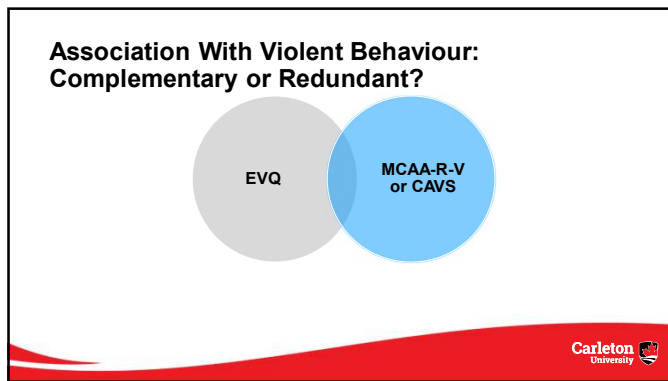


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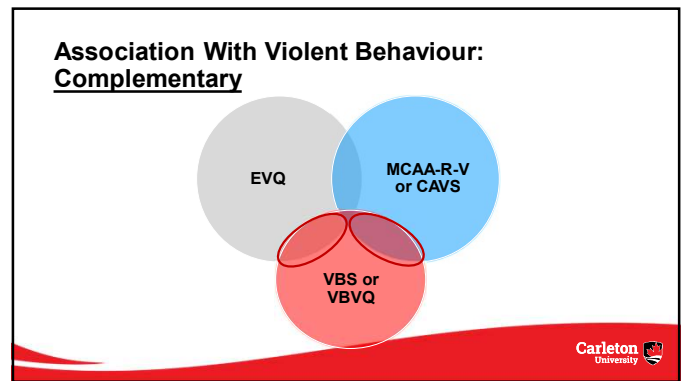


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Summary: Evaluative Attitudes were Sometimes Distinct

- SDS formed a distinct factor from the MCAA-R-V and CAVS
- EVQ formed a distinct factor from the CAVS, but not from the MCAA-R-V

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Summary: Evaluative Attitudes were Relevant

- Measures of evaluative attitudes toward violence (EVQ and sometimes SDS) and the other attitude measures were independently associated with violent behaviour
- Together, EVQ (and sometimes SDS) and the other attitude measures were more strongly associated with violent behaviour than either one alone

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- Fully replicated Nunes et al.'s (2015) findings with different sample
- However, extension with EVQ and VBQ did not produce results fully consistent with Nunes et al. (2015)

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Maybe Not so Different After All?

- Given the high correlations, perhaps most of these measures reflect evaluative attitudes toward violence but differ in their focus
 - CAVS and MCAA-R-V focus on some specific beliefs that could inform the determination of one's evaluation of violence
 - E.g., beliefs about harmfulness, effectiveness, acceptability, morality, enjoyment, legal consequences
 - EVQ focuses on the evaluation of oneself perpetrating specific violent behaviours in specific contexts, but it does not ask about the basis or rationale for that evaluation
 - Semantic differential focuses on overall evaluation of violence without specifying the underlying considerations nor the perpetrator, behaviour, or context


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Limitations and Future Directions

- Go beyond self-report
- Extend to other attitude measures and populations
- Measures of **enactment** of violent behaviour



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Objective: Evaluative attitudes toward violence refer to the extent to which violence is viewed negatively or positively. The purpose of the present study was to replicate and extend previous research to test the extent to which items in typical measures of violent attitudes reflect evaluative attitudes toward violence. *Method:* A cross-national online panel of men from the community ($N = 342$) completed self-report measures of attitudes toward violence and violent behavior. Two of the attitude measures were drawn from the

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Aggressive Cognitions and Behaviour Research Lab

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