

Nunes, K. L., Hatton, C. E., Brazil, K. J., & Forth, A. E. (2026, July 20-23). An experimental test of the moderating effect of violent attitudes on the relationship between psychopathic traits and violent behaviour. In K. L. Nunes (Chair), *Understanding violent behaviour through attitudinal, personality, and social constructs* [Symposium]. International Society for Research on Aggression World Meeting, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada.

An Experimental Test of the Moderating Effect of Violent Attitudes on the Relationship Between Psychopathic Traits and Violent Behaviour

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Moderation by Violent Attitudes?

- Theory consistent with the possibility that violent attitudes may change the likelihood that psychopathic traits will manifest in violent behaviour (e.g., Finkel, 2014; Lasko & Chester, 2021; Lilienfeld et al., 2015)
- Some correlational evidence of moderation (Nunes, Hatton, Brazil, et al., 2026)
- Causal effect?



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Present Study

- Experimentally manipulated violent attitudes to test their effect on the relationship between psychopathic traits and violent behavior



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Hypotheses

- More psychopathic traits will be associated with more violent behaviour
- Participants randomly assigned to the antiviolence attitudes message will report less violent behaviour than will participants randomly assigned to the control condition
- Experimentally manipulated violent attitudes will affect violent behaviour even after controlling for psychopathic traits
- Experimentally manipulated violent attitudes will moderate the relationship between psychopathic traits and violent behaviour



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Method

- Pre-registered hypotheses and methodology
- Online panel of 1,379 men in Canada and USA who met inclusion criteria (age, attention, etc.)



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Psychopathic Traits

- Randomly assigned to complete one:
 - Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy-Expanded version (E-LSRP) scale (Christian & Sellbom, 2016)
 - "People who are stupid enough to get ripped off usually deserve it"
 - Self-Report Psychopathy-Short Form (SRP-SF) scale (Paulhus et al., 2016)
 - "It's fun to see how far you can push people before they get upset"



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Experimental Manipulation of Violent Attitudes

- Randomly assigned to
 - Antiviolence attitudes message or
 - Control condition
- Nunes et al. (2024)



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Violent Behaviour

- Direct Physical Aggression subscale of the Richardson Conflict Response Questionnaire (DPA-RCRQ; Richardson & Green, 2003)
 - How often would you do various violent behaviours to someone who makes you angry?
- Violent Behavior Vignette Questionnaire (VBVQ; Nunes, Hermann, Maimone, et al., 2021)
 - Select violent or nonviolent behaviour responses to conflict vignettes



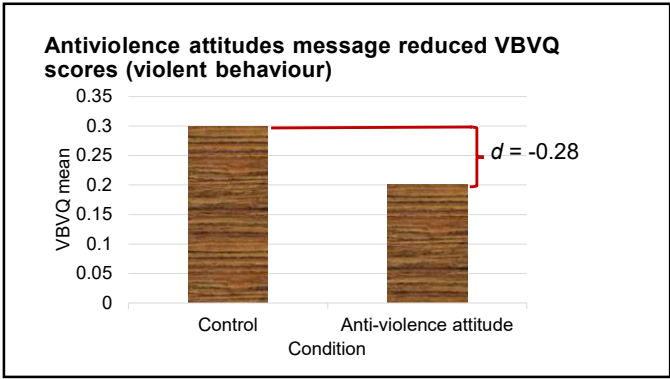
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Psychopathic Traits were Associated with Violent Behaviour

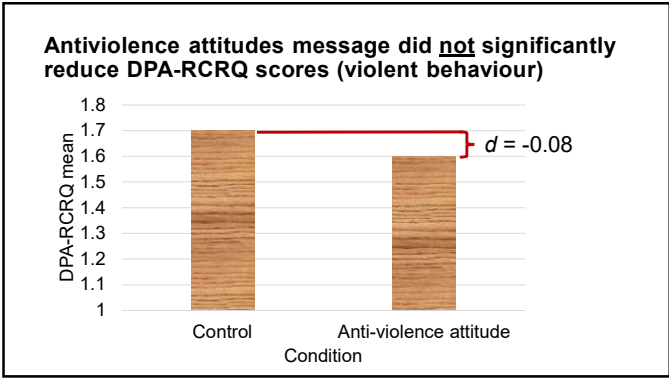
Psychopathic traits	DPA-RCRQ	VBVQ
E-LSRP (n = 652)	.45 [.37, .51]	.25 [.18, .32]
SRP-SF (n = 726)	.60 [.54, .66]	.41 [.34, .48]



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Violent attitudes manipulation independently affected VBVQ (violent behaviour)

	B (SE)	BCa 95% CI	p	sr ²
SRP-SF	0.16 (0.02)	[0.13, 0.19]	<.001	.16
Manipulation	-0.05 (0.02)	[-0.09, -0.02]	.003	.01

	B (SE)	BCa 95% CI	p	sr ²
E-LSRP	0.18 (0.03)	[0.13, 0.23]	<.001	.06
Manipulation	-0.09 (0.02)	[-0.13, -0.05]	<.001	.02

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Violent attitudes manipulation did not independently affect DPA-RCRQ (violent behaviour)

	B (SE)	BCa 95% CI	p	sr ²
SRP-SF	0.67 (0.04)	[0.59, 0.75]	<.001	.36
Manipulation	0.02 (0.04)	[-0.07, 0.10]	.669	.00

	B (SE)	BCa 95% CI	p	sr ²
E-LSRP	0.89 (0.08)	[0.74, 1.01]	<.001	.20
Manipulation	-0.08 (0.05)	[-0.18, 0.01]	.130	.00

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Violent attitudes manipulation did not moderate the relationship between psychopathic traits and violent behaviour

VBVQ	B (SE)	BCa 95% CI	p	sr ²
SRP-SF x Manipulation	-0.01 (0.03)	[-0.08, 0.05]	.751	.00
E-LSRP x Manipulation	-0.06 (0.05)	[-0.16, 0.05]	.276	.00

DPA-RCRQ	B (SE)	BCa 95% CI	p	sr ²
SRP-SF x Manipulation	0.09 (0.08)	[-0.08, 0.25]	.308	.00
E-LSRP x Manipulation	-0.29 (0.15)	[-0.58, 0.01]	.060	.00

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Hypotheses Supported?

- ✓ More psychopathic traits will be associated with more violent behavior
- ✓ Participants randomly assigned to the antiviolence attitudes message will report less violent behavior than will participants randomly assigned to the control condition
- ✓ Experimentally manipulated violent attitudes will affect violent behavior even after controlling for psychopathic traits
- ✗ Experimentally manipulated violent attitudes will moderate the relationship between psychopathic traits and violent behavior

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Results Suggest That...

- The moderation found in past correlational research may not reflect a causal effect
 - Violent attitudes may not actually change the relationship between psychopathic traits and violent behaviour
- However, violent attitudes may have a causal effect on violent behaviour above and beyond any influence of psychopathic traits

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Limitations

- Violent attitudes manipulation has small-to-moderate and likely short-lived effect on violent attitudes
- Measures of selection rather than enactment of violent behaviour
- Convenience sample from community
 - Results generalizable to other populations?

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Future Directions

- Examine moderation question with more impactful experimental manipulations of violent attitudes and measures of enacted violent behaviour
- Extend to other populations (e.g., other genders, correctional)

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Conclusions/Implications

- Reducing violent attitudes may not change the relationship between psychopathic traits and violent behaviour
- Violent attitudes may explain and predict violent behaviour above and beyond psychopathic traits
- Interventions aimed at reducing violent attitudes may reduce violent behaviour regardless of level of psychopathic traits



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Thank You

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