

Nunes, K. L., Hatton, C. E., & Presta, B., & Chester, D. S. (2026, July 20-23). Testing the construct validity of an experimental manipulation of violent attitudes. 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.

Testing the Construct Validity of an Experimental Manipulation of Violent Attitudes

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Construct Validity of Experimental Manipulations

- A valid manipulation should have the largest effects on measures of the intended construct, intermediate effects on measures of adjacent constructs, and the smallest effects on measures of unrelated constructs
- Nomological shockwave (Chester & Lasko, 2021)



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Violent Attitudes Manipulation

- Evidence that our manipulation has the intended effect on measures of violent attitudes (akin to convergent validity)
 - $d = -0.24$ to -0.38 (Nunes, Hatton, Zelenski, et al., 2026; Nunes et al., 2022)
- But unknown if its effect is specific to violent attitudes (akin to discriminant/divergent validity)



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Present Study

- Tested whether our experimental manipulation of violent attitudes would demonstrate a nomological shockwave by examining its relative effects on a variety of self-report measures



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Hypotheses

- Largest effects on measures of attitudes toward violence by a man against another man
- Intermediate effects on measures of presumably adjacent constructs (attitudes toward other types of violence and non-violent crime)
- Smallest effects on measures of presumably unrelated constructs (affect and perceived threat to freedom)



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Method

- Pre-registered hypotheses and methodology
- Online panel of 1,401 men in Canada and USA who met inclusion criteria (age, attention, etc.)



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Experimental Manipulation of Violent Attitudes

- Antiviolence attitudes message
- Control condition
- Nunes et al. (2024)



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Antiviolence Attitudes Message

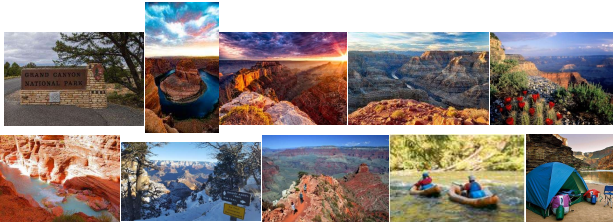
- Violence is a “lose-lose” situation, with negative consequences for everyone involved.



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Control Condition

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



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Intended Construct

- Attitudes toward violence by a man against another man
 - Evaluation of Violence Questionnaire (EVQ; Nunes et al., 2021)
 - Violent Attitudes scale of the Measures of Criminal Attitudes and Associates (V-MCAA; Mills et al., 2002)



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Evaluation of Violence Questionnaire (EVQ)

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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Violent Attitudes Scale of the Measures of Criminal Attitudes and Associates (V-MCAA)

It is understandable to hit someone who insults you

Disagree

Agree



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Presumed Adjacent Constructs

- Attitudes toward other types of violence
 - Revised Attitudes Toward Violence Scale (RATVS; Anderson et al., 2006)
 - Intimate, War, Penal code, and Corporal punishment of children
- General criminal attitudes
 - Measures of Criminal Attitudes and Associates (MCAA; Mills et al., 2002)
 - Entitlement and Antisocial intent



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Intimate Violence subscale of the Revised Attitudes Toward Violence Scale (I-RATVS)

It is all right for a partner to slap the other's face if insulted or ridiculed

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree or disagree Agree Strongly agree



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War subscale of the Revised Attitudes Toward Violence Scale (W-RATVS)

Violence against the enemy should be part of every nation's defense

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree or disagree Agree Strongly agree



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Penal Code Violence subscale of the Revised Attitudes Toward Violence Scale (P-RATVS)

Violent crimes should be punished violently

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree or disagree Agree Strongly agree



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Corporal Punishment of Children subscale of the Revised Attitudes Toward Violence Scale (C-RATVS)

Children should be spanked for temper tantrums

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree or disagree Agree Strongly agree



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Entitlement Scale of the Measures of Criminal Attitudes and Associates (E-MCAA)

Only I should decide what I deserve

Disagree Agree



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Antisocial Intent Scale of the Measures of Criminal Attitudes and Associates (A-MCAA)

In certain situations I would try to outrun the police

Disagree Agree



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Presumed Unrelated Constructs

- Affect
 - International Positive and Negative Affect Schedule Short Form (I-PANAS-SF; Thompson, 2007)
 - Positive affect, Negative affect
- Psychological reactance
 - Perceived Threat to Freedom Scale (PTFS; Dillard & Shen, 2005)



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Positive Affect subscale of the International Positive and Negative Affect Schedule Short Form (P-I-PANAS-SF)

Please read each word and indicate how much you feel this way right now (that is, at the present moment).

Alert

Very slightly or not at all A little Moderately Quite a bit Extremely



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Negative Affect subscale of the International Positive and Negative Affect Schedule Short Form (N-I-PANAS-SF)

Upset

Very slightly or not at all A little Moderately Quite a bit Extremely



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Perceived Threat to Freedom Scale (PTFS)

The following statements are about the message with the photographs that you read and listened to earlier in the survey.

The message tried to manipulate me

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral/Don't know Agree Strongly agree



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Experimental Demand Question

- The message changed both how I answered **and** what I really think, such that it led me to rate violence as more negative **and** it led me to actually think of violence as more negative than I did before.
- The message changed how I answered **but** not what I really think, such that it led me to rate violence as more negative, **but** it didn't lead me to actually think of violence as more negative than I did before.
- The message **didn't** lead me to rate violence as more negative.



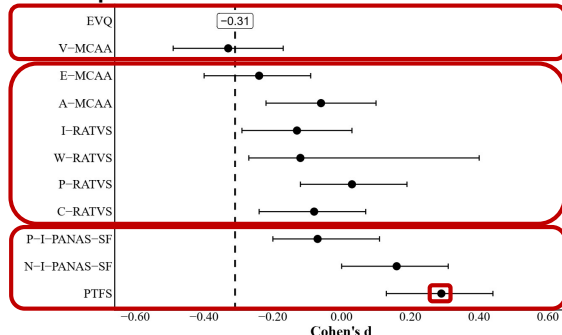
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Procedure

- Randomly assigned to antiviolence attitudes message or control message
- EVQ plus random subset of 3 of the remaining 9 measures (order of 4 measures counterbalanced)
- Manipulation attention check, experimental demand, and response quality items

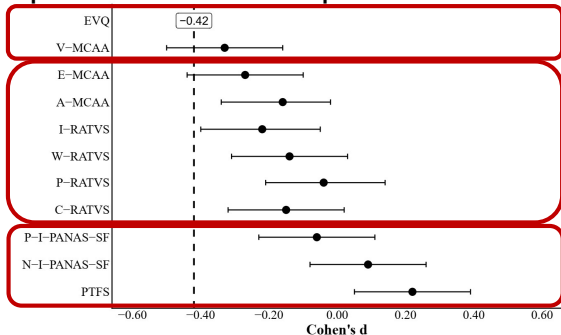
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Full Sample



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Experimental Demand Participants Excluded



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Limitations

- Violent attitudes manipulation has small-to-medium and likely short-lived effect on violent attitudes
- Convenience sample of men from community
 - Similar effects with other populations?

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Future Directions

- Attempt to increase magnitude and specificity of effect of experimental manipulation
- Longitudinal design to test duration of effect
- Extend to other populations (e.g., other genders, correctional)

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Conclusions/Implications

- Small-to-medium effect on violent attitudes in spite of unintended effect on perceived threat to freedom
- Some evidence of specificity of effects (discriminant/divergent validity)
- Supports use in experimental research and base for more impactful experimental manipulations and clinical interventions

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