

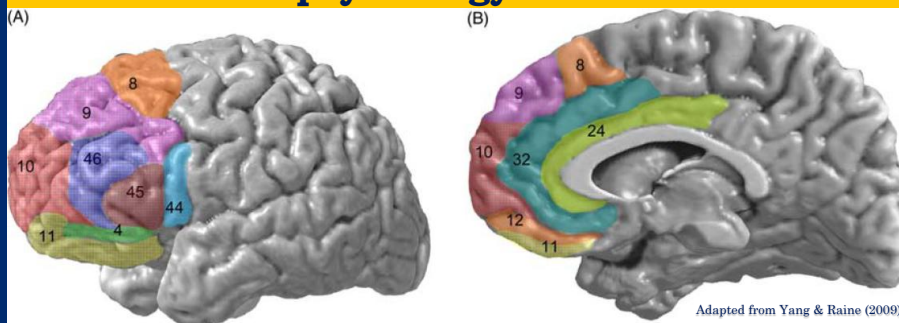
# Neuropsychology can enhance violence risk assessment: *Opportunities and limitations for mental health professionals*

Casey LaDuke, MS, Kirk Heilbrun, PhD, David DeMatteo, JD, PhD  
*Drexel University*

## Background

- ◆ VRA is an established component of FMHA for a variety of legal questions
- ◆ VRA has exhibited validity in predicting violence
  - Structured professional judgment: HCR-20, SAVRY
  - Actuarial measures: LS/CMI, VRAG, COVR, PCL-R
- ◆ But, based on self report data and consistent evidence of “ceiling effect” in predictive validity for these measures
- ◆ Growing concern in legal field regarding admissibility and reliability of VRA
- ◆ Contemporary theories of violence integrate psychological, biological, and situational factors
- ◆ Neuropsychology may provides promising theoretical and empirical basis to enhance validity of VRA

## Neuropsychology of violence



## VRA and neuropsychological assessment

Neuropsychological domains relevant to VRA	VRA with items informed by neuropsychology
<i>Impulsivity</i>	<i>Impulsivity and inhibition</i>
<i>Attention</i>	<i>Attention deficits</i>
<i>Decision making</i>	<i>Decision making deficits</i>
<i>Concept formation</i>	<i>Rule following behavior</i>
<i>Mental flexibility</i>	<i>Ability to modify behavior</i>
<i>Verbal fluency</i>	<i>Verbal intelligence and abilities</i>

## Conclusion

- ◆ Neuropsychological assessment may increase the clinical and legal validity of VRA
- ◆ Current lack of empirical literature
- ◆ Importantly limitations in training and experience
- ◆ Implications and future directions
  - Validation studies, particularly predictive incremental validity studies
  - Cross-training between forensic psychology and neuropsychology
  - Procedural consensus regarding referrals and assessment



For more information contact:  
casey.laduke@drexel.edu