



# Impacts of Relationship Legitimacy on Perceptions of Violence

This research study investigated the impacts of social legitimacy on perceptions of sexual violence. The goal is to demonstrate the ramifications of social processes on perceptions of violence. Legal processes have not provided adequate resources, protection, or knowledge. Marriage equality does not negate the impacts of violence experienced. Understanding how legitimacy factors into perceptions of sexual violence can provide individuals with a more comprehensive view of sexual violence and can help identify weaknesses within formal resources that need to be addressed.

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## 01 Introduction

From the eyes of the individual, and this is reflected in the lived experiences of queer individuals, who consistently report higher rates of discrimination, oppression, and violence. Heterosexual and/or cisgender counterparts (Gillum, 2017). Johnson et al. (2006) identify the phenomenon of legitimacy as a social process used to determine systems of value and definition at an individual or societal level. Understanding how seemingly unconscious processes result in consequential outcomes for LGBTQ+ individuals.

## 02 Objective

The objective of this research project was to investigate the impact of individual attitudes of offender and victim in the context of sexual assault. This study seeks to investigate how these attitudes identify situations of sexual assault. The study was designed to observe how gender impacts perceptions of blame and deservingness of punishment for the offender and victim of sexual assault.

## 03 Methodology

Data were gathered at Stockton University via regression ANOVA assumptions of skewness, homogeneity of variance and normality. Data were gathered via Sona Labs. 308 usable data sets were collected. Included genders were male, female, nonbinary and transgender with multiple combinations of each gender identity. Respondents received compensation in the form of extra credit for academic courses.

## 04 Analysis

Crime	F-F (reference)	46.207	0.032	<0.001
M-M	0.789	0.651		
T-T	0.376	0.564		
NB-T	0.381	0.561		
Legal Legit.	0.068	0.942		
Social Legit.	0.857	0.024		
M-M	-0.072	0.755		
T-T	0.376	0.564		
NB-T	-0.133	0.575		
NB-NB	-0.215	0.215		
Legal Legit.	-0.146	0.663		
Social Legit.	0.36	0.008		

## 05 Results

Gender dynamic accounted for 3.2% of variance in perceptions of crime and 2.9% of variance in perceptions of offender deservingness of punishment. Only when social legitimacy was overlaid in analyzing crime perceptions and offender punishment were the results significant ( $\beta = 0.024; 0.008$ ). Beta weights were mostly positive for perceptions of crime (i.e. most identified the actions as criminal regardless of gender identity), but had an inverse relationship when respondents were asked about offender punishment (i.e. overall less attitude towards punishment when the offender and victim are of the same gender identity).

## 06 Conclusion

Gender dynamic and knowledge of legitimacy impacts on perceptions of criminality and offender deservingness of punishment. However, it was mediated by the factor of social legitimacy as depicted. Understanding the process of social legitimization and its subsequent impacts on perceptions of criminality and offender deservingness of punishment can help address knowledge is lacking. This analysis discussed perceptions of crime and offender deservingness of punishment, but further analysis should be done on the impacts of gender dynamics on blame of offender and victim, punishment of victim, and appropriate resources.

The findings of this study suggest that legitimization processes are relevant to surrounding sexual violence is important to further discuss and address inequity in the systems available for victims of sexual victimization.

Descriptive Statistics				75
DV	Cr	Mean	Std. Deviation	
Crime	F-F	47.58	4.699	50
	M-M	47.923	2.578	
	T-T	48.038	2.038	
	NB-T	47.84	1.973	
	NB-NB	48.843	4.876	
	Legal Legit.	1.04	0.201	
	Social Legit.	1.48	0.501	
Offender Pun	F-F	13.96	1.201	50
	M-M	13.726	1.201	
	T-T	13.608	1.511	
	NB-T	13.608	1.511	
	NB-NB	13.608	1.511	
	Legal Legit.	1.04	0.201	
	Social Legit.	1.48	0.501	

### IMPLICATIONS

Understanding of criminality and culpability can help identify resources for victims of sexual violence.

### Related Literature

Gillum, T. L. (2017). Adolescent dating violence experiences among *Journal of Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 34(2), 137-145. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10560-016-0451-7>  
 Johnson, C., Dowd, T. J., & Ridgeway, C. L. (2006). Legitimacy as a social process. *Annual Review of Sociology* 32, 51-71. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/29151151>.