

Sex Workers Outreach Project

Sex Workers' rights and Human Trafficking

<https://swopusa.org/blog/2017/03/28/research-summary-the-role-of-sex-work-stigma-in-victim-blaming-and-empathy-of-sexual-assault-survivors/>

Policy Issue Resources

[Full Article](#) | [Research Summary \(.pdf\)](#)

This research study, by Dr. Eric Sprankle and SWOP-USA board member, Katie Bloomquist looks at how changing whether a sexual assault victim was a sex worker or non-sex worker affects empathy for the victim, as well as victim-blaming.

In the study, 197 Midwestern U.S. undergraduate students (mainly white, heterosexual cisgender women) read the same newspaper article reporting a sexual assault. In the article, the victims identity was modified, and the victim was either a sex worker, prostitute, social worker, or no title (simply woman).

After reading the article, participants filled out a survey to measure their empathy for the victim and blaming of the victim and perpetrator, called a Victim Empathy Scale. They also filled out a survey to gauge whether the article had emotionally affected them, called a Positive and Negative Affective Schedule, or PANAS.

The study found that respondents were slightly **less likely to empathize with**, and slightly **more likely to victim-blame** when the individual **had a sex worker identity**.

Learn more by checking out the community research summary, or full article linked above!

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