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# Acceptance of Moral and Legal Deviance

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## Background

- Deviance is the straying from cultural norms—these norms can be either moral or legal.
- Everybody reacts to deviance, mostly in negative, unaccepting ways. However, over time people have become more accepting of these deviant acts. (Wesselmann, Williams, Pryor, Eichler, Gill, & Hogue, 2014).
- There is a significant relationship between remembering an event that makes someone feel guilty and actually feeling guilty again. (Chiou, Yang, Yang, 2010). This shows that priming people to feel guilt is affective.
- People who are made to feel guilty tend to participate in riskier behaviors. (Kouchaki, Gino, Oveis, 2014). From this, it can be inferred that those who feel guilty are more likely to be deviant.
- Findings show that there is a significant difference between males and females likelihood to engage in deviant behaviors. (Barnett, Sanborn, & Shane, 2005).
- Our hypothesis was that the participant's acceptance of moral or legal deviance would depend on their gender and the type of prime they received.
- If the participants were primed with legal guilt, we predicted they would be more accepting of legal deviance. If the participants were primed with moral guilt, we predicted they would be more accepting of moral deviance.
- Overall, we predicted that males would be more accepting of deviant acts, both moral and legal.

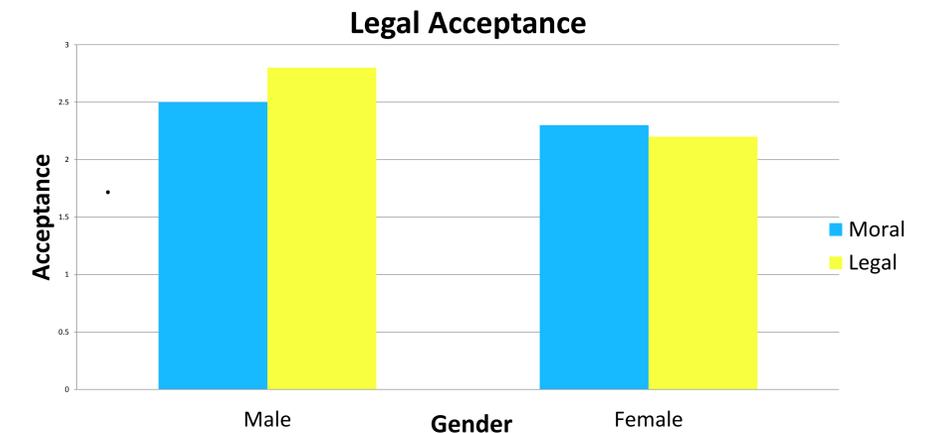
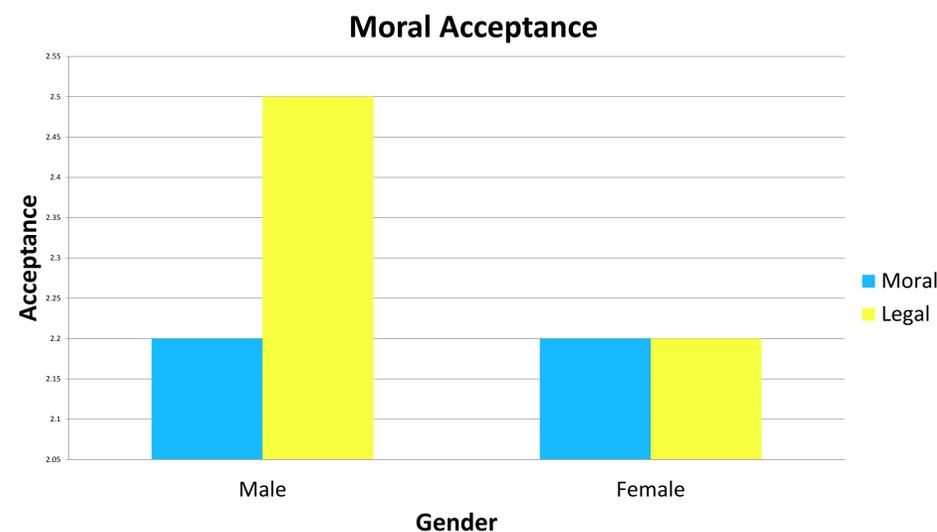
## Method

- There were 80 participants who were undergraduates at a small Christian private school in the south who participated for partial course credit in different psychology courses.
- They complete a prompt containing our prime. We said, "First you will write about an experience where you have broken a law (or moral standard). We will give you ten minutes to complete this section".
- Next, we gave the participants a survey asking them to rate their acceptance of different deviant behaviors on a scale from one-to-five. Moral example: "How wrong is it to sneak out of the house?", Legal example: "Is okay to write on the bathroom stalls?"

- After completing the survey, we showed each of the participants a picture of a cute puppy to bring their emotional state back to neutral.
- We then pick up the surveys and told participants that we would send them a debriefing email after we were finished collecting data.
- All participants who completed the entire study were given course credit.

## Results

- There was no main effect of prime on acceptance of moral deviance,  $F(1,75)=1.16, SD=.54, p>.05$ .
- There was no main effect of gender on moral acceptance.
- There was no significant interaction between gender and prime on moral acceptance,  $F(1, 75)=1.42, SD=.54, p>.05$ . The mean was 2.26.
- There was no main effect of the prime on legal acceptance,  $F(1, 75)=.34, SD=.56, p>.05$ .
- There was a significant main effect of gender on legal acceptance, with males being more accepting of legal deviance.
- The mean of the female participants on legal acceptance was 2.27, while the mean of the male participants was 2.66.
- There was no significant interaction between gender and prime on legal acceptance,  $F(1,75)=2.65, SD=.56, p>.05$ . The mean was 2.40.



## Conclusions

- The results of our study did not support our hypothesis that participant's acceptance of moral or legal deviance would depend on their gender and the type of prime they received
- Our results were not significant, except the main effect of gender on legal acceptance
- We believe there was a main effect of gender on legal acceptance because men are already more prone to deviant behaviors
- We believe we would have found more significance in our results if we had a more diverse participant pool
- Future studies should gather more diverse participants and evaluate the effectiveness of the prime on the participant's emotions

## References

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