

Patriarchy and Clearance Rates of Sexual Victimization: A Multilevel Analysis

Authors : Margaret Schmuhl, Michelle Cubellis

Abstract : Violence against women (VAW) is a widespread social problem affecting nearly two million women in the United States each year. Recently, feminist criminologists have sought to examine patriarchy as a guiding framework for understanding violence against women. Literature on VAW often examines measures of structural gender equality, often overlooking ideological patriarchy which is necessary for structural inequality to remain unchallenged. Additionally, empirical literature generally focuses on extreme forms of VAW, rape, and femicide, often neglecting more common types of violence. This literature, under the theoretical guidance of the Liberal, Radical, and Marxist feminist traditions, finds mixed support for the relationship of patriarchy and VAW. Explanations for these inconsistencies may include data availability, and the use of different operationalizations of structural patriarchy. Research is needed to examine fuller operationalizations of patriarchy in social institutions and to extend this theoretical framework to the criminal justice response to VAW (i.e., clearance rates). This study examines sexual violence clearance rates under the theoretical guidance of these feminist traditions using incident- and county-level data from National Incident Based Reporting System and other sources in multilevel modelling. The findings suggest mixed support for the feminist hypotheses and that patriarchy and gender equality differentially affect arrest clearance rates and clearance through exceptional means for sexual violence.

Keywords : clearance rates, gender equality, multilevel modelling, patriarchy, sexual victimization, violence against women

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