

Animalistic descriptions of violent crimes increase punishment of perpetrators

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Describing criminals and criminal activities with animal metaphors leads to more retaliation against perpetrators by inducing the perception that they're likely to continue engaging in violence, a new *Aggressive Behavior* study suggests.

When surveying jury-eligible adults, investigators varied animalistic descriptions of a [violent crime](#) and examined its effect on the severity of the punishment for the act. Compared with non-animalistic descriptions, animalistic descriptions resulted in significantly harsher punishment for the perpetrator due to an increase in perceived risk of recidivism.

"This research is yet another reminder that justice may be influenced by more than the facts of a case," said lead author Dr. Eduardo Vasquez.

More information: Vasquez, E. A., Loughnan, S., Gootjes-Dreesbach, E. and Weger, U. (2014), The animal in you: Animalistic descriptions of a violent crime increase punishment of perpetrator. *Aggr. Behav.*, 40: 337-344. [DOI: 10.1002/ab.21525](https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.21525)

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