

Culture of Victim Blaming & How to Change it

By Temima Rothmel

Objectives

- Understand Rape Myths & Victim Blaming
- Understand the Realities Surrounding Rape, Rapists, & Rape Survivors
- Attempt to Change Public Perception

Introduction

•“She seemed the perfect victim. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that she was the perfect person to teach us that there are no perfect victims, that no matter how impressive your person, how detailed your story, how unblemished your past, if you stand up and say, ‘He did this to me’, someone will find a way to discredit you.”

-*Anna Quindlen*, 10/16/91

•Women are often blamed or seen as complicit in the sexual offenses against them (Berns, 2001). "The attention and questioning therefore shifts toward the women rather than to men's violence. Thus, an environment of victim blaming and normalization of violence is created in which women feel unable to report crimes of violence against them" (Thapar-Björkert & Morgan, 2010, p. 38).

•“Women are socialized to associate their self-worth with the satisfaction of the needs and desires of others and thus are encouraged to blame themselves as inadequate or bad if men beat them” (Bunch & Carrillo, 1992, p. 18).

•Women who are victims of male violence find “breaking the silence” stigmatizing because they are often perceived by others as “fallen women who have failed in the ‘feminine’ role” (hooks, 1997, p. 283).

Causes of Rape?

Short Skirts?

Alcohol?

Walking home alone?

Being out late?

Flirting?

Causes of Rape

Answer:

NONE OF THE ABOVE!

The only thing that causes rape is:

THE RAPIST

"Real Rapists" & "Real Victims"

Based on a presentation by Dr. Judy Postmus

"Real Rapists"

- Stranger
- Use of weapon/force
- Attacks unexpectedly
- Can't be identified
- Physically stronger

"Real Victims"

- Female/heterosexual
- White
- Sober
- Fights back
- Immediate reporting
- "Pure" or "Virginal"
- Wrong place at the wrong time
- Dressed "appropriately"

Real Rapists & Real Victims

Real Rapists

Real Victims

ANYONE

Steubenville

Media Reports on Guilty Verdict:

- CNN-"Boys were promising students"
- ABC- Makes excuses for the rapists
- NBC- Laments the boys "Promising football careers"
- USA Today- Stressed that the survivor was intoxicated
- Twitter- Survivors received death threats

Statistics of Rapists who Face Jail Time

Rapists

Reported

Faced Trial

Jailed



The Enliven Project <http://theenlivenproject.com/the-truth-about-false-accusation/> Design by Paul Pierson **Falsely Accused**

The Rape of Mr. Smith

The Rape of Mr. Smith

After hearing this vignette, please think about the following questions:

1. How many people found the scenario to be humorous or ridiculous?
2. Why is it easy to find this scenario humorous yet it remains appropriate to ask such questions of a woman who has accused a man of rape?
3. How else are women blamed for their own oppression?
4. What advantage do men have in perpetuating this blaming of the victim?
5. How are other groups within our society blamed for their own oppression?

Implications for Social Work Practice

When working with survivors of interpersonal violence (i.e. rape and IPV) maintain empathic, nonjudgmental stance.

Activism is needed to educate informal and formal systems about rape and rape culture.

Advocate for survivors in Court

We need to work to change this culture:

- Bystander intervention

- Challenging rape culture

- Challenging sexist and demeaning language

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Questions / Comments