

WHAT IS A CULTURE OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE?

A SHORT GUIDE FROM

BOLD VOICES



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Feeling a little uncomfortable? I imagine you probably are. You have, after all, opened a document about gender based violence. You might have also heard this culture referred to before as a 'rape culture'.

The very word 'rape' can be a scary one. It is also in essence controversial; at its core is an act of violence and aggression but it can also find itself the subject of humour, irony and even ridicule.

Add the word 'culture' and many of us might be tempted to raise an eyebrow - after all, surely this is a term better applied to the Handmaid's Tale?

So why do we use these terms?

Well, although rape is a consequence of a 'rape culture', rape culture as a concept isn't purely about the specific act of rape.

Instead, rape culture and cultures of gender based violence are terms that embody the myriad of ways that different forms of aggressive and violent sexual behaviour are normalised, encouraged and even revered by society.

A culture of gender based violence exists when sexual violence is condoned and normalised through societal attitudes, actions and structures.

I don't expect to have convinced you yet, but allow me to unpick this for you over the following pages...



A CULTURE OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE EXISTS WHEN SEXUAL VIOLENCE IS CONDONED AND NORMALISED THROUGH SOCIETAL ATTITUDES, ACTIONS AND STRUCTURES

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

is any kind of unwanted sexual act or activity including...

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence is the abuse of one partner within an intimate or family relationship. It is the repeated, random and habitual use of intimidation to control a partner. Anyone forced to alter their behaviour because they are frightened of their partner's reaction is being abused.

REFUGE

The abuse can be

- physical
- emotional
- psychological
- financial
- sexual

RAPE

let's cut straight to it... the definition of rape is when a penis penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of someone without their consent.

The legal definition in the UK differs from the US where rape includes penetration with other body parts or objects (this is called 'sexual assault by penetration' in the UK)

SEXUAL ASSAULT

is a sexual act carried out without consent. This includes forcing or manipulating someone to watch or be a part of sexual activity.

Penetrating someone with an object or body part other than a penis, without their consent is 'sexual assault by penetration'. This carries the same sentence as rape.

Sexual assault doesn't have to involve other physical violence and doesn't always leave injuries that are visible.

(!) This is a common myth to watch out for (!)

ONLINE HARASSMENT

Online sexual harassment encompasses a wide range of behaviours that use digital content (images, videos, posts, messages, pages) on a variety of different platforms (private or public). It can make a person feel threatened, exploited, coerced, humiliated, upset, sexualised or discriminated against.

The abuse can be

- Non consensual sharing of intimate images and videos
- Exploitation, coercion and threats
- Sexualised bullying
- Unwanted sexualisation

PROJECT DESHAME

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

includes any unwanted sexual actions (a one off or repeated incident) that leave someone feeling uncomfortable, distressed, intimidated or humiliated.

This includes:

- sexually degrading comments or gestures
- staring or leering at someone's body
- sexual jokes or propositions
- sexual content sent online
- physical behaviour, including unwanted sexual advances or touching
- displaying sexually explicit images
- offering rewards for sexual favours

Street harassment included here - catcalling, etc



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CONDONED & NORMALISED

Remember *The Notebook*?
Remember the scene where Noah is dangling from the Ferris wheel saying he won't get down, despite his hands slipping from the bar, unless Allie agrees to go on a date with him...? Concealed by the smokescreen of a Hollywood romcom, a fanciable actor and a culture that tells us women only say no because they want to be persuaded otherwise, is the not-so-subtle coercion and emotional blackmail being portrayed as the ultimate romantic gesture...

... a casual portrayal of coercive sexual behaviour in **popular culture and the media**...

...and an extension of sexual violence into **all areas of the lives of women and marginalised genders** from the street to the nightclub to social media to the home.

High rates of sexual violence..
act as both an example of sexual violence being accepted yet also reinforce it.. a lovely cycle of normalising something horrendous

One third of 16-18 year old girls reported experiencing 'groping' or other unwanted sexual touching at school (YouGov)

6% of 13-17 year olds reported having their nude or nearly nude image shared with other people without their permission. 41% witnessed this happening (Project DeSHAME)

66% of girls aged 14-21 reported experiencing unwanted sexual attention of harassment in a public place (Plan International UK)

Through this cycle, sexual violence comes to be accepted as a normal part of life that is so engrained we don't realise it exists or if we do, we don't think anything can be done about it.



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VICTIM BLAMING

41% of men aged 18–24 say a woman is totally or partly to blame for her sexual assault if she goes out late at night, wears a short skirt and gets drunk (The Fawcett Society)

SLUT SHAMING

Practice called 'slut-dropping' where male students drive round and offer female students who "look like sluts" a lift home then leave them miles from their destinations

LAD CULTURE

Categorised by misogynistic banter, objectification of women and pressure/competition around sex

ATTITUDES & ACTIONS

everyday actions and seemingly insignificant attitudes - each acting as a small seed that together creates a culture of gender based violence

JOKES

Trivialising gender violence by jokes such as Jimmy Carr's "What do nine out of 10 people enjoy? Gang rape."

FALSE RAPE MYTHS

As a society we are quick to claim that women are 'crying rape' when they speak up. This is in spite of the fact that a man is more likely to be raped himself than falsely accused of rape. (Fact Check - Channel 4)

CONSENT

I didn't report "because I didn't know if he was doing anything technically wrong, even though I asked him to stop over and over again" (Revolt Sexual Assault)

Only 52% of students understood it isn't possible to give consent if you are drunk (Brook)

OBJECTIFICATION OF WOMEN

Women's bodies being graded based on objective, demeaning criteria

SILENCING VICTIMS

"My college pretended like it didn't happen" (Revolt Sexual Assault)



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JUSTICE SYSTEM THAT RESULTS IN LOW CONVICTION RATES

Prosecutions for rape in the UK were at just 37% in 2018 (Crown Prosecution Service)

STRUCTURES

legal and institutional structures that prevent change from occurring

LACK OF FUNDING AND SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS

At the end of 2018 there were 6,355 victims on Rape Crisis waiting lists, and the wait for counselling ranged from three to 14 months (APPG)

POOR REPORTING PROCEDURES

lead to low reporting rates and victims left unsupported and isolated

- 42% of girls tell no one when they've been sexually harassed (Plan International)
- Only 8% of students report experiences of sexual assault to their university (Brook)
- 43% of sexual assault victims who didn't report the incident said it was because they thought they would be blamed for the incident (Hidden Marks, NUS)



ANYTHING ELSE TO KNOW?

One more thing before we go...

INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality means understanding that there are lots of different parts of our identity that affect how we experience the world.

These identities might be your gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion, class, disability and so on.

Your identity affects how you experience discrimination, oppression and violence.

Unfortunately, it can exacerbate those experiences because you cannot separate different parts of your identity from oppression.

69.3% of female migrants, including refugees, have experienced sexual violence since they entered Europe (UNU)

Black women found to be 84% more likely than white women to be mentioned in abusive or problematic tweets online (Amnesty)

1 in 2 transgender people are sexually abused or assaulted in their lifetime (USTS)

Well, it means recognising that there are many identities that make individuals and groups more vulnerable to sexual violence.

What does this mean for understanding cultures of gender based violence?



WHAT CAN WE DO?

Preparing and empowering young people to tackle cultures of gender based violence is what we do at Bold Voices, and we're here to support you in doing the same.

Together we can ensure that future generations experience an education free from the threat or experience of sexual violence.

EDUCATION

We deliver education to young people on the many different aspects of this culture (some of which we outlined in this guide).

We help young people identify this culture and disrupt it.

You can find out more about our talks, workshops and resources on our website.

WHERE DO YOU COME IN?

The most important role for parents, guardians and teachers is to be open.

Be open to conversation with teenagers that might be uncomfortable and that might include difficult topics we usually shy away from.

Be open to learning more about a culture that has long been silenced and that might involve rethinking our own assumptions and views.

Be open to really hearing your teenagers - their views, their experiences and their solutions.

You can sign up on our website for our online teachers course and our online parents course.

For more support and information sign up to our newsletter, explore our website and do not hesitate to get in touch.

