



What is Rape Culture?

Rape culture (or rape supportive culture) is a term that is used to describe the ideas, attitudes, or beliefs that perpetuate dangerous stereotypes about sexual assault. It creates a society in which perpetrator behavior is excused and victims are not believed or supported.

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Examples of Rape Culture:

1. **Jokes about sexual assault, domestic violence, or violence against women.**
 - Statements that trivialize or make light of sexual assault promote the idea that these types of violence are acceptable.
2. **When the media reports about a sexual assault, and uses inappropriate language (calling assault “sex” rather than rape).**
 - Oftentimes, news outlets will also express greater sympathy for perpetrators than it does for victims. For example, “He had such a promising football career.” or “She was a well-liked teacher.” Are ways we’ve seen perpetrators described in the media.
 - “She was drunk and pressed provocatively when the alleged assault took place.” or “The student has a history of problematic behavior.” Are ways we’ve seen victims unfairly blamed in the media.
 - Using inappropriate or inaccurate language to describe sexual assault desensitizes the audience and fails to convey the severity and violence of the crime.
 - Expressing sympathy for offenders perpetuates the myth that somehow the victim is to blame for what happened, and that perpetrators aren’t responsible for their own actions.
3. **Promoting the idea that sexual assault prevention is about people dressing, behaving, or presenting him/herself in a certain way to stop an assault, rather than teaching people not to assault or harass.**
 - Many times, women are told that in order to prevent an assault from taking place, they should not walk home alone, not wear revealing clothing, not drink too much, etc.
 - On the other hand, men are given the message that they should always want sex or should be strong enough to fight off any offender, and therefore cannot experience sexual assault.
 - The reality is **the only person who is responsible for a sexual assault is the perpetrator.** Their actions, behaviors, and words are a result of their own choices and cognitive distortions, and they need to be held accountable in a manner that is consistent with their crimes.



4. Advertisements in the media, magazines, or popular culture that portray people as sexual objects, or normalize sexual violence in the context of their production

- Examples such as those shown below are a clear example of how sexual assault is “normalized” in our everyday media consumption:



These are just a few of many examples of rape culture. It is important to remember that sexual assault doesn't happen in a vacuum. Sexual violence happens in a cultural context, which influences how victims are treated when they come forward, and how perpetrators are (or are not) held accountable for their actions.

Speaking out against rape culture is a form of bystander intervention, and is crucially important in creating societal change.