

The Connection between Rape Culture and Violence Toward Women

AMBER

Hi everyone. I hope you can hear me. I'm going to get started with my presentation. That was a really great introduction from Caitlin, so I appreciate that. As she said, I'm a PhD candidate in the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology. I'm sort of a content expert, if you will, in violence towards women and rape culture. I also do some research in pornography and I've worked in institutional corrections. So my experience really runs the gamut. But the bulk of my research, I would say, sort of correlates to what we're going to be chatting about tonight.

MORCZEK:

I've spoken quite a bit on this topic. Not only to college students like yourselves from across the country, but to those in the field who are working as practitioners with those who have experienced sexual violence with domestic violence and stalking. I've even done sort of these sorts of talks with inmates in Washington State Department of Corrections. So I've sort of had a really unique [? sort of growth ?] experiences sort of help me navigate not only this conversation, but ones in a variety of circles.

As Caitlin noted, I've been published on this topic quite a bit. You know, I've had my head wrapped around this topic for many years now. So all my experiences therein are really rooted in not only my research, but the bulk of the research that I've been looking at and consuming for the past several years.

A couple of things you should know about me just personally because we're going to be talking about some pretty heavy topics tonight. I want you to know a little bit about me as a presenter. I'm from New York State originally, upstate to be exact. So I have a tendency to talk kind of fast. That's just an east coast kind of mentality. I'm going to try to slow that down tonight to the best of my ability, but know that that's sort of where I'm hailing from.

Another thing you should know about me is that I have a cat named Plankton and it's one of those work hard so your cat can have a better life situation. So I'm achieving all these great things, but I do that for my son who happens to be a cat. So I just wanted to give you that sort of background on me, not only personally, professionally, because this topic can get quite heavy as it progresses. And you should know that there's a human here who's talking to you about this, and who's talked about this quite extensively in a number of circles.

So before I move on, I'm actually going to shut my camera off because it's a little weird for me to be staring at my own face. So I'm going to go ahead and do that now. But know that you

can ask me questions, and I'll try to answer them towards the end. Another thing here is I'm going to try to make this as interactive this humanly possible. And I'd love for you, when I ask questions, for you to answer those in the chat box for me so we can sort of make this a back and forth dialogue.

So let's get started on the presentation. I want to offer a few reminders to you though before we get into the content. Offer a trigger warning of sorts. As I said, this topic is really, really heavy. And it can be intimidating for many and it can be overwhelming. So know that. Be respectful of others in the room. Be respectful of yourself throughout this presentation. Know that there may be survivors listening in on this presentation who have their own set of unique experiences. You know, I, myself, have been impacted by gender-based violence, so I understand sort of the trauma and the aftermath therein. So if you need to sort of take a step back while you're listening, go do something else for a minute and come back, I totally understand that. It can be very difficult to sort of talk about these topics.

You know, that being said, note that this presentation is going to contain some strong language and some rather unsettling anecdotes. We're going to be discussing sort of the nooks and crannies of rape culture. And I'm going to be discussing with you sort of the more insidious elements therein. So again, some strong language. Be mindful of that. I'm not doing it purposefully or maliciously simply to give you this information as concretely as possible. Feel free to write down some questions. As I said, I'll have a Q&A portion at the end of the webinar. And I will try to address all of those questions at that time.

So let's get started. We're having this conversation because sexual violence is a huge problem in our culture. One in five women and one in 16 men will be victims of sexual assault during their time at university. So violence in general is rampant. And sexual violence is even more so. And I should note here that when I say things like sexual assault, what I mean is any sexual activity that lacks consent. So sort of hold that definition in your mind as we move through and sort of talk about rape culture, that it's really any sexual activity that's lacking consent.

Recent research actually estimates that about 25 million adults in our culture have experienced sexual violence. And that there's a huge economic toll, emotional toll, physical toll, and societal cost to these sort of experiences that a lot of people have. And given these statistics, you know, it's obvious to me that we need to start examining what factors contribute to sexual violence in our culture. And for me, I believe that cultural factors are a major, major

thing that is linking us to all of this sexual violence that we're seeing.

And I would say I'm in good company. The United Nations, the World Health Organization, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, they all know that cultural risk factors are related to sexual violence. That cultural norms that are supportive of violence and gender inequity can lead to sexual violence, or at least a culture that supportive of that therein.

Accordingly, I don't feel like we should simply address sexual violence on an individual level or a community level, but also on a cultural one. Because cultural mores impact individual attitudes and behaviors. And individual attitudes and behaviors taken collectively can impact culture and reinforce some of those negative stereotypes therein. So let's talk about rape culture.

Rape culture is a culture where gender-based violence, sexual violence is pervasive, normalized, minimized, rationalized, lyricised, satirized, and condoned. Remember that rape culture is the infrastructure that enables violence to occur, and validates it when it happens. It sort of misrepresents sex and gender-based violence as normal and expected. It silences victims. It exonerates perpetrators. So in terms of the tree diagram you're seeing here on the slide, I sort of see rape culture as the foundation or the roots, if you will, where it's sort of like linking all of these individual level and community level expressions of violence. Like you can imagine these little branches on the trees as individual expressions and whatever that may look like. So that could be an instance of sexual violence. Maybe an instance of intimate partner violence. And so on and so forth.

So moving forward here, when we talk about rape culture, note that it's sort of pervasive in our culture to the point that we don't even necessarily recognize that we're steeped in it. According to Jackson Katz-- he's a famed scholar in the field. He does a lot of work around masculinity and violence and sexual violence. He says that sexual violence is quote "A pervasive social phenomenon with deep roots in the existing personal, social, and institutional arrangements. And when violence is rationalized as normal and expected, the more likely it is to occur." So in other words, he's saying that sexual violence and rape culture have sort of a synergistic connection. Sexual violence is the foundation of rape culture, and rape culture normalizes sexual violence.

However, this sort of produces a paradox. This very normality makes it even harder to see that there's an actual problem taking place. And given that rape culture-- specifically, in our current

sort of technology-saturated, pornified, popular culture, which I'll talk about a little bit later-- is sort of passively condoned as fact, young people are trained from very, very young ages to sort of see violence, specifically sexual violence perpetrated by men, as normal and expected.

So I actually recently read a study on young girls, ages three to 17. And they were sort of questioning them as to what they felt about violence in their culture, and specifically men's violence. And some of the more startling findings were that these young girls saw men's violence as normal. And even more insidiously, they romanticized it. And they also policed other young girls responses to men's violence. So we see that young people are already being steeped in this culture, and viewing sexual violence as normative and sometimes even romanticizing it.

You know, and when I say romanticizing, it always makes me think of-- oh, gosh-- *Twilight*. I forgot the title there for a second. The movie, *Twilight*, where we see this sort of romanticizing of these stalking behaviors. Where we see Edward sort of chasing after Bella in a really insidious way. And we don't even recognize that. We sort of see that as romantic. And it's really more insidious than that when you really start to sort of peel back those layers.

So let's continue on. I have a lot more examples here of rape culture that we can talk about. But keep the tree diagram in mind because it will sort of be utilizing that throughout the evening. Oh, yes, and Kara H actually just said-- I'm looking at the chatbox-- yes, the *Fifty Shades of Grey* movie is actually a very good example of a more recent example of this sort of dynamic where we're romanticizing men's violence. Very, very good. Very good.

So-- I'm not trying to cite myself here, but I pulled a quote from one of the publications that I have that I sort of use quite frequently when met with any criticism around me bringing up the topic of rape culture. So I say rape culture isn't the primary perpetrator of sexual violence. You know, there are individual people out there perpetrating these crimes. And that's-- me having this conversation with you all tonight is not taking away from that. Right? But I believe that rape culture is metaphorically driving the perpetrator to and away from the scene of the crime. So what do I mean by that?

I think that we live in a culture, like I said, that sort of exonerates perpetrators and silences victims. And we can talk and we will talk throughout the evening about how this is sort of exemplified in many ways in our culture. But let me give you a few examples here. I think that rape culture sort of creates an environment where women are targets of violence, and the

men who perpetrate it, again, walk away unscathed.

And I think that it's even normalized-- sexual violence is normalized to the point where we didn't even recognize it in our language. I often hear younger people say things like-- when they're describing sexual activity they'll say things like, oh, hit that, beat that, tear it up, bang, pound, slay, smash. You know, so all these words that are just readily used to describe sexual activity that actually have a violent connotation. We just use these things so flippantly that we don't even recognize that.

Another example of rape culture would be actually something I saw recently in the media. There was a Brazilian soccer player, and I don't know if any of you saw this, he had recently returned to playing soccer after he spent some time in prison. Now, he spent time in prison for torturing and murdering his ex girlfriend. So he spent many years behind bars. He had done his time. But when he got back out, he was reinstated in soccer. And he was quoted as saying, well, mistakes happen. I'm not a bad guy. So what is rape culture telling us here? Rape culture is saying that someone can commit a horrendous act of gender-based violence that results in a murder, and it's OK, they can play soccer again and they can continue to sort of be glorified by fans and so on and so forth.

Yes, I've actually just seen Amber in the chat box here. She says same with NFL players. You know, we do see this a lot with pro athletes. Maybe you're speaking, Amber, about the Ray Rice video. Where we saw him sort of engage in intimate partner violence with his then fiancée, now wife. Right? And he's still sort of lauded as a good football player.

Moving on, there's a bigger case here that I think we've all probably heard of in the media that sort of is the exemplification. Yes, Karina. I'm looking in the chat box now. Karina said Brock Turner. Yes, absolutely. The Stanford sexual assault case. Where there was many things wrong with that case. Many, many things. One of which was in the first article, or one of the first articles that was written about the case, he was referred to as quote, "The Stanford Swimmer" rather than suspected rapist or any of the language that would refer to him given the actions he had partaken in.

And in fact, one of the first articles that were written about him, his swim team times were listed because he was a swimmer at Stanford. And his team head shot was used, not his mug shot. Long story short, this sort of played out in the media. He went to court, went to trial. He was convicted and was sentenced to six months in prison. He actually only served three

months in prison, which was sort of a double-edged sword for those of us who work in the field of gender-based violence because on one hand, yes, that is a very light sentence for sexual violence. On the other hand, we know that most perpetrators of sexual violence do not, absolutely do not spend any time behind bars or even go through the criminal justice system.

Another thing you know that we see in the media quite frequently is those in the political sphere sort of making comments about violence towards women that are pretty flippant, if not horrifically offensive. So one Wisconsin politician was actually quoted as saying-- and this was in response to him being asked about a recent sexual assault that had taken place in a high school in Wisconsin. And he said, quote, "Some girls rape easy." So, you know, denoting that there are some victims out there who are more easily perpetrated against than others. There was also a video of a certain presidential candidate who was quoted as saying that he wanted to grab women by the pussy. So all these horrific things are sort of playing out in the media right now.

Another example of rape culture that I sort of see quite frequently is the use of demeaning language towards women. We see that quite often. And in fact, Jackson Katz-- again, that scholar I noted earlier-- he pointed out that we sort of flippantly use really horrific language towards women. And, rightfully so, we will not use things like racial slurs, but we have no problem with calling women horrific names. So actually Jackson Katz points out that Eminem, the rapper, he has made it a very-- sort of his point to not ever use racial slurs in his lyrics. Yet he has many lyrics that sort of are the embodiment of violence towards women. His song, "Kim" in particular is pretty heinous in the fact that he is openly disparaging and lyricising abuse and violence.

So I could go on for days about how many examples of rape culture are out there. But what I really want to do right now is sort of go into the individual elements that we see, and we tease out more examples from there. So there's no one piece of literature that's seemingly itemizes all the dynamics of rape culture very thoroughly. But my careful review of the literature allowed me to tease out some recurring themes that are sort of intimately connected to the proliferation of this culture that normalizes and minimizes violence towards women.

So they're listed here. We're going to go through them individually. I'm going to ask you some questions throughout, so I hope you will participate. You all are doing a great job at doing that already. But we're going to talk about sexual objectification, rape myths, victim blame, risk reduction, slut-shaming, harassment in its varying forms, and then media influences that

perpetuate this culture of violence.

So let's talk about the first one here. Sexual objectification. So this occurs when a woman's body-- and it's generally women who are sexually objectified in our culture. Men can be objectified, but generally, women are the targets of this objectification. But this is sort of where a woman's body parts or certain elements of hers are separated out from her as a person, and she's viewed largely as a physical object of male desire. So we see this in a variety of ways play out in our culture.

What I want to ask you all now is if anyone can think of any examples that they've seen of sexual objectification, specifically in the media. In real life too, but perhaps in the media if you can think of anything. Perfume commercials, Amber said. Absolutely, yes. We see that from-- and specifically, in the ads in magazines as well. We see the objectification of certain body parts with perfume bottles. [? Naya ?] said the Victoria's Secret commercials. Karina, very good. I was going to actually mention that. The Carl's Jr. Commercials. Oh, Olivia, yes, very good. The American Apparel ads are actually quite extreme in their objectification of women. And specifically when you put the American Apparel ads of men versus women up, the difference is quite startling.

Yes, Chloe. Fashion shows, absolutely. Maria, magazines with cars and girls. Yes, very much so. I always think of when I was in college and I went to get my car fixed at this local shop in New York, and I walked in the garage and there was these calendars of women posing next to cars, so obviously very objectified. Ashley said we were just watching the *Iron Fist*, and I was surprised to see the main character was often showed without a shirt on while his girlfriend was fully clothed. Good, that's a good example actually, Ashley, of men being objectified sometimes when women aren't.

Amber said alcohol ads. And Tony said magazines. Yes, very good, everyone. Very good. A couple other ones I wrote down, which I was sort of chatting with some colleagues about this morning, is-- this one always sticks out to me as sort of the epitome of sexual objectification. In the late 2000s, the Houston press published an article called "10 Hottest Female Sex Offenders". I can't make that up. Even after committing a sexual offense, women are being ranked and objectified based on their appearance.

Another one that sort of sticks out in-- yes. Autumn said, wow. Yes, very much-- wow. Another thing that sort of sticks out for me is in sports, specifically the NFL versus how women play

football. So there's something called the Women's Lingerie Football League. I don't know if all of are familiar with that. But in order for women to play football, apparently they have to be scantily clad. And also another thing with boxing matches, where you see the "ring girls" quote, unquote. At the end of every round they come out in either a bikini or some other outfit, and they sort of hold up the number of the round and keep things moving that way. It's quite fascinating for someone who does this research. And it's horrifying for me as someone who identifies as a feminist.

Oh, Courtney. Yes, very good. I'm looking at the chat box. She said cheerleaders. Very good. Yes, absolutely. And I want to note here-- there, of course, are men who are cheerleaders, but we do see that women are wearing more scantily clad outfits than men. You know, I should note here before I move forward, I'm not pathologizing or shaming any individual, specifically women who may appear in these advertisements, maybe in music videos, and any other way that someone may be objectified. Because on an individual level, I think owning and expressing your sexuality is fantastic. You know, that's wonderful if you feel empowered to do that. But I think at a cultural level when we take all of these images collectively, they're ultimately disempowering for women. I sort of think of it as, like, if sexuality and harnessing one's sexuality in those ways was an effective means to garner influence, power, and respect, powerful men all over the world would do it all the time. Right? So that's what I sort of think of.

I'm looking at Autumn here in the chat box. You actually said a very good example that I missed, is the *Deal or No Deal*. Women on there and game shows and that sort of thing. We absolutely do see those images quite frequently. In the interest of time, I have to move on. I tend to want to talk about these things for quite a long period of time. So let's keep it moving. So sexual objectification is one.

The next one here-- rape myths are inherent to rape cultures. So these are widely held albeit deeply inaccurate beliefs about sexual assault. So the one that I actually didn't put on here that I want to start with first is the first rape myth that I sort of see is-- rape is always about sex. That's what we sort of hear. But no, it's actually about power and control. I sort of think of it like this. I use this analogy quite frequently in my classes. You know, if you walked into my office-- let's say you were visiting me on campus. And you saw me hitting my office mate with a baseball bat, you would not automatically assume that I like baseball. You wouldn't be like, wow, Amber is such a baseball fan. Right?

Similarly, sexual violence is not always about sex. It's rather-- it's gaining and retaining power

or control over another person. So that's one rape myth that I see. It's sort of permeated our culture. The first one that you're seeing here, you know, that it isn't really sexual assault. It's a misunderstanding. We sort of see that trope quite frequently. Same thing with these sort of excusatory statements-- boys will be boys. We see this ranging from small children all the way up.

What about victims lie? I see this way too often, actually, in this work. Where there's an argument that there is this-- the criminal justice system is sort of awash with those who perpetuate lies about sexual violence. And again, that's not true. The research tells us that false reports are actually incredibly rare. An estimated 2% to 8% of all reported cases of sexual assault happen to be falsified. You know, that's out of the reported cases. You know, we know that the large majority of cases of sexual violence are never reported to authorities.

I think a good example of this rape myth that victims lie is the whole Bill Cosby situation that we see playing out here. Bill Cosby has had more than 50 women accuse him of sexual violence. And all in startlingly similar ways. Despite that fact, though, despite that 50-plus women have come forward, there are still people who outwardly deny that it happened at all. And would even go as far to say that the victims are lying, or that they're gold diggers. Yes, Amber, I actually did say 2% to 8%. I'm looking-- or actually, excuse me, I'm looking at the chat box now.

Let's see. Sexual assault is most often perpetrated by deranged strangers. We see that quite often. This is perhaps one of those pervasive myths in our culture. Where we conceptualize rape as something that's highly violent, perpetrated by a stranger, and it results in a victim immediately reporting to police. However, the research tells us we know that most cases of sexual violence, there is little physical violence taking place. The victim knows the perpetrator and the victim rarely reports to police. So sort of the polar opposite of our antiquated conceptualization of what sexual assault looks like.

I think that pathologizing perpetrators of rape as these, like, deranged strangers who are running around at night, sort of allows us to not only narrowly define what rape looks like, but it also provides us with some cognitive dissonance. You know, I think that men who assault women sans any degree of force or verbal coercion, they're not framed as sexual assault perpetrators. We sort of frame that as seemingly normal man who made a harmless mistake. I think that this rape myth, in particular, also leads us to feel sort of-- it makes it difficult for us to label sexual violence as what it is.

The next one here. You cannot be assaulted by your partner. We know that that's not true. Actually there is-- in the field that I work in, we call that intimate partner sexual violence. And that's actually quite common within relationships containing intimate partner violence. So you absolutely can be perpetrated against by someone who is close to you.

The second to last one here. Men cannot be sexually assaulted. You know, we know that's not true. Indeed, the statistics tell us otherwise. One in 16 men while they're here on a college campus will be sexually assaulted. You know, it's true, however, for particularly for men who are victims, they face additional barriers to reporting. In fact, I want to pose that question to you all out there listening. Why do you think for men in particular it can be difficult to report sexual violence? Why do you think that would be harder for men in particular to come forward to say, listen, I've been assaulted and I need help.

Or even women. Why do you think that it might be difficult for women to come forward? Shame, absolutely. Yes. Courtney said one that's pretty pervasive. You should have been strong enough to defend myself. Very good. Ashley said maybe they could be embarrassed. They don't think people believe them. Yeah, Maria, very good. Gender roles. Masculinity would dictate that you're supposed to be able to fight off any potential attacks or thwart any attacks. Yes, absolutely, Tony. They may not actually think that anyone will believe them. Michael says, men don't want to admit weakness. And men in law enforcement, they don't want to hear it.

Erica said, when it's a younger guy with an older woman, his peers act as if he should like it. Absolutely. We see this quite often as the response when female teachers perpetrate against students. We don't see that reaction, however, when a male teacher perpetrates against students. Very, very good. We're seeing that-- yeah, absolutely. There's a large portion of attacks that occur within male-dominated spaces. Very good. Absolutely. So all of these things sort of create a situation where victims do not come forward. Right? All of these sort of elements that we're talking about.

The last one here is something I like to talk about given how technology has permeated our culture. And I sort of see a distinction when people talk about violence between embodied harm versus disembodied harm. So I see embodied harm as an actual harm taking place in quote, unquote, "the real world". Maybe offline. Maybe this could be an instance of sexual assault, an instance of stalking. Disembodied harm could be something like we're going to talk

about later, like online harassment. You know, I believe that both of these forms of harm are equally important to talk about regardless of the space. But we definitely see the sort of distinction here.

Moving forward in the instance of time, let's go to the next one here. Risk reduction strategies. So this is where I'm going to ask you for some input as well. What strategies do you all employ to protect yourself from sexual violence? I know for me, I can think of one right off the bat that actually my dad sort of told me about. He gave me a pepper spray before I went away to college. And I used to carry that on my key chain or out and about when I was jogging. So if you all could just write in the chat box-- oh, they're already popping in here.

So Courtney said, carry pepper spray when I run. Absolutely. Amber said never leave a drink alone at a bar. Kara said the buddy system. Yes, very good. [? Naya ?] said if I work late, I always walk out to the car in a group. Very good. Moderator said don't drink too much. Very good. Lots of pepper sprays on here. Absolutely. So we do sort of see this. We're trained for this sort of-- especially women since we were very young. Yeah, always have a key ready for your door. Park under a street light. All of these sorts of things. You all are coming up with some really great examples.

So I put some on here on the side in case we didn't touch on them. But it's things that I even think about and many of my friends think about as we sort of walk through life. And specifically my friends who identify as women. So I do things like make sure my car doors are locked as soon as I get in. You know, I carry-- like we just said in the chat box. All of you are carrying pepper spray or your parking under a street light. You know, you're looking in your car before you get in it. Using the buddy system. Using self-defense. You know, I've even been told to use the reflective surfaces of windows near me to ensure that no one is following me.

I feel like as a woman I sort of have to be hyper vigilant and aware of my surroundings. Actually, Autumn in the chat box said that yes, sometimes I hold my keys between my fingers. Very good. Yes, very good. I actually-- I'll tell you another story. My dad got me in inner city defense pencil when I moved away to grad school. And I'll tell you what that is in case you don't know. It's basically-- it looks like a normal pencil, but you push the button and a *Game of Thrones* looking sword comes out. It's quite the thing. And I think my dad thinks I'm going to gouge someone's eyes out or something like that. But it's essentially a pencil that I can use in the event that I'm ever attacked. But again, I'm constantly thinking about these things.

Angela in the chat box actually just said, I have a tool on my key ring. Very good, absolutely. So all of these things we sort of constantly think about. And I think that women in particular are constantly thinking about these things because we live in a culture where sexual violence is normalized and we have this sort of rhetoric where we have to prevent it from happening.

So when I talk about risk reduction, again, I'm talking about things that sort of perpetuate the don't get raped message versus the don't rape message. So all of these sort of self-protective strategies that we employ. And then also this sort of-- our country is awash with anti-rape products. Like this nail polish actually recently came out. And the people who developed this nail polish were actually very benevolent in their sort of development of this product. But it's nail polish where if you put it on your fingers and you're out in a bar, if you dip your finger in a drink, the nail polish will change color if there are any date rape drugs in your drink.

You know, that's fantastic that someone thought of that. But you know, it leads me to a couple of questions here. What if I'm out with someone that I trust? You know, if I'm out with someone that I trust, I'm not going to automatically assume they're going to do anything harmful to me. So why would I wear that nail polish that night or why would I even think to use it? You know, another thing along these lines is that when, if I were to wear this nail polish, I mean, date rape drugs are used, but alcohol is actually the number one drug used to facilitate sexual violence. So it sort of defeats the purpose, so to speak.

There are also belts that lock your pants on so they won't come off in the event of an assault. There's also alarms that are available for you. Interestingly enough, I put stockings up here because there was a project that looked-- it was stockings, but they looked like hairy legs. And this was marketed as an anti-rape product because apparently I think the messaging therein was obviously very oppressive and ridiculous, but that if you have hairy legs that you would not be sexually assaulted, for some reason. So yes, this is something-- you can google that. That is a thing.

There's also anti-rape clothing that makes it very difficult not to get off in the event of assault, so on and so forth. I think that risk reduction-- I don't want to sort of make this into something that's diminutive. I really do believe that you should protect yourself. But I also think the messaging is coming from a not great place. I think it's coming from messaging inherent to rape culture.

Some recent research, though, has indicated that risk reduction paired with messaging about

empowering women and dispelling all these myths, that's sort of been useful to counteract sexual violence. So of course we don't want to take risk reduction or this don't-get-raped messaging in isolation. If that is paired with empowering messaging, it can be helpful. So I am not against going out there and protecting yourself. You absolutely should. But I think that the crux of some of these products and strategies are really rooted in the foundations of rape culture.

So in the interest of time, I'm going to move forward here and talk about the next element, which is victim blaming. I highly recommend this book. You'll see at the bottom here. I put the book name. It's Kate Harding. Her book is *Asking For It*. It is a very easy read. I always have my students read it when I teach violence towards women, which is a criminal justice class in my department. I really think it's an easy sort of book to read and sort of digest all of these issues. But she has this really great quote in her book. And it says, "Women are no more important than any other potential victim, but we are the primary targets of the messages and myths that sustain rape culture. Anyone can be raped, but men aren't conditioned to live in terror of it, nor are they constantly warned that their clothing, travel choices, alcohol consumption, and expressions of sexuality are likely to bring violations upon them."

This is a pretty profound quote. And I sort of see this as sort of the crux of our conversation about victim blaming. Because in a rape culture, the actions of the victim rather than the perpetrator are automatically scrutinized before, during, and after an assault. Unless the victim and the sexual assault in question meets that very narrow and antiquated conceptualization of sexual violence, i.e. stranger violence, we're remiss to denote that as sexual violence.

For example, again, we expect victims to be victimized by a stranger, to fight back, to show physical and emotional trauma, to immediately tell law enforcement, to be able to regale law enforcement of that trauma without any inconsistencies or hesitation. And if a victim doesn't fit this very narrow mold-- let's say there's no obvious physical trauma. Let's say a victim fails to tell law enforcement immediately. Let's say the assault is not perpetrated by a stranger but maybe by the victim's spouse or maybe by their partner, maybe by a friend. You know, that immediately leaves room in our culture to question it's occurrence.

So common victim-blaming sentiments that I see often involve questioning of victim's sexual history, questioning of victim's amount of alcohol consumption, and questioning the style of dress that a victim wore given a certain scenario.

You know, victim living has gone so far that we see this play out in news media. Right? The Steubenville case is a fantastic example of that. I don't know if you all are familiar or remember the Steubenville case. This is where a 16-year-old was sexually assaulted at a party while she was unconscious by some high school athletes. They actually assaulted her, documented it, bragged about it on social media.

And then the media, in regaling us with this story, framed the victim as a career ruiner. She was hurting these football players by having this happen. She shouldn't have drank that much. These guys had such promising football careers. How dare she you know come forward with this. Or how dare we sort of scrutinize this. This was a big case. And you can actually look up on YouTube if you just search, like, Steubenville news media response, or something along those lines, you'll see how major news networks were framing this, blaming the victim, and exonerating the perpetrators. And even, like, sort of feeling bad for the perpetrators in these scenarios.

So in so many cases of sexual violence, victims are blamed. Either they blame themselves because of all of these things we're talking about tonight, other people blame them, and then there's some combination of both. Right? But this is a big element of rape culture, where we are blaming victims and exonerating perpetrators and scrutinizing the victim's behavior before we ever look at perpetrator behavior in these scenarios.

So in the interest of time, I have to keep moving forward. I could talk about this for so long. But we have to move on to the next one, which is the next element of rape culture, which is slut-shaming. So this is labeling a woman who expresses her sexuality as a slut. So this expression of sexuality, mind you, can be real or presumed. It doesn't actually have to be real. So we see this quite often in this double standard for men and women. Where men sexual expression is normalized and glorified, and women are chastised for their expressions of their sexuality.

So we can think about this in terms of how many names we have for women who express-- or derogatory names for women-- who express their sexuality, versus men. So a few off the top of my head here-- we see the word "slut" used. We see the word "whore" used for women. "Floozie". The word "skank". We sort of see this quite frequently for women when they're expressing their sexuality. But we don't have a lot of words for men that are necessarily demeaning in terms of this. So we do have the word "womanizer" for men. That has a negative connotation. But then we also say things like "stud" or "ladies man". Maybe he is a "player". Maybe he's a "pimp". So this sort of double standard exists where women are

degraded for their expressions of sexuality and men are lauded.

Slut-shaming occurs within this culture that engages in a lot of sexual double standards in which men are lauded for sexually permissive behavior and women are punished, maybe sometimes even socially ostracized. It's sort of this virgin-whore dichotomy in our culture, where you have to be sexy to a certain point because we're living in a culture that dictates that as normal, but also you can't be too sexy. And you have to be sexual, but you can't be too sexual. But you can't be prudish either, but you don't want to be whorish. It's sort of this, like, no-win situation, where I think women exist in this space where this double standard is such that no matter what we do, we're going to be scrutinized for expressing our sexuality too much or not enough, in a way that is palatable to some and not [AUDIO OUT]. It's quite a situation.

Sort of an example of slut-shaming and victim-blaming that always comes to mind when I'm thinking about this is there was a New York Times article that was reporting on the gang rape of an 11-year-old girl by 18 men who recorded the act. So in this New York Times piece, when they were regaling us with this case or this gang rape that took place in Texas, I believe, the New York Times writer denoted that the victim dressed a certain way, wore makeup, and often associated with teenage boys. So what is that telling us? The writer was quick to note an 11-year-old girl who was gang-raped, well, she wore makeup. You know, she might have dressed productively, and she definitely associated with older boys. An 11-year-old girl. I mean, I think of that and I think, if an 11-year-old girl who was victimized can be blamed for that, imagine all of the other victims who outwardly have more agency, how they can be blamed for an assault. I mean, it's absolutely ridiculous.

In the interest of time, I have to continue moving forward. Again, I keep wanting to talk about all of these things in-depth. But this, again, is a double standard that exists within our culture. The next to last one here is normalizing harassment. So women are more likely to be targeted for harassment, specifically in male-dominated spaces, than men. We see this with street harassment. So street harassment, if you don't know exactly what that means, that's otherwise known as catcalling. It happens frequently on the street to women, where men will yell things at them on public transportation and on the street, whatever. I actually encourage you to watch a video on YouTube. It's called 10 hours of walking in New York City as a woman. It will give you some additional perspective on what this looks like.

You know, I think that street harassment is sort of framed within a rape culture, that it tells conventionally attractive women that they should expect street harassment. And that women

who do not meet conventional standards of beauty should appreciate street harassment. So we sort of see this insidiousness even within street harassment. I actually experienced street harassment when I was in Las Vegas. That would be the first and last time I ever go to Vegas. It was an experience. I did it once and it was fine. But I experienced as I was walking-- so I'm sort of a morning person. I'm one of those awful people who gets up really early and is super chipper.

So I got up really early one morning. It was like 7:00 in the morning. My partner at the time, he didn't want to get out of bed. So I said, OK, I'm going to walk across the strip. I'm go get some breakfast. So that's what I did. I was stone cold sober at 7:00 AM. I'm excited to go get this breakfast at the other end of the strip. So I'm walking down the strip and I see this group of men in front of me. There was about seven or eight men in the group. And it's 7 AM. Now, as a woman I kind of know what's going to happen. I kind of can see how rowdy they are. I kind of knew that I was going to get harassed as I walked by. But I had to walk through anyway. There was no other way for me to walk around them. So I walked by them. They harassed me. I won't tell you what they said, but you know, it was uncomfortable at best.

As I was walking by them, I happened to see two other men approaching me from the other direction. So they were sort of walking towards me. These were older men. They looked like someone's dad. And I thought, oh, good. These individuals are going to help me, right? They're going to say something. And they did stop me a little bit after we passed the men who were street harassing me. And they said to me, sweetheart, you shouldn't be walking down the strip by yourself. And I was a little bit too stunned to say anything as a retort to that. But the implication was that I shouldn't be walking alone. Not that these men shouldn't be harassing me. But that at 7:00 in the morning, when I'm stone-cold sober going to get my breakfast, I should not be doing that. So let's just say street harassment happens all the time. And it can happen in a wide variety of spaces and exceedingly uncomfortable.

There's also online harassment that takes place of women. This is where women are verbally abused online in a variety of spaces. This could be anywhere from in the comments sections of online-- even an online dating, maybe on websites. It could be within gaming. So they're subject to verbal abuse, cyberstalking. Sometimes other users will threaten them with violence when women are interacting online. In fact, actually Ashley, I'm looking in the chat box. She said gaming all the time. Yes, absolutely. In fact, I was doing this presentation for a class last semester.

And I asked the students, much like I'm asking you all, what does online harassment look like? Have you ever experienced it? And one of the women raised their hands and said, yeah, I actually can show you. I was playing Yahtzee on my phone, she said. She goes I didn't realize the chat box was open on the Yahtzee thing. I was just trying to play Yahtzee. And she showed me all of these disgusting messages she was getting. All she was doing was playing Yahtzee on her phone. Like it was absolutely bananas to me. But, you know, I'm actually seeing in the chat box now, we see, yes, absolutely. Tinder, we see all kinds of unsolicited pictures and nudes that are being sent to individuals. Absolutely.

Someone actually just commented-- I have guys ask me if I'm married. I tell them I am, then they proceed to harass me anyway. And that's actually sort of one of the problems that we see within this, is that we have to sort of exert that we have a boyfriend or a husband or something like that in order to get harassment to stop. And then sometimes it doesn't stop after that. It's really insidious. But I'm getting a little ahead of myself.

I do want to tell you about this example of online harassment that a pretty prominent feminist online-- she's an author. She's fantastic. Her name is Jessica Valenti. That she experienced online harassment on Twitter. I mean, she constantly experiences it. But this one time she actually experienced it to the point where she woke up, got on Twitter, and there were people who were threatening-- and again, I can't make this up-- to rape and murder her five-year-old daughter. So online misogynistic trolls on Twitter were threatening to rape and murder her daughter.

She actually tweeted in response to this. She said, this morning I woke up to a rape and death threat directed at my five-year-old daughter. This part of my work life is unacceptable. This occurs all the time. You know, in fact, it occurs so much that we see it as normal and expected in most settings. And in fact, I recently was reading a piece that talked about online harassment that said, you know, a lot of famous people or journalists, if they're not getting harassed online, it's sort of-- they're sort of using it as a litmus test of how famous they are. Right? Like, if you're not receiving this sort of online misogyny, you haven't made it, so to speak. It's quite insidious. But we see this as normal and expected when we're working in online spaces.

I want to get to questions here so I do want to sort of move forward. So media influences are huge when it comes to sexual violence. We see this. We talked about advertising where women are being objectified. There's music out there where lyrics are so misogynistic, it's

almost astounding. In fact, there's one that I hear every Christmas that's quite astounding. I don't know if anybody can guess in the chat box which Christmas song I'm denoting as being inherent to rape culture, but there's this one song around Christmas that sort of-- yes, absolutely. Amber in the chat box said, "Baby, it's Cold Outside". Very good.

If you go ahead and look up those lyrics, the bulk of that is coercive in nature. You know, I really can't stay up. That should be it. She should say, OK, you can't stay. That's fine. But we see this sort of pulling and prodding at this individual song. Michael said, yup, the worst song ever. And [? Naya ?] said, "what's in this drink?" Yeah, absolutely. We're normalizing date-rape drugs in these songs that, you know, our parents and grandparents sang on Christmas or whatever. So yeah. Maria brought up "Blurred Lines". Very good. I was going to actually mention that. That's sort of the newer sort of iconic song that talks about sexual violence. Absolutely terrible.

We see this all the time in television and movies. A lot of my research is on pornography. So there's a lot of tropes within that that are violent towards women. So keep that in mind. I do want to get to-- because we're swiftly running out of time here. I said a lot of things tonight, and I wish I could talk to you all for so much longer because you all have been such a great audience and very communicative with me. But I don't want to leave you with just like, hey, this is rape culture. OK? Go live your best lives. Right? Like, that would be weird to me to just leave it there. So I really want to talk to you right now about how you can mitigate the impact of rape culture because I think that's very important.

Number one, I think you should be critical of the media you consume. That can be exhausting, admittedly. Rape culture is sort of everywhere. It's sort of omnipotent in our lives. But I think that we can be critical of what we consume in a way that's sort of just framing what we're doing in a critical lens, is really what I'm getting at here.

The second one here-- be an active bystander. You know, if you see someone perpetuating rape culture, you know, check them on it. If you hear victim-blaming sentiments, if you hear someone say, well, what was she wearing? How much did she have to drink? Something like that. You know, check them on it. Say that's not OK. You know, that's not a good question to ask. You're victim-blaming right now and I don't appreciate it. Right? Just standing up, sort of stepping in when you hear this stuff happening. And you will.

The third thing here is listen, support, and believe survivors. So when someone comes to you,

they need help, they've been victimized, listen to them, support them and believe them. And this sort of coincides with the next one-- knowing your resources on campus and in the community. And right now I want to switch really quickly to show you your resources here on campus on the OEO website. So the Office for Equal Opportunity. Hopefully, you all can see that. You can see here that there are resources and reporting options. All the different flyers for resources on different campuses here. So be mindful that that exists for you. And you can find that on oeo.wsu.edu.

Self-care, self-care, self-care. You know, if you're talking about these issues with friends, if you are researching this, be mindful this can be very, very difficult to talk about. And take care of yourselves while doing so. Up your self-care game, so to speak, when you're having these conversations. Because they can be really, really hard.

So again, rape culture normalizes and glorifies sexual violence, leaves perpetrators to flourish, and it silences and blames victims. But it can be mitigated by people like you. I have all the faith in the world in all of you out there, that you can help me work myself out of a job, so we don't have to have these conversations anymore. And it can be mitigated by you.

If you want to learn more, I highly encourage you to look some of these things up. So there's actually a couple of really great documentaries on masculinity and how that relates to violence. One of them is *The Mask I Live In*. Fantastic recent documentary on how young boys are socialized within this culture. *Bro Code*, that's a little bit of an older documentary but still really great. Talks about sexism within our culture and sexual violence. You can actually look at these two Ted Talks actually at the end of this webinar. One of them is Tony Porter and the other is Jackson Katz-- again, do really great work around masculinity and sort of getting men involved with dealing with these issues.

Some books you can read. I just got done reading *Girls and Sex: Navigating the Complicated New Landscape*, and it was a fantastic book. Same thing with *Sex Object* by Jessica Valenti. And, like I said, *Asking For It* is also a great book. I would highly recommend any of these things. With the exception of the documentaries, you can find all these online, your local bookstore or what have you. And I would encourage you to pick those up.

All right. So I sort of flew through that because I wanted to get to questions. So does anyone have any questions for me? Oh, Michael has a question. As a dad, I have three daughters. I really appreciate-- a statement maybe-- I really appreciate the continued attention to this

issue. Parents are key to breaking this culture. Thank you, Michael. I appreciate that. I actually don't want human children myself so I need people like you out there doing awesome and, you know, sort of parenting around these issues and bringing these conversations up. So fantastic. Thank you, Michael.