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Examining Rape Culture in Different Countries:

An Undergraduate Research Project

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**Introduction:**

Rape culture, is, unfortunately, a component of American society. While it has no universal definition, it essentially means, to put simply, “both men and women assume sexual violence is a fact of life…Much of [which] is in fact the expression of values and attitudes that can change” (McEwan). While there has been a lot of conversation about rape culture here in the United States, there is not a lot of discussion surrounding rape culture in other countries, and how they compare to conversations in here in the United States. The purpose of this paper is to determine what causes rape culture in different countries and why do they cause rape culture, as well as determining how they compare to rape culture, as Americans discuss it, in the United States.

**Netherlands:**

Sexual violence is a fairly large issue in the Netherlands, though their statistics are lower than other nations that will be examined in this paper. 34% of women and 6% of men in the Netherlands have reported ever experiencing sexual violence, of which 3.978% of women and 0.18% of men specifically experienced rape (De Haas, et. al). Considering about one-third of women have ever experienced some sort of sexual violence, it is important to ask what in the Netherlands is contributing to such a large number. In this paper, legalized prostitution and rape myths will be examined in connection to the Netherlands’ rape culture.

1. Legalized Prostitution

In 1983, The Hague, a city on the western coast of the Netherlands, opened the first tippelzone, in which soliciting and purchasing sex is tolerated between certain hours of the night; furthermore, in the decades that have followed, eight more cities have created similar zones for street prostitution (Bisschop, et al.). One main reason for the creation of tippelzones was the concern for the safety and health of the numerous street prostitutes, yet there is significant debate of the extent to which tippelzones decrease sexual assault and rape.

Within its first two years, an active tippelzone reduces the occurrence of rape and/or sexual abuse by thirty to forty percent for the city in which the tippelzone is located (Bisschop, et al.), which may occur for several reasons. Firstly, there are fewer instances of sexual violence against prostitutes, due to the provision of a secure and controlled working environment—police monitoring is higher for tippelzones than in other areas of a city—for those who work in the sex industry (Bisschop, et al.). Furthermore, violent individuals looking for a sexual outlet may be drawn to the easily accessible and anonymous environment of tippelzones; thus, potential violence against women elsewhere in the city is avoided. If or when such individuals do become violent, it is easier for women to report an instance of rape or for the violent individual to be removed, due to the heavy police presence in tippelzones (Bisschop, et al.). Lastly, the opening of a tippelzone decrease drug crime by approximately twenty-five percent (Bisschop, et al.). Lower drug crime means fewer drugs circulated within the city, which means fewer potential drug addicts. Because a large number of women in the sex industry are looking to support a drug addiction, this means fewer prostitutes on the street. Thus, there is less of a chance of a women being raped or sexually assaulted by a “client”. Moreover, the is a lower chance of all women—not just prostitutes—being with a partner who may be under the influence of drugs, which can contribute to violent behavior.

However, the theory that tippelzones can decrease rape and sexual abuse has numerous holes. To begin with, there is little evidence to suggest that tippelzones help keep rape and sexual abuse rates low in the long-term. Most is concentrated around the first few years after a tippelzone is opened (Bisschop, et al.**).** Moreover, according to a study published in the *World Development Journal*, “countries with legalized prostitution have a statistically significantly larger reported incidence of human trafficking inflows” (Bindel). This may not appear to have any direct impact on an increase in rape statistics until one examines how human trafficking in tippelzones fosters rape culture. Because prostitution in tippelzones is legal, pimps and brothel owners cannot be punished for selling sex (Bindel). Therefore, those who buy sexually trafficked women to use as prostitutes are not committing a crime (unless human trafficking can be proven, which is immensely difficult). Because it is practically legal for women to be trafficked into prostitution and then sold for sex against their will, sexual violence against women starts to be normalized. This normalization of sexual violence is one main characteristics of a rape culture (Rape Culture, Victim-Blaming, and The Facts). Thus, legalized prostitution can encourage human trafficking, which can promote a rape culture. The only proposed solution has been to require prostitutes possess a license to use tippelzones, which means an investigation into whether the prostitution is voluntary (Bisschop, et al.). Unfortunately, few tippelzones require it (Bisschop, et al**.**).

Overall, legal prostitution both positively and negatively impacts rape culture in the Netherlands. Though it has the potential to help reduce the number of sexually violent incidences each year, it still has a lot of growth it needs to make.

1. Rape Myths

Another way in which rape culture can be promoted is via rape myths. Rape myths are “prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, or rapists” (Odem & Clay-Warner). Common rape myths include that rape is performed by strangers and not known acquaintances, men cannot help themselves and have no choice but to “take” sex, and that it can at times be the victim’s fault (i.e. s/he can “ask” for it via intoxication, flirting, provocative clothing, etc.) Rape myths are extremely harmful, as they can normalize or excuse sexual violence, which can increase the likelihood of it happening.

One of the most common rape myths is that of victim-blaming. Victim-blaming is seen in blaming rape victims for dressing provocatively or drinking too much. It can begin as early as childhood; in a survey of 1,700 Rhode Island middle school students, 50% of boys and 50% of girls says a woman is “asking” to be raped by walking alone at night (Munch). By blaming the victim, those who are sexually violent internally normalize their acts and continue to be sexually aggressive. Furthermore, prosecutor and advocate Anne Munch says, “By blaming the victim and focusing on the victim [in rape cases], we have created an environment where perpetrators are really active and really successful” (Munch). This is because, by placing blame the victim for the incident of sexual violence, the actual actions of the perpetrators are ignored. This allows for sexual violence to continue and flourish.

Finally, rape myths can promote sexual violence in relationships. It is a common misperception that one partner simply cannot rape another partner. In the survey among Rhode Island students, 62% of boys and 58% of girls said it is acceptable for a man to force a woman to have sex if they have been dating for six months; moreover, 70% of the boys and 53% of the girls said the man has a right to sex if the couple has already had sex. This notion is demonstrated in the acquittal of a man who raped his girlfriend at a fraternity party. Jurors cited that she could not have been raped because she had already had sex with him (and because she was drunk) (Munch). By believing that rape cannot occur between partners, this type of sexual violence is seen as normal and not a big deal. Thus, it can continue.

The Netherlands has helped validate rape myths in multiple ways. One example is a television show entitled *Raped or Not*, which encourages panelists to reach a verdict of whether sexual violence has occurred in reenacted footage of real cases (Farrell). Regardless of the intentions of the show’s producers, the show teaches audience members and panelists that rape is subjective and one can have an opinion about whether “real rape” has occurred. Because one person’s opinion about whether an individual has been raped or not can heavily rely on rape myths, (e.g. the alleged victim was dressed in a promiscuous manner and panelist one believes the perpetrator could not help himself, so he thinks no rape occurred) the show therefore indirectly serves to validate rape myths. The more common rape myths the show tends to promote are those discussed above: sexual violence does not happen between partners and the woman is to blame when sexual violence occurs.

Another way in which the Netherlands is promoting rape myths is via the popularity of certain video games. A Dutch study found that adolescents who play video games featuring sexualized female characters are more likely to believe rape myths and have a greater tolerance of sexual violence (Driesmans, et al.). Unfortunately, such games are extremely popular, and there are no discussion currently occurring in the Netherlands about fixing this particular dilemma. One game that is very popular in the Netherlands is the Grand Theft Auto series (Beerthuizen, et al.). However, the game has been criticized for its portrayal of females. There are no female protagonists one can play as, and the only working women are strippers and prostitutes, thus preventing women from existing in a nonsexual manner. Moreover, while playing as a male character, it is possible to pay for sex and watch the animated female perform sexual acts. One female character even shot a pornographic movie in Grand Theft Auto V. When a woman is not engaging in sex, her physical appearance emphasizes her role as a man’s sexual outlet. They wear plunging necklines, or in some cases no shirt at all, to reveal unnaturally large breasts, a trend that appears in about half of all video games (Gonzalez). Despite adolescents exposed to such sexualization, there has been no response from adults. While the Netherlands has a fairly comprehensive sexual education, there are no discussions about video games such as Grand Theft Auto and the harm it can have of teenagers’ perceptions of sexuality. Moreover, there have no actions taken to protest the images in video games like there have been elsewhere, such as in Australia. Due to protests and even a petition filed on Change.org, Australian stores pulled Grand Theft Auto V from their shelves. Complaints were centered around the treatment of women in the video game (Stuart). If the Netherlands were to take actions such as these, it is possible adolescents would not be exposed to extreme sexualization of female characters, and their belief in rape myths and overall tolerance of sexual violence would decrease. Thus, the strength of its rape culture could decrease significantly.

Overall, the Netherlands is struggling to defeat its problematic rape culture due in part to the legalization of prostitution and the prevalence of rape myths. Until these issues are addressed, rape culture will continue to thrive in the Netherlands.

**South Korea:**

South Korea is another country with a horrendous rape culture. In 1998 alone, there were 25,000 cases of sexual violence reported by various counseling centers. Of these, 33% involved rape and 21.9% involved sexual assault; the remaining involved sexual verbal abuse and street harassment. However, these numbers only represent the women who visited a counseling center, meaning the actual rate of sexual violence in that particular year was much higher (Noonan). While there are multiple sources to this epidemic of sexual violence in South Korea, as well as its tolerance, two causes will be examined: the history of women’s chastity and its effect on victim-blaming as well as South Korea’s sexual education system.

1. Confucianism, Chastity, and Victim-Blaming

Confucianism was established around 200 BCE and was based off of the ideologies of Confucius, specifically his Hundred Schools of Thought. Confucius argued socio-political order could only be established if individuals took on prescribed roles. All roles and relationships were based on ethical behavior and morality, (Confucianism). Moreover, if these roles were disturbed, chaos would ensue. Thus, one’s position in society had to remain untouched.

As Confucianism grew and developed over the next several centuries, it became the woman’s job to help keep the family’s social position from changing by maintain the purity of its lineage. This is most likely due to her being considered lesser than man; according to Confucian principles, the man is yang (positive), and woman is yin (negative) (Noonan). In order to ensure the purity of the family’s lineage female chastity was heavily emphasized. In the words of emperor Cheng Yi, “To starve to death is a small matter, but to lose one’s chastity is a great matter”, indicating that death was preferable to a woman losing her virginity (Ebrey, *Women and the Family in Chinese History*).

Thus, chaste women were celebrated whereas non-virginal and unchaste women were punished. One example is the treatment of widows. A widow who remarried after the death of her husband was condemned to a life of poverty and exile; however, if a woman was widowed before the age of thirty and remained chaste, she was rewarded financially and given a memorial arch (Adler).

This is also seen in the practice of foot-binding. Foot-binding began between 1000-1200 AD under the philosophy of Neo-Confucianism (a “newer” version of Confucianism) (Foreman). By binding up a woman’s feet, it became more difficult for her to move around and thus find ways to break her chastity (Ebrey, *Women and the Family in Chinese History*). However, because men found smaller, daintier feet beautiful, women with bound feet were consequently seen as beautiful and therefore were usually offered marriage proposals over women who did not bind their feet (Ebrey, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*). Thus, an indirect result of encouraging women to live lives of chastity via foot-binding was the celebration of chaste women, as they were more popular choices as wives due to having bound feet, and the ostracizing of unchaste women, as their unbound feet were not as pretty.

This emphasis on rewarding chaste or virginal women and essentially punishing those that were not has influenced practices in modern-day South Korea, one of which is victim-blaming. By promoting victim-blaming, sexual violence can be excused and is therefore permitted to continue.

One way in which the importance of women’s chastity has led to victim-blaming can be seen in South Korea’s former rape laws. The law only protected “respectable women” (Noonan), most of whom were married and all of whom practiced chastity in some form (Herald Staff). Women who were considered “fallen” were not eligible for legal protection (Noonan). Here, it is possible to see the same pattern that occurred South Korea’s history (e.g. treatment of widows, foot-binding). Women who are chaste are rewarded while those that are not are left to fend for themselves, thus indicating South Korea’s historical emphasis on chastity has influenced the creation of the rape law. Furthermore, it encourages victim-blaming by signaling rape victims—at least certain ones—are at fault. Because of their lewd behaviors, they cannot receive legal protection and aid. Thus, the fact their cases will most likely never see in the inside of a courtroom is predominantly their fault. Moreover, this can promote rape culture; firstly, men will be encouraged to rape if there will likely be no legal repercussions; secondly, rape victims that have not remained chaste or virginal may internalize such blame and therefore be inclined to believe that experiencing sexual violence is their fault. Consequently, they excuse the sexual violence they experience.

1. Poor Sexual Education

Another contributing factor toward South Korea’s rape culture is its inadequate sexual education, especially education surrounding rape myths. As discussed in the Netherlands portion of this paper, rape myths strengthen rape culture because they provide excuses for the existence of sexual violence; this allows sexual violence to continue and thrive when the goal should be ending its prevalence.

South Korea’s sexual education serves to not only allow for the continuance of rape myths, but it also teaches children that rape myths are correct. For example, in 2015, South Korea’s Education Ministry released teaching manuals with curriculum for the school year. In it, they instruct high school sex education teachers to tell students that women can be at fault when they are raped. One scenario the curriculum used was a woman getting raped after not paying for her meal on a date and then rebuking the man’s sexual advances because “it is natural that he would want a commensurate compensation from the woman” after paying for her (Hu). Even after complaints, the curriculum has not changed. This encourages students to blame the victim if she is the victim of sexual violence. By taking the blame off of the perpetrator of sexual violence, this allows for the continuance of sexual violence.

Another example is the sexual education curriculum provided in the 2015 teaching manuals for elementary students. It states teachers must teach students the philosophy “boys will be boys” is a valid argument when a woman experiences sexual violence (Hu). The boys will be boys myth attempts to “explain away” any sort of aggression or violence in males as biological or natural. As a result, any factors that could be contributing to violent behavior are ignored, and any acts of violence or aggression are justified (Meyer). Again, this takes the responsibility off of a man if he perpetrates sexual violence and provides an excuse for its existence rather than motivating change or an investigation into why sexual violence may be prevalent. Therefore, sexual violence is allowed to continue.

Aside from validating rape myths and thus sexual violence, one of the most dangerous side effects of South Korea’s poor sex education is how it affects law enforcement. A study conducted in South Korea found that the majority of police officers support rape myths, which, in combination with negative attitudes towards women, makes them more likely to blame the victim (Lee, et al.). This means fewer investigations into reports of rape, as the police will see the victim at fault for being raped, which means fewer legal consequences for rape. This in turn promotes rape culture, as perpetrators may recognize there will be no punishment for their actions. However, the same study found that when police officers receive some education about the inaccuracy of rape myths, the likelihood of blaming the victim decreases significantly (Lee, et al.). Not only does prove that police officers did not receive enough former education about sexual violence, most likely in school, but it also demonstrates the effect that comprehensive sex education can have on students. By teaching students about consent and the inaccuracy of rape myths, there is a greater chance they will not buy into rape myths as adults, which can decrease the severity of rape culture in South Korea.

Thus, South Korea needs to improve its sex education. Its first step needs to be to remove the validation of rape myths from its classroom in order to demonstrate sexual violence cannot be excused or justified in any way. However, simply doing this would not be enough. Even without directly promoting rape myths, poor sex education can have a huge impact. Research conducted at Duke University found that there is a correlation between low sexual violence rates and comprehensive, high-quality sex education. This was found in multiple countries including the United States, India, China, Sweden, the Netherlands, and France (Raphael). Thus, South Korea must improve the quality of its sex education system to feature all aspects of sex education such as birth control, consent, sexuality and different types of sexuality, sexual health, etc.

**Nicaragua:**

Nicaragua is one of the most problematic Latin American countries when it comes to rape culture. Thousands of women report sexual violence each year, and this number only includes a minority of cases, as many women do not report being sexually assaulted or raped. Furthermore, the majority of victims that report incidents of sexual violence are under eighteen, with the number ranging from 66-77% (Amnesty International). What is even more worrisome is that the widespread sexual violence is accepted and deemed normal. The question is, what causes frequent instances of sexual violence, and why is it tolerated? In answer this question, both machismo and the state of education and laws in Nicaragua will be examined.

1. Machismo

Nicaragua’s culture is dominated by the concept of machismo, which ultimately works to reinforce rape culture. Machismo in Latin America consists of a “deep structure of masculinity” that embodies characteristics such as “bravado, sexual prowess, protecting one’s honor, and a willingness to face danger” among other traits (Cabrera). Moreover, machismo establishes a hierarchy that places men on top and women at the bottom by considering traits like those listed above as superior (Cabrera).

Machismo is established via the socialization of males and females. Women are taught to be feminine, which is associated with traits such as passiveness and roles such as taking care of children and taking care of husband sexually and domestically. Men, however, are taught to be “real men”, which is associated with characteristics such as being violent, aggressive, and dominant. One way in which men are taught this is through sports. Older male relatives will teach young male children how to play various sports and encourage violent and aggressive behavior. Furthermore, by being told at a very young age that they cannot show emotion or talk about feelings, men are forced to release feelings of anger, frustration, or stress through violence (Cabrera).

The culture of machismo plays a large role in Nicaragua’s rape culture. Because men are taught that it is acceptable to use violence against women, sexual violence is not seen as wrong or abusive. Rather, it is an appropriate way to treat women or even punish women for not doing as they are supposed to within their feminine roles. It is not unheard of for husbands to beat their wives, or rape women as punishment, or even murder their wives or girlfriends (Karasek). And because machismo tells society that it is appropriate for men to behave in a violent manner, encouraged in fact, most men will not face any consequences for doing so. They are rarely arrested and are even less likely to face a trial (“Nicaragua Accused of ‘Failing Rape Victims’”). Thus, when sexual violence occurs between a man and woman, it is viewed as normal by men and most of society. This matches with the figure that only 1% of all cases involving sexual violence are successfully prosecuted (Lakhani). Moreover, women view the violence they experience as normal. This is partly because they are raised in a society that supports machismo and therefore reality for them is experiencing sexual violence. However, the church also plays a role. The church (mainly Catholic) tends to look down on divorce and ostracize those that do not embody the “ideal” family (i.e. a traditional marriage with children). Whether or not violence is occurring is usually irrelevant (Cabrera). Thus, sexual violence is upheld by social institutions, not just by people in society. Therefore, women do not tend to view their relationships as abnormal. This normalizes sexual violence amongst women. This is shown in the number of rape incidents reported to police. The majority were from girls under eighteen, most of whom were violated by adult men, whereas grown women who have been fully socialized and have had more exposure to the acceptance of sexual violence make up a much smaller percentage (“Sexual Violence Against Girls in Nicaragua Widespread”). The acceptance and normalization of sexual violence by men, women, and society as a whole ultimately contributes to rape culture.

1. Poor Resources and Laws

Another way in which Nicaragua creates rape culture is via poor laws and resources. Nicaragua essentially has no sexual education for students. While it is in theory part of the curriculum, it is still essentially absent from the classroom. Moreover, the rate of children that actually attend school is extremely low. Thus, many children do not understand important topics such as consent and self-autonomy or even basic concepts such as reproduction (Lempiainen). This is demonstrated in the statistic that only 2% of girls have received any information about what sexual violence is and what to do if it happens (Amnesty International). The result of sex education being entirely absent from schools is that children interpret it as a taboo subject; thus, when they experience sexual violence, they do not discuss it. For example, when a young girl was being sexually abused by her cousin, she did not tell anyone, as no one talked about sex (Amnesty International). The problem here is that by not talking about sexual violence when it occurs means it is able to continue. People cannot end a problem they do not even acknowledge. However, this is considering that people know what sexual violence is. As mentioned, because of the nonexistent sex education and the taboo-ness attached to sex, few people receive information out of it; again, only 2% of girls receive any information about it. That does not mean rape culture is still not promoted. If people do not know what sexual violence is, they may not understand it is a problem; though they may feel violated, they may not understand that violation is not supposed to occur. The same girl that experienced sexual violence at the hands of her cousin did not realize his treatment of her was abuse. She assumed his behavior was normal (Amnesty International). Thus, sexual violence is allowed to continue. (This aligns with the fact there is a correlation between poor sex education and higher rates of sexual violence, as seen in the examination of South Korea’s sex education.) Therefore, the absence of sexual education is promoting a rape culture in Nicaragua.

Nicaragua’s legal system is also extremely appalling because the legal consequences for sexual violence are much lower than they should be. Because most rape cases are ignored or dismissed, when families do want justice, their only other option are whistas. A whista is an informal community judge that usually settle cases via monetary restitution. Even then, the accused rapists usually do not make pay the amount they have been sentenced to pay (“Stopping Sexual Violence in Nicaragua”). Moreover, for the few cases that do make it to court, hearings are constantly cancelled. This occurs for various reasons. One is jurors not bothering to show up (which further indicates the level of acceptance of sexual violence in Nicaragua). Another is potentially not having a prosecutor, as there are far too few prosecutors for all of the cases in Nicaragua, and they tend to choose other cases over rape cases (which, again, further indicates there is already acceptance of sexual violence without the problems created by the legal system). Cancelled trials are especially problematic, in part due to legislation that prevents prolonged pre-trial detention by stating that a trial must be contained to three months. Once the three months are up, the accused is released and a mistrial is declared (Amnesty International). This means accused perpetrators of sexual violence that are in the minority of those arrested can face no legal consequences for assaulting or raping women. By reducing sentencing or removing it altogether, it trivializes sexual violence into a minor crime, which encourages further people to see it as almost a nonissue. Thus, rape culture is created.

Thus, if Nicaragua wants to put an end to its rape culture, it is imperative that it works to improve its sexual education and its laws and justice system. Ultimately, this will be reallocating public funds and the changing of values. As that cannot happen overnight, it would be a long process. To help reach such a point, it is important to have a public conversation about the state of Nicaragua’s resources and legislation and raising awareness about its problems.

**South Africa**

The last country, and one of the worst nations in terms of sexual violence, to be examined is South Africa. South Africa is commonly referred to as the world’s rape capital (Davis). One in three women are raped. At least one in four experiences violence at the hands of her partner. South Africa’s justice system and health care system have been cited for their inability to assist sexual violence victims. The country’s suffering from a HIV/AIDs pandemic (Moffett). All of these facts add up to widespread sexual violence. As will be demonstrated, this is due in part to a rape culture created by colonialism and apartheid and homophobia.

1. Legacy of Colonialism and Apartheid

Colonialism in South Africa began in around 1650. With it came the changing of African traditions and lifestyles and the selling of South Africans to various western countries as slaves (“History of Slavery and Early Colonisation in South Africa”). Moreover, in 1948, the Caucasian minority declared a policy of apartheid. Under it, Africans were subject to segregation, requirements to carry documentation, economic and political inequality, and removal from “white” areas, just to name a few (History.com Staff). Though both colonialism and apartheid have since come to end, many of the practices instilled by white men still exist in South Africa, some of which contribute to rape culture. Moreover, some of the changes South Africans have been making to their society to erase their ugly history impact rape culture as well.

Apartheid fostered negative relations between the black citizens of South Africa and the police. During apartheid, it was the job of the police to ensure the success of apartheid. Officers took to raiding private homes, using intimidation, violence, and/or torture on apartheid critics and protestors, eliminating “terrorists” (i.e. those who worked toward ending apartheid), and checking for documentation, as well as engaging in criminal activity themselves (Steiner). Furthermore, police officers have also been noted for using brutality against women and disregarding most rape charges as lies, especially when bribed by an accused rapist (Clarke). The result was that, by the end of apartheid, women found very little reason to trust law enforcement, which was prevented them from reporting incidences of rape. This not only means no legal consequences for perpetrators of sexual violence, but it also means reports of rape are much lower than the actual number in South Africa, making it easier to deny rape culture exists. Thus, rape culture is encouraged and strengthened.

During both the eras of colonialism and apartheid, South Africa was controlled by predominantly white men. In order to maintain the status quo and thus their domination of the region, they used violence against black individuals (Armstrong). Whenever a black person showed some level of independence or disrespect, s/he was punished with excessive force; it could be strong enough to cause serious injury or even death, or it could be targeted more towards humiliation than physical trauma (Moffett). Despite the end of both colonialism and apartheid, the act of suppressing a particular group of people via violence still exists, as it has manifested itself in male-female relationships. Traditional gender roles re-emerged after the end of apartheid, although the exact reason why is not quite clear (Scully). Consequently, men adopted head of the household roles whereas women were ascribed roles that required obedience and subordination. The roles here are fairly similar to those of colonialism and apartheid. One group is dominant while the other is forced to obey. As a result, male-female relationships have adopted the violence that colonialism and apartheid signaled as a normal response to the subclass behaving in an impudent manner. For example, in an interview, a taxi driver openly described how he and his friends cruised around at night looking for women to abduct and gang-rape. When asked whether it constituted rape, his response was they only did it to women who “deserved it”. Upon being asked who deserved it, the taxi driver described their victims as cheeky, self-autonomous, and daring enough to men in the eye (Moffett). Thus, it can be ascertained that the usage of sexual violence as a way to hand out punishment has continued since colonialism and apartheid. Unfortunately, the result of this is the normalization of violence. Men see it as not rape or assault but as merely part of one’s interaction with women. It is seen as an appropriate way to deal with conflicts with women rather than a violation of women’s bodies. As seen with the taxi driver, he genuinely believed he was not a rapist; he was just giving women what they deserved. Moreover, women accept sexual violence as merely a part of life. In fact, women take their daughters to hospitals to get contraceptive injections as soon as their menstrual cycles start to prevent unwanted pregnancy from the inevitable raping their daughters will experience as a teenager (Moffett). This demonstrates that women accept sexual violence as something women must endure and is part of living as a woman in South Africa. When sexual violence is normalized, it in turn promotes rape culture.

As mentioned, the periods of colonialism and apartheid have also motivated the re-emergence of traditions in order to escape the violent and hateful practices promoted by both eras. While many are rich in history and culture, some are harmful and perpetuate South Africa’s rape culture, as seen in the rape trial of Jacob Zuma.

In Zulu culture, as well as others, women are considered second-class citizens, and they are conditioned to believe they are at the disposal of men. In terms of sex, women do not have the right to turn men down. While this changed somewhat during colonialism in the nineteenth century, it has since returned (Clarke). Because of this philosophy, women may not fight perpetrators of sexual violence and deem it as “normal”. This was demonstrated in Zuma’s rape trial, as the victim apparently did not call out for help or fight Zuma. Rather, she was subject to him and his actions and therefore did not have the ability to say no. Moreover, in Zulu culture, it is the job of men to pleasure a woman and to not do so is tantamount to rape; ironically, this was used in Zuma’s defense. Because of her arousing apparel and body posture, he believed the victim was “ready” (Wines). By assuming a woman’s choice of clothing or non-verbal actions can signal a woman consenting to sex when in fact she does not (and most likely cannot fight him) aligns with the rape myth of victim-blaming (i.e. the woman should know better than to dress proactively or behave in a particular manner because she is inviting rape or assault). As mentioned several times in this paper, by placing blame on the rape victim, rape and sexual assault can continue because the symptoms causing the epidemic of sexual violence cannot be eradicated.

Overall, it is clear the periods of colonialism and apartheid have significantly influenced culture in South Africa, both directly and indirectly. If South Africa wants to make any progress in removing rape culture from its country, it must work to eradicate how colonialism and apartheid have influenced society, whether that is by helping South Africans foster positive relationships with police officers; educational programs for police officers about sexual violence; promoting gender equality via social movements, childhood education, better legislation, etc.; raising awareness about some of the harmful practices that old traditions can have; or implementing government programs to provide assistance to victims of sexual violence.

1. Homophobia and Corrective Rape

Another way in which rape culture is promoted is via the normalization of sexual violence against members of the LGBTQ+ community. The reason for the normalization is due to strong homophobic attitudes common in South Africa.

Homophobia is fairly common in South Africa. In one of the nation’s first studies on LGBTQ+ discrimination, almost 50% of respondents said they had experienced discrimination in the past two years (DeBarros). While no single cause can be attributed to the origin of homophobia in South Africa, one of the larger reasons is colonialism. White European colonizers introduced laws that criminalized homophobia and Christianity, which has featured the idea that homosexuality is a sin (Kalende). Furthermore, acceptance of different sexualities can be found in pre-colonialism traditions for various (though not all) African tribes. For example, there is ethnographic evidence that same-sex relationships existed in the Azande, Beti, Pangwe, and Nama tribes (Kalende). The result of widespread homophobic ideologies is discrimination and hatred of members of the LGBTQ+ community. This hatred is best seen in what has been termed “corrective rape”.

Corrective rape is a hate crime in which a person is raped due to his or her sexual orientation or gender identity. The goal of corrective rape is to “make” a non-heterosexual or non-heteronormative individual into someone who conforms to sexual and gender norms. In South Africa, an average of ten LGBTQ+ members are victims of corrective rape a week (Koraan & Geduld). Moreover, the sexual violence incurred against these victims is accepted, due to South Africa’s homophobic environment. There are several examples of this acceptance, some of which will be demonstrated.

The legal system in South Africa does not punish those who perpetuate corrective rape. Current rape legislation does not make any mention of corrective rape. Moreover, there is no legislation in South Africa that makes hate crimes illegal (Koraan & Geduld). As a result, this can reduce sentencing and the stats or ranking of the crime. This does two things. Firstly, this signals that the justice does not see corrective rape as the epidemic it is, thus indicating that there is some level of acceptance of the crime. Secondly, by minimizing corrective rape in the legal system, this sends a message to society that the problem is more trivial than it is and thus makes it easier for people to accept.

Due to widespread homophobic views, family members also cause or aid in corrective rape. One adolescent female was the victim of corrective rape, and the perpetrator was her uncle who “disapproved” of her gender identity. Moreover, her mother did not tell her that her uncle had HIV and left her to handle it on her own. Another young girl’s mother married a man who repeatedly raped her daughter in the hopes it would turn her daughter straight. When she became pregnant, her mother took her child and has prevented her from having a relationship with him (Carter). Both examples demonstrate that the acceptance of corrective rape is so widespread that even family members see it as acceptable treatment of their own flesh and blood. As long as corrective rape is accepted and receives no negative reaction, it will be allowed to continue. As a result, rape culture is created.

Overall, if South Africa wants to make a dent in its problematic rape culture, it will need to do more to decrease discrimination for LGBTQ+ members, whether that means increasing the legal consequences for corrective rape perpetrators, providing better education about LGBTQ+ discrimination and the importance of equality, or merely engaging in a discussion about the problem of corrective rape, it will continue as it has in the past.

**Comparing Rape Cultures**

To address the second part of the second research question, the information from the examinations of the Netherlands, South Korea, Nicaragua, and South Africa will be compared to rape culture in the United States.

As determined, media, specifically television and video games, in the Netherlands validate rape myths. This aligns with how the media in the United States validates rape myths. Common rape myths validated in the United States media are boys will be boys or victim-blaming (Drobny). However, it tends to be more integrated into the United States media, similar to how video games in the Netherlands promote rape myths, than the more obvious promotion via the Netherlands television show *Raped or Not.* Specifically, the United States media, especially music and pornography, relies on dehumanizing women into essentially natural prostitutes. Women are animals driven by lust, which means their behavior invites sexual violence and men will not be to control themselves when exposed to such raw sexuality (Drobny).

The role of chastity in South Korea was determined to be a cause of South Korea’s culture. Because of the importance of women abstaining from sex, victim-blaming occurred. A similar pattern occurs in the United States. Victim-blaming occurs in the United States in part due to the importance of being a virgin before marriage under Christianity. The church emphasized that women must remain virgins to be respected and considered moral. If women did not abstain from premarital sex, the result was punishment, such as being ostracized from the church. Monitoring women’s virginities still occurs, for example through abstinence-only education, which tells girls that if they have sex, they are inviting rape (Drobny).

**Conclusion**

Overall, it appears there are multiple and multi-faceted points of origin for rape culture in different regions of the world. This includes poor sexual education, cultures of male dominance and power, an emphasis on women abstaining from sex, gender, racial, and sexual discrimination, response to prostitution, inadequate laws and justice systems, and images in the media. Additionally, many of these sources of align with those found in the United States. Knowing this is extremely important. Firstly, it is impossible to tackle a problem without knowing why it exists. Thus, it is important to identify what contributes to rape culture in order to eliminate it. Secondly, in seeing there are overlaps in sources of rape culture, this can provide both inspiration and motivation for various countries to work together to fight rape culture and sexual violence. While rape culture cannot be defeated overnight, it something that must be eradicated both for the betterment of society and to achieve equality.

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