

## Rape culture in Psy contexts

### La cultura de la violación en entornos psi

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#### Background

Rape culture is a structural and systematic issue in patriarchal, racist and sanist-ableist societies. Psy environments (psychological, psychotherapeutic, psychiatric, etc.) are no immune to their reproduction, validation and invisibility. Rape culture and sexual assaults in psy environments are “fields of ignorance” of science and society: problems poorly studied, recognized and repaired. We understand as “rape culture” a context where rape is accepted and normalized, or is denied due to sexist myths about the victim (she is not believed due to prejudice or is blamed); or where sexual assaults and their consequences are trivialized. Also, we understand by psy environments many fields of expertise (psychology, psychiatry, psychoanalysis) that function as devices or technologies of the self, shaping subjectivities. In this study, we particularly analyzed psychotherapeutic contexts and psychiatric centers.

#### Aims

This research aims to analyze different power mechanisms that lead to the perpetuation and normalization of rape culture in two psy environments: psychotherapy and psychiatric centers. From there, this research seeks to “echo” those who have denounced and researched the problem of sexual assaults (understood as sexual harassment, unwanted sexual touching, sexual relations in contexts of power with little margin for consent or agency, or rapes) in psy environments. Also, the aim is to collect some possible strategies for its eradication and for reparation processes.

#### Method & procedures

Following a qualitative methodology, in this research we carried out a documentary analysis with a critical perspective, to study rape culture and sexual assaults in two psy environments: psychotherapy and the psychiatric centers. We have selected documentary material from a historical, scientific and “gray literature” dimensions. Our analysis mainly addresses different mechanisms of power that go through and potentially reproduce rape culture in these environments.

#### Results & discussion

We present the main results in two main sections: rape culture in psychotherapeutic contexts (we describe secrets and silences about abuse in therapy, or subtle modalities and even diagnoses that promote sex without interest, and some feminist resistance to this); and sexual assaults in psychiatric centers (we describe their non-response as a form of institutional violence, as well as preventive “security” measures that, far from protecting, can further make people vulnerable and deprive them of privacy and autonomy). In the first section, we point out how the position of patient-professional inequality, the sexist dynamics that may exist in it, sexism in theories, the lack of understanding of “no means no” and power relations in the psy environment since training, all have long led to the normalization of erotic contact and sexual relations in the psychotherapeutic context, and its consequent deontological regulation. We have also pointed out how the latter has not necessarily led to the cessation of abuses, but rather to assuming that since they are formally prohibited, they no longer occur, so they are no longer researched, and it becomes more difficult

to talk about or report them. In the psychiatric context, we point out chemical submission, physical submission, forced sterilizations, violation of the right to privacy, and the 'trigger' (trigger of traumatic memories of previous sexual abuse) derived from the characteristics of high surveillance and control of the same institution. The lack of understanding and invisibility of how the sanist and patriarchal-racist structures operate hand in hand in the psychiatric context, lead to "solutions" such as reinforcing surveillance, increasing the presence of staff in private spaces, intensifying isolation or restraints, or incorporating police forces into the facilities. All of which can be counterproductive for the purposes of care, healing, and/or repair of an experience that produces intense suffering, in addition to significantly affecting the autonomy and physical and psychological integrity of the person.

### Conclusion

The social imaginary that constructs psychotherapy and the psychiatric institution as always harmless and beneficial spaces for society (and its consequent lack of review as spaces of power), is an element that leads to perpetuating the silencing of this reality and thus sustaining the culture of rape. Sexual abuse is, however, a poorly kept secret. Some feminist mobilizations, and particularly the movement of survivors of psychiatry, have explained for at least five decades how these are produced, made invisible and perpetuated in psy environments. It is an open secret because, although it is carefully kept secret, it does not stop leaking out to be heard. It is the mad voices that have broken the pact of silence. We recognize the historical and current collective actions of feminist movements and mad movements as forms of resistance, since they have problematized "mental health" as a device of power by making this reality (among others) visible and the need to continue investigating it.

**Keywords:** mental health, psychotherapy, Psychiatry, reparation, sexual assault

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