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On national and cultural boundaries: A cross-cultural approach to sexual violence perpetration in Brazil and the United Kingdom.

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Please cite as Scarpati, A. & Pina, A. (2017). On national and cultural boundaries: A

cross-cultural approach to sexual violence perpetration in Brazil and the United

Kingdom. Journal of Sexual Aggression (online first)

dx.doi.org/10.1080/13552600.2017.1351265

Abstract

The majority of research on rape has so far neglected to examine the effects of socio-cultural beliefs and practices on sexual violence perpetration, with most authors dedicating themselves, instead, to an individualistic approach of this phenomenon. Although these approaches are certainly valid, they often ignore how these behaviours are embedded in the culture and, as a result, do not adequately explore the causes and consequences of sexual violence perpetration. Therefore, the primary goal of this review is to redress this deficiency, focusing on the connection between the phenomenon and the cultural backdrop against which it occurs. Hence, a discussion around certain factors that may serve to either legitimize or to condemn sexual violence in two different countries (Brazil and UK) is necessary. To make this possible, differences regarding each country's culture, rape legislation and prevalence are presented, and issues regarding the current individualistic theoretical approach to the subject are explored.

Keywords: sexual violence; rape; culture; gender norms; Brazil; UK

Introduction

Within the sphere of violent sexual behaviour, there exist cultural variations not only regarding frequency and type of violence committed, but also in terms events that are seen to

trigger those episodes. It is further possible to observe differences in relation to what each culture considers to be an appropriate response to these events.

Most authors investigating sexual violence perpetration focus on the individual tendencies to commit rape (see Bohner, Eyssel, Siebler & Viki, 2009). However, there is a marked absence of consistent studies looking at aspects such as culture, socio-cultural norms and gender roles, and their influence upon the occurrence and legitimacy of sexual violence, as well as how it might best be understood (Vandello & Cohen, 2003).

Although individualistic approaches are certainly valid, they often ignore how human behaviour is embedded in the culture and, as a result, do not adequately clarify and explain the causes and consequences of that behaviour (Kiss et al, 2012; Lamichhane, Puri, Tamang & Dulal, 2011; Yount, Halim, Schuler & Head, 2013). Additionally, most studies on sexual violence come from Western countries, mainly the United States of America (Burrowes, 2011), and little is known about the risk factors of sexual aggression in other parts of the world, such as in Latin American countries (D'abreu & Krahé, 2014). In Brazil, for example, to our knowledge, there are only two pieces of research covering the topic of men's self-reported perpetration of sexual aggression: Chan, Straus, Brownridge, Tiwari and Leung (2008) and D'abreu and Krahé (2014).

In a review about rape and sexual assault, Burrowes (2011) found 282 articles, chapters, and reports that were published in 2011 on the topic, with the UK being the second largest publisher (to the US) of research in this field (8%). Nonetheless, research still gravitates towards individual elements; with little attention paid to the sociocultural aspect. As discussed by Burrowes (2011), the topics mostly researched are: therapeutic work with survivors, rape myths, impact of rape and sexual assault, policy papers, and rape prevention programmes.

Therefore, the primary goal of this review is to redress this deficiency, focusing on the connection between the phenomenon of male sexual violence perpetration, and the cultural backdrop against which it occurs. In doing so, we will discuss some of the variables that may serve to either legitimize sexual violence and therefore increase the chances of its occurrence, or condemn sexual violence and thus lower the chances of its occurrence in one Latin American country (Brazil) and one European country (the UK).

Sexual violence and rape: universal concepts?

Sexual violence is usually defined as any form of sexual behaviour imposed upon someone, and is characterised by an absence of consent from the recipient of the behaviour. This absence may be due to the recipient explicitly saying no, or it may be that consent cannot be freely given; for example, because the recipient lacks the mental capacity to give it, or they are under the influence of drink and/or drugs (Heise & Garcia-Mireno, 2002; Jewkes, Sen & Garcia-Mireno, 2002).

This definition, however, normally varies according to the reference source. To Basile and Saltzman (2002), for example, sexual violence takes many forms, and is not restricted to penetrative contact, as non-contact sexual abuse (i.e., intentional touching, voyeurism and unwilling exposure to pornography) is also considered to be an expression of it. In a similar manner, Mont and White (2007) suggest that the 'sexual violence umbrella' covers all acts such as forced marriage, prostitution, abortion, sexual harassment and unwanted sexual advances. Further examples of sexual violence found in the literature include: 1) human trafficking with the purpose of sexual exploitation and prostitution, 2) Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and 3) being denied access to information and strategies to prevent

unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Rape, therefore, is just one manifestation within the sphere of sexual offences.

As with the general concept of sexual violence, the specific offence of rape can be also categorised in different ways. For instance, the understanding of rape can relate to: 1) the identity or characteristics of the victim (i.e., their age); 2) the precise situation in which it occurs (i.e., during wartime, or in the context of a gang conflict); or even 3) the identity or characteristics of the perpetrator (i.e., a custodial rape). Another possible method, by which we might better understand rape cases, is the consideration of any pre-existing relationship between victim and perpetrator. We can thereby identify these acts of violence as falling into one of four categories - 'stranger', 'acquaintance', 'date' or 'marital' rape (WHO, 2002).

Rozee (1993) goes beyond this classification and suggests that a better way to understand this type of violence is by organizing it into two large categories: the non-normative (condemned) and the normative (condoned) rape. The first represents those situations where societal norms vigorously disapprove the offender's behaviour. Therefore, the offence will be publicly condemned and the contact between offender and victim will be considered perverse, immoral and illegal. In this scenario offenders will be probably punished both due to the violation of a victim's will, as well as the violation of societal norms.

Normative rape, on the other hand, was found in 97% of Rozee's (1993) sample and describes those situations where, aside from an explicit or tacit acknowledgment of the victim's lack of consent, the violence is not deplored by society. According to Rozee (1993), even though it is possible to find, in most cultures, some mechanism that allows men to sexually abuse women without violating any societal norms, this form of violence is usually ignored by cross-cultural studies.

One of the most obvious examples of a normative rape is what is termed 'punitive' rape. According to Rozee (1993), in society there exists a whole raft of justifications for sexual violence that aims to discipline and punish women for having behaved in some 'wrong' manner (e.g. a woman who has sexual relationships outside marriage is "fair game"). This demonstrates a definitive example of sexual violence used as a method of sanction for what the offender/society considers as the wrong female choice.

Another example is 'marital rape', and/or sexual violence by intimate partners, and essentially represents a situation where the perpetrator is the woman's husband. According to WHO (2002, p.152), this offence is "neither rare nor unique to any particular region of the world". In fact, data suggest very similar figures regarding the number of women who have been victim of either an attempted or completed rape by a partner in their lifetime (i.e., North London, England = 23%; Guadalajara, Mexico = 23%; Leon, Nicaragua = 21.7%; and Lima, Peru = 22.5%).

Men's social superiority and power plays an important role in this scenario and it is not unusual to see either a lack of awareness of the concept (for both men and women), or an unwillingness to identify oneself as either a victim or a perpetrator. It suggests that, despite the reporting rate being low, the actual incidence is likely to be much higher. Ultimately, the key aspect remains the victims' lack of consent (Howitt, 2012), and sexual violence appears to be, in some form, an almost universal occurrence (Giner-Sorolla & Russell, 2009; Miller, 2014).

Nevertheless, the understanding of what might constitute the violence, the target of the assault, the method of perpetration, the frequency with which it occurs, the events considered as trigger episodes of violence, as well as the set of social norms that serve as a backdrop to the act, vary greatly across societies, and from one culture to another. As discussed by several authors (Hall & Barongan 1997; Hall, Sue, Narang, & Lilly, 2000; Loh,

Gidycz, Lobo & Luthra,2005), certain socio-cultural beliefs and practices may encourage

men to be sexually violent, make women more vulnerable to sexual offences and, at the same

time, reduce their chances of receiving societal support. These beliefs and practices will be

further explored throughout this paper.

Brazil and United Kingdom; a background

Countries and cultures can be described, and/or compared, in accordance to a wide

variety of meaningful variables (Neto, 2007). Their language, predominant religion,

economic status, laws regarding a certain topic and their position in different rankings (i.e.,

gender (in) equality), are just a few examples of them.

Beyond those, another criterion commonly applied in order to differentiate countries

is based on their *cultural syndromes* (Heine, Peng & Greenholtz, 2002). According to Heine

et al., (2002), research guided by this approach has aspired to compare cultures on the basis

of their positions on dimensions such as individualism-collectivism (IC).

Generally speaking, IC addresses the different emphasis some cultures place on

aspects such as the importance of group attainment for individuals, the values they endorse,

as well as the orientation of their attitudes (i.e., towards the individual or towards the group)

(Triandis, 1989). According to Neto (2007), in collectivistic societies the emphasis is

primarily placed on group attainment, and values such as benevolence, tradition and

conformity are highly endorsed. These values are translated into respectful actions,

commitment, obedience, and subordination **of** one's needs to the wishes of others, for

example. As a result, in these cultures there is either no distinction between personal and

collective goals, or there is a clear subordination of the former to the lat**t**er.

Individualistic cultures, on the other hand, place great emphasis on the attainment of

self-centred goals, individuals' independence, and freedom. Moreover, values **of**

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achievement, hedonism, power, and stimulation (Neto, 2007) are highly endorsed. As a result, individuals tend to value personal initiative and autonomy, and prioritise their personal goals. Furthermore, these cultures tend to present a lower endorsement of divinity factors, and low adherence to religion terms (Ryckman & Houston, 2003).

To Heine, Peng and Greenholtz (2002) even though there is critique around this approach (i.e., IC), this construct stands out as one of the most widely used to aid our understanding of the similitudes and differences among cultures around the world. Individualist cultures are usually found in Western societies, and especially North America; whereas cultures in the rest of the world, particularly East Asia, are usually described as collectivist (Heine, Peng & Greenholtz, 2002). United Kingdom and Brazil are two prime examples of individualist (UK IC Rating = 8.95) and collectivist (Brazil IC Rating = 3.90) cultures (Guerra, 2008).

Brazil

The Federative Republic of Brazil is the only Portuguese-speaking country in South America and has the seventh biggest economy in the world. Its surface occupies half of this continent, and it is divided into five administrative regions (south, north, southeast, northeast, centralwest), with more than 190 million inhabitants. As a result of its dimensions, this nation is a highly diverse country; with different climatic conditions, ethnicity, languages used, social practices, economic development, religions, and so on (Hofstede, Garibaldi de Hilal, Malvezzi, Tanure & Vinken, 2010).

In terms of its culture, Brazil has always been shaped by foreign influences and its current configuration is the result of this process of integration and absorption of distinct civilizations (i.e., Africans, Europeans and Asians). For these reasons, it is difficult for researchers to have a unified vision of this country. Researchers suggest (see Guerra, 2008, for review) that even though Brazil has been identified as a collectivist country, the influence

of diverse immigration has created a difficulty in making an unambiguous classification of this culture (e.g., collectivist and vertical). Hofstede et al (2010) even suggest that Brazil is neither conservative nor modern, but both at the same time; requiring, from researchers, "a multifocal vision capable of simultaneously applying more than one cultural paradigm" (Hofstede, et al., 2010, p.349).

These same authors (Hofstede, et al., 2010) stress, however, that despite its complex cultural orientation, there is evidence of a common Brazilian national culture that can be applied as a general guide for researchers. When compared to countries such as America, for example, Brazilians tend to use more divinity and community-based discourses; meaning that individuals are usually acting consistent to their social roles. As pointed out by Neto (2007), in collectivistic societies, such as Brazil, because the emphasis is primarily placed on group attainment (e.g., family), people are expected to behave in a way that does not disrespect, or challenge, their assigned roles. The expectations surrounding gender norms and responsibilities is just one example of that group emphasis.

It is important to highlight, in line with the above, that Brazil is considered to be both an honour-culture, and a 'macho' (or 'male-orientated') society; meaning that masculinity is associated with authority and strength, and femininity with weakness and subservience (Goldenberg, 2011). Gonzalez (2014) suggests, for example, that around 90% of Brazilian men and about 94% of Brazilian women agree that Brazil could be still described as a 'machista' country.

'Machismo' is, in fact, a popular term applied - usually by North-Americans and Europeans - to describe South European and Latin American masculinities; but also by Latin American men to describe (and enhance) their own virility (Grunnagell & Wieser, 2015). As discussed by different authors (Barker, 2016; Nascimento, Gomes & Rebello, 2009; Stocker

& Damalso, 2016), being sexually active, heterosexual, and – if necessary – aggressive, are some of the 'focal points' of manhood in these contexts.

According to Scarpati (2013), despite the ongoing progress and the emergence of different ideas about men and women, gender inequality is still a problem in Brazil. This nation occupies the 121st place in the ranking of women's participation in policy making and politics, with the female unemployment rate being about twice that of men and the average salary for women being 30% less than that of men. Data from 2014 also suggest that Brazilian women still spend twice as much time doing housework than men, and the statistics about violence against them seems to increase every year (Brazilian Health Department, 2014; Compromisso e Atitude, 2014).

One final – and essential – aspect of this culture revolves around the importance Brazilians place on the spiritual domain (spirituality and/or religiosity) (see Guerra, 2008 for review). It means that moral concepts such as sanctity and sin, purity and pollution, etc., are extremely valued; and that even if an action does not cause direct harm to someone, individuals should not behave in a way that disrespects the 'natural order' (i.e., homosexual relationships), or the order of God.

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is one of the most populous countries in Europe, with more than 65 million inhabitants. It is also one of the world's leading industrialized nations and its population is highly ethnically diverse, with an abundant amount of identities, cultures, nationalities and heritages. Recent data suggest that more than 5% of the British population is now constituted of immigrants from West Indies, India, Pakistan, Africa, and China (The Columbia Encyclopaedia, 2016).

In comparison to Brazil, the UK appears to be more an individualistic than a collectivist country (score 89 on IndCol; 3rd place among 53 countries), with a higher endorsement of autonomy values (Guerra, 2008). As previously stated, those countries often place greater emphasis on the attainment of self-centred goals, as well as personal initiative. That is, individuals' independence, freedom, and power is usually highly valued (Ryckman & Houston, 2003). Guerra (2008) highlights, however, that the UK is also characterized for its emphasis on horizontal aspects; which means that people also tend to attribute high importance to harmony values, such as equality and social justice, while also valuing autonomy and independence.

The Anglican Church (or Church of England) is the official church in England and Christianity remains the largest religion in this country, with 33.2 million people (59.3 per cent of the population) subscribed to it. According to Neto (2007), however, individualistic countries also tend to present lower endorsement of divinity moral values and lower adherence to religion terms. In line with that, one quarter of the population have reported, in 2011, that they have no religious affiliation (Office for National Statistics, April of 2016, https://www.ons.gov.uk/).

Compared to the Brazilian society, Britain has higher scores in a variety of ranks. For example, in the Gender Gap Index (0 = inequality and 1 = equality) the former scores 0.694 (71st in this ranking), whereas the later scores 0.738 (26th in this ranking out of 142 countries). Data from different sources (e.g. TrustLaw, 2012) also suggests that, in comparison to other countries, Britain has better workplace opportunities, access to education, property rights, and women's political participation.

In addition, Britain is not considered to be an honour culture, nor a macho society. Together, these characteristics should mean that gender-based violence does not occur – at least not frequently – and that men and women are at a better place, when it comes to gender

norms and (in)equality. The picture, however, is not that clear. Although Britain has a more progressive attitude in several key areas, when compared to highly developed countries (i.e., those in the top quartile of the Human Development Index), there is still a lot to be improved. According to the Global Gender Gap Index (Dahlgreen, 2015), although Britain appears to have a progressive outlook to issues such as traditional gender roles (i.e., in the context of the household, and society), it is not considered to be a social priority; especially when compared to other developed countries (e.g. Sweden).

Moreover, as discussed in the British Social Attitudes Report (Scott & Clery, 2012) even though attitudes towards the role of men and women in British society have changed considerably (i.e., in 1984, 43% of Britons agreed that a man's job is to earn money and a woman's job is to look after the home and family, whereas now only 13% endorse this view) the actual behaviour at home has not changed to a similar extent. They cite, for example, that when compared with men, British women still report undertaking a disproportionate amount of housework and caring activities.

In sum, beyond the values mostly endorsed in each of these cultures, Brazil and Britain also differ in **a** wide range of aspects. Levels of religiosity, gender inequality rates, and access to education and services, are just a few examples. Nonetheless, rates of women's victimization – for different forms of violence – in these countries are intriguingly similar (Radcliffe, D'Oliveira, Lea, Figueiredo & Gilchrist, 2017), and cases of sexual violence committed against women have been regularly reported.

The occurrence of rape in these two countries

Prevalence

The high incidence of sexual violence, the grave consequences thereof, and the inherent complexity of the phenomenon, means that it has come to be considered almost as an epidemic, and certainly a public health problem, in several countries (Higginbotham, Ketring, Wright & Guarino, 2007; Rapecrisis, 2013); including Brazil and the UK. Recent estimates from WHO (2013) suggest that, despite considerable efforts to prevent and eradicate it, no less than one in three women around the world will fall victim to either physical and/or sexual violence, in her lifetime.

In England and Wales in 2012, for example, more than 400,000 adult women (estimates from sources vary, and are given in the range of 430,000 to 517,000) experienced one form of sexual violence (Ministry of Justice, 2013) and 53,700 sexual offences were recorded by police in the same period. When the offences of rape and sexual assault are considered together in statistics compiled by the Ministry of Justice, they account for 71% of sexual offences recorded by the police in England and Wales during a single year (Ministry of Justice, 2013). In 2011, more than 10,000 prisoners were in custody for committing a sexual offence.

Data from the Ministry of Justice also shows that, in 2011, of those prosecuted for a sexual offence, 98% were men; suggesting that sexual offences have a strong gender base. According to these statistics, rapists account for "around three in ten (of the) defendants prosecuted for sexual offences each year. Of those cases that reached the Magistrates or Crown Court in 2011, just under two thirds resulted in convictions (MoJ, 2013, p. 9).

It is worth to mention that, today, we see an overall trend whereby sexual offences are reported to the police, and more men are convicted of sex crimes. In 1959, for example, only 500 incidents were reported to the police; by 1985, this number had increased to 1842 in that year, while 2011-12 saw more than 14,000 cases reported. The Ministry of Justice explains

thusly:

> The increase in the conviction rate for rape when including other offences reflects the complex relationship that can sometimes exist between prosecutions and outcomes at the Crown Court – namely the extent to which particular types of offences can be subject to downgrading. Further, in some instances, cases are combined and the offender is convicted of a more serious offence, such as murder, with the rape charge ordered to remain on file. (Ministry of Justice, 2013, p.37)

In the year ending March 2015, there was an increase of 37% observed, with more than 88 thousand police recorded sexual offences; the number of rape offences increased by 41% to 29.234 offences, and the number of other sexual offences increased by 35% to 58.872 offences. Both rape and other sexual offences are at the highest level of recording since the NCRS was introduced in April of 2002.

Similarly to the UK, sexual violence is also considered a social problem in Brazil. Data provided by the Brazilian Health Department (Dados do Sistema de Informação de Agravos) indicates, for instance, that in this same year (2011), 4,871 women were raped in this country; and that the first trimester of 2012 alone, saw 5,312 cases of sexual violence (Compromisso e Atitude, 2014; Scarpati, 2013). In the same year, 4.4 cases of murder per hundred thousand were the result of sexual violence.

Furthermore, and according to the '10º Anuário Brasileiro da Segurança Pública' (Cerqueira & Coelho, 2014), more than 50,000 women were victims of sexual violence in 2014. It means that a woman falls prey to this form of violence every 11 minutes. The worse situation is found in Roraima, in the north of the country, where numbers suggest a figure twice as high than the national average (i.e., rate of 55.5 cases for every 100,000 people).

It goes without saying that the statistics must be viewed with caution. As pointed out previously, existing global statistics on sexual violence are shocking and controversial; more so, perhaps, when one considers that in many countries, and for a variety of well-documented

reasons, huge numbers of victims simply do not disclose that they have suffered sexual violence. Cerqueira and Coelho (2014) suggest, for example, that only 10 percent of the cases are reported to the police and that real numbers would revolve around 500.000 offences per year. On top of this, there exists the problem of incomplete and fragmented registers. To Jewkes, Sen and Garcia-Moreno (2002), even though a considerable amount of progress has been made in studies of sexual violence, the phenomenon is a particularly delicate one, and demands specific and detailed assessment and recording solutions.

Finally, regarding risk factors applicable to both countries, data suggest that age is an important factor to consider, as young women have higher chances to be victimized (i.e., approximately 8.01% of high school adolescents reported a history of forced sexual intercourse) (Howard, Wang & Yan, 2007; Miller, 2014). Furthermore, authors have noted that unemployed women, full-time students and women who frequent pubs and/or clubs are also at greater risk (Mallet & Herbe, 2011; McMahon, 2007; Xenos & Smith, 2001).

In line with that, Stanko and Willians (2009) argue that consumption of alcohol or drugs, living below the poverty line, and having an active sexual life also increase the likelihood of a woman becoming a victim of a sexual offence. Marital state (single and separated females are more at risk than others), limiting disabilities or long term illness, being in receipt of a low income (there exists higher risk for those living on less than £10,000 per year) have been also related to a higher risk of victimization, according to the Ministry of Justice (2013). In addition to that, according to WHO (2002) one of the most important risk factor for a woman's victimization, is being married or cohabiting with a partner - especially if the woman becomes herself more educated and economically empowered than her partner. In other words, it seems that women are automatically at a higher risk of being the victims of sexual violence, simply because of their gender (Senn, 2013).

Legal definitions

The legal definition of rape varies from one jurisdiction to another and several organizations (United Nations – UN Women, for example) have been engaged in developing a series of recommendations with regard to rape and sexual violence. One example is the 'Handbook for Legislation on Violence Against Women' (United Nations, 2010), which proposes how the legislation on sexual violence should best be organized.

According to the handbook, legislation needs to define sexual assault not only as a violation of someone's body, but also as a violation of his/her autonomy and integrity. It is also suggested that all countries should: 1) replace the existing offences of rape and 'indecent' assault, with a broader offence of sexual assault with degrees of gravity based on the inflicted harm; 2) consider the age of the survivor, his or her relationship with the perpetrator, the use or threat of violence, whether or not there are multiple perpetrators, the severity of any physical or mental consequences of the assault; and to 3) remove any requirement of evidence of force or violence, or proof of penetration. Additionally, the legislation should be created and applied in such a way as to 1) minimize any chance of the victim's secondary victimization, and 2) reject, as a defence, the fact of any pre-existing relationship between the victim and the perpetrator (i.e. in an 'acquaintance', 'date' or 'marital' rape) (WHO, 2002).

In UK law the relevant legislation can be found in the Sexual Offences Act 2003. This legislation was intended to update the law relating to sexual violence and covers all offences committed against different categories of people (adults, children, sufferers of a mental disability, etc.). For the purpose of this discussion, however, only the first four sections - related offences perpetrated against adults - will be covered here.

Section One - Rape: according to English law, the elements of rape are satisfied when: 'Person (A) intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of another person (B) with his penis; (B) does not consent to the penetration, and (A) does not reasonably believe that (B)

consents.' Per this legislation, then, we see that 1) only men can commit rape, and 2) it is considered a crime of basic intent with no defence to the allegation of drunkenness.

Section Two - Assault by penetration: in contrast with the language of S. 1, here we see the possibility of either gender acting as the perpetrator. We note also the absence of the mouth as a body part capable of being penetrated. Thus, an offence is considered assault by penetration when (A) intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus of another person (B) with a part of their body or anything else: the penetration is sexual; (B) does not consent to that penetration; and (A) does not reasonably believe that (B) consents.

Section Three - Sexual assault: as with assault by penetration, both genders may be charged under this section, and the offence occurs where: (A) intentionally touches another person (B); the touching is sexual; (B) does not consent to that touching, and (A) does not reasonably believe that (B) consents.

Section Four - Sexual activity without consent: the last section concerns offences which have been committed against adults, and presents the legal definition (and the attendant penalties) of causing sexual activity without the person's consent. This offence requires that '(A) intentionally causes (B) to engage in activity; the activity is sexual; (B) does not consent to engaging in the activity; and (A) does not reasonably believe that (B) consents. A S. 4 offence can be seen to have taken place when, for example, a person is forced to masturbate an offender. In relation to that, it is worth to notice that the offence of 'burglary with intent to rape' was replaced by the offence of 'trespassing with intent to commit a sexual offence' contrary to s. 63 of The Sexual Offences Act 2003.

It is noteworthy that the UK legislation initially defined rape as: someone (male or female), having sexual intercourse (vaginal or anal) with a person, who at the time does not (or cannot) consent to it (Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, 1974). The current legislation, however has expanded upon this definition, and now defines rape as having occurred when a

man intentionally penetrates, without consent, and with his penis, vagina anus or mouth of another. There exists in British law, therefore, a very identifiable gender bias, as this definition of rape insists upon the presence of a biological penis; consequently, only a man can be the perpetrator (Fisher & Pina, 2013).

In Brazil, however, men and women can be both the perpetrators and the victims of rape. According to the current legislation - approved in Law No. 12.015, Article 213 - rape is committed when someone (man or woman) coerces, with violence or serious threat, a man or woman, to have sexual intercourse (with them, or with a third party). As per this legislation, sexual offences occur when offenders employ different strategies to limit or nullify an individual's free will (e.g. by force, intimidation, coercion, blackmail, bribes, manipulation, threats) in order to compel the victim to maintain and/or participate in, sexual contact. It is also considered sexual violence if the offender coerces the victim to perform any of these acts with a third party.

The punishment is imprisonment between six and ten years, though a sentence may be extended if certain aggravating factors are present. Thus, if the contact results in bodily injury of a serious nature, or the victim is aged between fourteen and eighteen years, the sentence will increase to between eight and twelve years; if the contact results in death, the penalty starts at twelve years, and can reach up to thirty (Brazil, 2009).

It is important to note, however, that despite those differences a significant and common notion among different legislations is that of consent; and is generally understood as the uncompromised capability of the individual to elect either to engage in, or abstain from, sexual contact. For example, a person may allow a sexual connection without truly consenting to it, if they have been coerced (physically or emotionally forced; intoxicated) and for this reason, the specific circumstances may be minutely examined during the prosecution (Sexual Offences Act, 2003).

Putting things together: discussing sexual violence through a cultural lens

Culture, like violence, is a tremendously complex concept to understand, consisting of many different facets. Some authors understand culture to be 'learned habits' (Tylor, 1964) or learned rules, meanings, and behaviours (Jahoda, 1984) transmitted through the generations (Rohner, 1984). Others consider culture as an organised system of shared symbols (Geertz, 1975) and patterns of behaviour, transmitted through symbolical interactions (Kroeber & Kluckholn, 1952; for a review, see Matsumoto, 2006).

These kindred but diverse concepts perhaps only hint at the complexity of the subject. Nevertheless, it is certainly the case that individual and group behaviours are highly influenced by cultural and societal norms as each society creates a particular set of rules by which its members might structure their lives and predict the consequences of a departure from those rules (Berry et al, 2011).

Social rules (or norms) vary widely and because of that, an acceptable behaviour in one social group or culture might not be tolerated in another. Within these are, for example, rules regarding ordinary daily situations; such as rules about sexual contact between men and women (Miller, 2014). They become part of the social structure, and play an important role in helping people, not only to relate to each other in an acceptable way, but also to define the limits of that relationship (Miller, 2015; Rozee, 1993).

It is important to note, however, that people are affected by their surrounding context in different ways. Not all members of one group will, then, observe the cultural prescriptions and/or interpret them idiosyncratically: "Cultural patterns are dynamic, full of tension and vary over time" (Berry et al., 2011, p. 4-5).

In line with that, and thinking specifically about sexual violence perpetration, Cowan and Campbell (1995) comment that the true comprehension of the phenomenon requires a full understanding of different cultural contexts, gender roles, socio-economic context, stereotypes, individual characteristics, and so on. According to these authors, this offence cannot be treated as an isolated problem, and this is the main reason why any attempt to fully understand and explain this phenomenon should take into account both the individual mind and the diverse aspects of social interaction (Berry et al, 2011).

As noted by Berry, Poortinga, Breugelmans, Chasiotis and Sam (2011) researchers' understanding of what constitutes violence has been changing recently, with modern debate claiming that violence is neither the result of individual moral failure, nor indeed of poor mental health, but is instead the combined product of social forces and/or psychological imbalance. According to this perspective, the main point is not to investigate the incidence of rape in different societies because of individuals' psychological problems, but rather why, when it does occur, it is either justified or condemned through them.

It is also important to consider that these cultural rules seem to be even more evident in some situations than others. For instance, the sexual violence that occurs in the domestic setting and the sexual violence committed by a stranger against a woman walking down the street are not evaluated in the same way. This disparity stresses the complexity of the phenomenon, and the importance of recognizing the existence of the dynamics of power, the historical context, and the inescapable inequality in people's lives. This is one of the foremost reasons why it is so important to identify first what the societal norms are, and then the extent to which they promote or discourage violent behaviour (WHO, 2010).

As stressed by Rozee (1993, p. 511): "Legal sanctions against rape are simply the first step in changing social norms. Until there are real changes in gender relations and attitude, legal sanctions will be ineffective in all but the most extreme cases". In a number of

countries, for example, the use of violence by a husband to essentially 'control' his wife has been considered to be almost part of their relationship and thus not particularly deserving of condemnation:

> "(...) traditional beliefs that men have a right to control and discipline women through physical means, make women vulnerable to violence by intimate partners, and places girls at risk of sexual abuse. Equally cultural acceptance of violence, including sexual violence, as a private affair and is outside intervention and prevents those affected in speaking out in gaining support. In many societies, victims of sexual violence also feel stigmatized, which inhibits reporting" (WHO 2010, p. 4).

These shared norms affect, not only the offender's behaviour, but also the victim's interpretation of the violence (who may start to believe that they were somehow deserving of their ordeal); as well as people's (not directly involved in the situation) judgement of it. For example, those in authority, and even healthcare professionals, blaming the victims, trivializing their experience, questioning their credibility and speculating as to what they have done to "deserve" the violence meted out to them.

Those women who capitulate are rewarded with benevolent societal or institutional care, whereas those who do not conform face the consequences (i.e., being considered, at least partially, responsible for their own victimization) of departing from their expected roles (Chapleau, Oswald & Russell, 2007; Koepke, Eyssel & Bohner, 2014). Viki and Abrams (2002) have found, for example, that in a context of a rape case, more blame was attributed to the adulterous "married mother" (in comparison to the "control" victim) – mainly for those participants who scored high in Benevolent Sexism.

As discussed by Marx, Van Wie and Gross (1996), even elements such as who initiated the date, who has paid for the date, her outfit, etc. "are related to heightened perceptions of a woman's willingness to have sex and increased justifiability of forced intercourse" (p.33). That is, the judgements and expectations around men and women's

sexual encounters may contribute to the perpetuation of violence (Miller, 2014), and make women simultaneously more vulnerable to sexual offences, and less likely to receive a societal support.

Gender roles and women's victimization

Violence is a product of different forces, and while some are directly related to the abusive male himself, others refer to a cultural context that provides the scripts for how people ought to behave in relation to their sexuality (viz, the relative expectations of the gender roles). To Vandello and Cohen (2003) both men and women contribute to the perpetuation of violence by accepting and sharing all these different rules that reinforce "the view that men can sometimes use violence and women should sometimes tolerate it" (p.1008).

The salience of discourses about 'normal' gender behaviour shapes young people's behaviour seriously affecting the way boys and girls behave in relation to each other (Jackson & Sundaram, 2015). While young women are often taught to look, and behave in a way which is 'pleasing' to the opposite gender, boys are often taught to prove their masculinities by demeaning young women from an early age. As discussed by Ogletree, Fancher and Gill (2014), women everywhere have been conditioned to be forever young, always pretty - and above all, 'sexy'. At the same time, they are not widely permitted to be 'sexual' or to enjoy freedom of choice. Therefore, understanding the social context in which those norms take place, and the value assigned to them, is important.

For example, most societies still expect women to conform (and obey) to traditional gender roles, and not to violate the stereotype of 'a good woman'. In Brazil, for example, research suggests that women are still reductively viewed as a mother and/or wife; as the person responsible for the domestic activities; as emotionally unstable; as someone who

needs to remain beautiful in order to be accorded any value (Scarpati, 2013). For Margolis (2001), these characteristics can be directly related to the Portuguese colonization which identifies men with authority and strength and women with weakness and subservience.

This is not limited to Brazil (or roughly analogous countries) though. According to Rashida Manjoo (UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, 2014), British women have long been facing a 'boys' club' culture of sexism. For her, British women and girls' bodies are currently sold in a sexual way, with this practice leading to certain perceptions that, ultimately, allow men to offend against this group.

Abbott (2013, in lecture about Britain's Crisis of Masculinity) adds to this discussion by commenting about what she calls "the pornfication of British culture". According to her, in Britain, girls and women have been raised to believe that their most important quality is "sexiness, and not cleverness, sportiness, application or ambition"; and that that they only have value as sex objects.

At the same time, however, the messages being sent to boys/men are just as limiting and restrictive: 'be macho, be strong, don't show your emotions'. According to Abbott (2013), there is now a culture of hyper-masculinity; where men are encouraged to be heartless, and are rewarded for their lack of respect for women's autonomy. Men are mostly educated - to a greater or lesser extent – to be more independent, powerful, strong, tough, and generally more self-reliant than women. Moreover, there is a robust belief that men have little control over their sexual desires and should, in fact, behave in such a way as to obviate any signs of weakness, vulnerability or emotional lack of control.

These 'norms' seem not only to shape their relationships with both women and other men, but also to affect their self-esteem. According to Reidy, Berke, Gentille and Zeichner (2014), men who experience some conflict with their masculinity are more likely to behave in

a way that bolsters their status and their self-esteem – often manifesting as some form of violent behaviour.

Recent research conducted by 'YouGov' (Dahlgreen, 2016) revealed that British men find it difficult to talk to friends about their personal issues; and that men who consider themselves as highly masculine are more likely to have had a physical fight than those who do not think of themselves that way. In line with that, Nascimento, Gomes and Rebello (2009) found that, in Brazil, 'no respect' means no manhood. These authors further stress that in Brazil being 'a real man' means being faster, stronger, tougher and/or richer than other males. And, more importantly, it means being sexually active, virile and heterosexual. To Vandello and Cohen (2003), the problem is that the endorsement of some of these elements can often result in the use of violence in order to protect someone's self, and/or their family's reputation; as honour codes play a really important role in Brazilian culture.

As previously mentioned, even though Britain is not considered an honour-culture, other aspects seem to contribute to the increasing rates of sexually violent cases in this country. Researchers discuss the so called 'lad culture' and the negative effects of some of the values, attitudes and practices shared among male British students (see Jackson & Sundaram, 2015). According to Jackson and Sundaram (2015), the combination of nights out, excessive drinking, and peer pressure promote an environment wherein men are encouraged to be aggressive. At the same time, in this context, those who have been victimized might not even realize that the unsolicited sexual advance was, in fact, violence; as they are uncertain about what constitutes rape. Others, on the other hand, although able to recognize it, might be understandably reluctant to self-identify themselves as someone who fits the stereotype of the victim of a sexual offence.

As pointed out by Marx, Van Wie and Gross (1996, p.31): "if a victimized woman views the incident as her fault, or believes that her partner was so aroused that he could not

control himself, she may be less likely to conceptualize herself as a victim of rape". In addition, Muerlenhard and Kimes (1999, cited by WHO, 2007, p.16) comment that women may be reluctant to label their experiences due to a deep-seared fear of losing control; thus, as a 'coping mechanism' they may choose to interpret their experiences differently. This allows them to preserve a positive image of themselves, and to maintain an illusion of control by sustaining the belief that, by changing their behaviour, they can prevent any further exposures to sexual violence (Bohner, Weisbrod, Raymond, Barzi & Schwars, 1993). In other words, both men and women are educated to either accept, or perform various forms of dominance and, sometimes, to naturalize the discrimination to which they are exposed. Although there are some elements which seem to be similar among cultures; when it comes to sexual violence perpetration, the very specific and unique variables should be accounted for (i.e., machismo, lad culture).

As discussed by Ryan (2004) different cognitions (i.e., attitudes and beliefs about sex, rape-supportive beliefs, sexual scripts, beliefs about appropriate masculinity, etc.) can work in a way that provides men with the justifications they need to sexually offend. They can, for example, simultaneously suggest women's complicity, and give men a sense of entitlement that aids in the planning and preparation for sexual offending. Beliefs and values regarding sexual contact, gender norms, etc. help people to understand the expectations regarding their behaviour, and define what sexual violence is (and what is not). More importantly, they may serve to maintain and justify men's dominance, and to enable them to sexually offend (Sundaram & Sauntson, 2016; McCarry, 2010). Therefore, the discussion of sexual violence perpetration and/or victimization cannot be considered independent of the socio-cultural and historic context of gender in which it takes place (Lima & Deslandes, 2014).

Conclusion

The understanding of sexual violence perpetration is complex and calls for a multifactorial approach, as the behaviour seems to be the final product of a complex arrangement of different factors. Nevertheless, due to ethical constraints, this phenomenon cannot be investigated via realistic analogue studies in a laboratory, and the specific roles these factors may play, in moderating or mediating the final behaviour, remain unclear.

In addition to that, even though social psychologists have consistently emphasized the importance of sociocultural cues in the expression of aggressive behaviours, little attention has been paid to examining them (Thomas, 2009). Instead, as previously discussed, most authors have been dedicating themselves to the investigation of males' distorted cognitions and their effects on their likelihood to commit rape (see Bohner, Eyssel, Siebler & Viki, 2009), as well as their prejudices, emotions and past experiences. What has been overlooked, however, is that any individual tendency is rooted in, and influenced by, previous experiences and the context within which they occur. For example, socio-cultural forces work, in the context of sexual violence, as inhibitors or agents of those pre-existing propensities.

Therefore, examining someone's behaviour and/or tendencies only makes sense if the environment is also considered. By the same token, cultures cannot be understood while ignoring individuals' minds, as both social practices (i.e., norms) and institutions (i.e., religion) are, to some extent, the effect of humans' minds and own particularities. In other words, individuals are sensitive to social cues/context, as social information will provide the pillars to their behavioural evaluation and choice in a situation (Carnes, Lickel & Janoff-Bulman, 2015). They affect and are affected by each other. As suggested by Berry et al., (2011), they can be, either an antecedent, or a consequence of people's behaviour, or both.

Understanding how one's culture/group interprets some forms of behaviour – and whether they consider it violence or not – will determine if the act is going to be considered (or not) a crime by a particular jurisdiction (e.g. marital rape is not defined in the legislation of some countries). More importantly, individuals will be able to recognize themselves as either offenders or victims of that offence.

In line with the above, we posit that social context exerts a powerful and unique influence in the perpetration of sexual violence; as the social acceptance of certain norms might increase men's likelihood to engage in sexual aggression. As stated by Ryan (2004, p.598), men "are not born rapists": rather, rape is the result of a complex process whereby some men acquire a battery of strategies (for example, the atmosphere of a party, the known effects of alcohol and drugs, a victim's feelings of isolation, physical and emotional coercion, etc.) to neutralise a woman's resistance. In other words, patriarchal societies have been teaching men, not just what is effective or ineffective in terms of violent behaviour, but also how to behave in order to obviate their responsibility for the aggression. As a result, the idea of consent seems to be flexible and capable of being manipulated into what is expedient for the perpetrator.

As suggested by Hall, Howard and Boezio (1986), although almost no one approves of rape, or any other form of violence against women, people differ in their levels of disapproval. According to these authors, whereas some condemn rape under all circumstances, some might argue that, in certain situations, male sexual aggressive behaviour is understandable. Furthermore, depending on the target group and the circumstances, rape might even be desirable.

Following from this perspective, the primary goal of this paper was to explore how socio-cultural beliefs and practices might influence the perpetration of sexual violence, and to examine the problem of sexual violence perpetration in two different cultures. It becomes

clear that, although vastly different, Brazil and Britain experience the same high rates of sexual violence against women. We posit that this commonality is primarily due to cultural norms surrounding gender relations and responsibilities. As outlined by Cowan and Campbell (1995, p. 45), we also believe that sexual violence is not an isolated problem, but rather, "an expression of a larger cultural phenomenon in which women are seen as subordinate and sexual coercion is accepted" (p.45). Therefore, any efforts to put an end to sexual offences committed against women should consider such social and cultural norms as a key factor in this process.

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