



Step by step

How to face violence against women

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Index

Preface	<i>1</i>
Violence against women in the past and in the present: spot the differences	<i>2</i>
Women's voices for change	<i>9</i>
The strange case of misogyny	<i>16</i>
Women: muses in art and objects in real life	<i>22</i>
Violence behind the screen and the musical notes	<i>27</i>
Two pandemics: violence against women and COVID-19	<i>32</i>
Rape culture: the monster in our minds	<i>35</i>
Words and bodies: verbal violence and prostitution	<i>41</i>
Conclusion	<i>45</i>
Bibliography	<i>46</i>

Preface

The idea for this book was born during an English lesson, on an apparently normal Wednesday. However, it was the 25th of November 2020, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against women, and our teacher decided to focus on something which is not included in our school programme. By exchanging our opinions, we understood that our knowledge about the issue was not deep at all, no matter how many newspapers we read or news we watch. That pushed us to start this journey through all the aspects of violence against women. We did it by dividing us into groups and doing several types of research on many different websites and books (you can find our sources on page 46).

We discovered that this problem is much wider than what we expected; it has influenced our world in endless ways, affecting all the fields of knowledge, such as art, cinema and music. We ended up reading hundreds of stories that touched us very deeply; that's how we decided to give life to these pages. Is it only curiosity? Not at all. Young people always wish to change the world: we hope that our little contribution can make a difference in the mindsets of people around us.

The idea behind the title is this one: monsters cannot be won all at once, but Step by step, all together, holding our hands.

To all the women in the world: you are not alone! Wherever you are, you will never find yourself abandoned. Be strong, it is not your fault, and we know it.

Before you start your journey, here is a quote that is worth reading:

"No more minutes of fear, of humiliation, of pain, of silence. We have the right to have every minute of freedom, happiness, love and life. We want to live. All of us. Not one less."

- "Ni una menos" campaign against gender-based violence.

Enjoy the reading!

Violence against women in the past and in the present: spot the differences

In order to start this journey through violence against women, it is important to understand what people mean with the word violence and when or where the one against the female gender started.

Many dictionaries have more than one definition for the same word or concept. The Oxford English Dictionary defines violence as “*the exercise of physical force so as to inflict injury on, or cause damage to, persons or property; action or conduct characterized by this; treatment or usage tending to cause bodily injury or forcibly interfering with personal freedom*”, but also “*as Improper treatment or use of a word; wresting or perversion of meaning or application; unauthorized alteration of wording*”. The first definition that we presented is also the first one that the readers find when they look for it, while the other one is the third proposed by the dictionary.

For the U.N. Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women violence against women is “*any act...that results in...physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or in private life*”.

This intro already proves a point. It is shocking that in the dictionary physical and psychological violence are divided and not included in the same definition, just like if you have to show scars and stitches to prove that you have been violated. The first step to fight against the assaults is to be able to identify them. The acronym used to shorten the whole expression is VAW (violence against women). It is considered to be one of the major clinical problems in the world. Statistics say that globally one in three women have experienced violence from their partners.

Rape in ancient world and mythology

The first evidence about rape is found in the Code of Hammurabi where it is written that if the raped woman is married, she is punished with death together with the aggressor, while if she is not, the punishment is applied only to the man. Here is a list of laws present in the Code itself:

129. If the wife of a man is caught lying with another man, they shall bind them and throw them into water.

130. If a man has ravished another's betrothed wife, who is a virgin, while still living in her father's house, and has been caught in the act, that man shall be put to death; the woman shall go free.

143. If she has not been discreet, has gone out, ruined her house, belittled her husband, she shall be drowned.

155. If a man has betrothed a maiden to his son and his son has known her, and afterwards the man has lain in her bosom and been caught, that man shall be strangled and shall be cast into the water.

At verses 22, 23-29 (of other laws not present in the list above) it is stated that according to the place where the violence occurs, different trials are planned. If a woman is raped in the city,

because it is alleged that she could have shouted in order to receive help, she has to suffer the same punishment of the man. If the abuse occurs in the countryside, even if the woman had shouted no



Franca Viola around 1960.

one could have helped and so the abuser must pay money to her family or eventually marry her. This is a proof of how old the shotgun wedding is. Since the Babylonians weddings were arranged in order to “save” the honour and reputation of the family of the victim. It is shocking to know that this procedure was legal in many countries due to the so-called Marry-your-rapist law. This law was based on the idea that if a girl or woman is raped, it is her fault and therefore she should marry the rapist in order to do not throw her family into disrepute. It is not difficult to understand that this legislation actually protected the rapist because in this way they were exonerated from the punishment. In 2017, a World Bank Group report claimed there were 12 countries left with marry-your-rapist laws: Angola, Bahrain, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Iraq, Jordan

(repealed in August 2017), Lebanon, Libya, Palestine, the Philippines, Syria, and Tunisia (repealed in July 2017). In Italy, Article 544 of the Italian Criminal Code considered rape an offence against 'public morality', not against a single person. Things changed thanks to Franca Viola. She was one of the first women refusing the “repair marriage” publicly in 1966 after having been raped at the only age of 17.

This idea of women being inferior spread in the Ancient world easily and even started to be supported by science. Greeks believed that humans were the most perfect animals and that more specifically, men were better than women because of their body temperature. Even if their anatomy was the same, men appeared to have hotter organs while women were unable to reach that temperature and therefore were inferior. Even the philosopher Aristotle agreed with this theory in his work Politics where he wrote: “*as regards the sexes, the male is by nature superior and the female inferior, the male ruler and the female subject*”.

It is difficult to have data about rape in Ancient time, but our case can be based on Greek mythology because those stories were examples for the population on how to behave properly. So, it is not reckless for us to write that mythology helps us in understanding abuse at that time. The first story we would like to analyze is the one of Medusa. It is possible to create a comparison between how society considered her after the rape and how society considers women today after the rape. According to the Roman poet Ovidio, originally Medusa was an outstanding woman who was transformed into the monster that we all know by Minerva as a punishment because she was raped in one of her temples by Poseidon. The comparison should be clear now. Medusa was not the villain we are used to think, she was the victim. Even today women who suffered violence think to be the cause of the violence itself, they tempt to justify the attackers. However, what touches the readers the most is the reaction that Minerva has. She knows about the abuse and yet she punishes Medusa. It is almost painful to see how this part of the story is current because even in our society we can clearly feel a lack of empathy among people. For example, often we hear people claiming that rape occurs also according to the kind of dress the victim was wearing, while the blame should be put only on the aggressors.

The destiny of women in the Ancient Rome was identical. Again, they were considered minors by the law and as objects that belonged to the father during childhood and then to the husband during marriage. Wives were not allowed to have a public life, so everything- included rape- had to be filtered by men, giving them the power to control. The rape of the Sabine is a crucial example of how abuse was not just physical violence, but also social. This kind of rape is called genocidal rape. Winning men wanted to bastardize the defeated population by forcing women in having sexual intercourse. The action aimed was to end the “purity” of the citizenry. The event of the rape of the Sabines was narrated by Livy as a fact of necessity rather than violence. When Rome was born, the city was inhabited only by men. Therefore Romulus asked the surrounding tribes to send their women in order to live with them and create the Roman population. However, the tribes declined and so he invited them at a festival in honour of the god Neptune. It was a set-up because Sabine women were attacked while the men were distracted by the spectacles and games. The words used by the poet suggest that the Sabines were extremely beautiful as if it could be a reason and a justification for the rape.

Another fundamental example is the rape of Lucretia because it signed the end of the monarchy in Rome, while the episode of the Sabines began it. According to tradition, she was the beautiful and virtuous wife of the nobleman Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus. Her tragedy began when she was raped by Sextus Tarquinius, son of Lucius Tarquinius Superbus, the tyrannical Etruscan king of Rome. After exacting an oath of vengeance against the Tarquins from her father and her husband, she stabbed herself to death. Lucius Junius Brutus then led the enraged populace in a rebellion that drove the Tarquins from Rome.

Luckily women in Ancient Egypt had another destiny because they were considered equal to men and could even choose liberally their grooms. However, due to the lack of data and stories, we cannot be sure that violence against women was not practised.

Rape in middle ages and witch-hunting

With the Middle Ages, women started to be considered creatures of sin again in the wake of Eve. She was accused to have attempted Adam in eating the fruit, leading him and the idea of women on the wrong path. It should be mentioned that in these years religion played a leading role in people’s life. During the Medieval period, there were two sources of violence against women: the theocracy and the witch-hunting.

In this paper we will analyze the problem trying to be as posted as possible: it is not our intention to offend the sensibility of the readers. However, we cannot neglect how Eve- first woman on Earth- is pictured in the Bible and how evident the impact that Christianity had during the Middle Ages is. Witchcraft was born in this period as opposition of the Pagan culture against the Christian one.

First of all, the name “witch” itself has its origin in the term “*stryx*”, a kind of owl that was considered responsible for biting children and killing them during the night. At the beginning, so, witches were only the ones that happened to abort. However, Christianity brought another vision of the witch that was extendable to a big part of the female population. By defining women as devils, fear was spread among the population.

Second only to the Bible, the most read book in the Medieval period was the *Malleus Maleficarum*, written by two inquisitors from the Catholic Church, Springer and Kramer and published in 1486. In this book women were described as easy prey for the Devil, for being sexually vulnerable.

Here some interesting lines from the book:

“What else is a woman but a foe to friendship?” wrote the monks. *“They are evil, lecherous, vein, and lustful. All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is, in women, insatiable.”*

Another crucial aspect was the decretal made by Pope John XXII named *“Super Illius Specula”* in which he condemns all the women who were discovered to practice witchcraft to be burned at stake. Here is a quote:

“They make a deal with death and hell, they make sacrifices to the devils, they worship them, they fabricate and make images, rings or mirrors or ampoules and anything else to magically bind the devils to themselves, they ask them for responsibilities. Or how much pain!”

The most famous historical event that almost everyone thinks of when we talk about witches, is the Salem trial. With this expression, we take into consideration a series of processes that took place in the homonym little village (in Danvers) since 1692. At the end of the trial, which lasted almost seven months, about 200 people had been accused of witchcraft, 150 people were imprisoned and 19 women, considered witches, had been hanged.

This horrifying event inspired many shows, such as the popular TV series named just *“Salem”*.

The first woman who is recorded for having been executed with the accuse of being a witch is Petronilla de Meath in 1324 in Kilkenny, Ireland. She was a servant for a rich woman who was accused of bad behaviour. However, she was influent so she managed to get rid of the accusation quite easily, while her servant did not. She was burned at stake, anticipating what would have come later on.

The number of innocent victims is estimated to be one hundred-thousands; however, Dan Brown in his *“Da Vinci Code”* wrote: *“The church burned at stake [...] 5 million women”*. This gives us an idea of the perception of the phenomenon that people at the time had, mostly in the countryside.

Also, Lord chief justice Anderson noted in 1602: *“The land is full of witches... They abound in all places”*. This is a real image, a deadly threat to life, not just a symbol or a representation.

Anna Goldi is remembered to be the last witch to have been executed in Europe, in 1792. It is shocking to see that not even three centuries ago, witchcraft was still considered a valuable accuse to murder a woman and that, even during the Enlightenment period, humankind was not rational and right at all. After having lived a hard life, characterized by several travels and many painful events, she is sentenced as a witch, with the accuse of having put a curse on the daughters of the family she worked for. The ladies, for instance, kept finding needles in their cups of milk at breakfast and started vomiting metallic objects: Anna was declared guilty. The verdict of the trial led to her decapitation in Switzerland.

A famous example of a woman accused to be a witch is Joan of Arc. She was a girl living in medieval France, believed that God had chosen her to lead France to victory in its long-running war with England. She collected many victories in the name of King Charles VII and her success spread all around France. Probably she became way too powerful considering that when during a battle in the spring of 1430, she was captured by the enemies, the King did absolutely nothing to have her released. In the trial she had to answer to 70 charges including witchcraft, heresy and dressing like a man. After a year in captivity, on the morning of May 30th, 1431, at the age of 19, Joan was taken to the old marketplace of Rouen and burned at the stake.

Even if with reservations, we could say that something started to change in the early 1500s when in America, thanks to a new law, husbands were allowed to whip their wives with a switch no longer than their thumbs.

Rape in modern world and the revolutions

Moving forward with history, it is worthy of mention the interview that the historian Alexis Coe made to the author Holger Hoock for the publication of his book *Scars of Independence: America's Violent Birth*. The conversation between the two of them focuses on the figure of Abigail Palmer, a teenager girl who was raped by British soldiers along with two friends and a pregnant relative. The episode happened in December 1776 at the house of her grandfather. It was common for the soldiers to rape girls and women in front of their fathers or husbands to underline how American men failed in protecting their women against the British soldiers. She had the courage to report the rape affirming that the soldiers told her “*They would knock her eyes out if she did not hold her tongue*”.

In 1791 Olympe de Gouges published the *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizens*, in response to France’s *Declaration on the Rights of Man*. She is considered one of the first political activists. Among the rights she lists there is “security”. It has a deep meaning whose importance is often underestimated. A woman needs to and must feel safe in her house, as well as in the streets.



Olympe De Gouges

Meanwhile, in Great Britain another female activist published *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*: her name is Mary Wollstonecraft, mother of the well-known Mary Shelley, author of the masterpiece *Frankenstein*.

Here’s a passage in which she exposes the treatment that women used to receive by men: “*...if they be really capable of acting like rational creatures, let them not be treated like slaves; or, like the brutes who are dependent on the reason of man*”

From an historical point of view, that period was preparing the base for the two consequential Industrial Revolutions. If, on one hand, signs of progress brought by them allowed women to work, on the other hand they often ended up being raped by their bosses or male colleagues. Apart from all the injustices that characterized the world of work, such as the different wages depending on the gender, they were largely abused.

It is not only a problem related to the past: still, nowadays women face any kind of abuse in factories. The investigation conducted in Lesotho, in a factory that produces jeans, brought this issue to light.

Women who needed to work to survive could not even afford to leave the job or to report anything because they would have died anyway. This type of violence is widespread and is based on taking advantage of the weakest.

In 1878 Frances Power Cobbe, Irish writer and activist, published “Wife Torture in England”, to support a new law that would expand legal options available to survivors of domestic violence.

In her writing, she estimated about 6000 brutal attacks by intimate partners documented over a three-year period, including the use of sulphuric acid to induce blindness, burning and murder. It is a collection of all the major articles in which wives reported sexual abuse from their husbands. In the same year the first International Congress on Women’s Rights was held in Paris, France.

Rape in the xx century

The XX century was characterized by several fights, apart from the two cruel world wars. First of all, not everybody remembers the Irish revolution, which took place in 1910s and in the early 1920s.

An interesting study conducted by two historians (M. McAuliffe and Lindsey Earner-Byrne) and two sociologists (Linda Connolly and Louise Ryan), brought to life a hidden side of the conflicts: the violence that women had to endure.

It was not uncommon that the soldiers who could not find any men in the houses they were breaking into, targeted their sisters, wives and daughters. Some of them were killed, the others resulted pregnant at the end. However, the most disturbing fact of this story is the silence in which they were obliged to live: for, when any of them begged some kind of institution for help, they received only a cold shoulder. A handwritten has been found, directed to the Archbishop of Dublin, from a woman who was raped by a band of Republicans and got pregnant; it is useless to say, that letter was uncovered.

Of course, the Republicans were not the only aggressors: there are plenty of witnesses of girls assaulted by the Free State Army or the Crown Forces.

“Never mind, don’t say anything now”, this is what the Sergeant in charge told to a girl who was reporting the attack she suffered from.

These stories have given birth to an interesting document entitled “CogadharMhná”. It gives voice to the unheard women, in a very strong and evocative way.

After having considered the first two decades of this century, it is crucial to focus on the war which is claimed to be not only the cruellest of the period, but of the entire human history: The Second World War (WWII).

It is not unknown that during this conflict there have been about 60 million victims; however, what is often forgotten or untold about these years, is that several women have been assaulted. As we said previously about the Irish revolution, the aggressors did not belong to a unique party: they were from the Nazis, as well as Fascists and Allies. In this case, violence and assault was not an accidental episode; on the contrary, it was commonly used as an instrument of torture (both physical and mental) and submission of the weakest part of the population. It was common, in Tuscany for example, seeing soldiers breaking into the houses, asking for a hot meal, and then abusing of the women there. The data found demonstrate that about sixty-thousands girls in Italy obtained a refund to keep silent about the sexual harassments they suffered from.

Of course, it is not only about sexual assault: it is important to remember that, for example, pregnant women in concentration camps were considered “unable to work” and were immediately killed. As during the Industrial Revolutions, if on one hand women were allowed to take part to the conflict, even as nurses, on the other hand they have been victims of muted violence. There is one important book that narrates the story from the point of view of a woman and that does not hide these dreadful events. It is entitled “La ciociara”, written by Alberto Moravia.

Today

Nowadays about 35% of women have experienced physical and sexual abuse from men at some point in their lives. This is still a monster we all must fight and that is the meaning of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25th November). It finds its origin in 1960, when three sisters Patria Mirabal, María Teresa Mirabal and Minerva Mirabal, were assassinated in the Dominican Republic on the orders of the Dominican ruler Rafael Trujillo. The Mirabal sisters fought hard to end Trujillo's dictatorship.

Women voices for change

We decided to start this chapter by focusing on what we just introduced to you at the end of the previous one. The International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women was established in 1999 by the General Assembly of the United Nations and is held every year on 25th of November. The day is also known as Orange Day, because the colour orange is recognised across the world as that chosen by The United Nations Gender Equality Body, to symbolise a future without violence against women. To mark the day, UN Women promotes the #OrangetheWorld awareness campaign and Eni is also taking part by lighting up the Palazzo Mattei, a building in Rome, orange for the evening. This date was chosen to commemorate the brutal killing of the Mirabal sisters, political activists in the Dominican Republic. On 25th November 1960, the three women went to visit their husbands in prison when they were stopped on the road by military intelligence officers. They were tortured, massacred and then thrown off a cliff in their car, to make it look like an accident. It was immediately obvious to the public that the Mirabal sisters had been murdered. Violence against women is not only a crime, it is the most widespread and pervasive human rights violation at a global level.



Minerva Mirabal



María Teresa Mirabal



Patria Mirabal

Facts and figures: ending violence against women

Availability of data on violence against women and girls has increased significantly in recent years, and figures on the prevalence of intimate partner violence is now available for at least 106 countries. Globally, 35% of women have ever experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence, or sexual violence by a non-partner. This figure does not include sexual harassment. Some national studies show that the number can be as high as the 70 % of women, and that rates of depression, having an abortion, and acquiring HIV are higher in women who have experienced this type of violence, compared to women who have not. Among the figures that really shocked us, it is said that 137 women are killed by a member of their family daily, and more than half of them are killed by intimate partners. Also, less than 40 per cent of the women who experience violence seek help of any sort and the ones who do, try to look for family and friends, rather than formal institutions. For, less than 10 per cent of those seeking help appealed to the police. Despite the 155 countries that have passed laws on domestic violence, those are not always compliant with

international standards and recommendations, or are implemented and enforced. Adult women account for nearly half (49%) of all human trafficking victims detected globally and the reason for it is sexual exploitation. 15 million teenage girls worldwide, aged 15–19 years, have experienced forced sex, and they are most at risk of forced sex (forced sexual intercourse or other sexual acts) by a current or former husband, partner, or boyfriend. What is worrying is that, based on data from 30 countries, only one per cent have ever sought professional help. Globally, one in three students, aged 11–15, have been bullied by their peers at school at least once in the past month. Across five regions, 82% of women parliamentarians reported having experienced some form of psychological violence while doing their job, including remarks, gestures and images of a sexist or humiliating sexual nature, threats, and mobbing. Social media is said to be the main channel of this type of violence, and nearly half (44%) reported receiving death, rape, assault, or abduction threats towards them or their families.

Key findings

It is fundamental to affirm that every woman can suffer from gender-based violence. Women from all over the world, regardless of income, age or education, are subject to any kind of physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence. The majority of women that have experienced violence have been victims of intimate partners. Sexual violence is less spread than a physical one; however, in intimate relationships, they are often experienced together. Among the consequences of this issue, there are long-term physical, mental, and emotional health problems; in the most extreme cases, violence against women can lead to death. Two-thirds of victims of home-related homicides are women. Hopefully, about 119 countries have passed laws on domestic violence, 125 have laws on sexual harassment, and 52 have laws on marital rape. On the other hand, even when domestic violence laws exist, they are not always followed or implemented in ways that protect and help women. Also, many victims need specific measures to be taken because they are often economically dependent on their intimate partner, and they are at risk of being left without any kind of economic support when their partner is convicted and imprisoned. Awareness is the key: the availability of data on violence against women has increased significantly in recent years – since 1995, 102 countries have conducted at least one survey addressing the issue: 44 collected data on this sensitive topic in the period 1995-2004 and 89 did so between 2005 and 2014. Now we are going to examine how violence is spread around the world and how every nation fights against this problem.

Africa

Gender-based violence is a very common issue in African countries, for many different reasons. The data and the figures that support this statement are easily reachable by surfing on the Internet and we decided to report some of the most impressive ones. For example, shocking as it may be, the risk of child marriage is highest in sub-Saharan Africa, where more than one in three women, aged 20–24 years, were married before the age of 18. The phenomenon of child marriage often brings with it early pregnancies, social isolation, the interruption of education, and the increase of risk of domestic violence. Another fact is that about 200 million women and girls, in their fertile period, have undergone female genital mutilation in 31 different countries where the practice is concentrated and half of these are in West Africa. There are still places where female genital mutilation is considered almost universal, where at least 9 in 10 girls and women have experienced it. However, data indicate that the practice is less prevalent among younger women than older

generations in all countries. In North Africa, 40–60 per cent of women have been sexually assaulted in the streets. The harassment was mainly about sexual comments, stalking, staring, or ogling. Also, the acceptance of wife-beating is generally higher in Africa. Hopefully, those attitudes towards violence are starting to change, mostly where education is available, the level of both women's and men's acceptance of violence has decreased over time.

However, in most countries, levels of acceptance are lower among men than women. In Africa, one-quarter of countries in the region reporting a prevalence of at least 50%. In Oceania, prevalence is the highest, reaching over 60 per cent in several countries in the region. More than half of the developed countries report a lifetime prevalence of at least 20%.

Angola

Despite having recorded some achievements on the rights of women, it is necessary to do a lot of organizing, as well as fighting those who impede the progress and success of women. It has been noticed in branches that, whenever there are claims, demands, and protests for dealing with workers' issues and advocating for women's rights, women do not participate fully in the action for fear of being dismissed. The federation and the union branches have undertaken to work together to support the rights of women against violence in many ways, such as professional technical assistance, training of (women) coordinators, promotion of awareness campaigns to increase the number of women in unions, and mobilisation of women and sensitising them on the importance of solidarity.

Kenya

The Kenya Dock Workers' Union campaigns on a range of issues including, child abuse and women's rights protection. The union's work has helped to open up job opportunities to women that were once male-dominated. Violence against women in the workplace has dramatically decreased, luckily.

Algeria

In this country, many days were usually dedicated to women. During these, they are encouraged to find ways to defend themselves and to come forward to report any acts of violence, even if this problem remains somehow a taboo in Arab Muslim society. These awareness days aim to strengthen understanding and solidarity among unionists, to promote the discussion of cases, and to inform and remind women about what rights they have, including the national regulations that can protect them. A national 24-hour monitoring centre for women who are victims of violence, is operating closely with women's groups to help bring the needed support to the ones in distress.

Tunisia

The revolution of 14th January 2011 weakened the Tunisian state and institutions, which is no longer able to control everything that goes on in the country. Even though people are allowed to express themselves more, often things get taken too far and there are violence and aggression. Frontline public service workers, especially those working in the transport sector, have suffered assaults at ticket offices, on buses, trains, and stations. Female workers are the most vulnerable ones and there have been more and more cases of violence against them. One such case occurred a few

months ago, when many passengers who wanted free train tickets attacked the women of the ticket sales staff, broke the counter windows and caused chaos. Fortunately, some railway workers gave them moral support.

Europe

Even though European countries are generally thought to be more developed, one in 10 women living there, report having experienced cyber-harassment since the age of 15. Among these acts, there are also unwanted and offensive sexually explicit emails or SMS messages, or offensive and inappropriate advances on social networking sites. The risk seems to be highest among young women aged 18–29 years.

Bulgaria

On 25th November 2009, the Federation of Transport Trade Unions in Bulgaria (FTTUB) started a big campaign in a round table discussion, where they reached an agreement for joint actions, on the prevention of work-related harassment and violence against women in the urban public transport companies of Sofia. The agreement, which was signed by the mayor of Sofia and the president of FTTUB, supported plans for research, campaigning, and practical workplace measures. The FTTUB then commissioned a survey of all urban public transport companies in Sofia, which gathered and analysed crucial pieces of information about the violence women face every day at work. Following FTTUB recommendations, a database on violence against women in the workplace was created and the campaign was widely reported in the media. Inspired by the agreement for joint action and the activities that followed (organized by FTTUB), the Mayor of Sofia gave birth to a self-defence course for women. Participants gave great feedbacks, taking away with them a greater sense of self-confidence and security, which is listed among people's rights.

Spain

In Spain a lot of associations have been providing training courses on gender-based violence for more than 10 years, through its “social intervention to stop violence against children and women” programme. The union's work on violence has included the publication of a document entitled Violence against women: a political Issue. Every year, on 25th November, FSC campaigns against gender-based violence, producing a poster, publishing a manifesto, and organizing a talk or conference, to provide people with awareness. United Kingdom Nautilus was extensively involved in lobbying authorities following the unexplained deaths of two women at sea: Rebecca Coriam, a British national working onboard a passenger ship, and AkhonaGevaza, a South African who was working onboard a UK-flagged containership. As well as using these cases to highlight the problem of violence against women, Nautilus campaigned for full and transparent investigations of both cases. One direct positive result was the UK government's decision to table proposals at the International Maritime Organization for new measures, that seek to improve the investigation of crimes at sea.

Italy

According to the 2015 Italian National Institute of Statistics report, almost 1 in 3 women in Italy have disclosed physical and/or sexual violence; 31% of women between 16 and 70 years old are

victims of some form of violence (20 % physical violence and 21 % sexual). In 2014, 39% of people in Italy said they knew at least one woman within their area or neighbourhood who has been a victim of domestic violence and did not report it. Also, 5% of women in Italy have been victims of rape and/or attempted rape. Italian legislation, which has the task of persecuting violence against women, is extensive, covering domestic violence, sexual violence, violence against minors, female genital mutilation, stalking, and trafficking of human beings. In 2001, a law was released about domestic violence (154/2001) and it covers all family members who are subjected to physical or psychological violence. Another law introduced the crime of stalking as a violent act in the Italian legal system; it is punishable with imprisonment ranging from 6 months to up to 4 years. Other offences for the Italian Penal Code are rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment. Unluckily, the situation is nothing but dangerous: 91 women have been killed in Italy in the first 10 months of 2020.

Associations

European Women's Lobby

The European Women's Lobby (EWL) is the largest umbrella organization of women's associations in the European Union; it was founded in 1990, and it has the purpose of promoting women's rights and representing a total of more than 2000 organizations. It works closely with European institutions and civil society partners; at the international level, the EWL has consultative status at the Council of Europe and participates regularly in the activities of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

Its origins come from a meeting in London in 1987. At this conference, 120 women, members of 85 organisations and representing 50 million individual members, came together and adopted two resolutions: the first called for the 'creation of a structure for influence, open to all interested women's organisations, to exert pressure on European and national institutions to ensure better defence and representation of women's interest'. Secondly, the delegates called on the European Commission to 'lend its support for the organisation in early 1988 of a meeting with a view to the implementation of such a structure'. In 1990, the Commission granted its support for the foundation of the European Women's Lobby, with a Secretariat based Brussels, the location of the main European Union institutions. The purpose is to grow awareness of the need to defend women's interests at the European level. It became urgent for women and their organisations to participate in the programmes established by the Union. The creation of EWL was therefore linked to the creation of a new form of European public space and a new form of interaction between citizens and political officials. The EWL's activities meet two types of needs: first of all, the one to lobby to ensure that women's rights and needs as well as a 14 gender perspective, are taken into account in the preparation of policies and legislation, secondly, to promote the participation of women's organizations at EU level. The EWL thus plays a dual role, linking women's organisations and institutions and facilitating the dialogue and the exchanges between citizens.

Campaign "Stand up and fight"

The North-South Centre of the Council of Europe declares its commitment to end violence against women by denouncing the victim-blaming attitudes that marginalize and stigmatize the survivor and make it harder to come forward and report the abuse. The phenomenon of not reporting the abuse is

commonly spread both in developed and in developing countries. So, the purpose is to raise awareness on the obstacles and barriers that stand against victims of sexual violence by encouraging public opinion to support survivors of violence, domestic violence, and, in particular, sexual abuse.

It is showed in recent reports that women are not willing to detail violence for several reasons, such as the perception of violence as a private, family affair, and the lack of support and protection of governmental bodies, police, and justice. Victims often are afraid of complicating the situation and of other people's reactions, especially the other male family members; these are also among the reasons for underreporting. Sexual violence, for instance, seems to be the least reported violence form, according to the latest data. The fear of being stigmatized by family and the community if they speak up against violence plays a crucial part in preventing women from denouncing.

Oxfam

Oxfam's worldwide 'Enough' campaign, has the purpose of ending violence against girls and it aims to challenge and change the harmful social norms that justify abuse, to other ones that promote gender equality and non-violence. Every day, everywhere, women are confronted by discrimination and inequality; they are obliged to face violence, abuse, and unequal treatment at home, at work, and in their wider communities. Gender justice results in women put on an equal basis with men, rewriting and shaping the policies that affect their lives and society as a whole, and it is critical to ending poverty and challenge inequality. It is important to support women's access to resources, to raise their voices end ending this nightmare.

Telefono Rosa

The Telephone Rosa Volunteer Association or simply Telefono Rosa is a voluntary association founded on February 1, 1988, by the journalist Giuliana Massari Dal Pozzo, to help women who are victims of any kind of violence or abuse. The president is Maria Gabriella Carnieri Moscatelli and the whole association works to prevent, report, and offer support to women who suffer from stalking and physical or psychological violence, to help them to come out and ask for help. It manages the free anti-violence and stalking public service number 1522 - active 24 hours a 15 day. In the first ten months of 2017, 26,481 calls were made, 84% of these are from Italian women (with children in 70% of cases).

Pan American Health Organization

The acronym PAHO indicates an international public health agency working in order to improve the health and living standards of American people. As a part of the United Nations system PAHO/WHO has a long history of working to improve prevention and response to violence against women and violence against children.

Here, we reported four priority areas for violence prevention in the region: the first one is improving the scope, the quality, the dissemination, and the use of data on VAW for evidence-based policy and programming. Secondly and thirdly, to strengthen the capacity for preventing this issue and to improve the health sector response. The last area is about supporting the development and revision of national policies and plans on violence prevention and response including specific policies and plans for addressing it.

Activism

In the 1960s and 1970s, a movement called Take Back the Night gained traction. This movement, still strongly represented today, is an international protest against sexual violence against women. Take Back the Night has become a non-profit organization that aims to end all forms of sexual violence, including street harassment.

In 1970, the "Wall Street Ogle-In" took place. Led by Karla Jay, women marched on Wall Street with signs addressing street harassment. As a role reversal, the women catcalled the men they passed in hopes of raising awareness of the unpleasant nature of the street harassment women experience daily. In 2012, the blog Stop Street Harassment became a non-profit that is "dedicated to documenting and ending gender-based street harassment worldwide" by hosting events and keeping people informed about the action they can take to end street harassment.

Public activism against street harassment has grown since the late 2000s. A group called Stop Street Harassment began as a blog in 2008 and became incorporated as a non-profit organization in 2012. The organization provides tips for dealing with street harassment in safe and assertive ways, as well as provide opportunities to "take community action". In 2010, Stop Street Harassment started the annual "International Anti-Street Harassment Week". During the third week in April, people from around the globe participated in "marches, rallies, workshops, and sidewalk chalkings" to gain attention for the issue. Another group called Hollaback! was founded in 2010.

The strange case of misogyny

“It's not enough for women to speak out on the issue- for the message to be strong and consistent, women's voices must be backed up by men's”.

-Rep. John Conyers, Jr., Michigan

With this quote we want to introduce three chapters in which we will discuss the role men had, have, and should have in opposing the violence against women. As John Conyers said, in order to strengthen the message, men need to be active and supportive.

Definition

If we search for the definition itself of misogyny, The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology describes it exactly as *“a cultural attitude of hatred for females simply because they are female”*. It is the essence of the sexist prejudice and ideology and, as so, it represents an important basis for the oppression of females in patriarchal societies.

There are many manifestations of misogyny in today's society, from jokes to pornography, to violence, to the self-contempt women may be taught to feel toward their own bodies and also to social exclusion, sex discrimination, hostility, patriarchy, belittling of women, violence against women, and sexual objectification: for example, the obsession that most women have of having the perfect body, being in shape due to the model that society accepts. By looking at it in a deeper way, philosopher Kate Manne defines misogyny as an ideology or belief system that has accompanied patriarchal societies for thousands of years and still continues to put women in subordinate positions, either at work or at home, with limited access to power and decision making, punishing those who challenge the male authority.

There are several causes that lead to misogyny and often behind it there is a concomitance of factors. Some of the main ones are traumatic personal events (like having absent or ambivalent mothers, who are unable to satisfy the primary care needs of the child), relational conflicts within the family (such as growing up in families in which the woman is constantly demeaned precisely because of her feminine characteristics) and cultural backwardness (repulsion for the female sex arises historically in patriarchal societies).

Talking about the historical origins of misogyny and male-dominated societies, we know that women, at least during ancient times, had very important roles in society.

Greece

Despite the presence of respected female figures in Greek mythology, such as Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty, and Athena, the goddess of wisdom, who held powerful positions in Ancient Greek religion, misogyny still pervades classical Greek writings, including the myth of Pandora. For instance, even though she had been warned by Zeus to never open a box she was given, she does that and, as a consequence, she unleashes into the world all evils (labour, sickness, old age and death). This myth had such a deep influence on people's mindsets that led us here.

For example, the Greek philosopher Aristotle regarded women not as equals, but as incomplete, deformed males. Aristotle also writes that the courage of men lies in overpowering, while women's lies in obeying and that female characters in a tragedy will be untrue if they are represented as brave or even clever, since they actually are lazy, false and deceptive. Plato shared the same idea; for, in some of his dialogues such as *Timaeus*, he presents inferior female characters against superior male ones.

Egypt

For instance, Ancient Egypt held some of history's greatest female monarchs. Historians regard Cleopatra VII as "*one of the most powerful rulers Egypt had ever known*". She was highly respected for ruling her own country, even when the Roman Empire attempted to take over it. Additionally, one of the most important Egyptian goddesses was Isis, a sort of protector and figure of motherhood and fertility, who gained massive importance during time. This devotion to Isis lasted very long until the rise of Christianity.

Christianity

Here, it is possible to find one of the most known sexist tales that history has ever witnessed: the one of Adam and Eve. This biblical story pictures Adam as the unfairly punished innocent victim of Eve's ignorance; however, as we all know perfectly, he ate the apple out of his own free will. So, the idea that the Christian point of view is characterized by a consideration of men as "slaves" to women's requests, suggests also another commonly spread consideration about women: they are seen as manipulative. In Timothy 2:12, another passage of the Bible, it also calls for the submission of women, such as when St. Paul says, "*I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man; she must be silent*". It is also quite shocking to read that even the holy Moses endorses violence against women with his order "*Do not allow a sorceress to live*". This sort of encouragement to silence and stop women certainly contributed to reinforce a culture of hatred towards females. Then, according to some scholars, Christian misogyny was consolidated by the so-called 'Fathers' of the Church, like Tertullian, who considered a woman nothing more than '*the gateway of the devil*'. However, some Christians argue that their religion does not necessarily include misogynistic principles: it depends on the interpretation. A proper one would not mean that. Indeed, David M. Scholer, a biblical scholar, stated that the verse Galatians 3:28 ("*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus*") is the fundamental theological basis for the inclusion of women and men as equal in all of the ministries of the Church.

Islam

Widespread as it may be, Islam is still nowadays synonymously known as one of the major promoters of misogyny in its worst form. The fourth chapter of the Quran is called "*Women*" (*annisa*). The 34th verse is maybe the most controversial of all. This one affirms that men received advantages over women, and for this they consequently became their protectors and maintainers. The verse says "*Where women are disobedient admonish them, and leave them alone in the sleeping-places and beat them; then if they obey you, do not seek a way against them...*". Explicit directions of brutality imply, therefore, the desire to keep women contained, not differently from objects, and thus encourages hatred towards the gender itself.

Misogyny terrorism

Even though we are not used to seeing these two words together, misogynist terrorism is an actual and extreme form of terrorism, moved by a sort of pleasure found when punishing women. The sexist idea behind it is to avenge nonconformity or to reaffirm the natural superiority of men. Among the motivations given for those attacks, there is, for example, a thought of sex as a right and privilege of men only; this same idea is easily spread in low culture environments, in which the female body is considered nothing but a sexual object or even tool. Also, we have to keep in mind that sexual entitlement alone has been a primary motivator for acts of terror. Since 2018, misogynistic or antimale ideology has been listed and tracked by counterterrorism.

The majority of the murderers, in some cases identified as “incels”, have declared that what motives them is a perception of entitlement to sex or companionship with attractive women, a sort of desire to seek vengeance for the perception of being rejected by women, and a drive to put women "in their place." Male supremacy in some attacks or threats of terrorism is shown off as a wish to underline male superiority in a sexual hierarchy by not allowing women to be praised for their work or tolerated in upper positions. The ICCT (International Council on Clean Transportation) argues that the Hanau terrorist attack should be understood as motivated by this exact male supremacy. Jessica Valenti wrote an article published on the Santa Fe New Mexican, in which she states that some misogynist terrorists are moved by this dream of living up to a stereotype that "real men" are powerful through violence (the idea of manhood). Just like many other forms of terrorism, misogynist extremist violence is intended to make a political statement. However, political responses to these attacks have been much less proactive than the governmental response to Islamic terrorism and other forms of the same event. For, many of these crimes tend to be defined as a "private issue" rather than a proper political subject. Also, since incel attacks sometimes target both men and women indiscriminately, the gender-based motivation of this violence has been difficult to recognize and defend.

The first time in which a government accused someone of acting like a terrorist (or being one) on the basis of a misogynist ideology was during the 2020 Toronto machete attack. Australian researchers have suggested securitization of incel ideology, as it has been done for other ideologies that animate terrorism. In the UK recently, there has been an increasing discussion about misogyny being added to the list of aggravating factors that are commonly referred to by the media as “hate crimes”. Among those aggravating factors, in criminal sentencing currently there is hostility to a victim due to characteristics such as sexuality, race or disability. In 2016, Nottinghamshire Police began a pilot poll in order to track misogynistic acts as either hate crime or hate incidents, depending on whether the action was a criminal offence. In almost two years (April 2016-March 2018) 174 reports have been recorded, of which 73 were classified as crimes and 101 as incidents. In September 2018, the Law Commission started a review into whether misogynistic conduct, as well as hostility due to ageism, misandry or towards minority groups such as goths, should be classified as a hate crime. One month later, two senior police officers stated that police forces should focus on “more serious” crimes such as burglary and violent offences, and not on recording incidents that cannot be defined as crimes. Thornton said that *"treating misogyny as a hate crime is a concern for some well-organized campaigning organizations"*, but that police forces *"do not have the resources to do everything"*. Then again, in September 2020 Law Commission proposed to add

sex or gender to the list of protected characteristics, and even though the Law Commission proposed to classify misogyny as a hate crime, that definition had not been accepted and adopted across the board. Hopefully, the commission is considering making its official recommendations to the government in 2021.

Misogyny in our days

As anything in this society, based on technology and social media, unfortunately, misogyny has found its way onto online platforms; this kind of rhetoric not only is prevalent online, but it has also grown more aggressive over time. This phenomenon includes both individual attempts to intimidate and denigrate women, and coordinated, collective ones, such as vote brigading and the Gamergate antifeminist harassment campaign. It is also evident in a paper written for the Journal of International Affairs, in which the authors discuss how online misogyny can lead to women facing obstacles, due to the abusive nature of the Internet. Both governmental and non-governmental means should put an effort in order to regulate and shut down online misogyny.

Online misogyny



Beyoncé in 2019

A 2016 study by Think Tank Demos found that the majority of messages on Twitter that contain the words "whore" or "slut" are advertisements for pornography. Among those that are not, a big part used these terms in a non-aggressive way, such as discussing slut-shaming. However, those who wrote words such as "whore" or "slut" in an aggressive, offensive way, were equally women and men. The users who are most likely to be targeted by other

women with aggressive insults are celebrities, such as Beyoncé Knowles. Most of all, we found out that online language gives a huge contribution to online misogyny, as a 2020 study published in the journal *New Media & Society* shows. Also, the authors themselves specifically pointed out how Urban Dictionary uses misogynistic and anti-feminist language in its definitions.

The misogynist man: who he is, how he behaves

From a psychological point of view, misogyny is defined as a pathological distortion of a defence pattern; it works just like a sort of shield that protects the man to hide his insecurities, his weaknesses or worries regarding his own masculinity. It leads him to feel a kind of desire to be cruel to women, in order to compensate for these fragilities. Physical and verbal aggressions are nothing but a demonstration, mostly to themselves, of their strength and of the "powerful and bold" male role, identified, according to the misogynist man, by those attitudes. This behaviour is obviously motivated by certain misbeliefs and wrongful convictions that obsess the personal life of the misogynist man, such as the ideal of a woman who must be limited to being a loving mother and wife, always sexually available and subordinate to the man, whose role and power must never be questioned. Any woman who does not fit in this role provokes the hatred and contempt of the misogynist man.

The paradox: the misogynist woman

It may seem hard to believe but, paradoxically, there are forms of misogyny even among women, who express a sort of aversion towards their own gender, which is not any different from the one felt by men; this phenomenon is often defined as “internalized misogyny”. Usually, the misogynist woman has been used to hate herself from a young age, to consider herself inferior, just because of her gender. She’s often identified with patriarchal patterns, particularly evident for example in family contexts with a strongly traditional mentality, where the woman is confined to a specific and exclusive domestic role. The misogynist woman, therefore, condemns the “modern woman”, for example by criticizing her choices (such as the one of having children and working at the same time), judging her as promiscuous, for the way she dresses or even denigrating her independence towards man.

The solutions: what to do about it

The first fundamental step to make is to recognize the phenomenon and not underestimate its danger. Everyone has the responsibility of facing and fighting misogyny in every sphere, starting from the very private and going on with the public one. One of the most powerful tools for this purpose is education. It is crucial to remember that kids naturally tend to imitate their parents, their teachers, or any other adult figure on their side, which is a phenomenon universally known as “imprinting”; so, it is very important to stand for equal models and behaviours from the very beginning. The initial move of any individual should be to be aware of their own prejudices, to understand and solve them, so as to avoid their automatic transmission. Another important thing is to always denounce violent attitudes of any kind towards women. Silence is the strongest way to spread misogyny, so it is not permissible to be neutral in front of such incidents.

Western thinkers

Endless influential Western philosophers have also expressed their ideas that can be described and seen as misogynistic, including great the figures of Aristotle, René Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, David Hume, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, G. W. F. Hegel, Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche, Charles Baudelaire, Charles Darwin, Sigmund Freud and so on. Because of their influence on the academic world and on history, feminist scholars tend to trace misogyny in Western culture to these philosophers and their ideas.

Schopenhauer

One of the main modern philosophers, Arthur Schopenhauer, believed that women were naturally made only to further the species through childbirth, just like a sort of machine in a “foetus” factory. He also stated that *“women's cheerfulness is chaotic and disruptive which is why it is crucial to exercise obedience to those with rationality. For her to function beyond her rational subjugator is a threat against men as well as other women”*. So, a smile on a woman’s face was a sign of her immorality and incapability of understanding abstract or objective concepts, such as art. This same idea is explicated in one of his quotes *“women have never been able to produce a single, really great, genuine and original achievement in the fine arts, or bring to anywhere into the world a work of permanent value”*, arguing that women themselves did not possess any real beauty.

Nietzsche

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Friedrich Nietzsche stated that *"every elevation of culture"* needs to own a strict control over women. In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche writes *"Women are considered profound. Why? Because we never fathom their depths. But women aren't even shallow"*.

Hegel

To conclude, we decided to show you how even one of the most esteemed philosophers of whole history hides terrible inner monsters. For, Hegel's view of women can be defined as misogynistic. Passages from Hegel's *Elements of the Philosophy* highlight that: *"women are capable of education, but they are not made for activities which demand a universal faculty, such as the more advanced sciences, philosophy and certain forms of artistic production... Women regulate their actions not by the demands of universality, but by arbitrary inclinations and opinions"*.

Women: muses in art and objects in real life

Art has always been a prerogative of men. They were the painters, the artists, the gifted. Women had the role of muses to be admired for their beauty or youth. In this chapter, we would like to propose you a list of paintings that have violence as a theme.

Susanna e i vecchioni by Artemisia Gentileschi and her rape

This is the most famous paint of Artemisia Gentileschi, even if some critics say her father is the actual author because at the time she was just seventeen years old and it is very unlikely she already had such a unique style. The three characters create the shape of a triangle that creates the idea that the woman is oppressed by the two men. They are represented in a particular pose if we consider it seems they are spying on her or even talking about her. Susanna is painted while she is protecting herself with her hands. As told in the Book of Daniel, this episode represents the story of Susanna and the Elders who are extremely recognizable in the history of art. It happened while Susanna was taking a bath in her private garden and was secretly observed by the Elders. They waited until she was alone to reach her and threaten her, telling her that unless she sleeps with them they will swear in public that they'd seen her in an act of adultery with a young man. As already said while discussing the Code of Hammurabi, this accusation would have humiliated her and her family or worst the penalty of death, considering she was married. This is how the story was about to be concluded, but luckily for her a noble Jewish called Daniel came to help her, after having heard her screams. He separated the two Elders and asked them to describe the tree under which she committed adultery. When they gave two different descriptions, her innocence was proved. Of course, Susanna is a fictional heroine, but the moral of her story is to tell that innocent virtues overpower evil, also not forgetting that her name means lily (symbol of purity). As we said before, this episode is quite famous in the history of art, but the version of Artemisia is the most known one. Why? Probably because she gave Susanna a less ambiguous expression. She was a woman and knew what it meant to be raped because she had this horrible "experience" herself. It happened in 1611 and the aggressor was the painter Agostino Tassi, a close friend of her father. For us, it is shocking to know that the two men continued their friendship even after the violence and the trial. It was a complex case, but, in the end, Tassi was exiled from Rome, although no sentence was ever carried out. The trial was considered the most shocking one of the century not only because Tassi was a close friend of Pope Innocent X, but also because she promised Artemisia to marry her as long as she remained silent. She wrote a 400-page testimony, from which the lines you are about to read are taken: "*He threw me on to the edge of the bed, pushing me with a hand on my breast, and he put a knee between my thighs to prevent me from closing them. Lifting my clothes, he placed a hand with a handkerchief on my mouth to keep me from screaming. I scratched his face and pulled his hair and, before he penetrated me again, I grasped his penis so tight that I even removed a piece of flesh*". At this point, the judge asked her if she had bled and she replied: "*At the time Agostino attacked me, I was having my period and therefore I am not able to say certainly to your lordship whether my vagina bled because of what Agostino did, because I did not know much about how these things happen, but it is true that it seemed to me that the blood was redder than usual*". In one of her letters, she wrote: '*My illustrious lordship, I'll show you what a woman can do.*' And what a woman can endure.

Judith beheading Holofernes

The second painting we would like to analyse is Judith Beheading Holofernes. Artemisia took inspiration from the episode told in the Book of Judith in the Old Testament and recounts the assassination of the Assyrian general Holofernes by the Israelite heroine Judith. We are shown the exact scene of the decapitation with the spreading of blood all over the sheets. As Judith said, she had to strike him down with her own hands because she believed to have the approval of God. She went to the encampment of the enemy dressed in her best clothes and seduce Holofernes. He invited her to a banquet, he got drunk and fell asleep in his bed. This was the opportunity she was waiting for and with a prayer on her lips and a sword in her hands, she killed him to set her people free. Considering what Artemisia said during the trial, it is not difficult to understand why she decided to paint such a strong woman. Judith succeeded in doing what Artemisia wanted to do: killing a man who oppressed them, even if in two different ways. Artemisia describes her struggle against Tassian and her attempt to attack him with a knife. She also recalls the sense of betrayal she felt when she realized her female chaperone had colluded with Tassian and arranged to leave the two alone. This Judith Slaying Holofernes dates to this difficult period in the artist's life. The memory of this event likely colored Artemisia's engagement with the story of Judith.

Le Viol

The painting shows two people in a bedroom. The man is standing in the darkest corner of the room with his legs wide and his hands in his pocket. On the left, there is the woman who is kneeling. The lamp behind her lights her white dress and the fact that she is partially undressed. Because of her posture, she may be facing away from the man because she is crying. This painting remained in the studio of Degas for 36 years and was sold in 1905. Everyone can interpret the painting based on private stories or sensitivity. Degas himself focused on the moment without giving any other references about the time or the place. This theory is also supported by the fact that the original name of the painting was "Interior". Anyway, one of the most famous interpretations considers the moment represented a rape. The woman should be the worker and the man the boss. His posture should let us think about remorse he may be having. Some critics say that the blood we can see on his coat may support this theory.

Walter Sickert

On September 12th 1907, the body of the twenty-two-year-old blonde prostitute Emily Dimmock was found in her bed in Camden Town. Her throat was cut ear to ear and the blood completely covered her sheets. The trial about her death was followed by many people for different reasons: first of all, they were attracted by the association sex-death. Detective stories were becoming more popular at the time and stories like this one were perfect for the novels that appear to be more realistic because based on true stories. Walter Sickert was impressed by the event and decided to paint about death. All of his paintings have in common the presence of two characters: a clothed man and an naked dead woman on her bed. The people are not defined but are mysterious because the spectator never has the chance to see their faces. To make the scenes more sinister, the

colours used are dark. Another characteristic of his works is that there is never a reference to a murder in the titles of the paintings.

Titian and Lucretia

We would like to conclude this list of paintings with Tarquin and Lucretia by Titian. He painted the episode different times during his career bringing innovation in the history of art because she has always been represented on her own in the act of committing suicide and never with the aggressor. We would not analyse the episode because you can find it in the first chapter of this book, but we will focus on the postures of the protagonists. First of all their skins create a contrast with the dark background, but the painting does not appear to be colourful because different shades of red and brown have been used for the majority. It is also clear how Titian drew the characters using a diagonal as a guide. More or less the effect is the same that we had with Susanna and the eldest because Tarquin is taller than Lucretia who is trying to step aside from him by going on the right corner of the painting.

Yoko Ono (cut piece)

Art is not just paintings, but also performances. This is the reason why we decided to include Yoko Ono and her performance, called Cut Piece, in this chapter. We all know her for being a Japanese artist and peace activist who was married to John Lennon from 1969 until he was murdered in 1980. She first performed “Cut Piece” in 1964 at the Yamaichi Concert Halle in Kyoto, Japan. It is simple, yet high-impact. She is alone on stage wearing her best clothes. The audience is invited to use scissors to cut pieces of her clothes and bring them at home. The dimension of the pieces and where to cut them is up to the public. Some of them arrived to cut the strings of her bra almost revealing her chest. She has to remain still until she decides the performance is over. She commented on the performance saying: “*When I do the Cut Piece, I get into a trance, and so I don’t feel too frightened...We usually give something with a purpose...but I wanted to see what they would take*”. It is easy to understand that she challenges gender with the performance because she becomes an object. She does not move or talk, but her grimaces show how uncomfortable she is in particular moments.

Rafi Peer [AbNahi]

To conclude this chapter, we decided to mention what is for us the icing on the cake: the performance organized by the Rafi Peer Theatre in Islamabad, entitled AbNahi, to sensitize the public about the topic of gender-based violence. Not only was it played more than once, but it also took place in many different cities. More importantly, this performance was in line with the initiative of the government of Pakistan, and the public was made up of students, academia, and political representatives, all invited to take part in it. Many different actors, with different backgrounds, were called in to embody what women and girls of any age and from any context have to face every day in this patriarchal society. The message was not just indirectly given from the performance: for, the organizers prepared discussions, debates, and lessons to everyone about ending

the menace and about the show itself. By showing off all the causes that lead to this kind of violence and all the situations in which it manifests, the theatrical performance successfully highlighted and strengthened the idea of negative cultural norms and practices. Another interesting message they gave to the public is the one regarding women helping each other to seek support and break the cycle of assaults against them. At the end of the event, all the participants who had attended it agreed that tolerance is the missing value in society and that it would make a difference in everyone's life. Apart from considering the issue something awful that needs to be ended as soon as possible, they stressed the need to promote unity and peace in the society. After having raised awareness, it is fundamental for individuals to act like it is on them to put an end to this problem, to create equality not only for women but for any kind of human being on Earth. Starting within our house's walls, we must change our mindsets, to help others to do the same. Men must support women in order to empower them and the entire community they are part of. This shows us how a good medium theatre is to engage the audience, while also sharing lessons on ending violence against women.

	Artist	Year	Medium	Dimensions	Location
	Artemisia Gentileschi	1610	Oil on canvas	67 in x 47 in	Schloss Weißenstein, Pommersfelden
	Artemisia Gentileschi	1614-1621	Oil on canvas	78 in x 64 in	Uffizi, Florence
	Edgar Degas	1868-1869	Oil on canvas	32 in x 45 in	Philadelphia Museum of Art
	Titian	1571	Oil on canvas	55 in x 43 in	The Fitzwilliam Museum

Violence behind the screen and the musical notes

Music therapy

Generally speaking, music therapy is the cure based on the alternative use of music to address physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs of individuals. It represents an emergent way of dealing with the memory or scars of violence and it is used more often in groups of violated women. There are many different Feminist music therapy groups, each one is unique like the stories of the women involved. To better understand the techniques and exercises proposed from the therapy, we ask you to read some verses of the extremely famous song by The police: “Every breath you take”.

Every breath you take

Every move you make

Every bond you break

Every step you take

I'll be watching you

Every single day

Every word you say

Every game you play

Every night you stay

I'll be watching you

Oh, can't you see

You belong to me

How my poor heart aches

With every step you take

We are sure this song is considered to be romantic by many people and probably it was meant to be so, but considering what we have said since now, do not you think it can be reinterpreted? The man singing looks like a stalker who believes the woman is a property that belongs to him and it appears that he follows her, tracing all her moves.

If we consider researches now, some of them suggest that different attitudes of men towards women derive from different social backgrounds and cultural influences. Men who listen to heavy metal music are more likely to be violent rather than who listen to easy-listening music. When we say that words have weight, we should consider also the lyrics of songs because it is estimated that the presence of violent words or concepts in lyrics or video clips, create violent behaviours in people as well. According to Cookie Edwards, of the KwaZulu-Natal Network on Violence Against Women,

28 some songs contain lyrics that very worryingly hint at violence against women and perpetuate a belief system that women are mere objects.

“If you look at the content of some of the lyrics and images, women are portrayed as objects, usually submissive to what the man wants, and there for the entertainment and leisure of men. This shows that we still live in a patriarchal world, and women are objects to be done with as per someone else’s wishes”.

“I have to stress that it doesn’t happen with all music. But we should be concerned about this and not encourage it, as it has become a social norm and acceptable for women to be seen as objects. Why is it that a woman walking along the road is whistled at or harassed? It’s entrenched in our minds and society that this type of behaviour is acceptable” she said.

Songwriter and musician René Tshiakanyi, a well-known face on the Durban music scene, said musicians were often caught in a complicated situation.

“When I write lyrics it starts with a feeling, and as I mature as an artist, I become more conscious of my words and their impact on the community”.

“Some of my songs were written about journalists working in dangerous situations, and another about Nelson Mandela. However, when you are signed with a record label, some of your songs are written by other people, and you are expected to sing it because you are bound by a contract”.

“But there are so many different factors in this industry, there is no easy answer. However, as we grow as artists, we become more aware of our responsibility to guide those who look to us. There are many other artists who produce good, clean music that doesn’t carry any of the negativity – singers like Adele and Ed Sheeran,” he said

Another critical and crucial aspect of how spread violent songs are is that they normalize what normal should not be. The more we listen to them and the more we do not see anything shocking in them.

Chris Brown and Rihanna

We have a list of episodes of violence we would like to propose to you. The first one is about the two singers Rihanna and Chris Brown. He was raised in a reality of violence because his stepfather used to abuse his mother. Ironically, he said that he “Used to always feel the hate for anybody that disrespects a lady” during the MTV awards of 2006. The first fight between the two of them happened when she found a message from another woman on his phone. He was arrested and sent to community service and domestic violence counselling. In his documentary told Chris Brown: Welcome to my life he said he wanted to marry her and knew he lost her trust. He said: “She hated me after that. I tried everything; she didn’t care. She just didn’t trust me after that,”. “From there, it just went downhill because there were too many verbal fights, physical fights as well. Mutual sides... We would fight each other. She would hit me, I would hit her and it was never ok”. He said to consider himself a monster he sees



Rihanna and Chris Brown

the pictures of the face of Rihanna full of bruises after the fight. Brown's career was briefly derailed by the assault incident, with radio stations refusing to play his songs, even though hundreds of millions of people listen to his music every day

Johnny Depp and Amber Heard

With the next episode, we change the form of art because we switch to the cinema. In 2015 Amber Heard accused her husband Johnny Depp of domestic violence. A year later, in May 2016, Heard entered the court with a black eye, claiming Depp physically assaulted her. She declared that



Amber Heard and Johnny Depp

"During the entirety of our relationship, Johnny has been verbally and physically abusive to me, I endured excessive emotional, verbal and physical abuse from Johnny, which has included angry, hostile, humiliating and threatening assaults to me whenever I questioned his authority or disagreed with him." However, this is a controversial case because there are papers that prove how Depp himself suffered violence from his wife. There is even a recorder call in which the two of them discuss after a fight and she can be heard apologizing

for how she behaved. His first wife, Lori Anne Allison, said not to believe the statements of Heard while Vanessa Paradis wrote that *"In all the years I have known Johnny, he has never been physically abusive with me and this looks nothing like the man I live with for 14 wonderful years."* Even if how the fight happened is still not clear, it had impacts on the career of Depp who had to leave the role of Grindelwald in the saga of Fantastic Beats and where to find them.

Disney

Moving on, we believe it could be interesting to see how violence is present also in the films produced by Disney. For example, Jafar tried to force Jasmine to marry him and imprisons her against her will. In Maleficent, a mortal drugs the fairy who trusts him and then cuts off her wings to prove he can lead the realm. In Beauty and the Beast, town hero Gaston harasses Belle and refuses to take no for an answer. Even if they are meant for the entire family, they are mainly based on stories that could, or better should let the viewers think. If we think about Snow White or The Sleeping Beauty, they are both awakened by the kiss of a man they have never seen before. The kiss of true love is nothing but violence. The stories were written in societies with more patriarchal ideas of women as being inferior, servile, and dependent on men, and these notions seem to have gotten carried over into some contemporary adaptations, where they might end up contributing to rape culture. The situation becomes worst if we consider that the films are "purified" because some aspects of the original tales are removed. For example, originally the Sleeping Beauty was raped in her coma-like-sleep and not just kissed. However, sexual violence is still referenced in the live-action reboot, Maleficent. As star Angelina Jolie confirmed in 2014, Maleficent is assaulted by her childhood friend. He cuts off her wings in a metaphor that has widely been interpreted as rape. Between the drugged beverage Stefan supplies her with, to her waking up bloody and in pain as she regains consciousness, the scene could be seen as a textbook example of violence against women.

The male aggressor took what he wanted, then left Maleficent broken both in body and mind. It takes the fairy a long time to process the ordeal and recover. Meanwhile, Stefan becomes king. If we consider the Beauty and the Beast, Belle has a different kind of relationship with Gaston and the Beast. The two male characters are completely different, but they both have “difficulties” in accepting no as an answer. Gaston says: “I’ll have Belle for my wife. Make no mistake about that!” while the Beast says: “If she doesn’t eat with me, she doesn't eat at all!” when Belle refuses to have dinner with him as his prisoner. Other examples may be Tiana who is ambitious professionally speaking but she is forced to kiss a frog to free the prince. Merida from Brave refuses to marry, but her decision does not change her reality. Finally, we have Frozen in which princess Anna thinks to have found true love after a few minutes. The guy is known to be the villain later on and she ends up with a different new guy, who the magical trolls tell her is “the one.” Disney has made huge strides when it comes to bringing strong women to the forefront of their newer narratives, but seeing repercussions for the misogynistic behaviour that often accompanies stories of female empowerment is just as important. Disney's movies could become an example of how a society functions when men and women are equal. If every kid’s introduction to the Mouse House is watching these kinds of stories, it can affect perception.

The Joker

At this point, we would like to analyse how violence is shown on the screen thanks to the film The killing Joker. Here Batgirl is shot, stripped naked and photographed by the Joker as a way for terrorizing her father. If you remember we said the same thing for the ancient world: rape was the method to affect the men as well. When violence is only related to men, it is a way to show how tough the characters are while for women it is different. For them, there is no respect at all.

Jessica Jones

Also, the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) proposes a violence story. We are talking about Jessica Jones. She is not the most famous hero, but we think her story is pretty interesting (especially considering we do not often associate superpowers with such important topics). Jessica has superhuman abilities after having been in contact with chemical materials: she has super strength and the ability of flying. She was approached by Kilgrave by chance through the streets of New York City and eventually became his sexual slave. In fact, his superpower is the mental control.

"We used to do a lot more than just touch hands."

"Yeah, it's called rape!"

Here is a conversation between the two characters taken from the TV series live-action. We think it is pretty obvious that the first line is said by Kilgrave and the second one by Jessica Jones. This show gives us the opportunity to discuss the last topic of this chapter, although we consider it the most important one: the movement #metoo.

#Metoo

What you might not know is that the movement was actually founded in 2006 by the activist Tarana Burke. She was raped when she was young and was encouraged by her mother to help who had to

suffer her same pain. However, it went viral only in 2017 after the sexual abuse case of Harvey Weinstein because he was accused of sexual harassment or assault by 106 different women. The entire world of cinema distanced itself from him also by wearing total black looks at the Golden Globes of 2018. It should be easy now to understand why we choose to conclude this chapter with the following quote by actress Nicole Kidman.

“One in three women may suffer from abuse and violence in her lifetime. This is an appalling human rights violation, yet it remains one of the invisible and under-recognized pandemics of our time.”

- Nicole Kidman

Two pandemics: violence against women and COVID-19

We are sure that you are completely stunned by the word pandemic in the previous quote. For, it was functional for us to introduce this chapter. Due to COVID-19, we have been forced to stay home. For some of us, those walls represent a safe place full of joy and memories, but for others they are a trap. One in four women experience Intimate Partner Violence, but lately this data has increased. If we consider that studies show us how abusers are more likely to murder their partners, we easily understand how serious this problem is.

As Covid-19 cases surged in March 2020, stay-at-home rules were put in place; for the ones who do not consider their house as a safe place, the danger has extremely increased. Our relationships with the others have been interrupted and, as lawyers say, the real problem for women is to reach the police. The fact that outline prepared for an increase in demand for services, but actually in some regions the number of calls dropped by more than 50%, is nothing but a proof of what we have just said. Another scary percentage is that 98% of women who reported domestic violence is Italian.



This means that all the immigrant women have become “invisible” because it is even more difficult for them to ask for help. The lockdown has become a real trap for the ones who suffer from domestic abuse and the curfews do not help either.

The abusers nowadays are trying to justify themselves by saying that this period of socioeconomic crisis is “driving them crazy”, and that it would have never happened if it was not for the pandemic. They describe themselves as stressed and worried, and the victims end up believing that it was just an episode, that it would not happen again. Some of them are just terrified, others are in love;

however, it does not change the fact that their isolation goes unnoticed, in a period in which social distancing is a rule.

Jess

Here we reported the sad testament of a woman who chose to use the name Jess: *“I was at home with him, we were both listening to Boris Johnson and he looked over at me, he had his arms folded back and chest out, because he knew that would intimidate me, and he looked at me and he said: ‘let the games begin’.” “And he added: ‘If you think it was bad before with the rape, you’re in for a rough ride.’ So, the rape started really, really, really bad, really bad. Curtains would get closed, the TV would be up loud, the front door would be locked, music would be turned up, so nobody could hear me screaming for someone, for anybody.”*

Her story of rape during the lockdown allow us the opportunity to discuss what abusive people do to isolate the victim, who is being abused. The aim is not to cut them off from loved ones, but to make it more difficult for people to realise that something is wrong. The victim is deprived of the support of her original family and her friends, so she starts to depend on the abuser himself, both economically and socially.

Violence and economic dependence

Economic independence is a critical factor, not only in violence prevention, but also for women's emancipation in general. For many people who experience domestic violence, the lack of any other chance of financial support is the main reason to not denounce. The lockdown created economic problems all around the world, with thousands of people losing their jobs and wages, particularly among women of colour, immigrants, and workers without education or any stable contract. Medical offices are safe places for people, but it is impossible and almost useless for them to give help without women reporting.

With the pandemic, doctors and other facilities are destined to the emergency; the priorities have changed and giving patients a proper exam is complex. In settings such as the emergency departments and delivery suites, policies mandate screening for intimate partner violence when victims are alone. After the offices had cancelled and rescheduled non-urgent clinic visits, safely screening patients for domestic violence became more and more difficult. Not only might patients live in areas with unreliable Internet or cellular service, but abusers might be listening in on conversations, might check on the victim's phone. Providers can keep screening for domestic violence and discuss safety planning with their patients during telemedicine meetings, on such platforms. By using standardized questions and by offering information to all patients, clinicians can normalize screening, regardless of whether they disclose IPV and they can also educate themselves about available community resources. If abuse is disclosed, the clinician and patient can establish particular signals to identify the presence of an abusive partner during their meetings; some examples of signs could be a raised fist on a video call or set phrases during an audio ad normal call. Safety practices must be reviewed by clinicians to make discussions safer, such as deleting Internet browsing history or text messages; saving hotline information under other listings, such as a grocery store or pharmacy listing; and creating a new, confidential email account for receiving information about resources or communicating with clinicians.

Here is a list of the strategies and hypothesis that countries all around the world have made to face domestic violence against COVID-19:

- Improving reporting of Domestic Violence:

This first aspect is probably the most important one because victims are more likely to report the violence once the aggressor left home; however, due to the lockdown, the two of them are forced to be together all the time. As the victims may not consider reporting such crimes a possible thing to do, the roles of neighbours, community members, and other bystanders become more and more vital. So, it is crucial to consider educating the others to recognise the signals of violence a possible solution. This could be done through advertising or encouraging community members to report cases of domestic violence in their neighbourhoods. Flexibility in providing the required information, therefore, and reducing waiting times for reporting will be extremely helpful in making reporting easier.

- Speed is very important

Law should be quick in taking action against the violence. Victims have already been brave enough in reporting it, so now they should be protected and the only way possible is to bring the aggressor to justice as soon as possible. This process is much easier when the suspect and the victim are related, while it is longer when the two of them are strangers.

- Understanding heterogeneity

Another strategy that is required to identify whether the vulnerable are also experiencing a higher proportion of violence. One such community that is particularly vulnerable is the migrant community. Because of lockdown, it may not be feasible for these communities to come back to their native places. Again, as job opportunities become limited, they are more likely to face abuse and may not even report the issue. The migrant population also faces multiple forms of discrimination, including cultural discrimination, stigma, out-group bias, etc. Furthermore, additional victim populations who are more vulnerable to Covid-19 are people with a higher risk of severe illness, immune-compromised individuals, older adults, and people with pre-conditions such as asthma, HIV, liver diseases.

- Establishing Digital Monitoring

Internet is definitely playing a leading role in the pandemic to keep people less distant to each other, and so it is not a surprise that many countries chose it as a useful tool to women who suffer from violence. Apps to track the potential suspects have been created and used. Even if we appreciate this kind of ideas, we believe governments should keep hotlines open 24/7. This will be a little more expensive at the beginning, but with the passing of time, it will hopefully have its benefits. It gives hope to see that international governments are understanding the real essence of the problem.

- Building Psychological Capital

As we said before, one of the fundamental reasons for not reporting domestic violence is a lack of economic well-being. Research of well-being suggests that creating positive psychological capital (including hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy) is vital for creating a positive future. Although no research has yet focused on understanding psychological capital in cases of domestic violence, maintaining a positivity toward the future may be important when the environment is so uncertain.

In this tragic and terrifying period for everyone in the world, we must keep our eyes even more opened than we usually do and give our hands to all the people who most need it. Solidarity is the only weapon we have to fight against our common monsters and be safe. We can and must be close to our communities, even if we cannot hug them; one metre apart physically, we must keep our hearts in touch.

Rape culture: the monster in our minds

Definition

Before analysing this phenomenon, it is important to define it. In fact, for rape culture we intend an environment in which rape is prevalent and in which sexual violence against women is normalized and excused by media and popular culture. Rape culture is perpetuated through the use of misogynistic language, the objectification of women's bodies, and the glamorization of sexual violence, thereby creating a society that disregards women's rights and safety.



The term "rape culture" was first coined in the 1970s in the United States by second-wave feminists that had begun to engage in consciousness-raising efforts designed to

educate the public about the prevalence of rape. Previously, according to Canadian psychology professor Alexandra Rutherford, most Americans assumed that rape, incest, and wife-beating were rare. The concept of rape culture affirmed that rape was common and normal in American culture, and that it was an extreme manifestation of pervasive misogyny and sexism of the society. Rape was redefined as a violent crime rather than a sex crime and its motive redefined from desire for sexual pleasure to male domination, intimidation and a sense of control over gender norms. Rape also started to be re-examined through the eyes of the victims rather than the perpetrators.

Never the victim's fault

Rape Culture affects every woman. The rape of one woman is a degradation, terror, and limitation to all women. Most women and girls over control their behaviour because of the existence of rape. Most women and girls live in fear of it, while the majority of men does not. That's how rape works as a powerful mean by which the whole female population is held in a subordinate position to the whole male population, even though many of them do not do this, and many women will never experience rape, luckily. There are many ways to be violent. Abuse can come in many forms, such as sexual, physical, verbal, and emotional. When a person in a relationship repeatedly scares, hurts, or puts down the other one, it is abuse. Harassment, intimidation, forced or coerced isolation from friends and family and having an independent social life, humiliation, threats of harm to you or your family or pets, threats of suicide if you leave, violating your privacy, limiting your independence and personal choices are all examples of abuse.

Sexual assault is never the victim's fault. Sexual assault is a violent attack on an individual, not a spontaneous crime of sexual passion. For a victim, it is a humiliating and degrading act. No one "asks" for or deserves this type of attack. Sexual assault is motivated by hostility, power and control. Sexual assaults are not motivated by sexual desire. Unlike animals, humans are capable of controlling how they choose to act on or express sexual urges. So, it is important to never consider

it as a sign of passion: it is a crime! Jealousy and possessiveness are signs that the person sees you as a thing. They are some of the most common early warning signs of abuse.

Leaving is difficult. Many victims love their partners despite the abuse, blame themselves, or feel as if they have no support system or resources outside of the relationship and so they feel as if they can't leave. Furthermore, the period immediately after leaving an abusive relationship is extremely dangerous for the victim and, often, she is too scared to handle it.

Causes and data

Sexual offenders come from all educational, occupational, racial and cultural backgrounds. They are “ordinary” and “normal” individuals. Being violent is a choice, not a natural threat. The majority of men and young men in our community are not violent. The use of violence is a choice. Men who use violence in their relationships choose where and when they are violent. The large majority of offenders who assault their partners control their violence with others, such as friends or work colleagues, where there is no perceived right to dominate and control. Rape affects women of all ages: from babies of few months (maybe by their parents or member of family) to old women of 90 years old. A sexual assault can happen anywhere and at any time. The majority of assaults occur in places ordinarily thought to be safe, such as homes, cars and offices. Anytime that someone is forced to have sex against their will, they have been sexually assaulted, regardless of whether or not they fought back or said "no". There are many reasons why a victim might not physically fight their attacker including shock, fear, threats or the size and strength of the attacker. Survivors exhibit a spectrum of emotional responses to assault: calm, hysteria, laughter, anger, apathy, shock. Each survivor copes with the trauma of the assault in a different way. Men, women and children of all ages, races, religions, and economic classes can be and have been victims of sexual assault. Sexual assault occurs in rural areas, small towns and larger cities. It is estimated that one in three girls and one six boys will be sexually assaulted by the age of eighteen. Most sexual assaults are committed by someone the victim knows. Studies show that approximately 80%-90% of women reporting sexual assaults knew their assailant. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, a rape or attempted rape occurs every 5 minutes in the United States. Global estimates published by World Health Organization indicate that about 1 in 3 (35%) of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. Globally, as many as 38% of murders of women are committed by a male intimate partner. Nearly 1 in 5 women (18.3%) and 1 in 71 men (1.4%) in the United States have been raped at some time in their lives, including completed forced penetration, attempted forced penetration, or alcohol/drug facilitated completed penetration. Approximately 1 in 21 men (4.8%) reported that they were made to penetrate someone else during their lifetime; most men who were made to penetrate someone else reported that the perpetrator was either an intimate partner (44.8%) or an acquaintance (44.7%). Population-level surveys based on reports from victims provide the most accurate estimates of the prevalence of intimate partner violence and sexual violence. Rape culture manifests in various ways and often we don't even notice. Even if we deny it, we often underestimate some situations in which we find ourselves.

She did not ask for it!

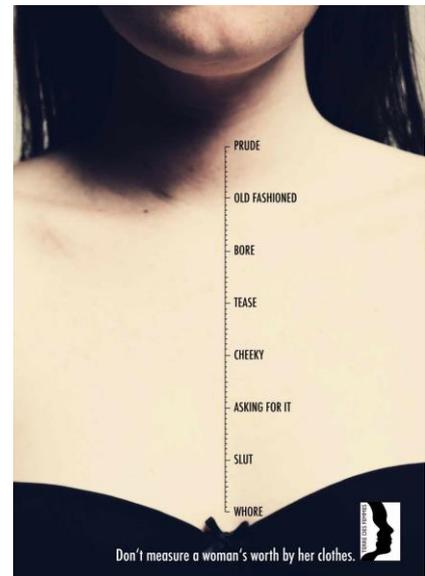
Blaming the victim by saying “She asked for it!” is the biggest mistake that our society does, in courts as well as in common conversations: publicly scrutinizing a victim’s dress, her mental state, her motives, and history is giving her part of the fault. Sexual assault prevention education programs focus on women being told to take measures to prevent rape instead of men being told not to rape. Another issue that is connected to it is trivializing sexual assault; the sentence “Boys will be boys!”, that our mothers tell in order to “warn us”, not only justifies the fault, it also encourages him. There must not be any kind of tolerance of these sexual harassments. Those are not just compliments that we have to accept or even be grateful for. Violence cannot be minimized in any circumstances, mostly when we are talking about a widespread phenomenon.

Another behaviour which is common in our society is the one of thinking that a woman is lying on her rape because other women did for attention: it is absolutely wrong! Reported sexual assaults are true, with very few exceptions. According to CONNSACS, only 2% of reported rapes are false. This is the same rate of false reporting as other major crime reports.

Stereotypes

VAW and rape culture bring with them many other monsters, such as gender stereotypes. Words as “manhood” to indicate a dominant and sexually aggressive (toxic masculinity) or “womanhood”, referring to a submissive and sexually passive conduct need to be abolished. Of course, rape does not only affect women: assuming that men do not get raped or that only “weak” ones do is just as terrible as hurting someone. While the majority of victims of domestic violence are women, men may also be victims of relationship violence. Men face many barriers that also women have, that prevent them from reporting abuse, face a different kind of stigma.

This fundamental need to talk about the violence that women suffer from, is one of the effects of the patriarchy. When it comes to women, there is a sort of Manichean vision in which they are seen as saints or as “bitches”. We would be lying if we did not admit that our lives are full of hidden misogyny; women themselves judge each other in a very bad way.



Another theme we wanted to analyse is indifference: it is a crime! Thinking it doesn’t touch you and looking away does not make it stop.

Facts and real stories

In our researches we found out many real shocking stories: one of this is about a Canadian University chant. The student leaders at Halifax’s St. Mary’s University are under fire after a video of a sexist chant advocating rape and underage sex performed at a frosh event was posted online. “Y

is for your sister. O is for oh-so-tight. U is for underage. N is for no consent. G is for grab that a--. St. Mary's boys we like them young,”

Let's move on to the next one: we are in 2013, at the University College London, where the student union (UCLU) took the unusual step of banning a single song, Robin Thicke's *Blurred Lines*. Pop music that tells women “*you know you want it*” because of these “*blurred lines*” (of consent).

Here's another one about an unbelievable sentence: in Montana in 2008, the State District Judge G. Todd Baugh of Billings, sentenced only 30 days in jail to a 50-year-old man who raped a 14-year-old girl (who later committed suicide), and defended that the girl was “older than her chronological age.”

Continuing our discoveries, two women separately accused the University of South Florida football player LaDarrius Jackson of sexual assault in 2017. However, his expulsion and ongoing criminal case posed no obstacle to his collegiate football career and that is not unusual. College athletes can lose their NCAA eligibility in numerous ways, but sexual assault is not one of them. Even when facing criminal charges, even when suspended or expelled from school, NCAA rules allow them to transfer elsewhere and keep playing.

Laws and public comments

It is not less worth of mention the phenomenon of publicly defending celebrities accused of rape just because they're famous and ignoring or denouncing what the victim has to say. For example, Trump was repeatedly accused of sexual assault by a model: “*He blocked me and put his tongue in my mouth*”. The Guardian is reporting the allegations, dating back to 1997 during the US Open tennis tournament in New York. The British newspaper interviewed the former model Amy Dorris, 24 years old at the time: “*I pushed him and it was then that his grip became stronger and his hands never stopped touching my butt, breasts, back, everything*”.

What about the idea expressed by the politician Richard Mourdock “*Pregnancy from rape or incest is something that God intended*”? Readers, are you just as horrified as we are right now? It is crucial not to send the wrong message in public, mostly when we are talking about people's life and health. Newspapers and articles themselves make mistakes too many times, making slut-shaming blaming the victim, ridiculing her; or by releasing the criminal by providing useless details that have no other purpose than to minimize the horrendous episode. Among these details are: the motive, the girl's actions, her clothes, or justifications, such as “*he was crazy*”. Those are totally sexist message. If this interests you, just check the case of Alberto Genovese, in Milan, 2020. (“*IlSole24Ore*”)

“Do you know how to stop someone from having sex with you? Did she close her legs to avoid rape?”, those are the hideous words of John F. Russo Jr, New Jersey, 2018. Luckily, he got removed by the Supreme Court. However, the real question is: in trials, do the judges manage to prevent the lawyers from asking certain questions? “*They have to do it. It is not an act of sensitivity: it is precisely the law that imposes it. Even non-specialized judges must know that questions unrelated to the subject of the trial, which concern habits, tastes, details of the sexual sphere, are not allowed. It is not clear, for example, the relevance of a question about the number of previous relationships,*

as if women who have had an intense sex life did not have the right not to be raped. Aside from inelegance, there are specific rules that prohibit them".

The Sexual Violence Act of 1996 was the first to ensure that the victim is not prosecuted. Then the Istanbul Convention was approved, an international charter for the protection of women victims of gender-based violence, the directive of the European commission of 2012 that protects vulnerable victims, including women who have suffered domestic violence, the law on femicide of 2013, the 2015 law of the Italian Parliament. There are many more tools than in the past: the responsibility of those who do not apply them increases.

Factors of sexual violence can be found at any individual, familiar, civil society levels. They can influence a man to be violent, but they do not justify the violent act. Being violent is a choice, but studying some of the supposed risk factors may be helpful to reduce them. Some of these are: a history of exposure to child maltreatment, lower levels of education, witnessing family violence, antisocial personality disorder, harmful use of alcohol, sense of possession and control, attitudes that condone violence, ideologies of male sexual entitlement and weak legal sanctions for sexual violence.

Consequences

It is also important not to underestimate the consequences of VAW. Intimate partner (physical, sexual and emotional) and sexual violence cause serious short- and long-term physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health problems for women. They also affect their children, and lead to high social and economic costs for women, their families and societies. Such violence can have fatal outcomes like homicide or suicide. Lead to injuries, with 42% of women who experience intimate partner violence reporting an injury as a consequence of this violence. Lead to unintended pregnancies, induced abortions, gynaecological problems, and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. The 2013 analysis found that women who had been physically or sexually abused were 1.5 times more likely to have a sexually transmitted infection and, in some regions, HIV, compared to women who had not experienced partner violence. They are also twice as likely to have an abortion. Intimate partner violence in pregnancy also increases the likelihood of miscarriage, stillbirth, pre-term delivery and low birth weight babies. The same 2013 study showed that women who experienced intimate partner violence were 16% more likely to suffer a miscarriage and 41% more likely to have a pre-term birth. These forms of violence can lead to depression, post-traumatic stress and other anxiety disorders, sleep difficulties, eating disorders, and suicide attempts. The 2013 analysis found that women who have experienced intimate partner violence were almost twice as likely to experience depression and problem drinking. Health effects can also include headaches, back pain, abdominal pain, gastrointestinal disorders, limited mobility and poor overall health. Sexual violence, particularly during childhood, can lead to increased smoking, drug and alcohol misuse, and risky sexual behaviours in later life. It is also associated with perpetration of violence (for males) and being a victim of violence (for females).

Another collateral effect of VAW is the impact on children; the ones who grow up in families where there is violence may suffer a range of behavioural and emotional disturbances. These can also be associated with perpetrating or experiencing violence later in life. Intimate partner violence has also been associated with higher rates of infant and child mortality and morbidity (through, for

example diarrheal disease or malnutrition). The social and economic costs of intimate partner and sexual violence are enormous and have ripple effects throughout society. Women may suffer isolation, inability to work, loss of wages, lack of participation in regular activities and limited ability to care for themselves and their children.

All In This Together!

All in all, to conclude this chapter, we need to fight rape culture, together! We're not in a talent show in which there are women versus men, we must be allies against every social issue: this is the true purpose of feminism. We need to list as many musts as stops to win this battle. First of all, it is important to stop using language that objectifies or degrades women, teaching them to avoid getting raped instead of teaching men not to rape. Kimberly Hall, Director of Women's Ministry at a Presbyterian Church in Texas, has a message for teenage girls who take bedtime selfies in their pyjamas: stop luring her teenage sons into sin. One thing that sometimes mothers do, is to blame girls for posting sexy selfies and leading their sons into sin, instead of talking with their sons about their responsibility for their own sexual expression. It is crucial for girls to back up their mates.

Speak out if you hear someone else making an offensive joke or trivializing rape, if a friend says she has been raped, take her seriously and be supportive, think critically about the media's messages about women, men, relationships, and violence, be respectful of others' physical space even in casual situations, always communicate with sexual partners and do not assume consent, define your own manhood or womanhood: do not let stereotypes shape your actions. And, mostly, you need to get involved! Join a student or community group working to end violence against women!

Words and bodies: verbal violence and prostitution

Catcalling

Catcalling is defined as the act of saying a rude, sexual remark to a girl passing by as a way to get her attention in some way. Probably you never heard the term, but you imagine the feeling or worst remember it. Typically, it is males to have social recognition by others. As we already said in this book for another kind of violence, one of the main problems in fighting them is that the aggressors do not consider what they did as violence indeed. This is the main reason why we decided to quote what Deirdre Davis wrote in 1994 to clarify what street harassment is in five points:

1. It takes place in a public space
2. It most commonly occurs between men and women
3. Saying “thank you” to a harasser provokes further harassment
4. Comments often pertain to what cannot be seen on the woman’s body
5. The harasser’s comment, though disguised as a compliment, is objectifying and derogatory.

All around the world, there are different laws and rules against catcalling. In Italy, for example, one can be punished with up to six months of arrest or with amends up to 516€. Of course, there are researches about this topic and the results are shocking as well as sad. 78% of women have been catcalled while they were alone. Down below you will find a list of all the countries involved in the research with some information.

Australia: despite what people may think, here catcalling is quite common because in 2015 87% of women had experienced that, especially from people in cars.

France: 100% of women in the suburbs of Paris have experienced it on public transport because men take advantage of the crowd to touch themselves or rub themselves against women. We would like to tell you this is not our world or reality, but unfortunately, it is.

India: in this country crimes about women are so common that they have a word more specific than catcalling: eve-teasing. Women said they feel like beasts who are observed by their predators.

Japan: things like catcalling do not happen here, or if they do, they are kept secret. Women receive “unusual greetings” where men invite them to “join” them in their cars to be molested.

Kenya: women in this country admit to wearing in a certain way because they want to protect themselves from the violence and to protect themselves.

Mexico: here there is no solution in terms of society and government for catcalling. Just like in Kenya, women are terrified by knowing they might have to walk in front of a group of men.

UK: as we said before, the aggressors see catcalling as a normal compliment, but of course from the point of view of the victim it is something more. The feeling women have is that they should stay quiet when they are in situations like that. Let us take an example. You are walking on the street, a 42 stranger approaches you and tells you “Nice hair”. You probably feel harassed, but if they tell you “Hi, I just want to tell you I really like your hair”, you appreciate that because they gave you context and expressed their opinion in a polite manner.

Feelings

In this section of the chapter, we will discuss some of the emotions that women told to have felt because of the violence. Of course, they are the most common ones, we know each one of us is unique and could react in different ways. The first one that all the victims meet is anger: it is probably also the first one that comes to our mind. Many of them, mostly the ones that suffered from sexual assaults, are dirt: not only are they treated as meat for slaughter, sexual objects, but if they are not given support, later on, they could also continue thinking to be that.

After having been considered objects, another idea that obsesses the victims is the one of being useless: because in that moment they are nothing more than a tool to which people can say anything they want, knowing that they won't react. In the end, most of them wrongly feel guilty because then they start thinking that if they had worn something different, they wouldn't have found themselves in that situation. And so, the guilt they feel is doubled, because a part of them thinks that they made something wrong for what they wore, the other part is wrong as it knows that it's not their fault if someone on the street has harassed them. So, when you say something to a person and she feels this way, that can't be a compliment. As a result of sexual harassment, women do not feel safe, have a worsening in their sleep quality, feel anxiety, and have detrimental health effects.

Statistics

We believe street harassment is an under-researched topic even if the data we collected should make us think. Many studies have been conducted in the USA and they show that 99% of women have been harassed many times in their lives, in public places. Other studies show the type of harassment they experienced:

99.5% of women have experienced excessive leering.

95% of women have been whistled or honked in public places.

Over 85% of women have received sexist comments.

82% of women have experienced vulgar gestures made by men at least once.

82% of women were the targets of sexually explicit comments.

81% of women experienced kissing noises from strangers.

75% of women have been followed in public places by strangers.

62% of women say that a man has purposely blocked their path.

57% of women reported being touched or grabbed in a sexual way by strangers.

27% of women had been assaulted by strangers in public places.



Among the comments that women have to hear during the catcalling, there are cruel expressions such as “whore”, but we know there is no connection between the two things.

Prostitution

Prostitution is defined as the practice of engaging in relatively indiscriminate sexual activities, in general with someone who is not a spouse or a friend, in exchange for immediate payment in money or other valuables. In some societies being a prostitute is a real profession but in others, it is

punished with stoning, imprisonment and death: so, we can conclude that the perceptions people have of it depends on the culture itself. To begin, we would investigate its origins in history: in Ancient Greek, prostitutes used to be independent because of their influential role and so they had beautiful dresses and paid taxes. However, there were ranks and so some prostitutes were rich but others were considered inferior. In Ancient Rome, law obliged prostitutes to work in “brothels”, buildings located in the outer parts of the cities and opened only during the night. Prostitutes or “meretrix” were quite always slaves or coming from the lowest classes. Street prostitution occurs in specific streets at high frequency or in peripheral districts (just like in Ancient Rome), the so-called “red-light districts”. Today in Italy we do not have something like that because brothels or dating houses are illegal.

Another type of prostitution is the one of companions (better known as escort), who can do practically anything the client wants. They can be presented thanks to either internet announcements or on paper or even hidden behind partner agencies; but not all of them offer sexual services to their clients. A phone number is strictly related to a sexual performance which can happen either at the home of the caller or in hotels/motels. Even where prostitution is illegal, the service brought by escorts is pretty common.

Researches show how prostitutes are more likely to be killed than women who have a different job, not to mention how prostitution homicide are more difficult to be investigated and they usually remain unsolved. Findings tell us that the genre portrait of the killer is a male in his 30s who commits the homicide in a highly-populated area using weapons or firearms. Physical violence is more common in the 45% of prostitutes who report having been punched or slapped or kicked. If she is a transwoman, it is more likely for her to receive homophobic comments during the harassment. The saddest side of prostitution is what in Italy is called “baby squillo”. In 2013 two 14nd 15-year-old girls were found taking part in sex work to earn money in a wealthy area of Rome. The mom of one of the girls knew it and encouraged her daughter to continue, even if she would retire. The mom of the other started questioning about the money her daughter had and called the police. Eventually, everyone involved was arrested.

Body shaming

As you had the opportunity to read, in this chapter we focused on the relationship between violence and bodies. So, we had to conclude the book with a paragraph about body shaming, about the feeling we have to change ourselves and the way we look just because we are told by others to do so. Did it ever happen to you? Think about how magazines constantly offer us ways to lose weight “in days”, appear slimmer “instantly” and hide our “imperfections”. We follow their tips even if they know nothing about us. It has sadly become normal to criticize aspects of our bodies or the ones of others. Body shaming manifests in many ways. Here are the most common ones:

1. Criticizing your appearance by making comparisons with the others
2. Making rude comments about your body in your presence
3. Sharing opinions or judgments

We are not spending many words about the definition of body shaming because we believe it is not necessary, but we want to prove what we have just said with the words of famous women who reveal to have experienced it.

Aurora Ramazzotti: *"Every woman is beautiful and does not have to feel unworthy for her imperfections."*

Julia Roberts: *"Even if I know I risked my career, when I turned 40, I refused to do any lifting as Hollywood asked and as most of actresses do".*

Selena Gomez: *"It's the medication I have to take for the rest of my life — it depends on even the month, to be honest. So, for me, I really noticed when people started attacking me for that," she said. "In reality, that's just my truth. I fluctuate. It depends on what's happening in my life".*

Adele: *"I don't mind about aesthetics, I did it for my son Angelo so that he could have a healthy mum".*

Alessia Marcuzzi: *"With the passing of time, I learnt that a flaw can be turned into a quality. Or into something I 'm the only one owning. My legs are crooked, and so? I never said you were wrong".*

Vanessa Incontrada: *"There will always be someone criticizing: they did it with me when I had a few kilos more. But if I lose 20 kilos, those same people will tell me I'm anorexic".*

Kendall Jenner: *"They have always made me feel wrong since I was a little girl, they became an obsession for me".*

Ashley Benson: *"People will make mean comments. People are going to say that you're fat, that you're this, that you're that. You just have to be comfortable in your own skin".*

Lily Collins: *"I was leaving my apartment one day and someone I've known for a long time, my mom's age, said to me, "Oh, wow, look at you!" I tried to explain [I had lost weight for a role] and 45 she goes, "No! I want to know what you're doing; you look great!" I got into the car with my mom and said, "That is why the problem exists".*

Conclusion

These are just the first eight steps of this crucial and delicate journey: everyone must continue discovering the rest of the path, in order to take part to this common battle. It has not been easy to write a conclusion to a totally unfinished issue. Awareness is the fundamental basis to be conscious of what actually means to suffer from gender-based violence; however, choices need to be made and actions must follow them. Our utopistic objective is to no longer hear about it again.

Do not ever be afraid of standing out for your right to be safe and, most of all, never forget that there is no good excuse for violence of any kind. You will always be heard and you will never be alone in this; don't feel weak or wrong, because you are not. There are several centres that would be happy to help, and remember: never keep silent in front of violence, whether it is directed to you or to someone else. We are endlessly glad and proud to have been in this together. Thank you for joining us into this project.

"As a human rights issue, the effort to end violence against women becomes a government's obligation, not just a good idea."

-Charlotte Bunch

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Written under the supervision of our teacher Mariagrazia Bruni

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