New book explains the reason why women are blamed for everything

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New Title Release:

Why Women are Blamed for Everything: Exploring victim blaming of women subjected to violence and trauma

Author: Dr Jessica Taylor (PhD, FRSA)

Summary

She asked for it. She was flirting. She was drinking. She was wearing a revealing dress. She was too confident. She walked home alone. She stayed in that relationship. She was naïve. She didn't report soon enough. She didn't fight back. She wanted it. She lied about it. She comes from a bad area. She was vulnerable. She should have known. She should have seen it coming. She should have protected herself.

Victim blaming of women is prevalent and normalised in society. What causes us to blame women who have been abused, raped, trafficked, assaulted or harassed by men? Why are we uncomfortable with placing the blame on perpetrators for their crimes against women?

Based on years of doctoral research and ten years of practice with women and girls, Dr Jessica Taylor explores the many reasons we blame women for male violence committed against them. Written in her unique style and backed up by decades of evidence, this book exposes the powerful forces in society and individual psychology which compel us to blame women subjected to male violence.

"I called it 'Why women are blamed for everything' because in all of the work and research I have done, I have seen women handed the blame for everything from being harassed in the street to being trafficked and sold for sex. Anything that can be used against them, is used against them. Even if they couldn't consent."

The book contains a shocking overview of just how prevalent victim blaming is in our society with new data and research from Dr Taylor's work. Eighteen chapters explore the psychological theories, evidence and real stories of victim blaming of women and girls.

"I decided to include chapters that presented the significant evidence base for the victim blaming of women and girls subjected to rape, abuse and violence. In the book, I write about the ways the criminal justice system, our mental health services and even our primary schools encourage and uphold the victim blaming culture."

Dr Taylor has included her most recent findings from her own psychological research which included interviews with women who had been blamed for being raped, and the professionals who supported them. The book also includes a chapter which publishes her findings from an attitude study with UK adults.

"I asked adults in the UK to read scenarios of sexual violence committed by men towards women and then asked them to assign blame to the woman and to the man. The study was completely anonymous which meant everyone could answer honestly."

"The results were depressing but important. I was surprised by how many adult men and women thought it was normal to have sex with a woman whilst she was asleep. In that scenario, 20% of the respondents said that if a man has sex with a sleeping woman, it is her own fault. I also noted that there was very little empathy for homeless women who were being sexually exploited or raped for somewhere to live - 46% of men and women blamed the women in those scenarios. This is particularly worrying during COVID19 as we have seen reports of landlords demanding sex instead of rent, which is illegal."

"The findings from my new book have significant implications for our criminal justice system. If so many people hold these woman blaming views, how can we possibly argue that the criminal justice process is a fact-finding process? How can we trust the outcomes of investigations and jury decisions?"

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The book is the first of it's kind. It brings together psychological theory, statistics, real stories, case studies and interview data from women who have been blamed for being raped and abused. It has been written to be as accessible as possible so that everyone can read it - even if they have no prior knowledge of psychology or social sciences.

Author

Dr Jessica Taylor is the founder of VictimFocus, an international research, teaching and consultancy organisation with the sole aim of challenging the victim blaming and pathologisation of women and girls subjected to violence and abuse. She is a feminist psychologist with a PhD in forensic psychology. Jessica is a Senior Lecturer in Forensic and Criminal Psychology. She has written 5 books and several chapters, articles and resources on the topics of CSE, rape, victim blaming, pathologisation of women, women bringing up babies from rape and global misogyny. She developed a free online course for survivors of sexual violence which has been accessed by over 20,000 people in the first 8 months. Her VictimFocus blog has over 1 million readers per year.

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