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Male Directed Sexual Violence in Conflict: A Challenge for Gender Studies

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Male Directed Sexual Violence in Conflict: A Challenge for Gender Studies

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Abstract

In recent years, extensive empirical data has indicated that acts of severe sexual assault are being perpetrated against large numbers of men in many areas of conflict around the world. This paper conducted an extensive review of relevant literature to evaluate levels of recognition of male victims. The review indicates that recognition of this problem within gender studies remains limited. This is due to many reasons including the opposition of a variety of feminism that is reluctant to acknowledge male victimhood. Masculinities studies may play a key role in developing a theory of sexual violence which encompasses all victims. "Inclusive feminism" is enriched and complemented by a focus on male survivors and on the gendered power relations that operate among men.

Keywords: sexual; violence; conflict; masculinities; feminism

La Violencia Sexual Dirigida a Hombres en Conflictos: Un Reto para los Estudios de Género

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Resumen

En los últimos años, datos empíricos extensos han indicado que se están perpetrando actos de agresión sexual severa contra un gran número de hombres en muchas áreas de conflicto alrededor del mundo. Este documento realizó una extensa revisión de la literatura relevante para evaluar los niveles de reconocimiento de las víctimas masculinas. La revisión indica que el reconocimiento de este problema dentro de los estudios de género sigue siendo limitado. Esto se debe a muchas razones, incluyendo la oposición de una variedad de feminismo que es reacio a reconocer la victimización de los hombres. Los estudios de masculinidades pueden desempeñar un papel clave en el desarrollo de una teoría de la violencia sexual que abarque a todas las víctimas. El feminismo inclusivo se enriquece y se complementa con un enfoque en los sobrevivientes masculinos y en las relaciones de poder de género que operan entre los hombres.

Palabras clave: sexual; violencia; conflicto; masculinidades; feminismo

In recent years, issues surrounding male-directed sexual violence (hereafter MDSV) have gained increased interest among scholars who adopt a masculinities studies perspective (e.g., Andersen, 2008; Carpenter, 2006; Dolan, 2009; Gottschall, 2004; Graham, 2006; Jones, 2009; Ó'Móchain, 2016; Onyango & Hampanda, 2011; Sivakumaran, 2010). Readers of this journal will note that Javaid (2015) showed the extent to which male victims of sexual violence must contend with a range of “rape myths” which hinder the provision of badly-needed assistance. Once male rape myths have been dispelled, the next step, perhaps, is to deepen research into this phenomenon so as to provide a more nuanced understanding of MDSV across a wide range of contexts. This paper explores relevant issues in the context of feminist critique and of regional conflict, that is in reference to sexual violence in areas where central governments have lost control of sections of the territory and armed groups are fighting for political or economic objectives (in many conflict areas, it would seem to be a combination of both political and economic motivations (Leatherman, 2011).

In her article for the global media platform “Open Democracy”, Goetz (2014) provides a thought-provoking analysis of conflict-related sexual violence (hereafter CRSV) especially with regard to the June 2014 global summit to end CRSV organized by the UK Foreign Office. The author gives pause for thought to those who welcome uncritically the “securitization” of CRSV in international law and global security policies in recent years. A focus on CRSV as a security issue needs to be integrated into a comprehensive long-term programme of genuine gender emancipation. Such considerations are well worth keeping in mind by all of us who engage with these issues at whatever level.

However, one aspect of Goetz’s article may be a cause for concern. She expresses dissatisfaction at the fact that a large number of male survivors of CRSV were given prominence at the June 2014 summit (a point disputed by Dolan (IDS Seminar, 2014). She quotes a UN official (no identification is provided) who states that 98% of rape victims are women. The author does not specify how this figure was arrived at or what definition of rape was used. Goetz argues that it is problematic for attention to be paid to male survivors of CRSV “even if the numbers are higher than expected”

This paper engages with issues raised by Goetz. Is it problematic to direct attention to male survivors of rape? Is this a “one per-cent issue, or

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are large numbers of men involved? Does such attention represent a “backlash” against gains made by female survivors of sexual violence? Does such attention detract from a project of “feminist emancipation?” These questions are faced by many scholars and activists, including those outside of the ambit of conflict studies. Marzano (2007) felt a dilemma when she decided to research the topic of self-harm among male prison inmates, an issue that has drawn considerably less research analysis than female self-harm. This is expressed in her apt “Feminism and Psychology” article title: “Is my work feminist enough...?” No doubt, many who focus on male victims of sexual violence in conflict will feel similar tensions and dilemmas. Marzano herself points out that the question is unhelpful if it presupposes that just one version of feminism exists. However, all varieties of feminism affirm egalitarian relations between all human beings within a nurturing global environment and are actively engaged in doing as much as possible to challenge any gender order that opposes a vision of collective empowerment. This paper argues that all varieties of feminism should welcome a focus on dealing with issues surrounding CRSV for both women and men alike. Feminist engagement with these issues should be “inclusive” rather than “exclusive”, as the former recognizes and the reality of male victims of sexual violence in conflict and includes them within the scope of valid scholarship and activism. The first section reports on research literature indicating high numbers of severe sexual assault and rape of men and boys in many regions of conflict. The extent of the problem is not reflected in the meagre attention and resources that it has received thus far (as elaborated in the following section on “lack of recognition” with a particular focus on Central Africa and the region of eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The penultimate section of this paper considers feminist responses to male-directed CRSV and distinguishes between varieties of feminism that exclude such cases and varieties that are inclusive. A concluding section attributes some of the reluctance to engage with CRSV issues to findings from psychology studies, but argues that research findings from the same field also underline the need for psychological care and support for male survivors just as much as for female survivors.

Characterization of Male-Directed Sexual Violence in Conflict

Although documentation is scarce, evidence of sexual violence against males in the context of war and conflict in ancient times can be found. DelZotto and Jones (2002, p. 2) cite sources that indicate the existence of sexual violence against males during ancient times in many locales. Prominent lawyer of international human rights law, Lara Stemple, in an interview for the Guardian newspaper (Storr, 2011, p. 7) comments: “I think it’s safe to say that it’s likely that it’s (male-directed CRSV) been a part of many wars throughout history and that taboo has played a part in the silence.” Now, in our own day, more documentation than ever before is becoming available regarding MDSV. Onyango and Hampanda (2011) cite credible documentation of male directed sexual violence from 25 armed conflicts in recent years, and they assert that male survivors of sexual violence suffer many psychosocial disorders and physical injuries. Sivakumaran (2010, p. 264) shows that during the two-year period 2007-2009, rape and sexual mutilation were inflicted upon men and boys in the Central African Republic, Chechnya, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Iran, and Kenya. Common themes that emerge in the research literature include the following: identification of under-reporting as a key element in the lack of recognition of MDSV; lack of consensus regarding the causes of MDSV; an awareness of the role of language in perpetuating misunderstandings surrounding these issues, particularly through the linguistic sleight of hand by which “woman” or “women” becomes equated with “gender,” “victim” becomes identified with “female,” and “perpetrator” becomes equated with “male.” Oosterhoff, Zwanikken, and Ketting (2004) provide extensive empirical data relating to extensive male directed CRSV in Croatia during the wars following the break-up of Yugoslavia during the 1990’s. In fact, Stemple (2009, p. 614) reports that in one assessment of a concentration camp in Sarajevo Canton, during the Balkan conflicts of the early 1990’s, 80% of the 6,000 male prisoners reported having been raped in detention. “Accounts of abuse through the conflict were often quite graphic, including severe genital mutilation and forced incest.” Agger (1989) reported that 76% of male political prisoners in El Salvador had experienced at least one type of sexual torture during detention. The work of Kirsten Johnson (2008, 2010) has been particularly influential in drawing attention to issues of male CRSV. In Liberia, her team found that 32% of male ex-combatants

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had experienced sexual violence (10% less than the figure for female ex-combatants). Johnson noted that social stigmatization of men who are sexually assaulted is extremely high. Such men may be commonly referred to as “bush wives” – the term normally used to refer to female civilians who have been captured by militia and forced into sexual captivity – and treated as pariahs within the local community. For this reason, Johnson estimates that rates of non-reporting of male CRSV may be as high as 95%.

In spite of these and similar research findings, some scholars seem unwilling to acknowledge male victimhood. Vermeulen (2011) notes that, “Some key-scholars on the issue of rape warfare plainly exclude men as possible victims, thus reinforcing the stereotypes underlying the very problem.” In her analysis of multiple popular cultural products, Cohen (2014) also expresses concern that men are excluded as possible rape victims and her book is pointedly entitled: “Male rape is a feminist issue: Feminism, governmentality, and male rape.” Graham’s (2006) legal/sociological analysis explains why male victims of rape are not accorded the same recognition and assistance as female victims. She argues that feminists are mistaken when they see a focus on male victims as part of a type of masculinist backlash against women who had to campaign for many years to be taken seriously as credible witnesses when reporting rape. Many men find themselves in exactly the same position, believing that no-one will take them seriously if they report they have been raped or severely sexually assaulted. Incredulity can have injurious consequences, as in the case of male CRSV survivors in Uganda, a state that defines rape as occurring between a man and a woman, and that imposes long prison sentences on those who engage in same-sex sexual activity.

A lack of legal and institutional supports (cf. Del Zotto and Jones, 2002), and a fear that public disclosure of their rape victim status will place them in a profoundly abject social status position, leads to a substantial under-reporting of male-directed sexual assaults. Carpenter (2006, p.83) provides support for this point, as well as arguing that when men and boys are selected for violent treatment, this also should be understood as “gender-based violence”. Many authors conclude that unless explicit recognition is made of MDSV, the prevailing belief that almost no victims are male will continue to hold currency in wider social and cultural discursive domains.

Invisible Victims

Solangan and Patel (2012) identify four factors for lack of recognition of MDSV: no legal framework exists to support men in many cases (something that is especially true in jurisdictions where sexual acts between males are illegal and carry heavy prison sentences); lack of resources and training for police and legal staff leads to poor institutional detection patterns; the prevailing belief that only women are victims of sexual violence is itself a causal factor, they argue; and, finally, prevailing gender ideals mean that the very concept of “male victims” is not a popular one.

Del Zotto and Jones (2002) raise the key issue of the political purposes that can become attached to issues of CRSV. They note that prevailing gender ideals and norms can be conscripted into the ideological fray to promote military interventions in conflict zones. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, the wartime rape of women was accorded considerable gravity in political consciousness. This discursive stratagem could imbricate within traditional narratives of the “damsel in distress” who is saved by a “shining knight in armour,” thus justifying military intervention. Similarly, Spivak’s (1988, p. 297) analysis of the justifications of neo-colonialist humanitarian interventions refers to “white men saving brown women from brown men.” During the Cold War era, such narratives became superfluous to the needs of power politics in a bi-polar international system and were summarily dropped. In the post-Cold War era, from the 1990’s onwards, the old discursive tropes have been revived in a wide range of political contexts because they have become useful once again (Meger, 2010). In the early 2000’s, for example, the proposed invasion of Afghanistan by U.S. forces was framed as a war against people who oppress women (cf. Messerschmidt, 2010).

Perhaps the most common trait to be identified within the corpus of research literature on male-directed CRSV is an awareness of misperceptions of the extent of the problem. While the average UN official, NGO worker, or average citizen might conjecture that only one or two per-cent of CRSV victims are male, the reality in many conflicts is that the figure may be between ten and twenty per-cent, if not higher. Yet, Del Zotto and Jones’ (2002) review of documents from over four thousand NGO’s dealing with CRSV found that only 3% mention men, and this very often as a sort of afterthought, perhaps one sentence at the end of the report

that says, “*it is also possible that cases of male victims exist.*” Sivakumaran (2005) tries to account for the fact that the women’s movement and queer activism have not engaged with issues surrounding the rape of men. One reason is that official numbers of cases often fail to reflect the true numbers; male victims often fail to report the crimes that have been committed against them. In homophobic social contexts, men will avoid disclosure if it means being tainted by the shadow of homosexuality. Peel, Mahtani, Hinshelwood, and Forrest (2000, p.2070) affirm that it is a myth to assert that only men who identify as homosexual will want to commit homosexual acts. “Perpetrators do not perceive themselves or their acts as homosexual.” Nevertheless, the strength of the “male rape myth” (Javaid, 2015) which confines male rape to homosexual participants (especially – or only the receptive partner during the rape) continues to play a pernicious role in the perpetuation of male-directed CRSV. In the case of male victims of SVC in Sri Lanka, Peel et al (2000) reported that many men who had not spoken about their experience of rape in previous counselling in their home country, did so during more comprehensive therapy sessions in London. Part of the psychological trauma for many men is that they are often made to feel that they can no longer function in society as fathers, husbands, or simply as men.

The gender politics of masculinities are hierarchical in terms of power and privilege being assigned to those who embody the signifiers of dominant masculinity in that particular social context (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Men who are identified as homosexual are stigmatized as part of subordinate masculinity and much masculinity gender work goes into the avoidance of ascriptions of homosexuality and/or effeminacy. As Sivakumaran (2005) points out, the “taint of homosexuality” is one of the principal reasons that male victims of CRSV are often reluctant to report their assault and risk being labeled negatively, especially as many of these victims live in those states – over 70 at least – where homosexual relations are illegal. Structures of hegemonic masculinity also work to confine other groups of men to the status of “marginalized masculinities” based on the race, economic class, or ethnicity that they identify with. Mills (2001, p. 74) provides the example of Aboriginal men in Australia; as a social group they are “Economically, socially, and politically marginalized in relation to non-Aboriginal

groupings.” Even more intensive processes of stigmatization as those against Aboriginal people in Australia seem to have been implemented in parts of central Africa.

Central Africa

Dolan (2009) provides extensive empirical data to support his claim that during the conflict in Uganda, the Acholi people were exposed to egregious levels of social torture and this included many acts of rape and sexual violence against women and men. In his analysis of conflict and “social torture” in Uganda, Dolan makes use of the work of Connell (1995) in his analysis of the connections between hegemonic models of masculinity and high levels of MDSV. Dolan’s (2009) gender lens for the analysis of conflict in Uganda is enriched by this focus on masculinities, seeing the 1986-2006 conflict in Uganda as involving a systematic attempt to place a particular gender group, (Acholi males), into a highly stigmatized category (marginalized and subordinated masculinity) through the use of male directed sexual violence. Dolan’s work in the Refugee Law Project sees itself as using a feminist framework to achieve collective emancipation for a particular marginalized group: male survivors of CRSV.

Lack of recognition can also be seen in research studies that intend to provide readers with comprehensive understandings of conditions in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In their analysis of micro and macro globalized political forces at work in the extension of conflict in eastern DRC, Mullins and Rothe (2008) include an extensive section on the scope of sexual violence against women in the region; they also provide a final thought: “Men are also targeted ...” Left in this textual context, the statement leaves unchallenged the prevalent notion that only a very small percentage of men are targeted as victims of CRSV. In fact, Johnson (2010) found that almost 40% of women and 24% of men had been subjected to CRSV. Moreover, in the case of women suffering sexual violence, in over 40% of cases, the perpetrators were women and in 10% of male cases, the perpetrators were also women. Men and women had comparable rates of major depressive disorder (MDD) at 38% and 41% respectively. Figures for suicidal ideation were also similar (23.9% and 27.3%). However, in terms of substance abuse, men were clearly less able to deal with their trauma as over 46% were engaged in alcohol or drug abuse, compared to 21.4% for

women. All of these data pertain to the very region referred to by Mullins and Rothe, the eastern DRC. Holoshitz and Cameron (2014, p. 13) also analyze issues of sexual violence in the same region specifically through the lens of “New York Times” reportage. Surprisingly, their corpus of 89 Times articles does not include Gettleman (2009), an article specifically on the topic of sexual violence in eastern DRC but in this case, the focus is on victims who are men and boys. Gettleman cites data from the American Bar Association’s sexual violence legal clinic in Goma. In June, 2012, more than 10% of its cases were men. He also cites a comment from Brandi Walker, an aid worker at Panzi hospital in Bukavu: “Everywhere we go, people say men are getting raped too.”

While Banwell (2014, p. 56) purports to offer readers an analysis of sexual violence in eastern DRC at macro, meso, and micro levels, the author makes no reference to Johnson’s 2010 article, the first of its kind to report a figure as high as 23% for male victims, or to other scholarly work reporting on high rates of male victimization in eastern DRC (e.g., Carpenter, 2006; Marinussen, 2010; Onyango & Hampanda, 2011; Storr, 2011). Readers are simply provided with an endnote that “men are also targeted...” In her analysis of wartime sexual violence in the DRC, Rowaan (2011) is justified, then, in referring to men as the “invisible victims.” She offers a final reason to account for the under-reporting of male victimhood in official statistics: NGO’s are dependent for financial help from their donors. The issue of male victims of sexual violence is not one that appeals to most donors, so that an unjust situation is left unchallenged.

Responses within Gender Scholarship

What contributions have been made by gender scholars to debates on issues surrounding male directed sexual violence in conflict? The first response can be characterized as one of skepticism. When the Institute of Development Studies in Sussex University (IDS, 2015) held a seminar on the impact of CRSV on men and boys in November 2015, it titled the event “The rape of men ... Seriously, a gender issue?” The organizers of the event see themselves as adopting a feminist stance, stating that their project, “adopts a feminist understanding of ‘empowerment through collective action’ from a position of marginalization – but here applied to men..!” Yet,

they are aware that other feminist stances express reluctance about including a focus on men and boys as victims or survivors, and this is reflected in the title of the seminar. Some feminist scholars (e.g., Banwell 2014; Dworkin, 1993; Holoshitz & Cameron, 2014; Lentin, 1999; Seifert, 1994, 1996; Skjelsbaek, 2006; Wachala, 2011) make none or only passing references to male-directed sexual violence. While their scholarship has considerable merits in terms of deepening awareness of CRSV issues, the lack of attention to male survivors may reinforce the perception that the number of male victims must be so small as not to merit attention. Such an omission is inevitable, perhaps, when one applies the perspective of Brownmiller (1975, p. 64) who argues that, "... a female victim of rape in war is chosen not because she is a representation of the enemy, but precisely because she is a woman, and therefore (emphasis in original) an enemy." This perspective seems to suggest that misogyny is a structuring principle of history and that men will always target women in every area of conflict simply because women are always, "the enemy." This is not to reject Brownmiller's (1993) argument out of hand, or to deny her position that conflicts are spaces where female bodies are the battlefield. This may certainly be accurate for some conflicts; for example, Connell (2009, p. 49) refers to the conflict in post-partition India in 1947 in terms that echo Brownmiller: "Women were targeted for rape, abduction, and murder in order to stain the opposing community – men fought each other via the bodies of women." However, some strains of feminism seem to believe that a focus on some men as victims of oppression is always unhelpful. Such perspectives assume that male oppression of women continues on through sexual violence in all conflicts in much the same way. Certainly, if misogyny is the structuring principle of history, then such pronouncements will prove helpful, but there are many instances where the application of such a principle seems unhelpful; it seems to tar all biological males with the brush of misogyny making them unworthy of consideration in cases of male directed CRSV.

The reluctance to accept research findings that point to large numbers of male victims is seen in the experience of Kristen Johnson who reported on high numbers of male victims of SVC in Liberia and eastern DRC. In his interview with Al Jazeera on the current affairs programme "Inside Story" (2011), the journalist Will Storr recounts receiving an e-mail from Johnson in which she thanked him for publishing his article in national newspapers

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in the U.K. and lending credibility to her research. NGO officials had been telling her that she must have made some kind of mistake in her research methodology; double-digit figures for men being raped just could not be accurate!

Perhaps this stance is based on the misunderstanding that researchers such as Johnson are seeking the removal of attention from female survivors towards male survivors of CRSV. As the director of the Refugee Law Project (RLP) in Kampala, Chris Dolan (2009) has been one of the first to bring international attention to male directed SVC, mainly in Uganda and eastern DRC. In an interview for a British national newspaper (Storr, 2011, p. 6) he explains: “There’s a fear among them [international aid agencies] that it’s a zero-sum game; that there’s a pre-defined cake and if you start talking about men, you’re going to somehow eat a chunk of cake that’s taken them a long time to bake.” He adds that one of the RLP donors, Dutch Oxfam, insisted that 70% of the client base would have to be female if they were to continue funding RLP projects. One can see the influence of exclusive feminism again, perhaps, in the UN report that followed an international conference in Nairobi in 2006 on sexual violence in east Africa. Dolan asserts that, “The people behind the report insisted that the definition of rape be restricted to women.” A similar conclusion regarding the influence of exclusive feminism can be drawn from Stemple’s remarks to Storr (2011, p. 7): “There is a constant drum beat that women are the rape victims, [and men] a monolithic perpetrator class.”

Another example of how a feminist stance could be enriched by an acknowledgement of male victims of SVC is apparent in Holoshitz and Cameron (2014). The authors refer to the work of MacKinnon (1994) and they highlight her claim that torture is accorded more gravity as a crime in domestic and international law and in political consciousness because men are subjected to torture; rape is not accorded the same status because rape is something that happens to women. The authors’ data analysis of New York Times articles shows that sexual abuse in Abu Ghraib prison (mainly in 2003/2004) was represented as political violence while sexual abuse in eastern DRC was represented mainly as domestic sphere, sexual violence. This is significant as the former is traditionally accorded more weight in terms of policy decisions, penalties, security rationale directives, and so on, than the latter. These claims can be understood to the extent that in the early

1990's, very little empirical data were available to indicate high numbers of male victims. The authors are perceptive, also, in recognizing that Abu Ghraib indicates how sexual abuse of men will often be represented as something other than sexual abuse, so that the true nature of the crime remains obscured. Yet the authors fail to challenge the perception that men, as a monolithic block, are rapists, and women, as another monolithic block, are their victims. Much empirical data contradicts such a simplistic gender binary model where male always equals perpetrator of rape and sexual violence and female always equals victim of such violence. The fact that the Abu Ghraib incidents involved at least one female perpetrator (Lynndie England) seems not to have given any pause for thought (England, Streck, & Wiechmann, 2008). Nor was consideration given to McKinnon's (1994, p. 18) assertion that, "Men who are sexually assaulted are thereby stripped of their social status as men. They are feminized: made to serve the function and play the role customarily assigned to women as men's social inferiors." In addition, MacKinnon (2014) highlights how difficult it is for gay men to prove "lack of consent" when they have been raped. Holoshitz and Cameron (2014) also decry the fact that Western "experts" often pose the question "Why are so many women raped in eastern DRC." The question could just as easily be posed as "Why are so many men raping women in Congo." After reading data reported by Johnson (2010) and others, one can ask an even more helpful question: "Why are so many people raping other people – women and men, girls and boys – in Congo?" It is unfortunate that the authors seemed to overlook Johnson's work as it could enrich their analysis of the gendered dimensions of DRC sexual violence representations considerably. Indeed, it seems difficult to find any example of an exclusive feminist approach having explanatory power in the case of wartime sexual violence in DRC. Maedl's (2011) analysis of CRSV in eastern Congo, which purports to provide the rape victims' perspective also excludes a focus on male survivors, and leaves these victims as a silenced, marginalized group. Meger (2010, p. 119) argues that her application of "rape as a weapon of war" theoretical framework offers insight that help us understand the function of sexual violence in conflict affected areas of DRC. Yet, that framework has hardly any insight to offer for the fact that almost 24% of men in the area have experienced rape and severe sexual assault. In a later analysis, Meger (2016) employs a more comprehensive political economic framework in which she takes into account the reality of

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sexual violence against men and boys, adding greatly to the value of the analysis. Leatherman's (2011) analysis of the conflict in eastern DRC also adopts a feminist and political-economic theoretical framework which is enhanced by her inclusion of an analysis of the situation for male victims of sexual violence.

An increasing number of feminist scholars are following Leathermen's lead, and including recognition of male survivors as part of their analysis of CRSV. In her analysis of the framing of CRSV, Crawford (2013) notes that what had been widely regarded as a "women's issue" was made into a "security issue" where rape is understood as a weapon of war by men against women, and nothing else. While many commentators have welcomed these changes, including many feminists, Crawford (p. 1) notes the limitations of an emphasis on rape as a weapon of war. Even if the stated intention is to achieve security rather than to "save the honour" of vulnerable indigenous women, the negative implications of this gendered framing need to be considered. If rape is seen only as a "weapon of war," then the ability of the international community to understand how gender norms shape events and agency in areas of conflict is severely limited. Another critique of "exclusive feminism" can be found in Jaleel, (2012, p. 131) who describes how the protagonists of the sex wars in the United States in the 1980's were able to extend the reach of their animating logic into public international law during the 1990's where phrases such as "rape epidemic," "war on women," and [later] "rape capital of the world" garnered immense media attention. Jaleel argues that the "project of global sisterhood" reifies women's ethno-religious difference. Ultimately, such difference must always be subordinated to the paradigm of women as a homogenous group in constant danger of oppression and sexualized coercion from another monolithic group, men. Such a paradigm, which has been promoted vigorously in the field of international legal discourse, fails to capture the particularity and complexity of each instance of rape and sexual violence in conflict affected areas. Sjørberg (2016, p. 51) argues that feminist security studies should focus on "security as felt" and victims of sexual violence feel the same way and experience much the same internalized abjection within social and cultural contexts which favour men who display power over women and over "weak" or "emasculated" men. Here she echoes the work of Connell (1995) on hegemonic masculinity

which shows that the variety of styles of masculinity that compete for hegemonic status often rely on displays of power over women and over subordinated masculinities (e.g. those men who are labeled as effeminate or homosexual). From this perspective, a focus on male CRSV victims is a feminist concern as masculinism can be seen as creating conditions that sustain high levels of sexual violence in areas of conflict and elsewhere (O'Mochain, 2015). It would be unhelpful, then, to recognize the human, sexualized suffering of one gender and to disregard that of another. In addition, it may be the case, in many instances, that war crimes should be classified as rape and sexual violence when they are officially listed as torture. Sivakumaran (2010, p. 273) refers to the work of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which found that 2% of victims of sexual violence during that country's period of conflict were male. However, a later study with a more inclusive methodology found that the figure should have been cited as 22%. In many cases, men who had suffered rape or other forms of sexual violence were placed under the rubric of torture. This reinforces the mistaken though prevalent perception that "sexual violence is a problem for women and girls alone." It should also be noted that in many areas of conflict around the world, health care delivery systems are in place for victims of sexual violence if they are women; fewer provisions are available for victims of torture, especially in post-conflict contexts.

The influence of psychology studies in the academy may help to account for some of the reservations about including men and boys in SVC research and activism. One strand of psychology-based feminism has expressed concern about a focus on "male pain." Orme, Dominelli, and Mullender. (2000, p.93) ask, "Why should women expend their energies on men who already receive a disproportionate share of social resources, when there is continuing work to be done with women to repair the damage done to them by men?" Other scholars (e.g., Coyle, 1998; Hautzinger, 2003; Hearn, 2004) argue similarly that little can be learned by researching experiences of pain or crisis among men, especially as this risks re-excluding women. This perspective may have validity in some particular contexts, but not when one considers the credibility of empirical data which indicates that male victims of sexual violence and abuse often experience the same heinous long-term effects as women. Based on his extensive research on trauma, Lisak (1994, p. 526) concluded that : "Abused men tend to score

significantly higher [compared to males traumatized by means other than sexual violence] on measures of depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsiveness, dissociation, hostility, low self-esteem, sleep disturbance, sexual dysfunction, impaired relationships, and suicide attempts.” It seems fair to conjecture that psychological traumas experienced during peacetime conditions will be exacerbated considerably in areas of conflict. Referring to such areas in his submission to the House of Lords committee on prevention of SVC, Chris Dolan (2015) pointed out that, in the experience of the Refugee Law Project health care delivery personnel in Uganda, the treatment of physical wounds for male victims is actually higher for male victims compared to female victims, and counselling for psychological wounds can also be slower and more difficult.

Conclusion

A focus on the need for international agencies to respond to issues surrounding SVC is fraught with difficulties. Goetz (2014) points out the dangers of framing SVC as a military problem that calls for a pugilistic, "we will get you perpetrators!" attitude. In fact, long term transformation of gender relations and empowerment of women are essential. Why have IGOs like the UN (Resolution 1820, in 2008) come to define sexual violence in conflict as a significant security issue? A critical approach might answer that it is because it allows powerful interests to give the appearance of doing good, while structural inequalities remain unchanged. A modern-day reworking of traditional "damsel in distress" myths can be used for political purposes, as was the case before and during the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and of Iraq in 2003. In the run-up to the invasion, the Bush administration promoted a narrative of U.S. rescuers redeeming the women of the Middle East As Messerschmidt (2010) argues, there are periods of history in which prevailing norms of hegemonic masculinity are pushed to the extremes of hyper-masculinity, and the early 2000's can be characterized in this way when we consider the events surrounding the invasion and occupation of Iraq. Such experiences remind feminists of the need to base their principles on a profound vision of the human in order to avoid being swept up in the swell of political fervor that can overtake nations during periods of crisis. As Auchter (2016, p. 47)

argues in her focus on human security and the framing concept of death, “more work can be done to think through the concept of ‘human.’” From this perspective, the key tasks of feminism are not limited by the framing concepts of “woman” and “man” but on the meaning of the human and of the gendering processes that bring human beings into social existence as “women” and “men” (cf. [Butler, 2004](#)).

One of the reasons why male directed CRSV has not received the attention it deserves is because some feminists believe it is not a serious gender issue or because scholars and activists fear that paying attention to these issues will disturb feminist sensibilities. In contrast, I have argued that research and activism that highlight male victimhood should be accepted as sufficiently feminist, in the first place, because it affirms fundamental equality between all human beings. Sexual identity issues and homophobia are also involved. As [Sivakumaran \(2005\)](#) argues, the “taint of homosexuality” is a key reason why many institutions are reluctant to engage with issues surrounding male/male sexual violence. This of itself should be enough to ensure that all feminists see male directed sexual violations as an issue to be understood through the lens of gender. [Sivakumaran \(p. 1281\)](#) notes that emasculation and feminization are key elements in the reality of male/male rape and so should be understood within a feminist perspective. “Notions of power, dominance, and gender, all of which play key roles in feminist analyses of male/female rape, also feature heavily in an analysis of male/male rape” It is to be hoped, then, that in future, that variety of feminism which overlooks the reality of male directed CRSV will be replaced by a feminist discourse of inclusion which is grounded on principles of justice and equality for all human beings who seek a restoration of the physical and psychological integrity that were stolen from them by acts of sexual violence.

Male directed sexual violence, whether in a conflict or in a peacetime context, is always relevant to feminist analysis, as is also the case for women-directed sexual violence. As [Cohen \(2014\)](#) affirms succinctly, “male rape is a feminist issue.” And yet, many male victims of sexual violence remain silent and some feminists find nothing problematic with such silence. In the case of sexual violence in conflict, the fear of a loss of resources and health care provision may be the main reason for reluctance to recognize male victimhood. This concern is admirable, but it is hardly a sufficient reason for continuing to ignore the plight of thousands of male

survivors around the world. An ethical response from the international humanitarian community is to provide adequate health care services to all victims of CRSV regardless of sex, age, class, ethnicity, or any other vector of categorization. The varied perspectives of activists working for male victims often reflect a common thread in affirming that all human beings are equal in inherent dignity (a concept that underpins much of international human rights law and international humanitarian law (cf. [Waldron, 1999](#)). Acts of sexual violence are “crimes against humanity,” against the dignity of human beings who are not to be subjected to profound physical and psychological trauma. Thus, all survivors of sexual violence need to be accorded the maximum of support, healing, and access to instruments of justice. This affirmation can hardly be discredited as “un-feminist” if feminism is understood as terms of egalitarian principles: biological females and biological males have the same inherent dignity and they should enjoy the same conditions of social equality. Human suffering deserves the same response of empathy, and empirical data indicates that the suffering of male survivors is akin to that of female survivors. Consequently, this paper has argued that inclusive feminism is more intellectually coherent, historically grounded, and more ethically aware than those varieties of gender scholarship who exclude male experience. Stemple (2009, p. 646) echoes these sentiments when she affirms that human compassion is an unlimited resource, and that concern for male victims of sexual violence does not require a corresponding loss of compassion or concern for women and girls. “It is not a zero-sum game. Indeed the total undoing of women’s sexual subordination must include an accurate understanding of rape and a thorough critique of feminist assumptions.” Feminists, masculinities studies scholars, and all who work for gender transformation can play a valuable role in these efforts to challenge and transform a masculinist gender order which up to now has perpetuated sexual violence in conflict against women and men alike.

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