

**Man, Woman or Just Human: How do Gender Roles Influence Sexual Violence
against Males in Armed Conflict?**

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MAN, WOMAN OR JUST HUMAN: HOW DO GENDER ROLES INFLUENCE SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST MALES IN ARMED CONFLICT?

By: Emel Linda Given

“Are all humans human, or are some more human than others?”¹ Lt. Gen.

Romeo A. Dallaire, commander of the UN Assistance Mission to Rwanda asked this haunting question three times² – the first time in reference to the UN Security Council’s failure to intervene prior to the Rwandan genocide in which some 500,000 to 1,000,000 civilians were killed^{3,4} and 250,000 to 500,000 raped;^{5,6} the second and third in 2003 and 2005 in reference to the atrocities in Congo and Darfur. Dallaire’s question is also valid when applied to gender-based violence defined as, “violence that is targeted at women or men because of their sex and/or their socially constructed gender roles.”⁷ Both females and males are targets of gender-based sexual violence, and violence can be perpetrated by either females or males upon either of the sexes. Sexual violence can be defined as rape, genital mutilation, sexual humiliation and forced nudity, as well as any other non-penetrating sexual assault.

Unfortunately, within armed conflict, little attention, research or support is given to

¹ Madeleine Lynn, "Rwanda to Darfur," (2005), http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/resources/articles_papers_reports/5105.html.

² *Ibid.*

³ Ernest Harsch, "Oau Set Inquiry into Rwanda Genocide: A Determination to Search for Africa's Own Truth," *Africa Recovery* 12, no. 1 (1998), <http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/subjindx/121rwan.htm>.

⁴ Scott Straus, "Rwanda and Darfur: A Comparative Analysis," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 1, no. 1 (2006), 42.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁶ Virginia Barbour et al., "Rape in War Is Common, Devastating, and Too Often Ignored," *PLoS Medicine* 6, no. 1 (2009).

⁷ "Sixty-Fifth General Assembly Ga/Spd/470", (paper presented at the Refugee Returns Possilbe 'Doorway' to Resolving Arab-Israeli Conflict, Say Fourth Committee Delegates, As Israel Touts 'Cynicism' of Israeli Practices Committee, New York, 2010).

males who are targets of this form of violence, and often times when it is mentioned it is relegated to a footnote⁸ or dismissed on the assumption that it happens infrequently.⁹ ¹⁰ DelZotto found that only 3% of the surveyed 4,076 non-governmental groups which deal with political or conflict-related sexual violence even mention males within this context.¹¹ It is within this shadow which the essay will focus, with the aim of better understanding how gender roles contribute to this form of violence, and furthermore to illuminate that gender-based sexual violence within conflict does not only pertain to females, nor are the ways of dealing with the aftermath necessarily the same between genders. Through understanding these challenges as well as the gaps in supporting male survivors of sexual violence, we can achieve greater success in the global battle against this form of brutality against both sexes.

The argument concerning the contribution of gender roles to gender-based sexual violence, particularly as it relates to males, is contextualised through analyses of the former Yugoslavian wars, expressly chosen due to the nature of the violence, as well as the extent of reporting and available information.¹² Utilising the

⁸ "The Nature, Scope and Motivation for Sexual Violence against Men and Boys in Armed Conflict: Un Ocha Research Meeting", (paper presented at the Use of Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict: Identifying gaps in Research to Inform More Effective Interventions, 2008). 1.

⁹ Sandesh Sivakumaran, "Sexual Violence against Men in Armed Conflict," *The European Journal of International Law* 18, no. 2 (2007). 261.

¹⁰ Charli R Carpenter, "Recognizing Gender-Based Violence against Civilian Men and Boys in Conflict Situations," *Security Dialogue* 37, no. 1 (2006). 93-94.

¹¹ Augusta DelZotto and Adam Jones, "Male-on-Male Sexual Violence in Wartime: Human Rights' Last Taboo?," <http://adamjones.freesevers.com/malerape.htm>.

¹² The author specifies a good example of reporting as carried out by Physicians for Human Rights (1999) on war crimes in Kosovo," See Carpenter (2006), *supra*, note 20. Evidence from the conflict within former Yugoslavia, is available from NGOs, individual states, UN experts, cases, indictments and convictions of offenders, See Sivakumaran (2007), 259.

theory of hegemonic masculinity and the social constructivist theory, exploration is made into the stereotypical associations of females as victims and males as perpetrators in order to reveal how these ideals perpetuate sexual violence and further exacerbate the post-conflict condition for both male and female survivors of sexual violence. Breaking the silence on this issue depends upon recognition of the power of social constructs and thus bringing to the forefront ideas of identity and homophobia.

The conclusion will focus upon post-conflict reconstruction and the challenges of supporting male survivors of sexual violence. Issues relating to reporting due to fear of shame, condemnation and further persecution may reflect some of these challenges. Other post-conflict challenges will be discussed, including another important area hindered by gender roles – Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration – to underscore the commonality shared by both females and males in addressing issues concerning gender and conflict.

Historical Background – Yugoslav Wars (1991 – 1999)

The worst of the atrocities of the war has been the sexual terror against Bosnian, Croatian, Hungarian, and other non-Serbian people. Women, girls, children, and men have all been victims. I believe it is wrong to say the Serbian forces in this conflict have made rape a weapon of war. Rather the Serbs have made war a form of rape.¹³

Two central contrasting perspectives on the wars and the resultant collapse of former Yugoslavia predominate historical narratives. In one narrative, ancient hatred re-surfaced in 1989 as if “the lid [had] been removed, [and] the cauldron

¹³ Stephen Schwartz, "Rape as a Weapon of War in the Former Yugoslavia," *Hastings Women's Law Journal* 5, no. 1 (1994). 70.

exploded”,¹⁴ i.e., the death of Josip Broz Tito who had fostered the ‘Yugoslavian’ identity over that of ‘Croat’ or ‘Serbian’, together with other factors led to a release of underlying ethnic tensions.¹⁵ One author describes a superficial facade in which underneath Yugoslavs were bitter and “clinging . . . to their ethnic identities.”¹⁶ The other perspective identifies outsider involvement as the primary instigator for the former Yugoslavia’s collapse, namely: imperialism, exploitation and interference. Judt highlights the shared theme of these narratives in that neither of the two histories actually place responsibility on the Yugoslavs themselves, and while outsider meddling certainly contributed, the breakup of former Yugoslavia “was the work of men, not fate. And the overwhelming responsibility for Yugoslavia’s tragedy lay . . . with the politicians in Belgrade.”¹⁷

Socialist Yugoslavia was made up of six republics: Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Slovenia, Macedonia, and Montenegro; including four languages, three religions and two alphabets – to some, the necessary ingredients for disaster. However, in reality, inter-marriage was common, most of the population spoke an interchangeable language, and by the 1990s, even religious links to nationalism were largely dissipating except in the countryside.¹⁸ If anything, the frustration within former Yugoslavia was more economic with a more prosperous north and an underperforming south.¹⁹ While an in-depth historical

¹⁴ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London: Pimlico, 2007). 665.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 665.

¹⁶ Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Worse Than War: Genocide, Elimination, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity* (London: Little, Brown Book Group, 2009). 350.

¹⁷ Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*. 666.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 668, 669.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 671.

analysis is beyond the scope of this essay, it is important to understand that even with considerable ethnic diversity, there was a common cultural 'identity' which was shared amongst the people of former Yugoslavia.

Maria B. Olujic describes a strong patriarchal culture among Slavic people, with male leadership of the extended family within community, known as Zadruga ideology, "a corporate family unit under which all holdings – for example, property, livestock, and land – are held communally by the patrilineage."²⁰ This traditional culture encompassed sexuality as well with a woman's virginity, morality and the sanctity of the womb linked with the honour of her husband, the protector, and furthermore to that of the family and village. In fact, "It is precisely because the ideology of honor/shame was shared by Croats, Muslims, and Serbs that war rapes became such an effective weapon in the former Yugoslavia."²¹ Through a series of republic changes²² and political manipulations,²³ the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia gave way to a new nationalism, which became a scapegoat for economic frustration.²⁴ The contradictory perspectives pertaining to the Yugoslav people being both coexistent, sharing language, culture, etc., and feeling ethnic-related animosity could both be true, argues Kaldor. "Fear and hate are not endemic but, in

²⁰ Maria B Olujic, "Embodiment of Terror: Gendered Violence in Peacetime and Wartime in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (1998). 33.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 46.

²² Mary Kaldor, *New & Old Wars*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006). Media became nationalised, see p. 40. The JNA became the stronghold of Yugoslavism; Territorial Defence Units for the republics gained in strength; Recruitment of paramilitary; Democratic elections moving from federal to republic. See p. 41.

²³ Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*. Milošević started using the wartime Chetniks insignia at nationalist meetings, see p. 671. Milošević forced a change in Serbia's constitution in order to add Kosovo and Vojvodina, whereby shifting voting balance in his favour; his goal was to increase the power of Serbia and in the process destabilise the federal system. See p. 672.

²⁴ Kaldor, *New & Old Wars*. 40.

certain periods, are mobilized for political purposes,"²⁵ and in the case of former Yugoslavia, it materialised into widespread "ethnic-cleansing" with sexual violence as the primary weapon²⁶ to "cleanse." This was particularly virulent within the paramilitary groups who "were hired to do the dirty work"²⁷ and create an atmosphere of hate from one of coexistence. On the Serbian side these paramilitary groups were coordinated with the Yugoslav National Army (Bosnian Serb Army) whereas on the Croatian and Bosnian side paramilitary groups acted more independently,²⁸ which may explain why the Serb forces were considered "far and away the worst offenders."²⁹ On a smaller scale, Bosnian Croats and Muslims also carried out similar atrocities, which were largely carried out after observing Serb violence going unpunished, as one author contends.³⁰ What became clear was that this war was not one of opposition forces fighting each other, but rather a war against the civilian population; and had the international community understood this from the beginning, then the right measures could have been implemented to protect, first and foremost, the civilian population.³¹

Power, dominance and ideals of masculinity

*There is nothing outside gender. To be involved in social relations is to be inextricably "inside" gender.*³²

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 55.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 57.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

²⁹ Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*. 675.

³⁰ Ivana Nizich, "Violations of the Rules of War by Bosnian Croat and Muslim Forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina," *Hastings Women's Law Journal* 5, no. 1 (1994). 25.

³¹ Kaldor, *New & Old Wars*. 61, 66.

³² Mike Donaldson, "What Is Hegemonic Masculinity?," *Theory and Society* 22, no. 5 (1993).653.

Power, domination, control – these are all qualities often perceived to be ‘masculine’ and of the male gender, or in the case of hegemonic masculinity to embody the ideal of what it means to be a man. Hegemonic masculinity, it is argued, underlies war and rape, and furthermore is argued to be the cause of both.³³ However, this ideal denotes a certain hierarchy over other masculinities and femininities, and thus in order to fully understand the role of hegemonic masculinity, the wider social construct and support must be considered.

Culture, created and reinforced through discourse (including songs, jokes, etc.), contributes to this normative sense of what it means to be male. In the former Yugoslavia, men were “preoccupied with their own as well as women’s sexuality.”³⁴ The author describes a ‘peacetime’ culture, in which sexuality and virility were central themes exemplified in epic songs, called *ganga*,³⁵ public boasting about sexual matters, obsession about female honour and virginity³⁶ and even “play rape” as part of some marriage rituals.³⁷ The gender hierarchy construct involves the hegemonic male in charge of *his* female’s protection, as they are the designated ‘weaker’ sex, and in competition with other males for sexual prowess. According to

³³ Eileen L Zurbriggen, "Rape, War, and the Socialization of Masculinity: Why Our Refusal to Give up War Ensures That Rape Cannot Be Eradicated," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 34(2010).

³⁴ Olujic, "Embodiment of Terror: Gendered Violence in Peacetime and Wartime in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina." 36.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 34. "A Croatian form of epic singing . . . conveys its meaning through symbolism: ‘plowing’ means intercourse, a cluster of wool symbolizes the vagina, a rifle represents the penis. . . . Ganga is performed by a group of men or women . . . the sexuality of women, is the main focus."

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 35. Bed sheets from the wedding night are publicly displayed with red stains in order to ‘prove’ the honour and virginity of the female.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 36-37.

Olujic, "violence against women is a means by which combatants show who controls the 'sexual property' and political process."³⁸

However, sexual violence is also directly targeted against men, as a tool to make men 'impotent', either literally through castration or genital mutilation, or through sexual violence against their women, whom they could not protect, or of themselves.³⁹ Moreover, if acts of sexual violence against women or men were publicly committed, it became a way to spread fear and "disempowerment of the community."⁴⁰ While the theory of hegemonic masculinity offers a conceptual framework for the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, it does not fully elucidate why men would necessarily be targets. In the case of former Yugoslavia, sexual violence against males was not some abhorrent side effect of an over-sexed military operation, but rather a specific, strategic tactic.⁴¹ More than 4,000 Croatian men were sexually assaulted by Serb militants,⁴² for example. Why were females not the only targets? Carpenter highlights the relative 'weakness' of women and children, together with not having the right to bear arms and protect themselves, as opposed to the threat of males conscripted into "male-dominated military institutions".⁴³ If females were the easier target, and males could essentially be

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

³⁹ Sivakumaran, "Sexual Violence against Men in Armed Conflict." 267-268.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 269.

⁴¹ United Nations Security Council, "Final Report of the Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992) , S/1994/674," (1994). 35.

⁴² Hilmi M Zawati, "Impunity or Immunity: Wartime Male Rape and Sexual Torture as a Crime against Humanity," *Torture* 17, no. 1 (2007). See *supra*, note 31.

⁴³ Carpenter, "Recognizing Gender-Based Violence against Civilian Men and Boys in Conflict Situations." 93.

dominated through sexual violence against 'their' women, then why bother with males?

Gender roles and sexual violence

For a man to be sexually attacked, by placing him in a woman's role, demeans his masculinity; he loses it so to speak. While this is gender-specific in that it only applies to male victims of rape, it is clear that the equation of femininity and weakness, and the notion that to place a man in the role of a woman demeans him, falls well within the scope of the objectives of the women's movement.⁴⁴

Once Bosnia was declared independent in 1992, the Yugoslav army's primary objective became the expulsion of civilians, mostly non-Serb citizens, in order to secure the territory for themselves.⁴⁵ "Ethnic cleansing" could have been accomplished through many different forms of violence and scare tactics, such as death camps, artillery raids or bombs etc., however, sexual violence became the preferred *modus operandi*, owing perhaps to the "pre-existing sociocultural dynamics."⁴⁶ How identity is constructed within the minds of aggressors also impacts sexual reproduction.⁴⁷ Culture, identity and power were "exclusively paternally derived"; thus a tactic used by Serbian militias was to rape and "impregnate Bosnian Muslim women so that they would bear 'Serbian' children."⁴⁸ In contrast with the former Yugoslavia wars, the Nazis performed sterilisation as a way of erasing identity via both maternal and paternal lines. Intermarriage was

⁴⁴ Sandesh Sivakumaran, "Male/Male Rape and the "Taint" of Homosexuality," *Human Rights Quarterly* 27(2005). 1283.

⁴⁵ Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*. 675.

⁴⁶ Olujic, "Embodiment of Terror: Gendered Violence in Peacetime and Wartime in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina." 31.

⁴⁷ Patricia A Weitsman, "The Politics of Identity and Sexual Violence: A Review of Bosnia and Rwanda," *Human Rights Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (2008). 577.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 565.

common both in Rwanda, between the Hutus and the Tutsis, and in the former Yugoslavia; thus a precedent was set for sexual relations, or in the case of war, rape, further supported within the Serbian military ranks, whereas sexual relations between Nazis and Jews was taboo and forbidden. Jean Wood offers this as a hypothesis as to why rape was so rampant within these wars as opposed to the Nazi concentration camps, where humiliation was more the order than rape.⁴⁹

From a constructivist perspective, these widely held identities of what is male and what is female formed the basis for the type of sexual violence which was enacted. The female was viewed as the weaker sex, thus if a male was raped or sexual violated, he was then 'feminised' and the perpetrator was 'masculinised.'⁵⁰ In a sense the idolised hegemonic 'male leader role' became a perfect target to attack as it symbolised the very essence of power, procreation and of the nation itself, which is exactly what happened within the former Yugoslavia wars.⁵¹

Heterosexuality and homophobia

*Serbian racism has always evoked hatred of the Balkan Muslims for their acceptance of gayness. In 1926, the Serbian writer Cedomil Mitrinovic published a classic exposition of Serbian anti-Muslim ideology attacking the Bosnians' acceptance of homosexuality among them and recommending, in fact, one solution: genocide.*⁵²

Hegemonic male theory within the particular social construct
aforementioned equates power and masculinity with heterosexuality, thus the

⁴⁹ Elisabeth Jean Wood, "Variation in Sexual Violence During War," *Politics & Society* 34(2006). 332.

⁵⁰ Carpenter, "Recognizing Gender-Based Violence against Civilian Men and Boys in Conflict Situations." 225.

⁵¹ Weitsman, "The Politics of Identity and Sexual Violence: A Review of Bosnia and Rwanda." Men were subjected to beatings, cannibalism, castrations, and other extreme forms of torture, frequently until death."

⁵² Schwartz, "Rape as a Weapon of War in the Former Yugoslavia." 70-71.

performance of sexual violence against females demonstrates the perpetrators' 'maleness.' Indeed, these actions were encouraged and "often heralded by the perpetrators as positive, patriotic accomplishments."⁵³ Gang rape may have been a 'tool' to strengthen the team bond by demonstrating loyalty to 'their national cause,' exercised in a mutually shared crime.⁵⁴ As Price asserts, "militarised nationalism 'does not simply *allow* men to be violent, but *compels* them so to be. In militarised societies . . . men who resist violence are suspect. Not only is their loyalty to the state [or nation] questioned, but also their loyalty to (heterosexual) masculinity.'"⁵⁵ However, not all highly militarised armies have high rates of sexual violence⁵⁶ and not all were willing 'rapists.' Some of the survivors of sexual violence testified that "some Serbian soldiers in the rape camps took sedatives or stimulants to enable themselves, at least in the early days, to commit rape; many others sought resolve or escape in alcohol. Some wept."⁵⁷ These types of accounts support the *Theory of Motivation*⁵⁸ in that certain social processes or expectations gave the impetus to some soldiers to commit these acts. In other words, the way that they defined themselves within this particular situation (hegemonic, hetero, loyal, etc.), gave them the belief and drive to perform these acts, even if they did not 'want' to, hence choosing to numb their senses with sedatives to make it possible.

⁵³ United Nations Security Council, "Final Report of the Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992) , S/1994/674." 35.

⁵⁴ Miranda Alison, "Wartime Sexual Violence: Women's Human Rights and Questions of Masculinity," *Review of International Studies* 33(2007). 77.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁵⁶ Wood, "Variation in Sexual Violence During War." 327.

⁵⁷ Alison, "Wartime Sexual Violence: Women's Human Rights and Questions of Masculinity." 77.

⁵⁸ Nelson N Foote, "Identification as the Basis for a Theory of Motivation," *American Sociological Review* 16, no. 1 (1951).

However, males were also raped and sexually violated by 'hegemonic' males for the same reasons in which females were violated: power and dominance. While it was not considered 'taboo' to have sex with females of different ethnicity, religion or nationality, it was considered taboo to be homosexual, even to the extent of outright hatred of some Balkan Muslims for being tolerant. Male perpetrators of male sexual violence do not consider themselves necessarily homosexual, as in the case of prison rape where the perpetrator may not even consider that he has taken part in a homosexual act.⁵⁹ The victim, however, is considered to be 'homosexualised.' By raping or sexually violating males or by forcing male victims to enact these violations upon each other⁶⁰ the victim(s) then become(s) 'tainted'⁶¹ with homosexuality.⁶² Perpetrators perhaps either used this form of violence as a way to enact 'homophobic' hatred or to humiliate the enemy's 'masculinity' in a manner which the 'hegemonic male' views as the most derogatory. Robert Mugabe, who is well known to be homophobic, utilised male rape to both terrorize and dehumanise young boys who he believed, could oppose his government.⁶³ Likewise in Congo, where homosexuality is also considered to be taboo, more and more cases

⁵⁹ Sivakumaran, "Male/Male Rape and the "Taint" of Homosexuality." 1300.

⁶⁰ United Nations Security Council, "Final Report of the Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992) , S/1994/674." 59. Testimony supplied by "[an] ex-detainee [who] told of suffering electric shocks to the scrotum and of seeing a father and son who shared his cell forced by guards to perform sex acts with each other."

⁶¹ Sivakumaran, "Male/Male Rape and the "Taint" of Homosexuality." 1275. As described by the author, "the term 'taint' is in no way used in the pejorative sense, but simply to reflect the view of the survivor, the perpetrator, and the state." See *supra*, note 4.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 1298.

⁶³ Geoff Hill, "Male Rape, the Latest Weapon for Mugabe's Men,"(2003), <http://www.newstatesman.com/200306090018>. "Gay sex is illegal in Zimbabwe and Mugabe is notoriously homophobic. He has denounced lesbians and gay men as 'worse than pigs and dogs', declaring that they have no rights and should leave the country."

of male rape are being reported as another way “to humiliate and demoralize Congolese communities into submission.”⁶⁴

Emasculating the enemy or taking away ‘manhood’, similar to the idea of ‘feminising’ the victim, thus equates to taking away power,⁶⁵ which is also linked to the national identity/ethnicity/religion identity itself.⁶⁶ In this sense, the aggressor could prove, “not only that he [the victim] is a lesser man, but also that his ethnicity is a lesser ethnicity.”⁶⁷ Without the socially constructed hierarchy of masculinities (over both females and males), and homophobic linkage to ‘femininity’ and dehumanisation, such brutality would not carry the same symbolic effect or strength.

Silence

*...the subject of male/male rape is a cause without a voice. There are very few people who are both willing and able to speak on its behalf.*⁶⁸

The issue with gender stereotyping and homophobia does not stop with the perpetrators. Unfortunately for the survivors, the same stereotypes which feed gender-based sexual violence also impede the possibility to receive much-needed medical and psycho-social support, which is precisely why sexual violence is so

⁶⁴ Jeffrey Gettleman, "Symbol of Unhealed Congo: Male Rape Victims," (2009), http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/05/world/africa/05congo.html?_r=2.

⁶⁵ Zawati, "Impunity or Immunity: Wartime Male Rape and Sexual Torture as a Crime against Humanity." 33-34.

⁶⁶ Inger Skjelsbaek, "Sexual Violence and War: Mapping out a Complex Relationship," *European Journal of International Relations* 7, no. 2 (2001). 225.

⁶⁷ Alison, "Wartime Sexual Violence: Women's Human Rights and Questions of Masculinity." 87. Quoting Zarkov, see *supra*, note 70.

⁶⁸ Sivakumaran, "Male/Male Rape and the "Taint" of Homosexuality." 1275.

effective.⁶⁹ One major issue is non-reporting, either from fear, guilt, shame, confusion or even not having the same opportunities to report. The victim may “not feel like a man” if he were to report, or may even lack the appropriate words to describe the offence, as sexual violence against males has been absent from the discourse.⁷⁰ For the victim, he may question his own sexuality as a result – if he considered himself heterosexual before the attack, did this make him homosexual, or if he was homosexual, was there something which attracted the attack?⁷¹ Aid workers in Congo reported that shame and humiliation is so profound that often males will not come forward unless they are suffering from health-related issues from the attacks. Even then, it is not a guarantee. Stories from Congo of “men whose penises were cinched with rope [who] died a few days later because they were too embarrassed to seek help”⁷² are real-life tragedies involving complex social dynamics. Males who do come forward risk being exiled from the community and considered as having been transformed into females.⁷³

Aid workers can also be affected by the socially-constructed notion of victimisation, which becomes incompatible with masculinity.⁷⁴ Medical staff that are only trained to recognise forms of sexual violence against females, or have pre-conceived notions that it can only happen to females, may miss the signs of sexual

⁶⁹ Skjelsbaek, "Sexual Violence and War: Mapping out a Complex Relationship." 228.

⁷⁰ Sivakumaran, "Sexual Violence against Men in Armed Conflict." 255-256.

⁷¹ Michael B King, "Male Rape: Victims Need Sensitive Management," *BMJ* 301(1990).

⁷² Gettleman, "Symbol of Unhealed Congo: Male Rape Victims."

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Sivakumaran, "Male/Male Rape and the "Taint" of Homosexuality." 1289.

violence against males.⁷⁵ A male victim may be afraid of being labelled as homosexual, thus fearing reprisal from homophobic authorities; especially as if he cannot offer proof that it was not consensual it could be considered a criminal offence in some countries.⁷⁶

Even the media reinforces the incompatibility of masculinity with victimisation through the absence of reporting of sexual violence against males within narratives,⁷⁷ while overemphasising violence against females. Members of the news media, however, are not the only contributors of reality distortions; other international organisations and NGOs are also responsible.⁷⁸ While some exaggerations may in turn influence policy and political agendas in positive ways, not all results are desirable. "Tragically, the war rapes also became an opportunity for breaking news, which served only to present women as victims once again."⁷⁹ Sadly even though reports of conflict-related sexual violence against males are publically available, males are still routinely left in the shadows of scholarly research and publications. In a recent article published by PLoS Medicine, ironically titled "Rape in War Is Common, Devastating, and Too Often Ignored,"⁸⁰ males are completely ignored as victims. Two mentions of males appear in the article: the first cautioning that husbands may reject their raped wives; the second speaking to the

⁷⁵ Pauline Oosterhoff, Prisca Zwanikken, and Evert Ketting, "Sexual Torture of Men in Croatia and Other Conflict Situations: An Open Secret," *Reproductive Health Matters* 12, no. 23 (2004).

⁷⁶ Sivakumaran, "Sexual Violence against Men in Armed Conflict.", 255-256.

⁷⁷ Alison, "Wartime Sexual Violence: Women's Human Rights and Questions of Masculinity." 86.

⁷⁸ "2005 Human Security Report: War and Peace in the 21st Century Human Security Centre," (New York and Oxford: Liu Institute for Global Issues, 2005). 2.

⁷⁹ Johanna Valenius, "Gender Mainstreaming in ESDP Missions," (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, 2007). 19.

⁸⁰ Barbour et al., "Rape in War Is Common, Devastating, and Too Often Ignored."

trauma of husbands having to watch their wives being raped. While both issues are real and warrant attention, no mention is made of sexual violence directly against males. The article concludes appropriately by suggesting that, "justice work be twinned with preventative efforts"; however, it then goes on to suggest only "protecting women and girls from sexual violence [so that it] becomes a central part of peacekeeping and security efforts."⁸¹ Another article which was published with the assistance from Physicians for Human Rights, the same group who were recognised by another scholar for thorough reporting on war crimes in Kosovo, completely neglects to include males for the "Prevalence of Rape in Recent Conflicts" table.⁸² The only mention of males is in reference to the "women 10-30 years of age [who] were raped daily by 40-50 men."⁸³ The purpose here is not to discredit or minimise the violence, which occurred against women, but rather to suggest that the only way to really help both male and female victims of gender-based sexual violence is to make a conscious effort to break the silence for both.

Conclusion

A male UNHCR official gave a distraught-looking boy, aged about fourteen or fifteen, a tray of food and a warm pat on the back. The boy's face became desperate and full of rage. His body trembled. He pulled the man's arm away from him, began to cry, and ran away from the camera. This was the face of an abused child.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Ibid., 0002.

⁸² Tara Gingerich and Jennifer Leaning, "The Use of Rape as a Weapon of War in the Conflict in Darfur, Sudan " (Boston: Program on Humanitarian Crises and Human Rights, Francois-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights, Harvard School of Public Health, 2004). 7.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ DelZotto and Jones, "Male-on-Male Sexual Violence in Wartime: Human Rights' Last Taboo?."

What happened in former Yugoslavia is also happening in other conflicts. Gender-based sexual violence is not age discriminate. Even boys between the ages of 1 month and 18 months have been raped.⁸⁵ Education is needed for medical workers who will most likely be the first ones to hear the victims' stories if they are told at all.⁸⁶ While the physical signs may be different between males and females, both males and females suffer from the trauma, physically and psychologically.⁸⁷ As conflict-related sexual violence is aimed at destroying the social fabric of the nation, more needs to be done to understand how relations are affected post-conflict, furthermore what can be done to support victims' reintegration within society.

More recently, legal advances such as the creation of The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) have resulted in significant progress,⁸⁸ specifically rape was finally considered a crime against humanity, and female involvement became compulsory within the tribunal structure.⁸⁹ Within the ICTY, sexual assault was generally awarded lengthier sentencing than other crimes;⁹⁰ however the gender of both the judge and the victim impacted the length of the sentence. Surprisingly,

⁸⁵ John Zarocostas, "Medical Aid Groups Treat Hundreds of Mass Rape Victims in Eastern Congo," *BMJ* 341(2010). c5218.

⁸⁶ Eric Carlson Stener, "Sexual Assault on Men in War," *The Lancet* 349(1997). He highlights that "many physicians and refugee workers are unaware that there are forms of male sexual assault other than anal rape, and are not trained to recognise the physical sequelae or to treat the psychological effects of such assaults. Experts have tended to bury the issue under the general rubric of abuse or torture and in most cases fail to provide adequate counselling for the victim."

⁸⁷ King, "Male Rape: Victims Need Sensitive Management."

⁸⁸ Skjelsbaek, "Sexual Violence and War: Mapping out a Complex Relationship." 211-212.

⁸⁹ Kimi Lynn King and Megan Greening, "Gender Justice or Just Gender? The Role of Gender in Sexual Assault Decisions at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia," *Social Science Quarterly* 88, no. 5 (2007). 1050, 1052.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* This was compared with a grouping of all cases such as "(murder, torture, persecution, looting, etc.)."

while it is hypothesised that female judges would be more aware or sensitive towards sexual violence in general, and thus impose longer sentences on perpetrators, this only held true for female victims, not for males.⁹¹ These findings reinforce the gender stereotype of the female victim who needs protecting. However, addressing issues related to male victims of sexual violence can actually help to support females in the same battle.⁹²

Narrow constructs of gender roles and stereotypes also affect women in other conflict-related areas. For example, within the Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR) process, programmes are still largely focused upon men and male-related support, thus when support is made available for women, it is often given through or related with men.⁹³ Widening the gender possibilities is necessary to account for the complex dynamics within conflict. As previously mentioned, males can also be victims just as females can be perpetrators. Moreover, the roles of females within conflict can be that of combatants, cooks, spies, forced to be 'wives' of combatants, choose to be 'wives' for protection, etc.⁹⁴ Not recognising these complex roles in relation to combat, or the particular issues of disarmament which women face, such as guns being seized by men, means that women will not be able to receive equal support even if they have been equally involved in the conflict.⁹⁵ Females may not even be aware of the DDR process or that it can apply to

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 1066.

⁹² Carpenter, "Recognizing Gender-Based Violence against Civilian Men and Boys in Conflict Situations."

⁹³ Dyan Mazurana and Khristopher Carlson, "From Combat to Community: Women and Girls of Sierra Leone," (2004).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Vanessa Farr Farr, "The Importance of a Gender Perspective to Successful Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Processes," in *Disarmament Forum Women, Men, Peace and Security* (2003).

them. Just as communication about disarmament is directed towards men in male-dominated areas, under the assumption that it is men who are the ones who need to disarm, the same is true for females when it comes to being the primary recipients of education about sexual violence.⁹⁶ Furthermore, within the DDR process, it is argued that supporting women will in turn strengthen the community post-conflict, and that if marginalised, they could resort to violence, prostitution, protest, affecting not only the peace but future prospects for younger generations.⁹⁷ The same parallel can be made for both male victims and even some perpetrators of sexual violence.

Some women have recognised the benefit of working together with men on these issues. For example, The Women Peacemakers Program (WPP) of International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) organised a "Training of Trainers entitled *Overcoming Violence – Exploring Masculinities, Violence and Peace*" which had three core objectives: "train male trainers on gender-sensitive active non-violence (ANV); explore the concept of masculinities in relation to issues of violence and peace; create a pool of male gender-sensitive active nonviolence trainers."⁹⁸ Personal testimonies from participants of the programme emphasise both the increased awareness of gender-related violence and gender roles, as well as the commitment to battling violence together. To express his feeling of unity in the fight against violence, a participant shared:

I am not just talking about putting forward women's rights, but about internalising the very principle of wholeness. . . . I feel there is a concrete

⁹⁶ Noeleen Heyzer, "Gender, Peace and Disarmament," in *Disarmament Forum Women, Men, Peace and Security* (2003).

⁹⁷ Mazurana and Carlson, "From Combat to Community: Women and Girls of Sierra Leone."

⁹⁸ "Women Peacemakers Program: International Fellowship of Reconciliation," <http://womenpeacemakers.blogspot.com/serach/label/Training%20Reflections>.

*necessity for men and women to work hand in hand to free ourselves of 'these boxes of thinking and confirming to it'. . . . I know I am working together with men, women and all genders from all over the world, with all colors, races, religions, and classes in a mission to transform the world.*⁹⁹

This is innovation – being willing to go beyond perceived limitations.

Undeniably, the feminist movement and even the definition of 'feminism' has gone through a notable evolution – from focusing on “women are people [too]” into a broader definition to include “all people, regardless of their identity categories, can experience freedom and safety, complexity and subjectivity, and economic and political parity – experiences associated with being fully human.”¹⁰⁰ As noted by Vanessa Farr, action has yet to follow inclusive language (of females) within agreements and resolutions in relation to the DDR process.¹⁰¹ Similarly actions need to follow from women's movements to be truly about both genders. By putting male-related issues on the agenda, females can further strengthen and give support to important processes such as gender mainstreaming, defined as, “The process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all level”¹⁰² and thus may lessen the risk of it being sidelined as a 'soft issue'. Also by including males rightfully within the gender battle, gender mainstreaming policies are more likely to be taken seriously than if they are marginalised.

In some respects, feminists have been fighting so long and hard for female inclusion within male-dominated systems, that defending males or male-related issues either seems 'out of scope' or completely counterintuitive. However, in the

⁹⁹ Ibid. See Valtimore B. Fenis, Mindanao – Can I share something?

¹⁰⁰ Donna M Nudd and Kristina L Whalen, "Feminist Analysis," in *Rhetorical Criticisms: Perspectives in Action*, ed. Jim Kuypers (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009). 257.

¹⁰¹ Farr, "The Importance of a Gender Perspective to Successful Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Processes."

¹⁰² Heyzer, "Gender, Peace and Disarmament."

battle against female gender stereotypes, caution is warranted not to inadvertently reinforce the same beliefs through over-emphasising the need to protect females only. Furthermore, as women encourage open-mindedness towards the complex roles of females during times of conflict, the best way to illustrate this complexity could be to recognise the ways in which males and male gender roles can also be affected. Women leaders who are working within the realms of conflict, security and post-conflict reconstruction should not only be ensuring that gender is considered throughout the process, but should also be setting an example by underscoring the importance of both genders.

Gender-based sexual violence is reinforced through the hierarchies of power within society. More research and attention is required to better understand these social dynamics in order to find ways of preventing and halting the perpetuation of this form of violence. Research on conflict-related sexual violence against males is especially lacking. Breaking the silence on these issues requires: vigilance on behalf of the medical community to be aware, sensitive and appropriately trained to recognise the signs and symptoms; psychologists to consider the stigma and trauma which can affect males and their reintegration into society; journalists to be just as appalled with the brutality and violence against both females and males; judges and lawyers to ensure crimes are brought forth into the international arena and perpetrators appropriately sentenced; and international organisations, NGOs and scholars to speak out against sexual violence against humanity – with and for a voice not determined by the length of the vocal chords.

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