

Hebah Farrag is a project manager at the Center for Religion and Civic Culture at the University of Southern California (USC) in Los Angeles. She is a graduate of The American University in Cairo, where she received an M.A. in Middle East Studies and a Graduate Diploma in Forced Migration and Refugee Studies. She holds a B.A. in Political Science/International Relations from USC. Hebah is interested in issues concerning religion, the politics of identity, nationalisms and migration and has worked for and with organizations including the Youth Policy Institute, Human Rights Watch and Casa Del Pueblo, traveling on delegations to conduct research in Cuba, Lebanon, Jordan and Chiapas, Mexico.

Engendering Forced Migration: Victimization, Masculinity and the Forgotten Voice

by Hebah H. Farrag

Political violence, armed conflict and aggression, in general terms, are often conceived of as the sole domain of men. This assumption has crept into much of the scholarship today, with many a researcher citing the now famous “statistic”: “war is largely created and fought by men” (Clark and Moser 2001, 3).¹ The identification of aggression and war as male has biased not only the image of men, but women as well, impacting the way researchers, academics and practitioners view violence and conflict, as well as the way they respond to victims of such violence. The simplistic division of gender into roles where men are perpetually the perpetrators and women the victims falsely relates women to peace, and thus passivity, and men to war, and thus aggression (Clark and Moser 2001, 3). This polarized view of conflict and its aftermath creates a worldview where men are never victims and women very rarely anything other than oppressed. It is this misrepresentation of the gendered causes, costs and consequences of violence that has resulted in not only the insufficient recognition of women’s involvement in conflict, as Clark argues, but also the marginalization of the male survivor and/or non-combatant (Clark and Moser 2001, 4).

This gap in research, it may be argued, has led to an ineffective approach when it comes to the treatment of victims of violence in a psycho-social setting. The emphasis on female victimization versus the reality of male silence and non-reporting has left one group, namely, victimized boys and men, without a space for healing, treatment and activism. This paper will explore such gender bias in multiple sites of victimization, focusing on forced migration, while including refugee camps, armed conflict and prisons. This paper will discuss such taboos as female combatants and male-male rape

¹ Here is one example that could be replicated from almost all works used in this research: “Overwhelmingly it is men who make war. Men who have the fighting personnel of national militaries, popular militias, political police forces and the armed gangs of warlords” (Cockburn 2001, 20).

in order to carve out a better map for treatment in the realm of psycho-social interventions, with a focus on refugee studies as an international arena dedicated to understanding and protecting victims of violence and persecution.

The Controversy over Gender

Alison Spalding argues that the division of the human race by gender has introduced controversy beyond that which has emanated from other social human divisions (1998). “Across cultures,” she states, “the male-female distinction has been assigned meanings and importance that have implications for virtually all aspects of society” (Spalding 1998). Though gender distinction is universal, it must be remembered that, gender is a social construct and to specify one’s gender, “automatically entails questions about relations of race, class, and political power, whilst war adds the dimension of conquered and victor” (Meintjes, Pillay and Turshen 2001, 3). Not all men see themselves as powerful, and not all women feel disempowered. It is safe to say that gender exists in a sort of continuum of masculinity and femininity, empowerment and disempowerment, with men and women on both sides of this spectrum (Hague, 1997: 52).

To go even further, in terms of cultural specificity, many people assume that there are only two sexes, two gender roles, two sexual orientations, however, researchers have pointed out that there are more than two sexes in many cultural contexts (Kilmartin 2000, 108). Aside from biological differences that defy traditional gender norms (hermaphrodites/intrasexuality), there are also cultural exceptions to the two-gender rule (Kilmartin 2000, 108). The *berdache* of the north American Indian are anatomically male who behave much like the women of the tribe and are considered a third gender within the group (Kilmartin 2000, 108). Several other cultures have third genders or accepted transgender sexes, such as the *hijras* of northern India and *xaniths* of Oman, “all of whom fulfill culturally approved social and sexual roles apart from the usual masculine and feminine genders,” giving just a small glimpse into the complexity of gender (Kilmartin 2000, 108).

Beyond the nuanced continuum of gender, there are other reasons to pay close attention to gender, especially in terms of psycho-social treatment. Today, as violence and armed conflict become all the more complicated, gender distinctions must be evaluated with an eye towards the global context of violence and the hierarchies of class, nationality and ethnicity that exist on the world stage. Amani Al Jack has argued that inequality in the distribution of power and resources has become more pronounced at the international level. This hierarchy of national power, coupled with “structural inequalities between and within nations, has led to more regional conflict” (2003, 8) due to disparity and power differences being extenuated. This paradigm of power is highly gendered, so that, for example, high unemployment destabilizes relations in the family, affecting men, women and children differently. On the other hand, in an environment of militarization, men are forced to violence and those who refuse to fight are often forced into imprisonment or exile (Cockburn 2001, 18). Gender cannot be considered the sole attribute of disempowerment; instead global divisions of power must also be brought into play to better understand how conflict and forms of structural violence impact men, women and children differently.

Gender and Forced Migration

In the world of forced migration and refugee studies, an arena focused on the causes, consequences, international responses and protection of migrants and victims of political violence, armed conflict and various forms of persecution, gender and notions of gender bias have undergone several transformations in the last four decades. Early scholarship in the emerging field was for the most part gender-blind. The omission of women led to the confrontation of many a feminist with what was seen as an inherent bias in the refugee regime, formally instituted with the purportedly male-centered 1951 Refugee Convention and pursuant creation of an androcentric regime (Adjin-Terrey 1996; Clark and Moser 2001, 3). Since then, many changes have been made to be more inclusive and responsive to the protection of women during times of conflict, and efforts have been made to better understand the specific nature of female suffering and persecution during such times. Unfortunately today, this problem has been over-compensated for in the field of refugee studies and psycho-social treatment, to the disadvantage of male victims of violence and persecution.

Engendering violence in areas such as forced migration means much more than simply bringing women into the picture. It also requires, in part, a reconstruction of masculinity and a deeper inquiry into how men and women react separately and in dialogue to the violence of life on the move. After witnessing feminist discourse become a justification for a war where men and women were impacted indiscriminately and intensely, regardless of their gender (Afghanistan), and watching various female leaders lead their nations to violent action (Thacher, Albright, Rice), it would not only be academically unsound but morally incorrect to see patriarchy and gender simply in terms of oppression to women. Often in the world of refugee studies, the word gender becomes confused with the plight of women or the imbalance of power between males and females. A similar complaint has been launched against many gender studies departments, which have too often been synonymous with western feminist theory. Gender and gender theory should not merely be a tool used to decode patriarchal power structures, liberate women from gendered forms or reconstruct the feminine; gender should also be seen through the scope of power differentials that allow one to see nuance in the continuum of gender.

Beyond simply silencing men in the discourse of gender, the depiction of women, especially “refugee women,” as perpetually the victims of male suppression, domination and control strips them of their agency, voice and multiplicity. Roberta Julian discusses how refugee women in Australia rarely represent themselves in public forum; instead, they are typically spoken about and represented by others (1997, 196). Julian considers this control over the image of refugee women a political mechanism dependant in part on “a process of ‘victimization’ where in the public sphere such women must be consistently represented as victims: of war, of persecution, of tragedy, and of state and patriarchal oppression” (1997, 196). Female refugees are often seen in pictures as the emblem of refugee status, an image that moves beyond public relations and fundraising to policy, where, as Boelaert describes, gender becomes increasingly recognized by social scientists as a significant vulnerability criterion in forced migration (1999, 165). Is there not a danger in saying that women are vulnerable simply by being women?

To compound this problem of image, facts are often skewed to accommodate the perception of women as victims. There is a tendency in the literature on refugees to suggest that women constitute a disproportionate amount of refugee populations, thus accentuating the vulnerability of such communities (Daley 1991, 254). Scholars such as Daley argue persuasively that contrary to popular perception, the sex ratio in African refugee settlements is much more balanced than has been assumed (1991, 248). There is no evidence, she points out, in the composition of the settlement population of any significant dominance of females over males (1991, 254). Moreover, there have been volumes of research conducted showing the resilience of refugee women, some going as far as to say that forced dislocation can be a liberating force aiding young women and men to escape the confines of patriarchal control (Daley 1991 249). There is no unitary path to describe gendered behavior. Women do not simply react to the norms before them; they invent, challenge, and even reinforce the roles they intend to play through dialogue and participation. Even further, it is women, not only men, who shape women's place, be it in a camp, in exile or in the home.

I admit to painting an over-simplified picture. There is a very real actuality of gendered violence and discrimination that women the world over must endure on a daily basis. However, there is also a very real history of colonial domination and empire that not only impacts men but has and continues to create hegemonic categorizations of gender that discriminate and disempower both women and men equally. As described by Chris Dolan in his study of northern Uganda, the state often capitalizes on hegemonic and strict definitions of gender roles and in many ways encourages the rigidity of masculinity as a tool for oppressing and empowering men against one another. Women are not the only ones raped in times of conflict and yet too often it is the consequences of women's rape by men that is discussed in scholarship that ignores and thus silences the existence of male rape, castration and sodomy,² and the severity of trauma created for a refugee or victim of violence. Dominant and violent masculinity affects not only women but other men, and of course children. Many individual men do not feel powerful; poor men often feel little sense of control over their lives and men of color alongside gay men are often systematically oppressed in white-dominated and heterosexual societies (Kilmartin 2000, 15). Engendering violence and forced migration requires the recognition of not only the effects of such violence on women but on men as well.

Gender and Armed Conflict

It is the effects of violence, instability, war and conflict that refugees flee and most forced migrants endure, and it is the impact of these events that mental health practitioners must be aware of. Armed conflict negatively impacts men and women and often results in gender-specific disadvantages that are not always recognized or addressed by the mainstream, gender-blind understandings of conflict and reconstruction (El Jack 2003, 3). Amani El Jack argues, and I tend to agree, that "gender inequalities reflect power imbalances in social structures that exist in pre-conflict

² Sodomy throughout this paper is referring to forcible sexual penetration with an object.

periods and are exacerbated by conflict and its aftermath”; and she further argues that it is because of, “the acceptance of gender stereotypes that such gender blindness persists” (2003, 3).

The Female Combatant

Women are typically painted as passive, peaceful victims of aggression and war, discussed as one of those games women are just not supposed to play. As Rita Manchanda so eloquently points out:

The dominant image of women in the iconography of war is that of the eternal victim, passive and without agency, an outsider to the battle-front. Women are visible as the overwhelming victims, direct and indirect, of violent conflict. Violence consists of rape and the trauma of displacement, disappearances, torture and killings, as well as the gendered politics of body searches at checkpoints. In the aftermath of war, women are victims of the fallout in domestic and societal violence of predatory masculinities and misogyny fostered in conflict. Researchers are now interrogating this dominant discourse of victim-hood to make visible the complexity and multiplicity of women’s experiences of conflict (2001, 99).

Why is the experience of the female combatant so neglected? One persuasive reason maybe the place of the peaceful and peace-loving woman in feminist discourse, as opposed to the aggression, militancy and violence of the opposing patriarchal structure, characterized by men. Women’s groups, very often, oppose war, oppose the arms race, oppose violence as a means of conflict resolution, and the existence of the female combatant not only counters this image but demands debate on what exactly empowerment is. As Manchanda argues, “the woman militant is a black hole in feminist discourse on the possibility of empowerment in conflict,” because she moves beyond the realm of peace, passivity and victimhood and adopts the role of perpetrator of violence (2001, 114). Can a woman be empowered through militant action, or is she simply “playing the part of a man”?

Rene Denfeld, author of *Kill the Body, the Head will Fall: A Closer look at Women, Violence, and Aggression*, argues very strongly for a woman’s right to fight equally in national militaries as a path towards empowerment. She argues poignantly that it is the image of the female soldier that may counter the age old taboo of women fighting men and puts us face-to-face with the fact that women can fight, not just in passion or anger, but for a cause or simply for the excitement of combat – the personal challenge of pitting one’s self against another (Spalding 1998, 149). Women’s military service and their participation as combatants in guerilla warfare is one of the more blatant examples of women’s aggression (Spalding 1998, 149). Are mental health practitioners prepared to handle the complexities of a female ex-combatant? Is there enough research to aid in understanding how to assist, treat and intervene on such a patient’s behalf? I think not.

Male Non-Combatant

The topic of male non-combatants, and the effects of war and armed conflict on their human rights, has long been avoided. Adam Jones’ article “Straight as a Rule: Heteronormativity, Gendercide, and the Non-Combatant Male” is the first to tackle this issue head on. Jones argues “the most vulnerable and consistently targeted population group, through time and internationally today is non-combatant men of ‘battle age’ roughly 15 – 55 years old” (2003, 1). According to Jones, it is this group of men

that have been and continue to be nearly universally perceived as posing the greatest danger to a conquering force and are the group most likely to have the repressive apparatus of the state directed against them (Jones 2003, 1). These men, subordinate to other stronger forces, what Dolan would call hegemonic masculinity, have little means to defend themselves and can be detained and exterminated by the thousands or millions, and invariably have been represented, once silently killed, as heroes, fighters and warriors, but rarely as victims (Jones 2003, 1; Dolan 2003). Jones goes further and estimates that it is not just men within these ages that are at risk: “Elderly males are probably more prone than women to be caught up in war, and modern warfare extends further down the age ladder in the hunt for child soldiers and street thugs” (2003, 1). While a UN Principles for Older Persons exists, it is not a legally binding charter. For many years, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have argued on behalf of this cause, arguments that are centrally motivated by the fact that ageing is increasingly a major aspect of female experiences in the refugee world (Canny 2000). This is due in large part to the reality that “elderly female refugees and IDPs (Internally Displaced People) coming from or currently in conflict zones are even more likely to be widowed than the elderly female population at large due to military service, war losses, and human rights abuses which often target and include the elderly male population” (Canny 2000). It seems elderly men themselves should be legitimate subjects for concern and intervention by human rights organizations, governments and NGOs (Jones 2003, 2).

New research finds that men are as likely as women, and maybe significantly more likely, to be persecuted or targeted for violence during times of conflict or unrest. This violence and persecution, as argued by Jones and Dolan separately, is due to the fact that non-combatant men violate the rules of a hegemonic masculinity, which dictate what a man is supposed to be. Dolan locates the source of the problem with the state and its control of mechanisms of violence, arguing that “states benefit from a disempowered male population which turns violent on itself not the state and maintains a context of violence to justify a continued military force” (2003, 16-17). Jones focuses on what he calls “subordinate masculinities,” often male non-combatants, and argues that hegemonic masculinity depends on the presence of this stigmatized subordinate masculinity for its existence (2003, 3). Jones calls this phenomenon “gendercide,” a pattern of gender abuse and atrocity aimed at gender-selective extermination strategies. These arguments all point to the fact that a majority of men forced to migrate often come from a category dubbed “the marginalized male.” Often potentially large number of men are non-combatants, forced combatants or ex-combatants, yet there remains a significant gap in research concerning persecution and non-combatants, as well as on this phenomenon of violence targeting other types of masculinity.

The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees does not grant, in most cases, refugee rights to men who flee from military service, and as such, male non-combatants are not afforded international protection. Despite this fact, it is important to consider how such an environment may impact men’s mental health. When men invariably cannot live up to expectations of hegemonic masculinity, they in turn experience violence, humiliation, a perceived or real loss of status and victimization. Sometimes this scenario may lead to violence. It may also result in much self-violence: suicide, drug abuse, alcoholism or violent behavior against one’s self. Either way, it is

important to realize the effects of repressed and unachievable gender aspirations within a social context and how that may impact the identity, resiliency, and coping mechanisms of men, be they forced migrants or not.

The Vulnerable Male: A Case Study Quiz

Do you believe that men can be victims? While many would like to answer this question with a resounding yes, there are powerful taboos in society that paint men as impenetrable and impervious to loss and pain. Many actions we would find abhorrent for women to endure we find perfectly acceptable for men. Many believe subtly that men should have the strength to overcome and survive, while women should be forced to make such sacrifices.

Below you will find a list of short case studies. Ask yourself if you find them violent or persecutory of men, if not, replace the men involved with a woman and see if you would still find the practice acceptable. Should these boys be considered refugees if fleeing from some form of these violent acts? Which acts do you find empowering or conversely disempowering and how can such actions affect the mental health of those involved?

- **Samburu (East Africa):** Adolescent boys go through a bloody circumcision rite to which they must submit without so much as flinching under the pain of the knife. If he does, he and his family's lineage is shamed. The cutting may last four minutes or more.
- **New Guinea Highlands:** Boys must endure whipping, flailing, beating, and other forms of terrorization by older men.
- **Tewa (native peoples of New Mexico):** Boys are taken from their homes and undergo ritual purification and are beaten by Kachina spirits (fathers in disguise) by a whip that leaves permanent scars.
- **Sambia (New Guinea):** Boys undergo blood letting ritual where glass is stuffed into nostril until it bleeds copiously.
- **Thonga (South Africa):** Youths are continually beaten during a three month initiation ritual. They are also denied water and forced to eat unsavory foods, and are made to sleep naked on the floor on cold nights, to be bitten by bugs.
- **Papua New Guinea:** Adolescent boys in some tribes are expected to perform oral sex on the older men of the tribe as a rite of passage into manhood.³
- **United States:** Routine Infant Circumcision is practiced on all males born with parental approval. The foreskin is opened after measurement and the inner lining of the foreskin is then bluntly separated from its attachment to the glands. A device is then placed (this sometimes requires a dorsal slit) and remains there until bleeding stops. Finally, the foreskin is amputated (Task Force on Circumcision 1999).
- **North America:** Hazing rituals, where men and boys are ritually beaten and/or abused mentally or physically in order to join a sports team, fraternity, military group or any

³ All examples found in Kilmartin, 2000

other type of club, are exceptionally common. Hazing very often involves large amounts of alcohol consumption and may result in death.⁴

It has been said that while femininity is attained naturally, masculinity must be achieved, and these are just a few of the many cultural rites that socialize men into their masculine roles (Kilmartin 2000). Female circumcision or cutting is just one cultural rite of passage, albeit one that has received much attention as an issue of human rights, female oppression and brutality. How do you think male rites of passage compare?

When Men are Raped

Antjie Krog discusses the effects of male rape on victims in her work on the gendered effects of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. She writes, “Male victims of rape don’t use the word when they testify. They talk about either sodomizing or about iron rods being inserted in them. By doing so, they make ‘rape’ a women’s issue. By denying their own sexual subjugation to male brutality, they form a brotherhood with rapists that conspires against their own wives, mothers, and daughters” (2001, 208). While Krog is right to point out the male inhibition to self-disclose when it comes to sexual abuse, the reasons she presents stand as a testimony to the misperceptions surrounding male rape and the needs of survivors. A survivor of rape, whether man or woman, should not be assumed to have formed a “brotherhood” with their victimizer.

The issue of male-male rape is rarely discussed in any context and yet it is a form of violence and victimization that occurs all too often without recourse or action. As Krog’s statement exemplifies, rape, even when it is done by a man to a man, remains seen as a women’s issue, a men’s conspiracy against wives, mothers and daughters, even though “clearly not all men are rapists, or are likely to be” (Hague 1997, 52). Thus the traditional feminist problematic that views rape solely as a system for maintaining male supremacy and patriarchy is insufficient (Hague 1997, 52).

A discourse on violence and protection that includes male-male rape is a necessary step but not an easy one. Today, as one researcher puts it, “male-male rape is a cause without a voice,” with very few, be it survivors or activists, who are willing and able to speak on its behalf (Sivakumaran 2005, 1276). Secondly, male-male rape involves sexual activity between two men, a social taboo, which amounts to a “taint” on the part of the victim of the rape (Sivakumaran 2005, 1276). There are many assumptions that persist in society as to the realities of male-male rape that must be addressed before survivors can feel safe enough to report. Moreover, there are rarely places where survivors can go to receive specialized attention for their specific needs, such as male counselors, which makes access to support a huge problem for men who are raped.

Before a discussion about protection and treatment may take place, it is necessary to breakdown some basic assumptions about male-male rape. It is estimated that one in eight men are sexually assaulted at some point in their lives, with the incidence of prison rape ranking much higher (Kilmartin 2000, 259). Historically, such male-male rape has been referred to as “homosexual rape,”

⁴ http://www.stophazing.org/fraternity_hazing/index.htm

due to the perception that the rape of a man is a homosexual act, posed as either perpetrated by or inflicted against homosexual men.⁵ Furthermore, most countries do not have gender-neutral rape laws, and thus, do not even recognize that the sexual victimization of an adult male is possible (Kilmartin 2000, 259). In some places, those who do report are at risk for being *charged* with a crime, such as sodomy (Kilmartin 2000, 259). The reality is that most men who rape other men consider themselves heterosexual, while the majority of victims also identify as heterosexual (Sivakumaran 2005, 1285). The sexuality of the survivor has very little to do with motivation of the crime, as for that matter, the sexuality of the rapist. Like the rape of women, the rape of men is an expression of power, not sexuality (Kilmartin 2000, 259). And yet, due to strong bias associated with the “taint” of male-male rape, it has been estimated that 90 percent of male survivors never report the rape and 70 percent never tell anybody at all (Kilmartin 2000, 260). It is this aspect of male rape, a reflection of rampant homophobia in societies, which is particular to male survivors and not women.

While non-reporting is always a part of the rape trauma, regardless of gender, the reasons for silence are gender-specific, as are the impacts of the trauma (Sivakumaran 2005, 1288). For example, in male-male rape, like the rape of a woman, the biological response of the body to the rape often confuses the survivor, arousing feelings of shame, guilt, and culpability that are difficult to overcome. When men are raped, the rapist frequently gets the victim to ejaculate for the specified purpose of confusing them sexually, and making the victim feel as though they enjoyed it (Sivakumaran 2005, 1291). This is in part to deter reporting of the crime, a tactic that works as many law enforcement agencies assume that if a man was raped it had to have been consensual, wanted or asked for by a homosexual victim; ejaculation frequently proves this point in the eyes of the law (Sivakumaran 2005, 1293). Stephen Donaldson, president of Stop Prisoner Rape (a US-based education and advocacy group), says that the suppression of knowledge of male rape is so powerful and pervasive that criminals such as burglars and robbers sometimes rape their male victims solely to prevent them from going to the police (National Center for Victims of Crime, NCVC). As a female survivor will often question her chastity, honor and dignity after the rape, a man will often question his sexuality, something that is often noted as “more negative.”⁶

Complicating the societal “taint” of male-male rape is the notion that men cannot be victims. A study analyzing interviews with survivors of male-male rape on what it means to be “masculine,” and how they have been influenced by the experience of being abused found that many participants expressed concern regarding their invisibility as male survivors, noting that contemporary discourses on violence typically position men as its perpetrators, rather than its victims (Atwood 2005). The discourse on male victimization has both practical implications for male survivors and theoretical implications for critical work on hegemonic masculinity (Atwood 2005). Practically, it is useful to

⁵ The phrase “homosexual rape,” for instance, which is often used by uninformed persons to designate male-male rape, camouflages the fact that the majority of the rapists are not generally homosexual (Donaldson 1990) (NCVC).

⁶ “The united nations high commission for refugees guidelines on sexual violence against refugees notes that ‘it is suspected that the reported cases of sexual violence against males are a fraction of the true number of cases.’ HRW reports from Eastern Congo documenting one case of male rape, noting, ‘rape is considered even more shameful for male victims, and is less likely to be reported.’ There is a perceived added stigma attached to victims of male-male rape, that does not attach to victims of male-female rape” (Sivakumaran 2005, 1293-1294).

begin by looking at how a male survivor may react to experience of rape by a man. Male-male rape frequently involves higher levels of violence, weapons, and is also more likely to involve multiple assailants (NCVC). Male rape victims are also at greater risk for committing suicide after being raped (NCVC). While male rape victims do not run the risk of getting pregnant, anal rape does have a much higher risk of internal tearing and damage, and with that comes a higher risk of possible HIV transmission (NCVC).

Many times, survivors experience similar responses to female survivors, with symptoms including PTSD, anger, shame, relationship difficulty, suicidal thoughts, sexual problems, sleep disturbances and increased alcohol use, as well as psychosomatic symptoms (Kilmarting 2000, 259). Men may also experience difficulties that are somewhat unique to male survivors, such as doubts about their masculinity and sexuality, extreme isolation, and even fewer resources for treatment and support (Kilmartin 2000, 259). What is essential on a practical level is the absolute need for neutral rape laws, more information tailored to male survivors, increased training of staff to deal with the unique character of male victimization medically and education campaigns aimed at informing the public about the problem (Kilmartin 2000, 260). Male victims need to receive empathy, but more importantly, many need to accept that men can experience trauma as well.⁷

The Sexual Abuse of Men in times of Conflict

According to the US-based National Center for Victims of Crime (NCVC), the rape of males was more widely recognized in ancient times. Several of the legends in Greek mythology involved abductions and sexual assaults of males by other males or gods. The rape of a defeated male enemy was considered the special right of the victorious soldier in some societies as a signal of the totality of the defeat. Ancient murals show plates piled high with enemy penises, and for centuries, men and boys captured became body servants of western warriors or brides of Mesoamericans (Jones 2003, 7). And further, the gang rape of males was known historically in many places as the ultimate form of punishment and, as such, was practiced by the Romans as punishment for adultery and by the Persians as a punishment for a violation of the sanctity of the harem. According to Jones, the issue of male-on-male sexual violence in wartime has barely begun to receive sustained attention despite the fact that this practice, along with the confiscation of feminine spoils, is as old as history itself (2003, 7). If many cultures have supported the claim that one aspect of conquest involves the emasculation of men through a variety of sexually violent acts, then why do we only read about women as victims of rape during war (Jones 2003, 7)?

According to Dubravka Zarkov, one of the few scholars who has worked on this subject, “while sexual violence against men has been a fact of war for hundreds of years, in contemporary wars however, it is a rather well-hidden fact; experts may know about it, but war rape of a man has never been a major story in the press, nor is castration in a war camp on the evening news” (Zarkov 2001, 71). Ronald Littlewood describes how difficult it is to deal with a phenomenon such as male military rape. Littlewood describes how standardized forms of sexual violence in societies involves

⁷ See appendix I for specific information regarding male-male rape from the NCVC

not just individualized rape and sexual killing but is often used as an instrument of public policy (1997, 7). Men are clearly vulnerable during armed conflict due to sexual abuse and torture and it is time that the other half of this gendered story is explored.

Zarkov, in one of the few articles about male rape in war, focuses on how media sources in the former Yugoslavia will not discuss male sexual abuse during war due to the implications of such a crime for notions of nationalism, masculinity, potency and power. “It may be a surprise to many readers,” he begins, “that men were victims of sexual violence during the wars in the former Yugoslavia, which became notorious for making the rape of women one of its most effective weapons... In most wars, and in times of peace,” he continues:

The reality is that men are rapists of women. However perceiving men only and always as offenders and never as victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence is a very specific, gendered narrative of war. In that narrative, dominant notions of masculinity merge with norms of heterosexuality and definitions of ethnicity and ultimately who can or cannot be named a victim of sexual violence in the national press (2001, 69).

Zarkov discusses the findings of the United Nations Commission of Experts’ Final Report (referred to as the Bassiouni Report) in depth in his article and sets out to describe sexual assaults against men. Some of these violent acts included beating men across the genitals, forcing them to undress, rape and assault with foreign objects, castration and the severing of the testicles; sometimes prisoners were forced to perpetrate these acts of violence against each other, while on other occasions prison guards were the offenders (2001, 71). As described, sexual violence against men in conflict is largely of two types, genital torture and male-male rape, sometimes including forced rape of women or family members (Zarkov 2001, 71; Sivakumaran 2005, 1295). Many of these crimes committed in detention during the war were conducted by all warring sides, yet no attention was paid by the media to this aspect of sexual violence during the war, with only one handful of researchers even mentioning it in their work (Zarkov 2001, 72).⁸ Even when information on male sexual abuse was included, it was only inserted as a footnote or as a couple of matter of fact sentences offering description without analysis. Very seldomly did people testify for themselves; instead witnesses would give testimony of what they saw – a trend that has continued into my research (Zarkov 2001, 72-73). Zarkov asks why sexually assaulted men are so invisible in the media and academic texts when the report clearly stated their existence, and I am posing a similar question; why is male rape such a taboo?

⁸ Zarkov cites an example of one rare media citation: “Russian forces stationed in Chechnya recently committed an organized mass rape of Chechen civilian males. During a fact-finding trip to the North Caucasus, Mironov learned of an incident which took place earlier this month: ‘Over 700 men (I was given a list of 762 names) were taken to a field. They [the Russian soldiers] raped a woman in front of them.’ The Russian troops, Mironov related, then taunted the Chechen men, calling on them to defend the woman’s honor. Those who intervened, sixty-two men, were themselves then ‘handcuffed to an armored personnel carrier, and publicly raped.’ ‘Never before have I heard about public rape,’ Mironov commented, ‘Of course, people were systematically raped in prisons and detention centers, and [in] military units. This was intended to break their character. But now this is being done in public’ (Eurasianet, July 19)” (Dunlop, 2001).

The answer to this question may be found in the motivating factors behind male sexual abuse in conflict and male rape in general. While many of the motivating factors for male-male rape are similar to that of male-female rape, there are particulars that may impact the mystification of and under-attention granted to this form of violence and persecution. Dolan discusses how male rape, like female rape during war, is genocidal in intention, meaning in the case of male victims to obliterate the masculinity of victim and thus nation through acts such as castration, mutilation and the forced intercourse of captives by one another (Dolan 2003, 10). These actions are the other half of genocidal practices such as forced impregnation – a form of cultural humiliation – and in some cases sterilization (Dolan 2003, 11). Hague argues that rape is always structured by relations of power and coercion, constructing a context of subjugation and powerlessness (Hague 1997, 59). Rape is use to feminize *any subject*, he argues, where power over the feminine functions as an assured sign of a clear and recognizable gendered identity that imagines itself as strong, superior and virtuous (Hague 1997, 59). Zurkov argues that the meaning of male rape is different and that the visibility of the violated male body, therefore, becomes an issue of nationhood, not only manhood (2001, 78).

Emasculation, in the case of male-male rape carries multiple symbolisms, due mainly to the fact that masculinity epitomizes specific aspects of ethnicity while the female body signifies its own symbolic portion of nation (Zurkov 2001, 78). It seems that the other half of rape as a symbolic tool of war is the rape of men. While men symbolize the virility and strength of the nation, women's bodies tend to embody the nation itself. Urvashi Butalia describes, as many feminists before her, the symbolism of the female body in times of war, referring specifically to the partition of India. Butalia describes how both Hindu and Muslim communities used rape as a weapon to humiliate the other and how the honor of the community and of the nation was consequently seen to inhere in the bodies of women; the violation of their bodies, therefore, was tantamount to a violation of the body of the nation, of mother India (2001, 103). As rape in war is intended to dishonor women and through them their male kin, male rape seeks to destroy the masculinity of the man and thus destroy the nation. Sexual violence during times of war is a political act aimed at the body of the nation, regardless of gender, albeit with potentially different symbolic effect. As one commentator mentions, "a raped Croatian women is a raped Croatia," but a raped Croatian man means there no longer is a Croatia (Boric 1997).

The rape, mutilation and sexual torture of men during war, like women's rape, is aimed at the victimization of men and should be evaluated beyond the effects of the trauma on women. In an article on rape in war and peace, Sideris (2001) effectively silences men by ignoring them in a discussion on rape, even when they are involved in the rape. At one point in the article, she describes how rape, when used as a tactic of social destruction in war, takes specific forms. In its most perverse form, she comments, rape involves the relative of the victim in the assault. An example she gives comes from Mozambique, where there have been widespread reports from men and women explaining how rebel soldiers used the husbands of rape victims as *mattresses* upon whom the perpetrator took his victims (2001, 147). She disregards the effect this may have on the man and instead focuses exclusively on the traumatization of the woman.

How should a case worker evaluate a case such as the one described by Turshen, where a 16-year old boy is forced to rape his sister as his mother is raped nearby (2001)? El Jack has argued that men are the indirect targets of violence against women, stating that “the rape of women has long been considered a public act of aggression, where raping and dishonoring women is a way of violating and demoralizing men” (2003). Jones similarly has argued that community males are clearly the target of the rape of their womenfolk, which is often carried out before their eyes, a point that even that feminist scholars have stressed (2003, 18). Jones believes that such rapes of women might also be considered a form of sexual violence against men, and I am inclined to agree with him, which means that not only must psycho-social workers be prepared to treat victims of firsthand sexual abuse, but also those affected indirectly by sexual assault.

Conclusion

With incidents like Abu Ghareb not too far from our recent past, it may be easier to imagine why the victimization of men is an important topic for discussion. Vulnerable categories of men, such as non-combatants and survivors of sexual abuse, are of particular importance to those in the field of mental health. Moreover, gender issues are not women’s issues alone; boys and men suffer from stereotyping that exists in patriarchal culture and most men cannot live up to notions of hegemonic masculinity (Bhasin 2004, 3-5). Gender is both a culturally specific construct and a universally applicable concept that shapes the experience of men and women alike. It must be recognized that women and men, as social actors, each experience violence and conflict differently, both as victims and as perpetrators. Today, women and men have differential access to resources (including power) during conflict. Internationally, socio-economic changes alongside global divisions of power have led to some changes in gender roles and relations. Erosion of male power and privilege has led to psychological and social problems for many men, while also complicating the continuum of global empowerment and disempowerment (Bhasin 2004, 3-5).

This paper is for the most part a call for more research. Gender biases against women cannot be overcompensated for. Neither the victimization of women nor the polarization of men as perpetrators aids us in the fight to empower women. Today, there remains a void in the field of mental health and men have very little if any scope for receiving effective treatment. Men can be said to be the most marginalized category of vulnerable groups, especially when they are survivors of sexual abuse. As Jones has argued, we must overcome the taboo of male victimization with new research. But today I want you to ask yourself: do men’s rights deserve special consideration? If so, then a legitimate men’s rights discourse must be created so that the reality of war and genocide may be confronted through a truly engendered lens.

Appendix I

National Center for Victims of Crime:

Medical considerations that require immediate medical attention include:

- Rectal and anal tearing and abrasions which may require attention and put you at risk for bacterial infections;
- Potential HIV exposure; and
- Exposure to other sexually transmitted diseases.

If you plan to report the rape to the police, an immediate medical examination is necessary to collect potential evidence for the investigation and prosecution.

Some of the physical reactions a survivor may experience in response to the trauma of a sexual assault or rape include:

- Loss of appetite;
- Nausea and/or stomachaches;
- Headaches;
- Loss of memory and/or concentration; and/or
- Changes in sleep patterns.

Some of the psychological and emotional reactions a sexual assault survivor may experience include:

- Denial and/or guilt;
- Shame or humiliation;
- Fear and a feeling of loss of control;
- Loss of self-respect;
- Flashbacks to the attack;
- Anger and anxiety;
- Retaliation fantasies (sometimes shocking the survivor with their graphic violence);
- Nervous or compulsive behavior;
- Depression and mood swings;
- Withdrawal from relationships; and
- Changes in sexual activity.

References

- Adjin-Tettey, Elizabeth. *A Feminist Analysis of the Convention Refugee Definition*, D.Jur Dissertation, York University, Canada. (1996)
- Task Force on Circumcision, American Academy of Pediatrics. "Circumcision Policy Statement." *Pediatrics* 103(3): 686–693. (1999)
<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/reprint/pediatrics;103/3/686.pdf>, (last accessed March 7, 2009)
- Atwood, Kristin Marie. *Male Survivors of Sexual Abuse and Hegemonic Masculinity: Insights into Discourses of Gender Violence*, M.A. Dissertation, Department of Sociology, University of Victoria, Canada. (2005)
- Bhasin, Kamla. *Exploring Masculinity*, New Delhi: Women Unlimited. (2004)
- Boelaert, Marleen. "The Relevance of Gendered Approaches to Refugee Health: a Case Study in Hagadera, Kenya." *Engendering Forced Migration: Theory and Practice*. Doreen Indra, ed. Oxford: Berghahn Books. (1999)
- Boric, Rada. "Against the War: Women Organizing Across the National Divide in the Countries of the former Yugoslavia." *Gender and Catastrophe*. Ronit Lentin, ed. London: Zed Books. (1997)
- Butalia, Urvashi. "Women and Communal Conflict: New Challenges for the Women's Movement in India." *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*. Clark, Fiona C. and Caroline O.N. Moser, eds. London: Zed Books. (2001)
- Canny, William and Knight, Lesley-Anne. "Ageing, Development and Displacement," NGO Submission to the 17th Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Executive Committee of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees' Programme, 29 February – 2 March. (2000)
<http://www.icva.ch/doc00000107.html>, (last accessed March 19, 2009)
- Clark, Fiona C. and Moser, Caroline O.N., eds. "Introduction." *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict, and Political Violence*. London: Zed Books. (2001)
- Cockburn, Cynthia. "The Gendered Dynamics of Armed Conflict and Political Violence." *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*. Clark, Fiona C. and Caroline O.N. Moser, eds. London: Zed Books. (2001)
- Daley, Patricia. "Gender, Displacement, and Social Reproduction: Settling Burundi Refugees in Western Tanzania." *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 4(3): 248-266. (1991)

- Dolan, Chris. "Collapsing Masculinities and Weak States: A Case Study of Northern Uganda." *Masculinities Matter!: Men, Gender and Development*. Frances Cleaver, ed. London: Zed Books. (2003)
- Dunlop, John. "Mass Rape of Chechen Men by Federal Forces." *Chechnya Weekly*. (July 24, 2001)
- El Jack, Amani. *Gender and Armed Conflict: Overview Report*. Cutting Edge Packs Series. Brighton, UK: BRIDGE, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex. (2003)
- Hague, Euan. "Rape, Power, and Masculinity: The Construction of Gender and the National Identities in the War in Bosnia-Herzegovina." *Gender and Catastrophe*. Ronit Lentin, ed. London: Zed Books. (1997)
- Jones, Adam. "Straight as a Rule: Heteronormativity, Gendercide, and the Non-Combatant Male." Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE), Mexico. (2003)
<http://www.ciaonet.org/wps/cid115/index.html>, (registration required)
- Julian, Roberta. "Invisible Subjects and the Victimized Self: Settlement Experiences of Refugee Women in Australia," *Gender and Catastrophe*. Ronit Lentin, ed. London: Zed Books. (1997)
- Kilmartin, Christopher T. *The Masculine Self*. 2nd edition. Boston: McGraw-Hill Co. (2000)
- Krog, Antjie. "Locked into Loss and Silence: Testimonies of Gender and Violence at the South African Truth Commission." *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*. Clark, Fiona C. and Caroline O.N. Moser, eds. London: Zed Books. (2001)
- Littlewood, Ronald. "Military Rape." *Anthropology Today*. 13(2): 7-16. (1997)
- Manchanda, Rita. "Ambivalent Gains in South Asian Conflicts." *The Aftermath: Women in Post-Conflict Transformation*. Meintjes, Sheila, Pillay, Anu and Meredith Turshen, eds. London: Zed Books. (2001)
- Meintjes, Sheila, Pillay, Anu and Meredith Turshen, eds. "There is no Aftermath for Women." *The Aftermath: Women in Post-Conflict Transformation*. London: Zed Books. (2001)
- Sideris, Tina. "Rape in War and Peace: Social context, Gender, Power, and Identity." *The Aftermath: Women in Post-Conflict Transformation*. Meintjes, Sheila, Pillay, Anu and Meredith Turshen, eds. London: Zed Books. (2001)
- Sivakumaran, Sandesh. "Male/male Rape and the 'Taint' of Homosexuality." *Human Rights Quarterly* 27(4): 1274-1306. (2005)

Spalding, Alison D. *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Issues in Gender Studies*. Guilford, CT: Dushkin/McGraw-Hill. (1998)

Turshen, Meredith. "The Political Economy of Rape: An Analysis of Systematic Rape and Sexual Abuse of Women During Armed Conflict in Africa," *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*. Clark, Fiona C. and Caroline O.N. Moser, eds. London: Zed Books. (2001)

Zarkov, Dubravka. "The Body of the Other Man: Sexual Violence and the Construction of Masculinity, Sexuality, and Ethnicity in Croatian Media." *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*. Clark, Fiona C. and Caroline O.N. Moser, eds. London: Zed Books. (2001)

Websites

American Academy of Pediatrics

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/reprint/pediatrics;103/3/686.pdf>

International Council of Voluntary Agencies

<http://www.icva.ch/doc00000107.html>

National Center for Victims of Crime:

<http://www.ncvc.org/ncvc/main.aspx?dbName=DocumentViewer&DocumentID=32361>

Stop Hazing

<http://www.stophazing.org/index.html>