

Sexual violence in conflict: Forgotten victims in secondary source literature

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the processes of exclusion by which male victims of sexual violence in conflict (SVC) are overlooked or erased from contemporary sources. Opening sections explain the background of SVC placing it in its historical context, before reviewing relevant secondary source literature. Three salient features regarding male-directed SVC are identified: lack of recognition (the tendency to see the problem as non-existent or relevant to only a miniscule number, when in fact it often affects significant numbers of social subjects); second, some conjectures about the causes of male-directed SVC are outlined. Most authors agree that extensive research is still required before convincing cause-effect dynamics can be hypothesized. Finally, the problem of language is explored in a section that highlights the ways in which relevant texts often bear misleading or ambiguous signifiers that perpetuate the confusion and lack of awareness that exists on the issue of male-directed SVC. A concluding section underlines the need for more intensive efforts to end conflict and to provide material and psychological assistance to all victims regardless of gender identity.

Key Words: male; sexual violence; conflict; victims; awareness; stigmatization; causes.

Data provided by in Heineman's (2011) collection of essays on the history of sexual violence in conflict (hereafter SVC) and by Ehrenreich (1997) make for sober reading. The authors present well-documented evidence of systematic abuse during conflicts that are diverse in time and space: warfare in ancient Greece, the victimization of women in late pre-colonial Tanzania, sixteenth-century England before, during, and after the civil war, the American revolution in the late 1700's and the civil war period some generations later, both world wars, Uzbekistan

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during the 1930's. A catalogue of sexual violence forms part of the history of inter-state and intra-state conflict, yet it went almost unheeded for centuries. Steans (2013) notes that for centuries, conflict related sexual violence was widely seen as an unfortunate but inevitable ingredient in military conflict. Women were male property and it was only "natural" that all property would be taken by the victorious conquerors.

The first inklings of ideological change can be seen in the late 1700's when author/activists such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Olympe de Gouges began to apply Enlightenment principles of human rights to women. If it were accepted that women also bore natural rights to life and liberty, one could no longer see conflict rape as mere "collateral damage." However, as Hunt (2007) shows, Wollstonecraft and de Gouges had only minimal success in their efforts to promote the rights of women on a par with those of men. In addition, new processes of stigmatization of women became apparent throughout the nineteenth century. Whereas previously held theocentric discourses had posited female as the lesser version of male, a new medical-legal discourse worked to dichotomize men and women as distinct organisms, "opposites," with the former unit of the binary pair holding the superior position. This development in Western intellectualism can be placed within a post modern critique of "logocentrism" a prevalent pattern within Western cultural formations; binary thinking posits a "logos" a principle of reason or spirit that originates a reality that contrasts with its defective offshoot or lesser version. Perhaps this development can be seen as the first "backlash" against feminist gains in the modern era. During the 1790's, a small number of members of the republican assembly had argued that the logic of natural human rights demanded the recognition of rights for women also. A wide range of groups, previously seen as unworthy of full rights of political participation, had been accorded substantial measures of recognition by the French state for the first time: Protestants, executioners, actors, Jewish people, and freed black slaves. The power of masculinist discourses is evident in the fact that the proposed addition of women to the list of groups demanding parity before the law was seen as a step too far, one that demanded a response. In fact, women were not to receive suffrage rights, and many other rights enjoyed by their male peers, until the end of the Second World War. While the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw numerous developments and efforts to realize ideals of global peace, or to at least minimize the levels of atrocities during military conflict, the needs of female survivors of sexual violence in conflict received scant attention. Any increase in levels of sympathy or empathy after the horrors of World War II did not translate

into concrete measures aimed at eliminating sexual violence in conflict until the late twentieth century.

During the 1990's, international criminal tribunals for Rwanda and for the former-Yugoslavia established wartime rape as crimes against humanity under international law. The 1995 "Beijing Platform of Action" included a substantial section on women in armed conflict. Implementation of the section led to the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 in October 2000. The resolution equates "gender based violence" with acts of violence against women and girls. It perceives women and girls as the victims of sexual abuse at the hands of male combatants in conflict zones. However, the resolution fails to take account of data that indicate that the numbers of male victims of sexual violence in conflict (at least in some cases) are very considerable and worthy of greater investigation and acts of intervention. Carpenter (2006) points out that forced conscription of men and sex-selective massacre of males should also be counted as "gender-based violence."

Abuse of Sexual Rights in Conflict Today

A look at more recent headlines also seems to confirm the view that sexual violence continues to play an extremely negative and prominent role in many military conflicts in our own day. Durojaye (2014, p. 894) refers to expectations of improvements in the situation with the signing of a UN Protocol that should have guaranteed sexual and reproductive rights globally. However, as of 2014, only nineteen states had ratified the protocol and none had submitted mandatory reports. A report issued by the International Federation of Human Rights in May, 2015 ("Egyptian Authorities") presented copious empirical data detailing the systematic use of sexual violence against women, men, and children in Egypt. Virginity tests, rape, and gang rape were just some of the methods being used by security forces on detainees as a means of silencing all public protest against the policies of the military regime. Security forces included police, members of the military, and intelligence officers. No comments have been provided by Egypt's Interior Ministry. As always, the human rights advocates find it difficult to prove that sexual violence was being used as a political strategy with direct orders being made to security officers. However, the fact that no perpetrators are being punished and that victims who file complaints face threats and reprisals without gaining assistance through the justice system, all seem to suggest that a culture of impunity and a clear political strategy are involved. Similar developments can

be seen in territory controlled by so called “Islamic State” or “ISIS” terrorist and military groups in Syria and Iraq. The UN special envoy on sexual violence in conflict, Zainab Bangura, detailed a wide range of atrocities in an interview in June, 2015 (Devaney, 2015). Over the previous eighteen months, the strategy of selling women as sex slaves, often for negligible sums of money, helped ensure a steady flow of foreign fighters to Islamic State battlefields. In the words of the envoy, “This is a war that is being fought on the bodies of women.” Similar sentiments were expressed at the time of military conflict in the early 1990’s. Brownmiller’s (1994) contribution to a collection of essays and research reports on mass rape in Bosnia Herzegovina was entitled, “Making female bodies the battlefield.” At the time, then, it was widely assumed that women, not men, were the only victims of SVC in the former Yugoslavia. Allen (1996) for example makes only a passing reference to male victims in his work on rape warfare in Bosnia Herzegovina and Croatia. Later findings, however, such as those of Oosterhof et al (2004) and data reported by Del Zotto and Jones (2002) negate such a conjecture. Oosterhoff et al provide extensive empirical data relating to male directed SVC in Croatia during the wars following the break-up of Yugoslavia during the 1990’s. In fact, Stemple (2009, p. 614) reports that in one assessment of a concentration camp in Sarajevo Canton, during the Balkan conflicts of the early 1990’s, 80% of the 6,000 male prisoners reported having been raped in detention. “Accounts of abuse through the conflict were often quite graphic, including severe genital mutilation and forced incest.”

Much time will need to pass before details emerge about the nature of human rights atrocities in territory held by “Islamic State” – where cases of gay men being thrown off tall buildings to their deaths or to stoning have been widely documented – but it seems to be correct to say, as Ms. Bangura does, that that particular conflict can be characterized as one in which women, rather than men or boys, are targeted for sexual violence. Yet, even here, data are emerging that require modification of such a stance. “Sexual Violence and the making of ISIS” (Ahram, 2015). reports that both girls and boys of Yazidi origin were subject to sexual violations when their families came under attack on Mount Sinjar. In addition, reports by United Nations (UN) agencies indicate that there have been cases where new male recruits to ISIS are gang-raped by their older peers in a coercive initiation rite denoted as “marriage.” Videotapes and mobile phone device recording of such atrocities ensure that new recruits who grow disillusioned and seek escape can be easily blackmailed and forced to remain with the ranks for fear

of public release of the traumatic footage. While some UN agencies are beginning to help draw attention to issues of male-directed SVC in contemporary settings, the organization can also be seen as a contributory factor in terms of Security Resolutions referred to previously and also in terms of abuses by UN peacekeeping forces. Writing in a feature article for the New York Times, Sengupta (2015, p.8) reports: "For five months, an unknown number of people in the French forces, sent to protect civilians from the violence tearing the country apart, forced boys to perform oral sex on them, according to testimonies collected by the United Nations." The report went on to explain that the promise of military rations was sometimes used to lure the boys, some as young as nine-years old. It can safely be assumed then that the question of male victimhood should always be raised whenever researchers seek a full understanding of the nature and extent of sexual violence in any particular time and place. Questions of male-directed sexual violence in conflict constitute the focus of the rest of this paper which provides an overview of secondary source literature (academic books, articles, and presentations) by scholars to investigate male-directed sexual violence in conflict. As Dolan (2009) of the Refugee Law Project in Uganda explains, the general assumption that still dominates at almost all levels of the main IGO's and NGO's concerned with areas of conflict and humanitarian crisis, is that only a tiny number of males are ever the victims; sexual violence, it is widely believed, is perpetrated by men upon female victims. Dolan, based on his experiences working with Congolese refugees in Uganda, disagrees.

Following sections outline the research findings that have been highlighted by Dolan and others who feel concerned about the neglect of health care provision for male victims of sexual violence in conflict. Common themes that emerge in the research literature include the following: identification of under-reporting as a key element in the lack of recognition of male SVC; lack of consensus regarding the causes of male SVC; an awareness of the role of language in perpetuating misunderstandings surrounding these issues, particularly through the linguistic sleight of hand by which "woman" or "women" becomes equated with "gender" "victim" becomes identified with "female," and "perpetrator" becomes equated with "male." Some authors express contentment with this situation (e.g., McKinnon (1994); Seifert (1992); Skjelsbaek (2006); Wachala, 2011). In the words of Vermeulen (2011), "Some key-scholars on the issue of rape warfare plainly exclude men as possible victims, thus reinforcing the stereotypes underlying the very problem." Graham (2002) expresses more concern and, in her legal/sociological

analysis, she (2006) provides reasons to explain why male victims of rape are not accorded the same recognition and assistance as female victims. She argues that feminists are mistaken when they see a focus on male victims as part of a type of masculinist backlash against women who had to campaign for many years to be taken seriously as credible witnesses when reporting rape. The fact is that many men find themselves in exactly the same position, believing that no-one will take them seriously if they report they have been raped. This, in addition to a fear that public disclosure of their rape victim status will place them in a profoundly abject social status position, leads to a substantial under-reporting of male-directed sexual assaults. Many authors conclude that unless explicit recognition is made of the fact that many SVC victims are male, the prevailing belief that almost no victims are male will continue to hold currency in wider social and cultural discursive domains. This was underlined in a presentation by Del Zotto and Jones (2002) at the annual convention of the International Studies Association: "The feminized construction of such assaults has a negative impact on male survivors at both legal and institutional levels denying them representation and protection by both governmental and non-governmental actors." The final section of this paper provides a review of the principal academic reports which have attempted to increase awareness of male-directed SVC.

Lack of Recognition

Perhaps the most common characteristic trait to be identified within the corpus of research literature on male-directed SVC is an awareness of misperceptions of the extent of the problem. While the average UN official, NGO worker, or average citizen might conjecture that only one or two per-cent of SVC victims are male, the reality in many conflicts is that the figure may be between ten and twenty per-cent, if not higher. Following sections provide instances of such awareness and each one can be seen as an indicator of inefficient methods in data collection regarding the extent of SVC as an issue of concern for the international humanitarian community. By the same token, each one may also be seen as a call to action to ensure that all victims of SVC receive the physical, psychological, and social rehabilitation and support which they need and deserve.

Sivakumaran (2005) points out that lack of recognition often derives from the fact that male victims fail to report the crimes that have been committed against them. In homophobic social contexts, men will avoid such an act if it means being tainted by the shadow of homosexuality. A United Nations Security Council

Experts Report (1992, p. 1288) takes up similar themes when it focuses on social contexts and the fact that many dominant gender orders equate masculinity with exertion of power over others, and men are discouraged from articulating their emotions. Many hold the belief that only homosexual males are raped. Therefore, “it could not have happened to them.” And yet it has happened, and the fact that they cannot receive any support to deal with it intensifies high levels of rape trauma syndrome. This factor may be involved in an incident adverted to by Sivakumaran (2005, p. 1294). In 2003, staff from the NGO “Human Rights Watch” interviewed women and girls in Sierra Leone who had been identified as SVC victims. A number of young men and boys were also identified as victims and the Human Rights Watch representatives sought permission to interview them also. Permission was denied on the basis that it would “re-traumatize” the boys. One assumes the reasoning here is that boys, unlike girls, find it very difficult to speak about traumatic events that have happened to them. Even if we accept this logic, it hardly seems justifiable to deny victims access to counselling if no alternative forms of therapy or support are being provided.

The work of Kirsten Johnson (2008, 2010) has been particularly influential in drawing attention to issues of male SVC as she has a long record of sterling research work in the field of medical attention to SVC and also because her research on male SVC in Liberia and in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was published in the influential *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Johnson noted that social stigmatization of men who are sexually assaulted is extremely high. Such men may be commonly referred to as “bush wives” – the term normally used to refer to female civilians who have been captured by militia and forced into sexual captivity – and treated as pariahs within the local community. For this reason, Johnson estimates that rates of non-reporting of male SVC may be as high as 95%. Carlson (2006) echoes the note on social stigmatization of “bush wives,” this time in the context of conflict regions in northern Uganda. His research with the Acholi people of that region indicated that, not only are male victims of rape highly stigmatized within their communities, but they are also more likely to be targets of more sexual violence. Once again, under reporting leads to a lack of recognition of the true extent of the problem. Solangon and Patel (2012) offer this and four other factors as reasons for lack of recognition of male SVC: no legal framework exists to support men in many cases (something that is especially true in jurisdictions such as Uganda’s where sexual acts between males are illegal and carry heavy prison sentences); lack of resources and training for police and legal staff leads to poor institutional

detection patterns; the prevailing belief that only women are victims of SVC is itself a causal factor, they argue; and, finally, prevailing gender ideals mean that the very concept of “male SVC victims” is not a popular one. Del Zotto and Jones (2002) advert to the fact that prevailing gender ideals and norms can be conscripted into the ideological fray to promote military interventions in conflict zones. In the early 2000's, the proposed invasion of Afghanistan by U.S. forces was framed as a war against people who are mean to women. The researchers found that women who apply for asylum in the U.S. are asked of the dangers of receiving sexual violence in their home country, whereas such questions are not addressed to male applicants. Their review of documents from over four thousand NGO's dealing with SVC found that only 3% mention men, and this very often as a sort of afterthought, perhaps one sentence at the end of the report that says, “*it is also possible that cases of male victims exist.*” One example may be found in Mullins and Rothe (2008) in their analysis of micro and macro globalized political forces at work in the extension of conflict in eastern DRC. In an extensive section on the scope of sexual violence against women in the region, we also find a final thought: “Men are also targeted ...” Left in this textual context, the statement leaves unchallenged the prevalent notion that only a very small percentage of men are targeted as victims of SVC. In fact, Johnson (2010) shows quite conclusively that 23% of men were victims of SVC, and this was in the very region referred to by Mullins and Rother, the eastern DRC. In her analysis of wartime sexual violence in the DRC, Rowaan (2011) refers to men as the “invisible victims.” She offers a final reason to account for the under-reporting of male victimhood in official statistics: NGO's are dependent for financial help from their donors. The issue of male victims of sexual violence is not one that appeals to most donors and so an unjust situation is left unchallenged.

Conjectures on Relevant Causes

Another characteristic of research literature on SVC is a wide range of theoretical stances and subsequent conjectures regarding causes of this type of violence in conflict situations. Gotschall (2004) delineates four main theories on wartime rape: “Feminist Theory” which focuses on the socialization of males into misogynistic imperatives and an anti-natural (often Western) lifestyle; the “Cultural Pathology Theory” which argues that a pathological national and/or military culture leads to SVC; “Strategic Rape Theory” which sees wartime rape as part of genocidal campaigns or as a strategy to achieve military and political

goals. Gotschall rejects these three theories in favor of “Bio-Social Theory” which he sees as accounting for much variation across time and space and in individual behavior as regards SVC. It is not a theory of biological determinism or of social Darwinism, he asserts. Rather it takes account of biological factors and human sensitivity to influence from environmental clues, as well as taking account of predominating social and cultural factors. Against those who see rape in conflict zones only as a weapon of war, he argues that in many cases, widespread acts of sexual violence by soldiers bring no strategic benefit and may even impede a campaign’s success. This was the experience of Japanese military in the 1930’s and 1940’s in China and Korea; the setting up of so called “comfort stations” was an attempt to prevent SVC which could have a counter-productive effect in drumming up support for the nationalist side. In addition, Reichert’s (2006, p.2) work on male-male sexuality in Meiji literature and Roden’s (1980) work on the student elite culture of higher schools in Japan until the end of World War II, leads to my own speculation that past practices in Japanese society may also have played a role. Militarized masculinities within samurai culture allowed for male-male sexual relationships, and this openness also found expression in later student and military cultures before and during the “fifteen-year war.” However, all traces of “*Nanshoku*” (male-male sexual desire) were ever more strictly repressed within the project of nation-state building and “modernization” from the late nineteenth-century on. It seems possible, though, that some military leaders believed there was a “danger” of modern-day *nanshoku* or intimate same-sex relations occurring within the ranks in occupied territories, relations that might provoke negative international comment and provoke a backlash within conflict areas. From that perspective, a “comfort station” system that sanctioned heteronormative practices would have been welcomed all the more strongly by advocates of Western discourses of sexology which pathologized male-male sexuality and that sanctioned even the most coercive of sexual relations, as long as they remained within the hegemonic masculine parameters of male domination over women.

While Gotschall offers helpful insights on causal factors for SVC, he does not, take account of male-directed SVD. Indeed, almost all such analyses focus on SVC within a fixed paradigm of “male as perpetrator/ female as victim.” Solangon and Patel (2012, p. 417) point out the need for male-focused research as, at present, “The motivations of sexual violence against men are also explored through applying causal theories that are largely based on female victims of sexual violence.” Johnson (2008, 2010) points out that this is unhelpful as there are many

cases where women are perpetrators of SVC. In many other cases, men are the victims, but they receive sparse recognition and a focus remains on the causes of "conventional" SVC. Greater research is required before conclusions can be made of the applicability of dominant accounts to the case of male-directed sexual violence in conflict regions.

Meger (2010) refers to two myths that are used to explain SVC: the irrepressible sex drive of male soldiers, and the fact that war disrupts the normal rules and constraints of society. Both of these factors may be covered by Enloe's (2000) reference to "recreational rape" while she directs more attention to two other factors that are called in to account for SVC: "national security rape", where an administration in fear of losing its grip on power lashes out against targeted populations, and "systematic mass rape", where rape is used as a weapon during open warfare. While many have come to see rape as a "weapon of war" because of events during the conflicts that followed the dissolution of former Yugoslavia, and these events have followed normative gender accounts, much data indicates that male-directed SVC also played a significant role.

Returning to Meger (2000, p. 131) and her reasoning for the prevalence of SVC in eastern DRC, she adverts to factors such as economic ambitions. Major profits can be made from the mining of coltan and other metals in the region (exports of coltan alone may fetch over one million dollars a day for militia in eastern DRC who have found willing accomplices among Western business associates.) Smooth running of mining business often involves the displacement of certain communities or the rendering docile of others. If rape of women has been used to serve this purpose, it also seems plausible that the rape of men might serve a similar function. If there is poor discipline among troops and if these soldiers have been socialized into forms of hegemonic masculinity, then they are likely to carry out acts of sexual violence against women. Again this factor could also apply to male victims; Connell (1995) argues that hegemonic masculinity instantiates itself through - among other factors- displays of domination over women and over "weaker" men. Through the very act of submitting male victims to physical subordination and to the social stigmatization as "bush wife" or as "homosexual", male directed SVC may also work to construct hegemonic masculinities among perpetrators. The term "bush wife" has been used to stigmatize women who are forced into conjugal life with men outside of village communities. It provides a ready-made weapon for further stigmatization, in this case for men who have been subjected to rape. Marinussen (2010) provides a detailed case study of male directed SVC in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

On the title page of her Master's thesis on these themes, she includes a quote, a typical slur directed at male SVC victims in eastern Congo: "You're no longer a man. Those men in the bush made you their wife." Similarly, the vocabulary item "marriage" which has been used in heteronormative contexts predominantly, serves as a discursive weapon of war with which to stigmatize some male recruits into so called Islamic State. These data reinforce the fact that engagement with the issue of male-directed SVC requires an interrogation of the discursive regime of gendered and sexualized identities that occupy powerful social and cultural roles. The power of such gender normativity may often be institutionalized legally, as is the case in DRC. Meger (2010, p. 130) points out that "In Congolese family law, a man is bestowed with the duty to protect his wife." There is a double humiliation, then, for the man who fails to protect his spouse and his own person. McKenzie (2010) states quite baldly that "structure" gives meaning to rape, whether that be in reference to marriage and paternity laws or gender norms of female inferiority, such as customary law in Sierra Leone which decrees that a woman must always be under a man's protection and authority while also nullifying the rights of a female spouse to marital property. McKenzie's analysis prompts the reflection that the everyday stigmatization of women in society is accentuated with the stigmatization of women and of men who have been subjected to rape, and the author is correct to identify the stigmatization of rape victims and their families as ongoing sources of insecurity, even after "peace accords" have been officially ratified. Nor should it be forgotten that conflict zones are also forced to provide the scene for "off-stage" inter-state power struggles or "proxy wars", compounding the set of difficulties facing those who work to end conflict. Nelson et al. (2012) note that the ongoing conflict in the Great Lakes region, especially in eastern DRC, has come to be known as "Africa's World War." In the Kivu provinces of east DRC, for example, there may be as many as fourteen major militia groups in operation, many with affiliations to Rwanda, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Angola, Burundi, and other states (seven in all by the authors' reckoning), in addition to indigenous groups who see themselves as Congolese such as the Mai-Mai. Only multi-sectoral approaches that take account of political, economic, and socially shaped gender norms will have any hope of success in the long-term pursuit of conflict resolution. Solangon and Patel (2007, p. 417), in their analysis of SVC around the world, recognize the (qualified) relevance of the broader literature on SVC which delineates four main causes of SVC: socio-economic poverty and impunity; gender inequality and identities; ethnic tensions; and military organization and structure. They conclude their study by stating that

“Gendered binaries and strict gender roles are primarily responsible in accentuating sexual violence against men in terrorizing and humiliating victims.”

Problems of Language

Many researchers who have explored issues of male-directed SVC refer to problems associated with the ambiguities and misperceptions associated with language itself. Very often, a problem exists because the actual import of certain terms is unknown or ignored. Vermeulen (2011) defines “gender-based violence” as “violence against persons based on their sex and gender roles in society.” The author points out that this can refer to males just as easily as to females, and so the equation of “gender based violence” with “violence against women” is inaccurate. Similarly, “sexual violence” refers to violence carried out through sexual means or by targeting sexuality”; this type of violence is also directed against human beings regardless of biological or social assignments of gender. Sivakumanran (2005) raises the issue of terminology and the gap between technical, etymological meanings of certain terms and their everyday, commonly held significations. The term “homosexual rape” simply denotes the rape of one person of a certain sex by another person of the same sex. In that sense, it has been used extensively in formal registers. However, the average “person on the street” is more likely to interpret the term as meaning that at least one of the participants in the assault can be identified as belonging to a social grouping with a long history of social stigmatization. The usage only compounds the difficulties associated with the needs of male victims who are loath to report offences for fear of being tarred with the brush of homosexuality. In a later document for the Red Cross, Sivakumaran (2010) refers to the use of language in UN Security Council resolutions on SVC issues. He notes how gender inclusive language is use when referring to broad principles. However, once concrete provisions come into play, gender language becomes exclusionary and only “women and girls” are referred to as potential or actual victims of SVC. Another problem with SCR 1820 is that it refers only to civilians as potential victims of SVC. In fact, Sivakumaran points out that combatants in both state forces and in irregular militia are at especial risk. Some progress can be seen with the release of SCR 1888 which uses language more carefully than previous resolutions and avoids explicitly exclusionary terminology. The author goes on to identify problems in the language used in UN documents for International Criminal Tribunals. The ICT dealing with the former Yugoslavia referred to a case of sexual violation by a male against another male

as “torture” rather than as “sexual violence.” If cases in which sexual organs are targeted for physical maltreatment were always counted as sexual violence rather than torture, or some other term, then the actual statistics for SVC would look very different. Sivakumanran (p. 272) offers the example of a report by a UN commission on SVC in Peru. While only 2% of victims were classified as male, the correct figure should be given as 22%.

Banwell (2014) displays a welcome awareness of the role of gender normativity in issues surrounding SVC in Kivu and other areas of DRC. Men and boys are socialized into patterns of “hyper-masculinity” in the military (where state forces or rebel militia) and soldiers seek improved status through diverse means, including acts of sexual violation. However, the language of Banwell’s text does not make clear the possibility that such acts of sexual violation may include male-directed violence. On page fifty-four we read that, “*Men*, women, and children continue to be targeted for crimes of sexual violence” and yet other references imply that only women and girls are involved e.g., “sexual violence against females has continued” (p. 49), “women’s experience needs to be fully recognized by the law” (p. 54), there is an enormously high level of sexual violence against “women and girls.” Remaining with a focus on eastern DRC, Meger (2010, p. 119) makes a factually accurate statement when she refers to the “hundreds and thousands of women and girls” who have been raped. However, the statement is misleading when one considers Johnson’s (2010) finding that over 23% of men there had been raped. Meger’s “Rape of Congo” is not confined to one particular sex, though that is the impression readers may be left with from her text. Similarly, an in-depth analysis of how male soldiers in diverse locations around Africa construct masculinity, sexuality, and sexual violence (Mankayi, 2010) fails to address issues surrounding male directed SVC. Silence itself can be thought of as an element within language. In many texts where words should be used to signify the reality of male rape, a blank discursive space effectively perpetuates the silence of victims and the impunity of perpetrators. The Refugee Law Project in Uganda reviewed global statistics to find the following data: 90 per cent of men in conflict-affected countries are in situations where the law provides no protection for them if they become victims of sexual violence; 62 countries, representing almost two-thirds of the world’s population, only recognize female victims of rape; 67 states criminalize men who report abuse. Another example of strategic silence and silencing is provided by Del Zotto and Jones (2002) when they refer to a November 1995 hearing of the ICTY inquiry into war crimes in the Balkans. Dr. Sophie Clarin, an expert witness at the hearing, stated that “men

and women were victims of rape.” However, the judges only referred to female victims in their interactions with the witness, and their final protocol stated that the “ICTY will provide safety and confidentiality for all women.” The authors comment that “Male victims were thus omitted, conceptually and de facto from the trial process.”

One bright spot in the consideration of the role of language is provided by McQuaid (2014) in his case study of “Alex” a young Congolese male who identifies as gay. Alex became a SVC victim in his mid-teens and has had to cope with stigmatization because of that and also because he does not hide his gay identity. Through contact with health staff and others in the camps for displaced persons, Alex has learned to adopt linguistic strategies to instantiate a persona as an LGBT person who is dealing with the local tribal and heteronormative discourses that seek to silence him. Alex’s new narrative of self allows him to create a cohesive story of self that accounts for his past and allows him to face the future with a more confident sense of self.

Conclusion

This short paper has not covered the full range of research literature available on the extent of male-directed SVC, possible causes, and proposed solutions. It would be interesting, also, to explore connections between present day problems of SVC and past imperialist policies, as is done by Reid and Walker (2005) when they show how contemporary machismo cultures in Zimbabwe strongly reflect the colonial legacy bequeathed by white settlers. Nevertheless, it may be taken as a legitimate starting point for those who hope to redress the current imbalance that exists, namely between levels of recognition accorded to female victims over male victims. The author’s intention is not to diminish in any way, levels of recognition and support currently provided for female victims. Indeed like most other commentators on these topics, I recognize a need for a greater provision of resources to help deal with SVC issues around the globe. However, it seems inconsistent that some victims should be seen as deserving of support while others are ignored, or made to feel that they deserve to be ignored. This is an area which has received relatively scant attention in recent years despite the availability of copious empirical data to suggest that large percentages of sexual assaults are those which are made against adult males. This alerts us to the broader issue of eliminating sexual violence in conflict per se and of how all acts of sexual violence form part a conflict situation As Carpenter (2006, p.83)

argues, “Addressing gender-based violence against women and girls in conflict situations is inseparable from addressing the forms of violence to which civilian men are specifically vulnerable.”

This paper may also have some value in historical studies of military conflict in directing attention towards motivations behind the establishment of the official comfort station policy by Japanese forces during the 1930’s and 1940’s. If researchers find data to support the conjecture that military leaders felt a need to prevent a return to *nanshoku* practices of ancient samurai cultures, then this could improve relations with Japanese neighbors who sometimes assert that the policy resulted from hatred of subordinated populations. Overall, though, the value of this paper must lie in its raising awareness of the fact that the victims of gender-based sexual violence in conflict zones often includes many men and boys, not just women and girls. In the longer term, such awareness is vital for the peaceful resolution of conflicts and peace can only be achieved in any conflict zone when stakeholders understand the actual conditions on the ground. If we understand the actual patterns of SVC, we can implement more effective local and international approaches to help protect vulnerable human beings.

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