

## Of rights of men

"Gender" has standardly been deployed in the human rights discourse to designate rights violations that target women and girls. To the extent that the male experience has been considered under this rubric, the focus has generally been on minority males -- particularly blacks. Seeking to supplement rather than supplant this approach, this article argues that the variables of minority ethnicity, social class, and age can be separated from gender for analytical purposes. When they are, the gender variable can be seen as equally if not more significant to an understanding of human rights abuses in the United States and elsewhere. The article contends that the most severe and institutionalized human rights abuses in the US are overwhelmingly inflicted upon men, especially -- though far from exclusively -- younger, poorer, and minority men. It focuses on four key institutions: incarceration, the death penalty, police violence, and registration for military conscription. The article concludes by deploying the concept of "men and minorities," suggesting that the phrase may be every bit as apt as "women and minorities," and that *younger* men may deserve acknowledgment and attention as a minority group in their own right.

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### Introduction

In marked contrast with organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, US government officials -- along with most media commentators -- have resolutely refrained from applying the framework of "human rights" to events and institutions within the United States.<sup>(1)</sup> In particular, the idea that systematic and widespread human rights abuses occur in the United States is perfunctorily dismissed -- though local and individual violations may be acknowledged, as with the controversies in recent years over alleged institutionalized racism in the Los Angeles and New York City police departments. To a striking extent, this ostrich mentality reflects what has been termed "American exceptionalism." Since its founding, American citizens have tended to view themselves as "a people apart," distinguished from the decadent class-based societies of Europe and, more recently, from the dictatorial and abuse-ridden lands of the communist bloc or Third World. The legacy of slavery aside -- and it is all too easily swept aside -- how could "the land of freedom and opportunity" possibly succour unfreedom and oppression?

This is not to deny that rights-based social movements have exerted a powerful influence on the course of US history. The labor movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the civil-rights campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s, and the Native American resurgence in the 1970s all did much to highlight the experience of marginalized social and economic groups in American life. Their accomplishments were matched, and in most respects exceeded, by the US women's movement that began its modern ascendancy in the early 1960s, and has today succeeded in eliminating most of the discriminatory impediments to women's public and private freedoms. The idea that human rights [388] abuses are often crucially related to "gender" -- which can be defined as "cover[ing] masculine and feminine roles and bodies alike, in all their aspects, including the (biological and cultural) structures, dynamics, roles and scripts associated with each gender group"<sup>(2)</sup> -- is now virtually a truism in both the USA and international communities.

Perhaps because it was first articulated by the feminist movement in the cause of advancing women's human rights, however, "gender" has standardly been deployed in a more limited sense: as the gendered experiences of *women* and the "roles and scripts" of femininity. Men and masculinity tend to be drawn into the framing to the extent that they illuminate the victimization and oppression of women. The task of the "gender" theorist frequently becomes to analyze women and the men who harm them.<sup>(3)</sup> There is no doubt that this framework has contributed an enormous amount to unveiling the violence and discrimination that women and girls suffer in the United States and worldwide. Less positively, it has tended to depict females as the *unique* targets of gender-based discrimination and abuse. Scholars and activists who have addressed the other side of the coin -- gender-based violence and discrimination against males -- have been largely marginalized from the mainstream. They are standardly caricatured as exponents of "fundamentalist masculinity" (*The Economist* 1996) -- would-be Iron Johns whose favourite activity is heading off to the woods for sessions of self-indulgent drum-beating and breast-beating.

To the extent that the male experience *has* been drawn into the discussion of gender and human rights in the USA, the focus has generally been on minority males -- particularly blacks. Police violence against young black men, for example, has received extensive notice, as have the disproportionate rates of incarceration and execution suffered by minority men. The present article seeks not to supplant but to supplement this important analytical tack. It argues that the attention to minority males, such as it has been, has tended to emphasize the variable of minority ethnicity (and social class, and age) over gender; that, in fact, these variables can be separated for analytical purposes (if less easily in real life); and that when they are distinguished and explored, the gender variable can be seen as equally if not more significant to an understanding of human-rights abuses in the United States and elsewhere. To put the matter plainly: the most severe and institutionalized human-rights abuses in the United States are overwhelmingly inflicted upon men, especially -- though far from exclusively - younger, poorer and minority men. I will focus on four key institutions: incarceration, the death penalty, police violence and registration for military conscription. I will conclude by deploying the concept of "men and minorities," arguing that the phrase is at least as apt as "women and minorities," and suggesting that *younger* men may deserve acknowledgement and attention as a minority group in their own right.

## Incarceration

It is by now widely recognized, by human-rights activists and others, that incarceration in the United States has spiralled out of control. About 1.8 million Americans are currently imprisoned at the federal, state and local levels -- more than anywhere else in the world. This represents an increase from 110 per 110 000 US citizens in prison earlier in this century to 682 per 100 000 in 1998.<sup>(4)</sup> Marc Mauer, director of the Sentencing Project, claims: "We have embarked on a great social experiment. No other society in human history has ever imprisoned so many of its citizens for the purpose of crime control."<sup>(5)</sup>

The hugely disproportionate incarceration of racial minorities and the poor (overlapping categories, of course) is frequently factored into discussions of this criminalization [389] boom. As noted, I do not wish to distract one iota from the attention paid to the variables of race/ethnicity and social class. But strikingly *underacknowledged* in the literature is the overarching gender variable at work. The vast proportion of those incarcerated -- about 93.5% -- are male; "Men's incarceration rate is still 15 times higher than for women."<sup>(6)</sup> It is often pointed out that women's incarceration rates have grown spectacularly since the onset of the boom in prison expansion and the rise in mandatory-sentencing procedures. This is certainly true.<sup>(7)</sup> It is also true that this growth has occurred from a very small base, and women still account for only about 6.5% of the imprisoned, since the number of men in jail has also increased massively -- though proportionately more

slowly -- over the same period.

A reflexive response to such data is to claim: "Well, of course; men commit more crimes." But the issue is not so simple. Criminal activity is, after all, socially defined, and its definition changes over time. Violent crime, which is of greatest concern to most Americans, "has fallen by about 20 percent" since 1991, "while the number of people in prison or jail has risen by 50 percent" (Schlosser 1998: 54). The explosive growth of the US prison population has been fuelled, above all, by two factors. The first is simply the growth of imprisonment for parole violations, which in 1997 accounted for a remarkable "two thirds of the people sent to prison in California," home to the industrialized world's largest prison system (Schlosser 1998: 76). The second is the "drug war" of the last three decades, which has been waged with such ferocity that "drug offenses alone account ... for three fourths (74 percent [*sic*]) of the rise in the [US] inmate population between 1985 and 1995" (Mauer 1999: 34).<sup>(8)</sup> But none of the drugs for which Americans are imprisoned is remotely as destructive, in health terms, as the two most dangerous *legal* drugs, alcohol and tobacco. Thus, an ever-growing proportion of incarcerated felons -- overwhelmingly men -- are behind bars for their association with commodities, the possession and sale of which have been *arbitrarily* criminalized.<sup>(9)</sup>

There is also a notable disparity between US men and women when it comes to the proportion of those convicted for criminal acts who are subsequently incarcerated, and the duration of that incarceration. "After controls are added, men are 17% more likely to be incarcerated than women, and receive, on average, an additional year of prison time."<sup>(10)</sup> Women's offenses are generally viewed as less serious, and women's "character" as generally better than that of male defendants. "Women have traditionally received the benefit of consideration for having a secondary role in the commission of a crime or a history of sexual or physical abuse" (Mauer 1999: 140) -- arguments that are rarely available to males. The reluctance to jail women with family responsibilities also stands in marked contrast with the readiness with which fathers are removed from households and incarcerated.

The gender disparity is perhaps most blatant in the area of murder (see also the discussion of the death penalty, below). The form of murder that is most "gendered female" is infanticide, particularly neonaticide. But this is rarely viewed as murder at all -- at least when women are the perpetrators. "Most women aren't incarcerated for infanticide. Of those who are even convicted, about two thirds avoid prison, and the rest receive an average sentence of seven years."<sup>(11)</sup> These conviction and sentencing procedures are no less arbitrary than in the case of drug use; it could just as easily be argued that the destruction of the weakest and most vulnerable members of society should be viewed as *more* serious than the killing of able-bodied adults. A frequently overlooked implication of the disproportionate number of men in prison lies in the realm of political rights. The "gender gap" in women's versus men's voting patterns has attracted much scholarly attention in recent years. Far less prominent has been the striking "gender gap" when it comes to *the right to vote at all*. According to a recent study [390] by The Sentencing Project and Human Rights Watch, utilizing 1996 Justice Department figures, "Two percent of all Americans, or 3.9 million, have lost the right to vote; 13 percent of all adult black men have lost that right" (Toppo 2000). And more than one-quarter of the disenfranchised were sentenced only to probation, not to prison.

There are clearly profound ethnic and class imbalances in the numbers: "Disenfranchised black males account for about one-third of all Americans barred from voting because of felony convictions." As a result, "On Election Day [2000], ... more than one in eight [voting-age black men] ... will be ineligible to cast ballots." But once again, the overarching variable is gender. Assuming that the 93% male incarceration rate carries over to disenfranchisement, then over 3.6 million of the 3.9 million people stripped of their political rights in the USA are males -- disproportionately, but not predominantly, black men. And "without a vote, a voice, I am a ghost inhabiting a citizen's space," in the eloquent words of one "disenfranchised ex-felon."<sup>(12)</sup>

By itself, this mass denial of political rights was probably sufficient to swing the results of the 2000 presidential elections, according to Human Rights Watch.<sup>(13)</sup>

Mass incarceration of US males should also be viewed in the context of labour rights. It can be seen as an offshoot of the global-historical phenomenon of *corvée* (forced) labour, which has overwhelmingly targeted men not just for exploitation, but for murder by the tens of millions.<sup>(14)</sup> As Noam Chomsky notes sardonically, prisoners are:

... a terrific work force. We hear fuss about prison labor in China, but prison labor is standard here [in the USA]. It's very cheap, it doesn't organize, the workers don't ask for rights, you don't have to worry about health benefits because the public is paying for everything. It's what's called a "flexible" workforce, the kind of thing economists like: you have the workers when you want them, and you throw them out when you don't want them. ... In Oregon and California there's a fairly substantial textile industry in the prisons, with exports to Asia. At the very time people were complaining about prison labor in China, California and Oregon are exporting prison-made textiles to China. They even have a line called "Prison Blues." And it goes all the way up to advanced technology like data processing. In the state of Washington, Boeing workers are protesting the exports of jobs to China, but they're probably unaware that their jobs are being exported to nearby prisons, where machinists are doing work for Boeing under circumstances that the management is delighted over, for obvious reasons. (Veir 1998)

One final "gendered" aspect of incarceration deserves mention: rape and sexual assault. It is almost certain, though utterly heretical to point out, that *US males are raped on a much larger scale and more severely than US females*. But rape is the paradigmatic "women's issue" in the United States, with barely a peep of public attention accorded to the majority category of victims. A difficulty, of course, lies in the fact that the vast majority of rapes of men occur behind bars, allegedly while these men are in state "custody" (which my dictionary defines as "guardianship, care"). In 1993, Stephen Donaldson published a taboo-shattering article in the *New York Times* entitled, "The Rape Crisis Behind Bars." In it, Donaldson -- who was himself gang-raped in prison, 60 times over two days, in 1973 -- delivered a "conservative estimate" of 290 000 males "sexually assaulted behind bars every year" in the United States. "By comparison, the Bureau of Justice Statistics estimates that there are 135 000 rapes of women a year nationwide, though many groups believe the number is higher." (Recall the explosion in the prison population since Donaldson's article appeared.) He added: "The catastrophic experience of sexual violence usually extends beyond a single incident, often [391] becoming a daily assault," while the anal and frequently gang character of the rapes intensifies the physical damage to the male victims. With AIDS running rampant in the nation's jails, the consequences are regularly fatal for the victims. (Donaldson himself died of an AIDS-related illness in 1996, apparently having contracted HIV from his prison rapes.)<sup>(15)</sup>

Abuse and harassment of the small proportion of women prisoners in the USA has attracted extensive media attention and fully-fledged investigations by Amnesty International and others.<sup>(16)</sup> The guiding assumption of such commentary and inquiries is that the state is responsible for respecting and protecting the physical and psychological integrity of women prisoners. Likewise, rapes of women in the wider society are deemed in large part the responsibility of the state (for failing to respond effectively to women's public-security concerns, investigate claims adequately, impose sufficiently harsh sentences on offenders, and so on). But when the crisis is gendered male, it is rendered all but invisible. The US, state and local governments have hardly been swamped with criticism, or calls for outside intervention, for allowing and *actively promoting*<sup>(17)</sup> an epidemic of sexual assault against some of their most vulnerable citizens.

## The death penalty

The shocking bias of US capital punishment against minorities and the poor has long been a byword of death-penalty critics.

"Today, whether you live or die in the USA as a result of your crimes appears to be largely determined by the colour of your own skin and the race of your victim," said Pierre Sané, Amnesty International's Secretary General. ... prosecutors seek the death penalty more often, or in some cases solely, against blacks. ... The odds of a death sentence in which blacks killed whites has been shown to be as much as 11 times higher than in the murder of a black victim by a white person. ... "This refusal of the U.S. authorities to admit and address the fact that the death penalty is being applied on the basis of race, ethnicity and social status is a key indication of the extent of the problem," Mr. Sané stressed. (Amnesty International 1999).

But "while we are on the subject of capital punishment," writes David Buchanan -- a Canadian member of Amnesty International who has done much to promote an inclusive approach to gender and human rights within Amnesty's ranks -- "it is worth asking which identity correlates most strongly with a place on America's death row. Skin color? Race? Ethnic origin? IQ? None of the above: the answer is biological sex" (Buchanan 2002).

According to the Justice Center Website of the University of Alaska, "Of the 19 000 confirmed executions since 1608 in what is now the United States, only 515, less than three percent, were executions of women. Until this year [1998], Velma Barfield, executed in North Carolina on 2 November 1984, was the only woman executed in the U.S. since executions resumed in 1976." Two more women were subsequently executed, for a total of three out of 596 (0.6%) between 1976 and December 1999 (Duggan 1999). That is to say, 99.4% of those executed by the state during this period were males.<sup>(18)</sup> The trend carries over to juveniles and the mentally handicapped. Here, in fact, it is *exclusively* males who are killed by the state: "There are presently 58 inmates, all male, on death row for crimes committed while juveniles. ... As of year-end 1997, 31 mentally retarded men had been executed in the US since 1976" (Justice Center n.d.). Executions of males in the US are out of proportion to the number of murders that [392] males actually commit. The Death Penalty Information Centre noted in 1999 that "Women are more likely to be dropped out of the system the further the capital punishment system progresses. ... Women account for about 1 in 8 (13%) murder arrests; ... 1 in 52 (1.9%) death sentences imposed at the trial level; ... 1 in 77 (1.3%) persons presently on death row; and ... only 3 in 540 (0.6%) persons actually executed since [1976]." As well, 76 out of the 132 death sentences imposed on women since 1973 -- 57% -- were subsequently overturned or commuted; the rate for men was about one-third (Death Penalty Information Centre n.d.). The overwhelming preponderance of men among those executed raises core human-rights issues on its own: both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch consider executions to be "cruel and unusual punishment," and have mounted sustained campaigns against them, in the United States and elsewhere. A range of associated human-rights concerns can be similarly "gendered": executions of juveniles and the mentally handicapped, as noted; extended stays on death row, which arguably amount to state-sponsored torture; and, of course, wrongful convictions and executions.<sup>(19)</sup>

## Violence by police and other state agents

For many Americans, the 1990s were bracketed by two signal instances of police brutality, on opposite coasts. The first was the March 1991 mass beating, captured on videotape, of Rodney King, a black motorist pulled over for speeding, then dragged from his car and battered senseless. The second was the 1999 killing

of Amadou "Ahmed" Diallo, a 22-year-old immigrant from West Africa who was mowed down with the notorious "41 shots" (the subtitle of a subsequent Bruce Springsteen song) in a doorway in the Bronx, after reaching for his wallet to produce identification.

What was argued earlier about the blending of race and gender variables in the case of incarceration can be reiterated in analysing the phenomenon of police violence. In a bulletin accompanying a 1996 study of police brutality in New York City, Amnesty International noted that "nearly all the victims in the cases of deaths in custody and police shootings ... were from racial minorities -- particularly African-Americans, Latinos and Asians" (Amnesty International 1996). But *nearly all of them were also men*, and it can be argued that the gender variable is of even greater significance in the equation than the ethnic variable.<sup>(20)</sup> Those sceptical of this assertion might ask themselves the following questions: (1) Is such violence meted out to minority *women* on anything like a comparable scale?; and (2) Are minority *women* more likely than white *men* to receive such treatment? The answer to the first question, quite obviously, is "no"; and to the second, although statistics are hard to come by, "probably not." This suggests that gender may be the crucial enabling factor in the infliction of police brutality on *both* minority and non-minority Americans.

Recall, for instance, the almost baroque violence inflicted on Rodney King:

He [King] was brutally beaten by three officers with batons; shocked and burned twice with a stun gun; and kicked in the head, face and stomach while down on the ground, as a dozen other officers looked on. ... The [video] tape shows King on his knees, attached to an electrical line from the stun gun, being struck repeatedly by a baton-wielding policeman. As he falls to the ground, several officers take turns swinging at his legs. King rises to his knees and attempts to shield himself from the blows, but the policemen continue to smash him in the gut and on the legs. One kicks him, another stomps on his head or neck. One eyewitness heard King cry out, "Stop, please stop!" But the officers continued to rain at least 40 blows on the defenseless [393] and unresisting King, finally handcuffing and hog-tying him, and sending him, bleeding badly, to a nearby emergency room. There King received 20 stitches -- including five inside his mouth -- and treatment for burns, massive bruises and lacerations. (Novick 1991: 5).

As I wrote shortly after these events, "Has anyone seriously suggested that police officers, out to prove what tough customers they are, regularly drag away women (even black women) and take turns beating them to bloody pulps at roadside, while fellow officers stand around and watch?" (Jones 1992). Note also the now-infamous events at Corcoran Prison in California, where "eight prison guards [were] accused of staging 'gladiator style' fights among prisoners ... setting up prison yard fights among rival prison gangs in [the] High Security Unit ... and then shooting at them when brawls broke out. This resulted in guards shooting 31 unarmed prisoners, seven of them fatally" (Amnesty International 2000). "It's going to be duck-hunting season," one guard allegedly said, immediately before the fatal shooting of prisoner Preston Tate. Are such scenes conceivable in a US women's prison? And if they did occur in that setting - even if the female victims were overwhelmingly or exclusively from racial minorities -- would they not be viewed as obviously "gendered," and denounced as an instance of unconscionable violence *against women*?

## **Military registration for conscription**

*The male is born to be slaughtered.* (Kurdish proverb<sup>(21)</sup>)

In 1980, after bitter debate, the US Congress passed President Jimmy Carter's bill to renew registration for the military draft for all US males (including aliens resident in the US) reaching their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. The

Military Selective Service Act, approved when the "New Cold War" was in full flower, has never been repealed. President Ronald Reagan, who had claimed during his first presidential campaign that "draft registration destroys the very values that our society is committed to defending," reversed himself after his election and declared his support for registration, on the grounds that "we live in a dangerous world."<sup>(22)</sup> He simultaneously began limited prosecution of those young men who sought to evade the measure (men who fail to register within 30 days of their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday can, under US law, be punished with up to five years in jail and/or a US\$250 000 fine). Beginning under his administration, a "campaign of intimidation" was launched against recalcitrants.

The Selective Service System ... used driver's license, high school, and voter registration lists, as well as federal student loan records, to locate nonregistrants. According to Selective Service, "data [have] also been provided by the Federal Aviation Administration, the Social Security Administration, the Department of Defense, the Department of Transportation, and the Veterans Administration." Selective Service has used these voluminous information sources to identify nonregistrants, send them threatening letters, and, ultimately, refer their names to the Department of Justice for prosecution. Moreover, nonregistrants are ineligible to receive federal student loans or job-training benefits or to hold federal jobs. Several states have copied the federal provision regarding educational aid, and in 1985, Selective Service director Thomas Turnag expressed the hope that "private corporations, when made aware of the law" regarding federal job ineligibility, would "adopt an employment policy based on the federal model." (Bandow 1987) **[394]**

No prosecutions of evaders have been launched since 1985. But the system, with its denial of key state services and benefits to the hundreds of thousands of men who have refused to register, endures. Bill Clinton had argued in his much-discussed 1969 letter to an ROTC colonel that "the draft system ... is illegitimate. No government really rooted in limited, parliamentary democracy should have the power to make its citizens fight and kill and die in a war they may oppose, a war which even possibly may be wrong."<sup>(23)</sup> But once in power he, too, chose to retain registration.

There has been one serious attempt to challenge sex-selective registration in the courts: *Rostker v. Goldberg* (1981). After a district court ruled that the Selective Service law was unconstitutional, the Supreme Court took up the question,<sup>(24)</sup> and reversed the district-court ruling. Of particular interest was the dissenting opinion by Justice Thurgood Marshall. He argued that:

The Court today places its imprimatur on one of the most potent remaining public expressions of "ancient canards about the proper role of women." ... It upholds a statute that requires males but not females to register for the draft, and which thereby categorically excludes women from a fundamental civic obligation. Because I believe the Court's decision is inconsistent with the Constitution's guarantee of equal protection of the laws, I dissent.<sup>(25)</sup>

Marshall did not contend that draft registration placed its imprimatur on "one of the most potent remaining public expressions of 'ancient canards about the proper role of *men*.'" The question was only whether it was constitutional to "deny" women what for men, and men alone, had long been a "fundamental civic obligation."

The debate in the 1980s and 1990s over women in combat has been similarly narrowly framed: as a question of women soldiers' *right* to engage in combat duties if they choose, which implies their right to *decline* to engage in combat duties if they choose. Such a choice has never been offered to male soldiers.

The tradition, in the US and nearly everywhere else, of forcing males to fight in the military (or, more recently, to register in the reasonable expectation that one day they might be forced to fight), must in my view be seen as a glaring and discriminatory violation of human rights. As Warren Farrell argues in his

much-maligned but valuable book, *The Myth of Male Power*: "Registering all our 18-year-old sons for the draft in the event the country needs more soldiers is as sexist as registering all our 18-year-old daughters for child-bearing in the event the country needs more children. ... An Equal Life Amendment would acknowledge male-only draft registration as slave registration." He rightly calls such registration policies and "combat requirements ... the most unconstitutional laws in America ... a breach of [Americans'] most inalienable right: the right to life" (Farrell 1993: 130, 136, 366).

## Men and minorities

A typical definition of a social minority within a nation-state is a group whose members share the following:

1. the experience of a pattern of disadvantage or inequality;
2. a visible distinguishing trait or characteristic (hence the term "visible minorities");
3. a "community of consciousness"; [395]
4. an ascribed status at birth;
5. a tendency for endogamy.<sup>(26)</sup>

Focusing especially on the first and crucial requirement,<sup>(27)</sup> it is easy to see why women have frequently been defined, if not *as* a minority, then as a group that deserves mention in the same breath as minorities. Indeed, the term "women and minority/minorities" has become a veritable touchstone of human- and civil-rights discourse -- almost as familiar to us by now as "women and children."<sup>(28)</sup> Sometimes the term "minority" is qualified by the adjective "underrepresented," indicating another critical point of comparison and common experience between women and minority groups: their lower degree of representation in many of the institutions that are viewed as exerting the greatest power and influence in society (government, big business, universities and research institutions, the military, etc.). At the same time, women and minorities may be *overrepresented* in certain groups that carry connotations of disadvantage and disempowerment -- such as the unemployed, the undereducated or the sexually abused.

The phrase "men and minorities," at first glance, seems paradoxical. After all, the combination of visible distinguishing traits and patterns of disadvantage, by which the concept of women-and-minorities came into being, *relies upon the definition of an in-group, contrasted with which out-groups are disadvantaged or marginalized*. And if "women and minorities" are removed from the demographic equation, only one group remains: *majority men*.<sup>(29)</sup> Certainly, members of this group are dramatically overrepresented in most of the key power institutions of society, already cited. How, then, can a case be made for a minoritarian framing of men and the male experience in the United States?

The first point to be made is that "women" is hardly an undifferentiated category: enormous disparities of wealth and power separate a minority of women not only from the majority of women, but from the majority of minority members. Not only are most majority-group women better off than most minority men (and women), but women from both majority and minority groups standardly surpass minority (and sometimes majority) males in key categories, such as life expectancy and educational accomplishment. If, in other words, the equation of "women and minorities" is acceptable despite these differentials of power, wealth and health, it is possible that the concept of "men and minorities" is valid, in spite of the disproportionate power wielded in most areas by a minority of majority-group males.

Second, men as a group *are* underrepresented, and often increasingly underrepresented, in certain sectors of US society that are associated with a degree of privilege. The most notable of these are the elderly age group



(owing to men's much shorter life expectancy), enrolments in higher education,<sup>(30)</sup> "free members of society," and eligible voters.

Third, and most importantly, men are dramatically *overrepresented* in a number of categories that are, or should be, associated with disadvantage and/or disempowerment: prisoners and death-row inmates; victims of violence (including violence at the hands of state agents); occupational fatalities;<sup>(31)</sup> suicide victims;<sup>(32)</sup> the homeless;<sup>(33)</sup> drug users;<sup>(34)</sup> deaths from heart disease, lung cancer,<sup>(35)</sup> and AIDS;<sup>(36)</sup> those drafted or registered for the draft; and those laid off from industrial and managerial jobs. If current trends hold, they will shortly be overrepresented in others, notably the less educated and the unemployed as a whole.<sup>(37)</sup>

If it makes some sense to talk about "men and minorities," then one subgroup of males should surely qualify as a minority in its own right: adolescents and young men, roughly those males between the ages of 13 and 30. All of the institutions and abuses focused on in this article correlate strongly not only with gender, race/ethnicity, and social class, but [396] with *age*. In addition, younger males are overwhelmingly more likely (than both women and older men) to be murdered and violently victimized (and to commit murder or other acts of violence); to kill themselves; to die in accidents; and so on. Furthermore, the cultural demonization that this younger-male minority has endured over the past decade or two is nothing short of mind-boggling. Consider the popularity, from the early 1990s, of the "superpredator" motif popularized by Princeton University scholar John DiIulio. As one alarmist summary of the alleged phenomenon described it, the superpredator is:

... a boy -- a teen-aged male who defines himself with violent behavior. The male is supported by another, older male -- one he has some identity with or respect for, such as an uncle or stepfather. The teen-ager may have witnessed the older man's own violent ways, played out in the systematic beating of a wife, or the verbal and physical abuse of a child. The man becomes a sort of mentor in violence for the boy. And so he evolves into Superpredator -- consistently in trouble, having an unpredictable, unruly temper and forever walking a violent edge. He feels, apparently, no remorse for anything hurtful that he ever does. ... The number of these so-called superpredator in today's society is astounding -- and unnerving. And since violent behavior tends to spawn more violent behavior, the number may well be on the rise. (Waldrop 1996)

Again, much critical commentary has pointed out that "superpredator" tends to be associated with "black" -- though one wonders whether, in the wake of the Columbine High School shootings and the emergence of a "trenchcoat mafia" bogey, that is still quite as accurate.<sup>(38)</sup> In any case, gender again serves as a critical enabling variable. No female archetype, of whatever ethnicity or social class, has been served up in similar fashion for mass consumption and anathematization. Needless to say, these stereotypes feed the US propensity not only to incarcerate, but to execute, the male juvenile offender.<sup>(39)</sup>

In the absence of effective remedies, I suspect that a crisis -- economic, educational and probably existential -- of younger males will shortly be one of the most prominent features of the US social landscape. The gender variable will always be linked to others, but it is likely increasingly to cut across class and ethnic lines, and it needs urgently to be moved closer to the core of the analysis.

## Conclusion

How might a minoritarian framing of the male experience assist in developing social policies and institutional initiatives aimed at ameliorating male disadvantage? Two main contributions can be proposed. First, *by seeing men "as men."* Feminists' salutary efforts have made us profoundly aware of the role of the

gender variable in shaping and constraining the lives of women. This, combined with the traditionally greater concern (in Western societies, at least) for the "weak" or "vulnerable" woman, means that gender tends to move to the forefront in descriptions and analyses of women's experiences. It would be highly unusual, for example, to see female rape victims in the Balkans described simply as "Bosnians" or "Kosovars" or "Muslims." A Canadian reading an account of the horrific massacre of 14 young women at the École Polytechnique in Montreal (1989)<sup>(40)</sup> would be surprised and probably offended to see the victims -- or their male attacker -- referred to as "Quebeckers" or "students" or "young people." But for male victims, *displacement* of the gender variable is rather the rule. [397] "The male is defined by some trait or label other than gender -- even when gender obviously, or apparently, is decisive in shaping the experience or predicament being described" (Jones 2001). Consider, for example, this recent report, entitled "Livery drivers leaving jobs," on a marked increase in murders of men employed in a particular occupational sector -- although the story is hardly framed to emphasize gender:

Crime against livery cab drivers in neighborhoods generally shunned as unsafe by the operators of metered yellow cabs has been a chronic problem in New York City. The situation reached epidemic proportions in 1992, when 39 livery drivers were slain. The next year, 37 were murdered. But as New York's crime rate plummeted in recent years, so did the number of livery cab killings. Last year, the total was 11. With nine murders during the first four months of this year [2000], police and politicians clearly are alarmed. (Goldman 2000)

In the entire article, there is no mention of the fact that livery cab-driving is "men's work" (usually minority men's work); or that those murdered, and the survivors left trembling in fear of their next shift, were accordingly male. The variables of *geographic location* and *occupation* displace that of gender, and the victims remain invisible as men (except by inference from the individual names provided). But gender, and the roles and expectations that accompany it, are hardly peripheral to the story. They largely explain why livery cab-drivers are men, just as the vast majority of the most dangerous occupations are also overwhelmingly male-dominated.<sup>(41)</sup> But these elements are usually "non-stories" for mass media and the public at large.<sup>(42)</sup> Examining the scale and character of the challenges and threats confronting men will be extremely difficult until the gender variable assumes greater prominence in the analytical equation. Failing to do so will mean that designated "worthy" victims rapidly become, for most intents and purposes, the *only* victims -- as females, for example, now dominate the discussion and problematization of huge issue-areas (refugee flows,<sup>(43)</sup> trafficking in human beings, genital mutilation,<sup>(44)</sup> reproductive choice,<sup>(45)</sup> domestic violence,<sup>(46)</sup> rape in the United States, civilian victimization in armed conflicts (Jones 2000) in which male victimization is prominent or predominant. In the context of state-sponsored human-rights abuses in the United States, this will preclude recognition of the fact that the vast majority of victims are, in fact, male -- and that this is no coincidence.

Second, *by increasing empathy and awareness*. While women, children and underrepresented minorities standardly and increasingly seem to be "natural" subjects of empathetic identification, the very idea of showing sympathy for the plight of men seems mawkish, unless routed through other variables (age, minority ethnicity or social class). Men are also standardly seen as the "natural" victims of violence and human-rights abuses; their suffering is expected and unexceptionable. If this is doubted, the reader might recall the number of times he or she has scanned a report of a massacre or other atrocity in which the victims are described as "including women and children." The most elementary mathematics demonstrates that if women and children are removed from the equation, the only people remaining are adult men; almost always, such reports can be translated as "including a large majority of men and a minority of women and children." "*Including women*" *therefore excludes men*. The male is the "absent subject,"<sup>(47)</sup> consigned to conceptual oblivion in a way that makes clear society's preference for the "worthy" victims, and its abiding disinterest in the adult male majority.

This brings up a broader question raised by a reviewer of an earlier version of this article, who wrote: [397]

A plausible, indeed powerful, argument can be made that the dreadful things that happen to members of racial minorities, to women, to homosexuals, etc., happen to them at least in part because they are understood to be, as such, less than truly, fully human. Their worth as human beings is discounted or even denied because of their skin color, sex, sexual orientation, etc. Can a plausible argument be made that the dreadful things that happen to men ... happen to them at least in part because men are understood to be, as such, less than truly, fully human? Is the worth of men as human beings discounted or even denied because of their (male) sex?

The reviewer expressed scepticism that such an argument could indeed be advanced. In my view, however, the answer to the question is a qualified *yes*. At the same time as "womenandchildren" may see their capacities belittled by patriarchal elites, they are also considered especially worthy of paternalistic protection by those same elites. Men, however, have been considered "the disposable sex," in part because they are the ones who have been conscripted to fight nations' wars, and in part because the most dangerous work (in developed economies, at least) relies upon the extensive maiming and killing of males -- to the point that in the United States, as Warren Farrell notes, "Every day, almost as many men are killed at work as were killed during the average day in Vietnam" (Farrell 1993: 106). They are also stigmatized as actually or potentially dangerous and antisocial, as the earlier discussion of gender "profiling" suggested. What is paradoxical here is that, while men are often viewed as disposable or dangerous, they are also required to be *self-sufficient*, to "take care of themselves," since they are seen as having a superior capacity to do so. The result of this complex, sometimes contradictory set of stereotypes is that when men require special attention or assistance, they are likely to receive instead derision or contempt for their failure to live up to the patriarchal image of the autonomous, independent male.

As I hinted in the introduction to this article, a further contribution to the downplaying or ignoring of men's gendered suffering has been made by feminist scholars and activists. They have tended to exploit the Victorian-era stereotypes that depict "womenandchildren" as especially deserving of patriarchal sympathy and protection. As the inventors of gender analysis, moreover, they have added a distinctive element to the mix: to the extent that victimization experiences are "gendered," gender *means* the victimization of, or discrimination against, females by males. In a recent survey of *Gender, Globalization & Democratization*, for example, co-editor Mary E. Hawkesworth contends that: "In principle, a gendered practice could privilege men or women. But the history of male dominance has resulted in systematic male power advantages across diverse social domains. Feminist usage of the adjective 'gendered' reflects this male power advantage. Hence a gendered practice is synonymous with androcentric [*sic*] practice in common feminist terminology" (Hawkesworth 2001: 235, n. 2, emphasis added). The renowned theorist of postmodern feminism in International Relations, Christine Sylvester, is even more blunt: "states and their regimes connect with people called women only to ensure, tacitly at least, that the benefits of regime participation will flow from 'women' to 'men' and *not ever* the other way round" (Sylvester 1994: 179, emphasis added).

In almost any other area of scholarly analysis, such arguments would be seen for what they are: Manichean depictions of a multifaceted reality. They give rise to a methodology that barely deserves the name: (1) isolate a social phenomenon; (2) assume *prima facie* that it is the expression of "androcentrism" and therefore discriminates against women; and (3) present what female-specific data are available to buttress the assumption of discrimination. Nor is this merely an academic issue. Precisely the same assumptions and methodology are evident in the plethora of "gender" initiatives by national governments, international [399] organizations (notably the United Nations and World Bank), and non-governmental organizations. Clearly it would be disastrous to diminish, in absolute terms, the attention paid to other vulnerable groups (women, children, minorities, the poor). The feminist movement, among many other social movements for

justice and human rights, deserves our praise and support. But it would be equally destructive to maintain the present state of affairs, in which violations of men's human rights -- and the very *idea* of men's human rights -- are either callously ignored or openly ridiculed.

## Notes

1. For constructive comments on this article and its component arguments, I wish to thank Carla Bergman, David Buchanan, Ferrel Christensen, Thomas Cushman, Hamish Telford, and an anonymous reviewer for the *Journal of Human Rights*.
2. This definition is drawn from Goldstein (2001), preface.
3. "In most feminist commentary, 'the politics of masculinity' ... centres on *how male privilege is established and how it is used to perpetuate the subordination of women*" (Jones 1996). Orlando Patterson (1993) similarly refers to "the tendency of black feminists, who dominate the discourse [on gender], to confine, and confound, the problems of gender -- which concerns *both* males and females in their relations with each other -- with those of women's issues, or, when relational problems are considered, to privilege the standpoint of women, on the assumption that they are always the victims of the interaction." His point can be extended without qualification to feminist movements in general.
4. Ibbitson (2001). The headline is misleading: although a small drop was registered for inmates of state prisons, "the overall population for state and federal prisons rose slightly, by 1.3 per cent, to 1,381,892 inmates."
5. Mauer quoted in Schlosser (1998).
6. University of Virginia and Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women, "Incarcerated Women in the United States: Facts and Figures," <http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/prisonstudy/subpages/facts/facts.html>.
7. "From 1980 to 1995, the number of women in prison increased by 417 percent, compared to a 235 percent increase for men. ... Women are increasingly being locked up for drug offenses, also at greater rates than for men. As of 1991, one third of female prison inmates were incarcerated for a drug offense, compared to one fifth of male inmates" (Mauer 1999: 185).
8. Drug prosecution rose by 99% between 1982 and 1988 alone (Mauer 1999: 61); "the chances of receiving a prison term after being arrested for a drug offense increased by 447 percent between 1980 and 1992" (*ibid.*: 151). According to *The Economist* (2001), "More than one in ten of all arrests -- 1.5m in 1999 - is for drug offences. Some 40-% of those drug arrests were for possessing marijuana. Fewer than 20% were for the sale or manufacture of drugs, whether heroin, cocaine or anything else. ... America's imprisonment rate for drug offences alone now exceeds the rate of imprisonment in most West European countries for crimes of all kinds."
9. There is a marvellous exposition of this theme in chapter 4 of Chomsky (1991).
10. Ann Chih Lin, review of Kathleen Daly, *Gender, Crime, and Punishment*, *The Law and Politics Book Review*, 5(6) (1995), 176.
11. Pearson (1997, 89), citing sentencing figures from Coramae Richey Mann, *When Women Kill*.
12. Quoted in Human Rights Watch/The Sentencing Project (1998). "The extent of disenfranchisement in the United States is as troubling as the fact that the right to vote can be lost for relatively minor offenses," write the report's authors. "An offender who receives probation for a single sale of drugs can face a lifetime of disenfranchisement. Restrictions on the franchise in the United States seem to be ... in violation of democratic principles and international human rights law." See also Borger (2000).
13. See the Human Rights Watch press release, "Florida Ex-Offenders Barred from Vote Decisive in Election," 8 November 2000. <http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/elections/results.htm>: "The permanent disenfranchisement of over 400 000 ex-offenders in Florida is likely to have determined the outcome of the presidential election. ... Almost one third of the African American men in Florida were unable to vote because of a felony conviction at some point in their past."
14. See the discussion of *corvée* labor in Jones (2000), noting that "the historical record shows a considerable overlap between *corvée* and associated institutions of imprisonment and incarceration -- again, a

victimization experience that is and always has been a male near-monopoly the world over." Readers may be as surprised as I was to learn that according to the International Labour Organization, it remains legal to impose forced labour on *adult men and only adult men*. Article 11 of the ILO's Convention Concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour, first introduced in 1930 and still in effect, states: "Only adult able-bodied males who are of an apparent age of not less than 18 and not more than 45 years may be called upon for forced or compulsory labour"; the Convention "fix[es] the proportion of the resident adult able-bodied males who may be taken at one time for forced or compulsory labour, provided always that this proportion shall in no case exceed 25 percent." Cited in Buchanan (2002: 105). [400]

15. Donaldson (1993). After this article was accepted for publication, Human Rights Watch published a groundbreaking report on "male rape in U.S. prisons" (Human Rights Watch 2001). One of its many interesting findings was that *white* males were most vulnerable to sexual attack, and *black* males most likely to be the attackers; see the discussion at pp. 71-73.

16. From 1998 to 2000, three Amnesty International news bulletins on human rights in the USA mentioned the gender variable in their title. All concerned imprisoned women: "Rough justice for women behind bars" (19 February 1999); "Amnesty International calls for inquiry into reports of retaliation by prison staff against women inmates who complain of abuse" (29 October 1998), and "New reports of children and women abused in correctional institutions" (5 October 1998). The overwhelming preponderance of abused, raped and (as we will see below) executed males appears to be taken for granted: the Amnesty bulletins slot males into other categories instead ("prisoners," "executions," "black teenager[s]," "child offenders," etc.). In the one case in which the word "man" was used in a bulletin's title, it was preceded by "mentally retarded" ("Execution of mentally retarded man scheduled," 13 December 1999); the word "men" never appeared. Two full Amnesty reports were published on gender and incarceration in 1999: "'Not part of my sentence' -- Violations of the Human Rights of *Women* in Custody," and "The Findings of a Visit to Valley State Prison for *Women*, California" (emphasis added). In Amnesty's 2000 Annual Report entry on the United States, the word "women" appears 14 times, in a substantial section devoted to "Women in Prison." The word "men" does not appear in the text of the entry; nor does the word "man," except in a passing reference to the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man. Ironically, Amnesty accuses the United States of "A pick-and-choose approach to human rights" (bulletin of 22 September 1998).

17. Specifically, through rampant overcrowding of male prisoners, the mixing of violent and non-violent offenders, and the mixing of adults with juveniles; more generally, by promoting for political gain a "tough-on-crime" ethos that exacerbates all of these problems, and by encouraging the growth of the US "prison-industrial complex," which Eric Schlosser defines as "a set of bureaucratic, political, economic interests that encourage increased spending on imprisonment, regardless of the actual need." Schlosser, "The prison-industrial complex," p. 54.

18. Between 1930, when the Bureau of Justice Statistics began keeping records, and 1967, when an "unofficial moratorium" on executions was temporarily imposed, 3827 out of the 3859 victims were men, that is, *over 99.9%*; 54% were black. During the same period, the US Army executed 160 men, *including 53 for rape* (see Justice Center Website, "Focus on the death penalty: history and recent developments"). On 24 February 2000, Betty Lou Beets became the fourth US woman executed since 1976. See Graczyk (2000). On 2 May 2000, Christina Marie Riggs was executed by lethal injection in Arkansas for suffocating her two children; she was the first woman executed in Arkansas in over 150 years.

19. *All but one* of the 88 death-row inmates who were subsequently cleared of their crimes and released (between 1973 and 2000) were male. They had spent an average of 7.6 years on death row (see Death Penalty Information Center, "Innocence").

20. Amnesty International (1996b). The report gives a list of "Sample cases of deaths in custody," in which all 11 victims cited are male; but this is evident only from their names and the pronouns used in describing the cases. In all instances, the victims are defined only by ethnicity and age: "Mohammed Assassa, aged 55," "Anthony Baez, aged 29, of Puerto Rican origin," "Richard Butler, black, aged 40," etc.

21. Cited in Randal (1999: 113).

22. All quotes from Bandow (1987).

23. Cited in "House debate on suspending draft registration, July 27, 1995," <http://www.objector.org/conscription/congress-debate.html>.

24. To its credit, the National Organisation for Women "submitted a powerful amicus curiae brief" in the

- case, "urging that compulsory military registration cover young women as well as young men" (Enloe 2000: 18).
25. See the text of the decision at: <http://www.columbia.edu/~rr91/3489/Rostker.htm>.
26. Adapted from Prof. Gonzalo Santos, Professor of Sociology, California State University/Bakersfield, <http://www.csubak.edu/~gsantos/presentations/pres1/sld009.htm>.
27. "Crucial," because all the other defining features of minority groups could also be shared by majority ones. The "tendency for endogamy" requirement is clearly irrelevant for an analysis of gender and minorities.
28. A World Wide Web search using the Google search engine turned up some 615 000 entries for "women and minority," including the following representative range of programs and resources: "Surveys of Minority-Owned and Women-Owned Business Enterprises," "Women and Minority Participation in Graduate Education," "Women and Minority Opportunities," "Women and Underrepresented Minority Scientists and Engineers," "Report on the Hiring of Women and Minority Historians," "Women and Minority Unemployment," "Women's and Minority Health," "Number of Women and Minority Coaches," and so on (and on).
29. This is true, at least, if children are not considered "players" in the various scenarios.
30. According to *Scientific American* (1999), "One of the most extraordinary developments over the past two decades has been the growing prevalence of female students on college campuses, particularly in the English-speaking countries and Europe. In the US, women became a majority on campuses in 1979 and by 1982 were awarded more bachelor's degrees than men. The number of female graduates, which has been growing steadily for more than a century, is likely to rise further, a trend reinforced in recent years by an unusually large number of women older than 30 seeking higher degrees. ... American women now receive 55 percent of master's degrees and about four out of 10 of first professional degrees and Ph.D.s; their share of all three types of [401] degrees is rising. ... Perhaps, as Thomas G. Mortenson, editor of the newsletter *Postsecondary Education Opportunity* suggests, the failure of men to keep up with women traces to stresses earlier in life. Girls in one-parent families ordinarily remain with their mothers and are more likely to find female role models in public schools, where teachers are overwhelmingly female. One result of this disparity, Mortenson says, is that boys are more apt to have poor grades. Eventually the stresses on males, who also suffer disproportionately from learning disabilities, result in lower college enrollment and graduation rates." See also the article by Fonda (2000), interestingly titled in the present context: "The male minority."
31. Men suffer some 93% of all occupational fatalities in the US, and 93% of murders on the job (about three-quarters of murders overall). Statistics for 1993, US Department of Health and Human Services, cited in *CHANCE News*, 2(17, 3-20 October). On murders overall, see US Department of Justice (2000) Bureau of Justice Statistics (1998 figures). Remarkably, the *New York Times* report citing the on-the-job murder statistics was headlined, "High murder rate for *women* on job" (3 October 1993; emphasis added).
32. "Each year, suicide claims more than 30 000 lives; about 80% of those who die are males." Pan-American Health Organisation, "United States of America: demographic indicators," <http://www.paho.org/english/sha/prflusa.htm>.
33. In the US in the early 1990s, up to 80% of the homeless were male, mostly single men. See Marin (1991).
34. According to the US Office of Applied Studies, "males were about twice as likely as females to be past year and past month cocaine users" (1998: 48). "In general, use of inhalants and hallucinogens was more commonly reported among males and whites [7.9% men and 3.7% women for inhalants, 12.6% to 7.4% for hallucinogens]. Heroin use was more commonly reported among males and blacks [0.8% men and 0.4% women for heroin injection]" (1998: 48). The report is available at: <http://www.samhsa.gov/oas/NHSDA/98MF.pdf>. There are also three times as many male as female alcoholics and "problem-drinkers" (see Grant *et al.*, 1994).
35. "In 1995, heart disease mortality for white men was almost double that for white women. ... Age-adjusted lung cancer death rates for African-American men and white men (73.7 and 51.7 deaths per 100 000, respectively) were two to three times those for African-American women and white women (26.1 and 27.4, respectively)." Pan-American Health Organisation, "United States of America: demographic indicators."
36. Some 78% of AIDS sufferers in the US in 1997 were male, according to the Centers for Disease Control, 1997, *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report* 9(2). Cited in Network of Reform Groups (n.d.).
37. "Between 1980 and 1992, women accounted for three-fifths of the increase in the American workforce ... America's Bureau of Labour ... forecasts that the five fastest-growing kinds of work between now and 2002

will be residential care, computer and data processing, health services, child care, and business services. Women dominate all these activities: their share of employment in them is respectively: 79%, 68%, 70%, 70% and 51%. In contrast, the five sectors declining fastest will be footwear, ammunition-making, ship-building, leather-working and photographic supplies. They are man's work. Men account for at least two-thirds of the workforce in all the categories" (*The Economist* 1996). The Women's Bureau of the US Department of Labor reported in November 1996 that "there were 7.3 million women employed in executive, administrative and managerial occupations. Women's job growth in this field has surpassed that of men in recent years. The number of women employed in these fields grew by 31 percent between 1988 and 1995, while the number of men grew by only 14 percent" ("Facts on Working Women," [http://www.dol.gov/dol/wb/public/wb\\_pubs/wmgt.htm](http://www.dol.gov/dol/wb/public/wb_pubs/wmgt.htm)).

38. According to Cynthia Cockburn, "when the police came in [to Columbine] and released the surviving students, 'every *male* student had to be frisked and treated as a possible suspect.'" Cockburn (1999: 1), quoting *Newsweek*, 3 May 1999, 76 (Cockburn's emphasis; I might choose to italicize "every").

39. They also play into the demonizing of very young boys, "tomorrow's superpredator." For a recent and stimulating analysis, see Sommers (2000). Sommers argues that, in part as a result of feminists' narrow preoccupation with the "plight" of girls, "it has become fashionable to attribute pathology to millions of healthy male children."

40. For an account of the events, see Gendercide Watch (n.d.).

41. For a much better treatment of the same story, which goes some distance towards the framing I believe is necessary, see Hedges (2000): "The coffins of livery-cab drivers, shipped back to this country from New York nearly once a week during the city's recent spate of killings, have badly shaken this poor mountain town of 55 000 [San José de Las Matas], which for decades has sent its young men to drive the streets of New York in pursuit of a decent, if dangerous wage. Families here have exacted promises from sons, brothers and fathers in New York not to work at night, to install required partitions or get out of the business. ... [But] cabdriving remains one of the few ways a young man with no skills can make money."

42. Contrast this with media coverage of women's occupational fatalities. The following Associated Press dispatch is typical: "At least 37 people, *mostly women*, were killed and many others injured when fire swept through a four-storey garment factory near the Bangladesh capital on Saturday night, fire fighters said. The fire service said most victims at the Chowdhury Knitwear Factory at Narsingdi, 60 km from Dhaka, were *women workers*." In *The News* (Mexico City), 26 November 2000, emphasis added.

43. For example, one frequently sees cited the claim that "70-80% of the world's refugees are women and children," intended to imply disproportionate suffering on the part of women/females (see Kelly 2000, from which the quotation is drawn (p. 52)). But a moment's thought suffices to establish that in most "Third World" [402] countries (where refugees overwhelmingly originate), "70-80%" of *all human beings* are women and (boy and girl) children; in these societies, those under 18 standardly constitute 50% or more of the total population. Thus, "men and children" likewise account for 70% to 80% of refugees, but this phrase is curiously never used. Citing the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (1998) report, Cynthia Cockburn notes that "about half" of all refugees are females (the figure is actually 50.4%; see excerpts from the report at: <http://www.unhcr.ch/statist/98oview/ch3.htm>). But this figure does not carry the emotional weight of the "womenandchildren" formulation, by which boy children are effectively "feminized" and used to buttress claims of women's comparative disadvantage (Cockburn 1999: 15).

44. I am thinking here not only of standard male circumcision, which in many parts of the world leads to the same type of trauma, infection and mortality as does female genital mutilation, but of the estimated 500 000 forcibly castrated "eunuchs" in India. See *India Today* (1982); Harding (2000); Behld (n.d.).

45. For an excellent analysis of the complex issue of male reproductive choice, see Young (2000).

46. For a summary of "95 scholarly investigations, 79 empirical studies and 16 reviews and/or analyses, which demonstrate that women are physically aggressive, or more aggressive, than men in their relationships with their spouses or male partners," see Fiebert (n.d.); also Cook (1997).

47. For an examination of this motif in the context of the wars in Bosnia-Herzegovina, see Jones (1994).

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