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See also: child abuse; crime, criminality and law; domestic violence; fatherhood and violence; military institutions; military masculinities; sexual violence; torture; violence, men as victims of; violence, organisational and collective; violence, sport; violence, workplace

KEITH PRINGLE

VIOLENCE, MEN AS VICTIMS OF

The victims of violence often are male. This is true in particular of collective, public forms of violence (in wars, political conflicts, street and gang violence). For example, in areas of political conflict such as Palestine or Northern Ireland, young men have a greater exposure to and participation in violence than young women (Reilly *et al.* 2004). However, males also comprise a significant proportion of the victims of violence in relationships and families. The perpetrators of these diverse forms of violence also are predominantly male. Boys and men are most at risk from other boys and men, and much violence is male-to-male. At the same time, males also are subjected to violence by female perpetrators.

The gendered character of men's subjection to violence often has gone unremarked. Scholars and policy-makers have neglected the ways in which this violence is shaped by and itself helps to constitute social codes and relations of masculinity. However, there is now growing scholarship on the gendered character of male victimisation, in such settings as wars and civil conflicts, gangs and street violence, prisons, schools, workplaces and other institutional contexts, and relationships and families.

The high incidence and typical dynamics of male–male violence reflect and themselves define the norms and relations of manhood. In contexts where dominant constructions of masculinity emphasise aggressiveness, entitlement to power and emotional callousness, males are more likely both to use violence and to be subjected to violence. Men's subjection to violence in many cultures often represents performances of masculinity by other men. For example, gay men and those perceived to be gay are assaulted by young men intent on proving their masculinity and heterosexuality. Violence may be used as a resource in achieving masculinity – as part of a repertoire of behaviours that define and emphasise particular forms of masculinity (Messerschmidt 1997). For some young men, violent behaviour is perceived as inevitable, compulsory, an appropriately masculine and heterosexual response to conflict, as having substantial rewards, and as respected by young women who are attracted to 'hard' men (Reilly *et al.* 2004). Such social codes take their toll on many men in terms of physical injury, ill health and death.

Male-on-male violence is the most common form of public violence, and men comprise the majority of victims of homicide and public assaults. Assaults in public venues are often the result of contests over male honour (Polk 1994). Minor incidents can set off lethal violence. Men may swap insults, argue, challenge each other's strength or manhood, or defend their honour in front of their male peers. Group drinking, rowdiness, arguing and

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fighting are pleasurable forms of entertainment for some men, as are power struggles with authority figures such as the police. Male victimisation is the outcome too of ritualised forms of male–male violence in the initiation and participation rituals of university fraternities, workplaces and other contexts.

Sex-selective mass killings of males are a gendered component of political and military conflicts (Carpenter 2002). Abuses and atrocities have been systematically perpetrated against non-combatant men, from the Stalinist purges in the 1930s and 1940s to more recent conflicts in Indonesia, Bangladesh, Cambodia and East Timor. There is growing recognition of the sexual torture of men. During the war in the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, substantial numbers of men were subjected to forced sexual acts, castration, genital beatings and electroshock. One study found that three-quarters of male political prisoners in El Salvador had been subjected to sexual torture (Oosterhoff *et al.* 2004).

Other forms of male subjection to violence are almost entirely socially legitimate. On-field aggression is routine in male-dominated contact sports such as American football, ice hockey and rugby, and may even constitute the sport itself, as is the case in boxing, wrestling and other martial arts. In these contexts, violence to men and by men is normative, codified (albeit bound by certain rules) and celebrated.

Where there has been public debate in Western countries regarding violence to men, it has often focused on violence by female partners. Yet this represents only a tiny proportion of the physical abuse to which men are subjected. For example, in a four-year study of admissions to the Emergency Department of an American hospital, over 8,000 men had been assaulted and injured. Of these, only forty-five men were injured by their intimate female partners or ex-partners, representing 0.55 per cent of male assault visits (Muelleman and Burgess 1998). While some studies find apparent gender symmetries in subjection to domestic violence, others suggest that in heterosexual relationships men are far less likely than women to experience frequent, prolonged, and extreme violence, sustain injuries, fear for their lives, be sexually assaulted or experience post-separation violence (Flood 2005).

Gender norms and relations also shape males' responses to victimisation. Being able to respond aggressively and heroically to other men's physical aggression often is a marker of manhood. Stories of withstanding aggression, and the scars which accompany these, can be badges of manliness, which embody courage, adventure and street toughness. Men who show pain or weakness risk being seen as feminised and homosexualised. Males' ability to admit to, recover from, and seek help for their abuse is constrained by masculine stoicism, homophobic taboos and laws (in cases involving male–male sexual assault), and stereotypical views in health care and other institutions of men as aggressors and women as victims.

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