

Male Victims & Female  
Perpetrators: New Data Challenge  
Old Assumptions

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# My background

- Women's reproductive health & rights, including sexual violence
- Sexual violence against prisoners
- Non-stereotypical victimization

# This talk will explore:



- ◉ Understandings & assumptions about gender & victimization
- ◉ What new U.S. federal agency data reveal
- ◉ Advocacy strategies & framing

# Definitions of Sex and Gender



- ◉ **Sex**: biological; male and female.
- ◉ **Gender**: social expectations for men and women and the unequal power relationships that can result.

# Traditional **gender** stereotypes

## Men

- ⦿ Naturally warlike
- ⦿ Aggressive
- ⦿ Strong
- ⦿ Invulnerable
- ⦿ Always want sex

## Women

- ⦿ Naturally peaceful
- ⦿ Passive
- ⦿ Weak
- ⦿ Sensitive
- ⦿ Reluctantly agree to sex

Extreme manifestations of gender are often celebrated



# Gender policing occurs in different ways:

- mockery
- pathologizing



- ◉ discrimination
- ◉ social pressure
- ◉ violence, including sexual violence







Our ideas about gender are so fixed, that flipping them is the story itself.

Gender stereotypes teach us that  
men are predators & women are prey.



- ⦿ Can we use facts to challenge **gender stereotypes**?
- ⦿ Can feminist analysis / gender theory apply to **male victimization**? To **female perpetration**?
- ⦿ Examples from **armed conflict**; then US data.

# But, lessons from feminist/gender theory

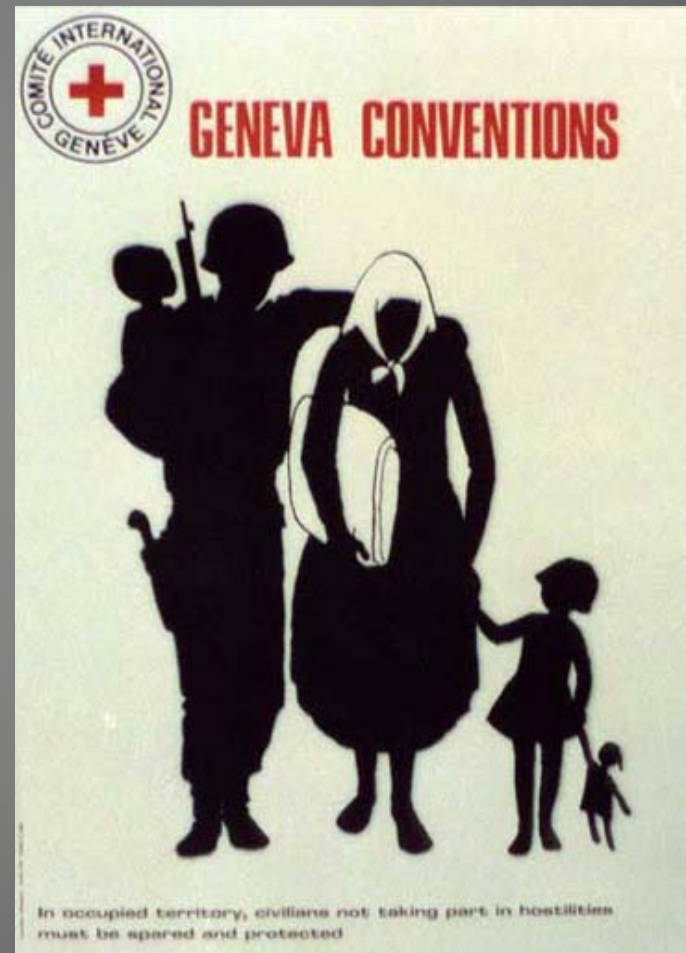
Question gender assumptions:

- ⦿ Women are weak
- ⦿ Men are invulnerable



# Lessons from feminist/gender theory:

- **Power** is everywhere.
- It informs **subordination**.
- Race, class, age, sexuality & nationality.



# Wartime sexual violence against men found in:

- Syria
- Former Yugoslavia
- Croatia
- Sri Lanka
- Iran
- Iraq
- Greece
- El Salvador
- Chile
- DRC
- CAR
- Sudan
- Rwanda
- and elsewhere



# Conflict-related sexual violence in Liberia (Johnson et al., JAMA, 2008)



- 42% of female and 32% of male combatants
- 9% of female non-combatants and 7% of male non-combatants

# Conflict-related sexual violence in Congo (Johnson et al., JAMA, 2010)

- 30% of women and 22% of men reported conflict-related sexual violence
- Other studies look at men *or* women



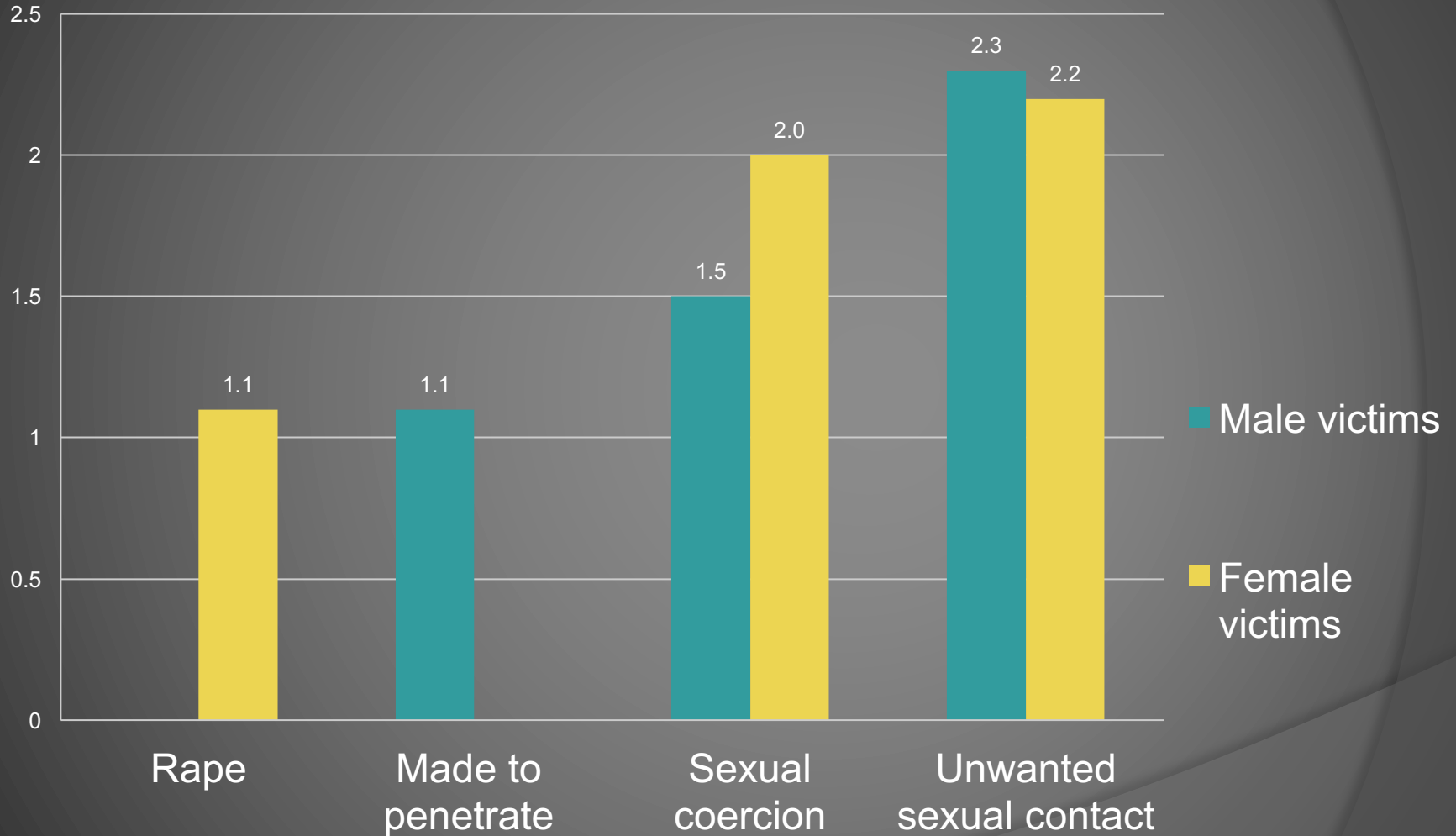


# US Department of Defense Data on Sexual Assault in the Military



- **Women** are more likely abused.
- **Most** abuse victims are **men**.
- **Messaging** from leadership focuses on women.
- Insufficient attention to **prevention**: military culture, hyper-masculinity, & warrior mindset.

# 12-mo. prevalence (%) among adults from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) 2010: U.S.



# CDC & “made to penetrate”



- **New** info about what’s happening to men.
- **Hidden** under “other” and distinguished from rape.
- **More detail** provided about rape.
- CDC press release
  - “Rape/raped” = 7
  - **“Made to penetrate” = 0**

Headlines reflect CDC's bias:

# The New York Times

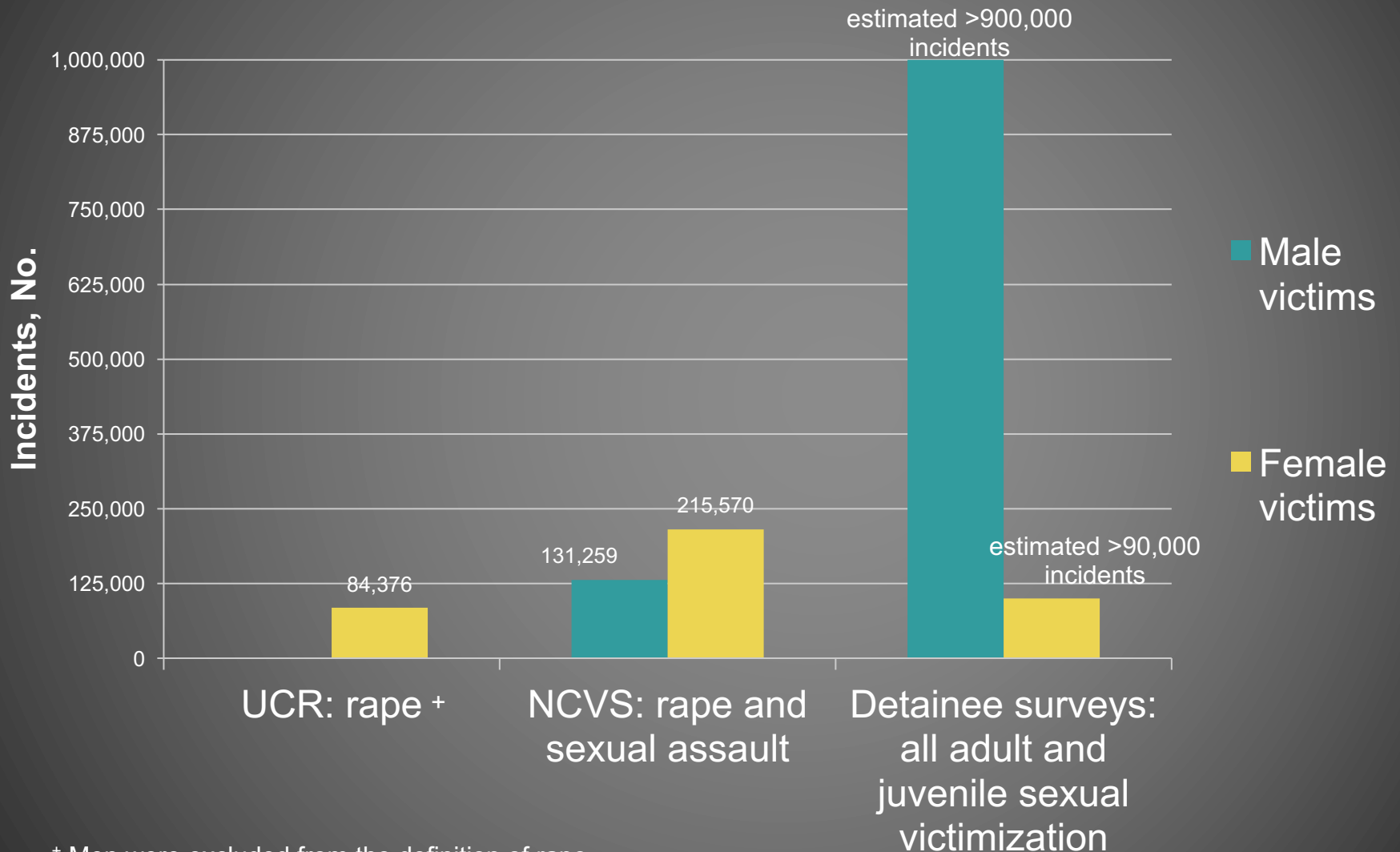
December 14, 2011

“Nearly **1 in 5 Women** in U.S. Survey Say They Have Been Sexually Assaulted”

# The FBI Uniform Crime Report (UCR) redefined rape:

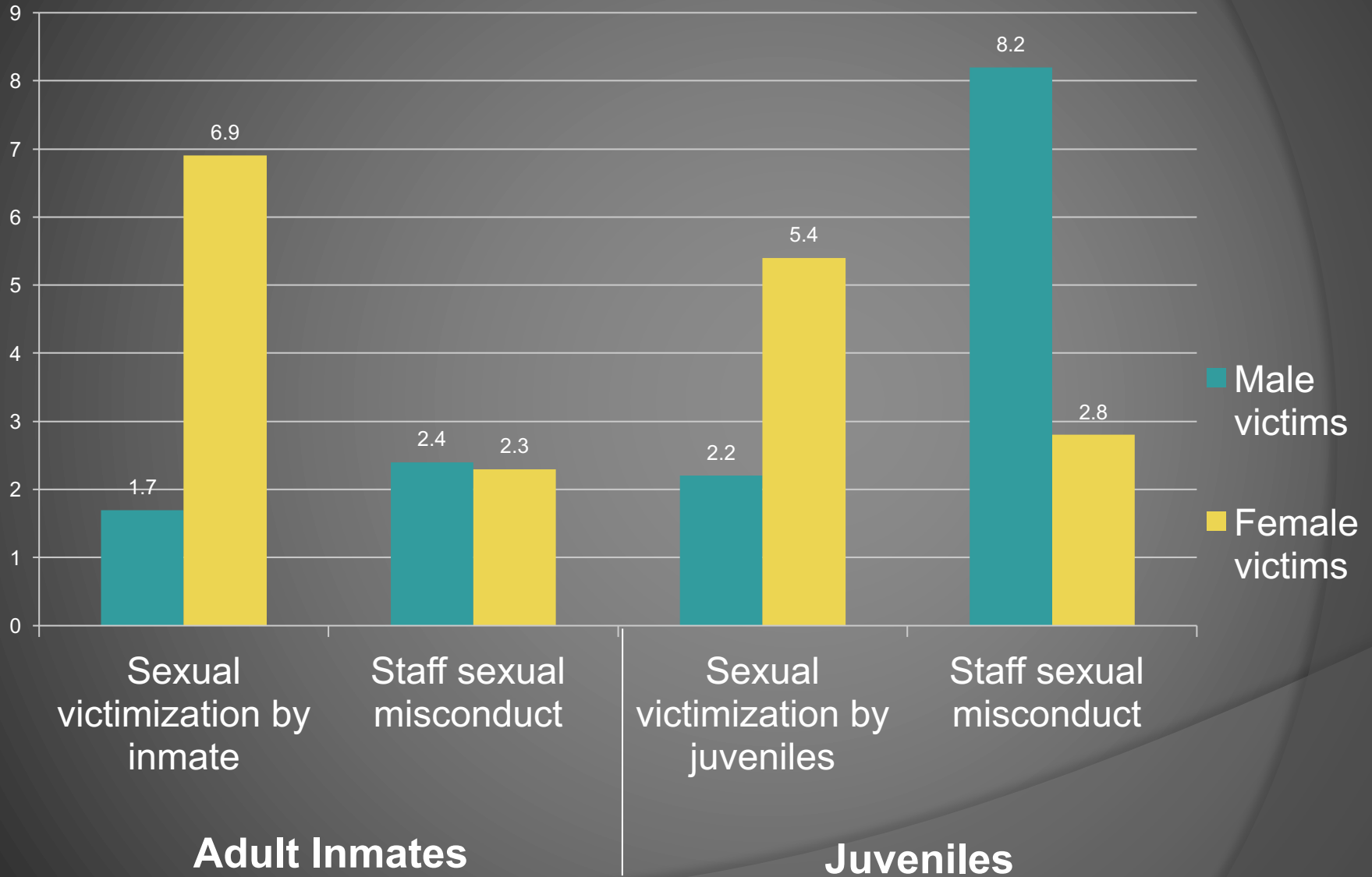
- 1929: “the carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will.”
- 2012: “the penetration, no matter, how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person without the consent of the victim.”
- *2012 is better, but is “made to penetrate” included?*

Annual incidents of sexual victimization from the Uniform Crime Report (UCR) and the National Crime Victim Survey (NCVS), 2012; the National Inmate Survey-2, 2008-2009; and the national Survey of Youth in Custody 2008-2009.



+ Men were excluded from the definition of rape.

12-mo. prevalence (%) among from the National Inmate Survey 2011-2012 and the National Survey of Youth in Custody, 2012



# Why are male victims **missed globally?**



- Men aren't **asked**.
- SV outreach **designed** for women.
- In conflict, framed as **torture**.
- Health providers look **only for physical trauma**.
- **Stigma** silence victims.
- Laws not inclusive, even **persecutory**.



Four men raped by an attacker, yet:



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December 26, 2006

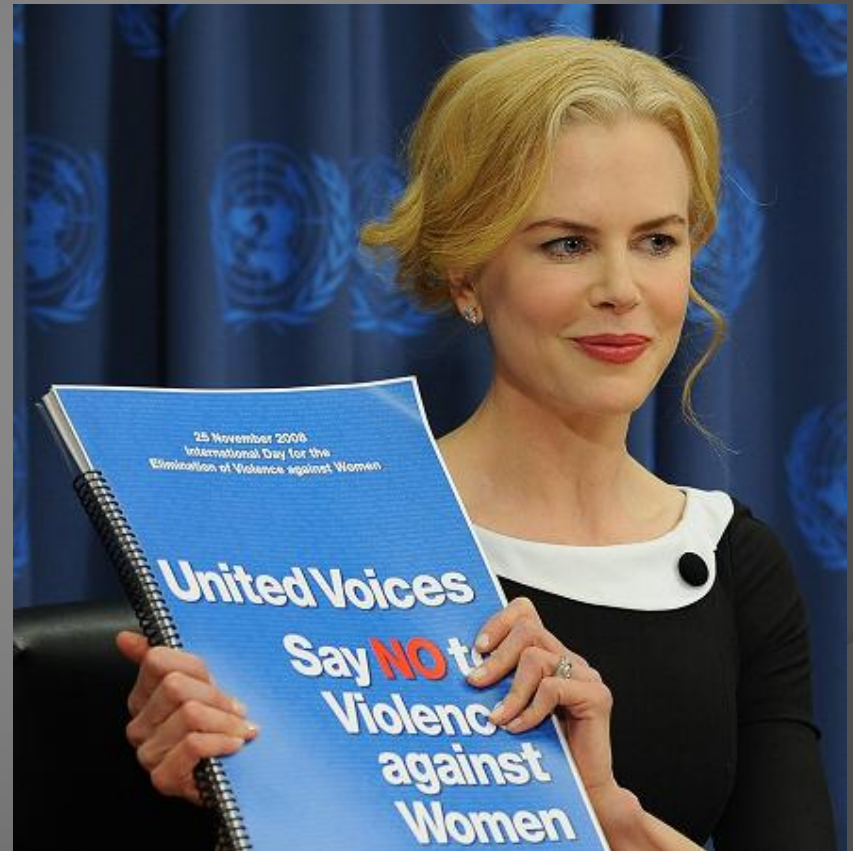
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“No one has been seriously hurt.”

# Gender inclusivity as feminist intervention

- Over-emphasis on victimhood: **women** are “pure, passive & ignorant.”
- Can reinforcing **male invincibility** exacerbate violence?
- Villains vs. damsels in distress.



# Upending stereotypes



- **Women & girls** are complex, multi-dimensional.
- So are **men & boys**.
- Reductionist, **fixed ideas about gender** hamper progress.

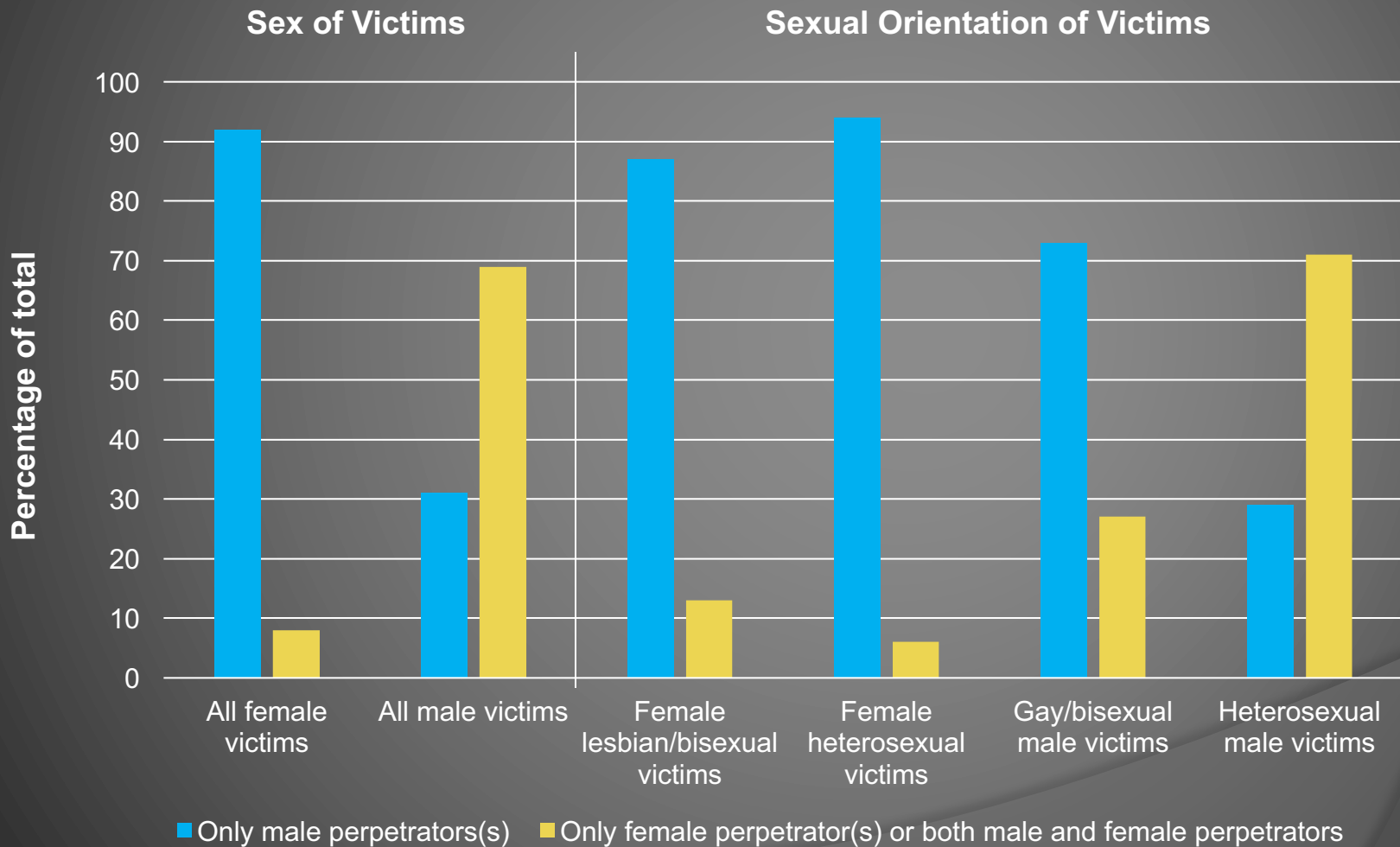
# Ignoring this is bad **for men.**

- ◉ Is inaccurate & misses **victims in need.**
- ◉ **Stigmatizes** sexually victimized men.
- ◉ Plays on stereotypes: invulnerable & **sexually insatiable.**



- ◎ We've looked at the **sex of victims**.
- ◎ More **male** victims than expected.
- ◎ Let's examine the **perpetrators**.
- ◎ Huge, state-of-the-art nationally representative samples.

Lifetime prevalence reports of “non-rape sexual victimization” from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) 2010 Summary Report and the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) 2010 Findings on Victimization by Sexual Orientation.

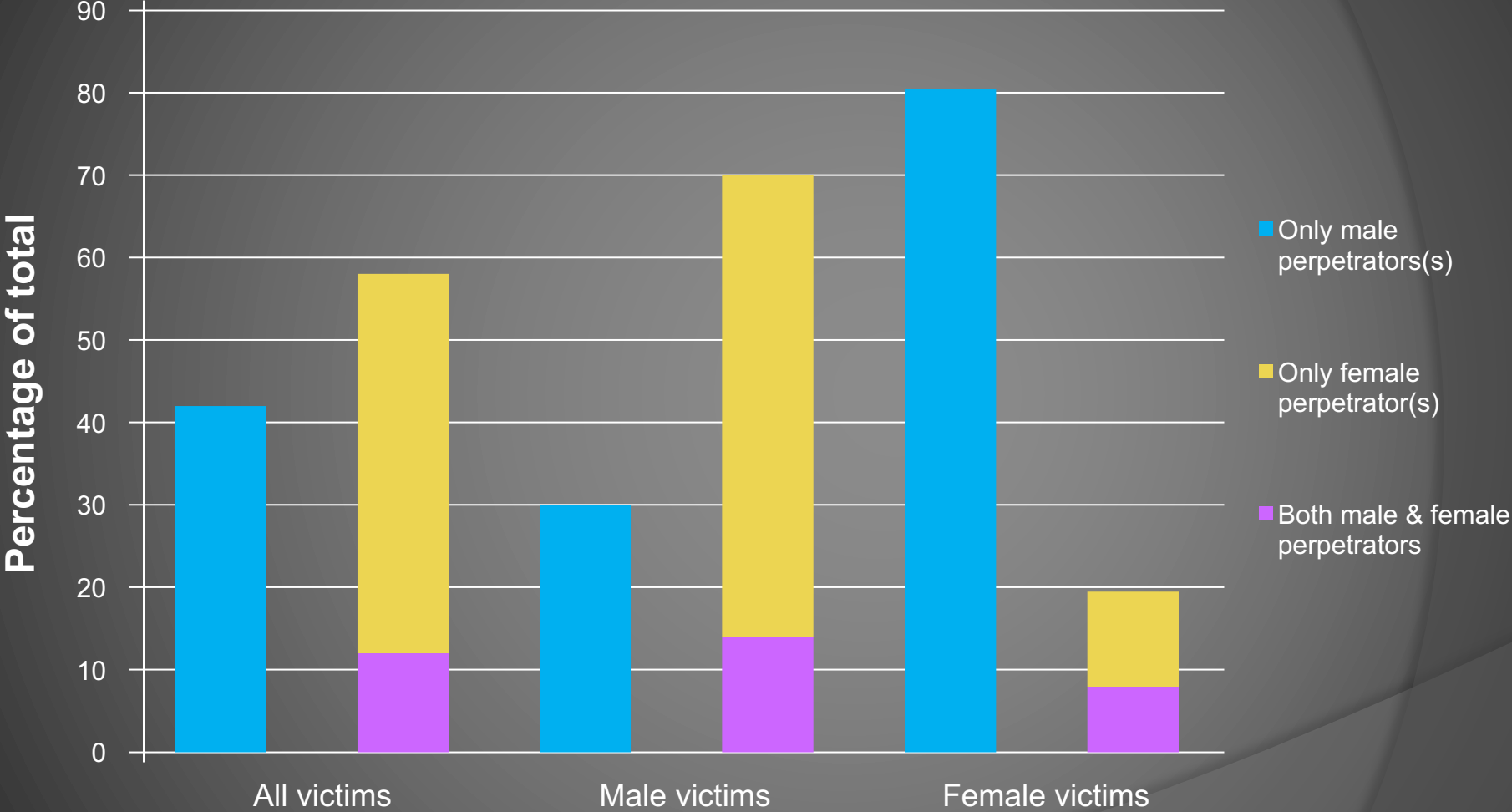


# NISVS lifetime prevalence (2010)

## Major take-away:

- Men and women **experience similar prevalence** of abuse.
- Male victims **more likely** victimized by women.
- Therefore, female perpetration **IS NOT FRINGE, RARE, OR AN EXCEPTION TO THE RULE.**
- Add **inmates** and this can be taken **even further.**

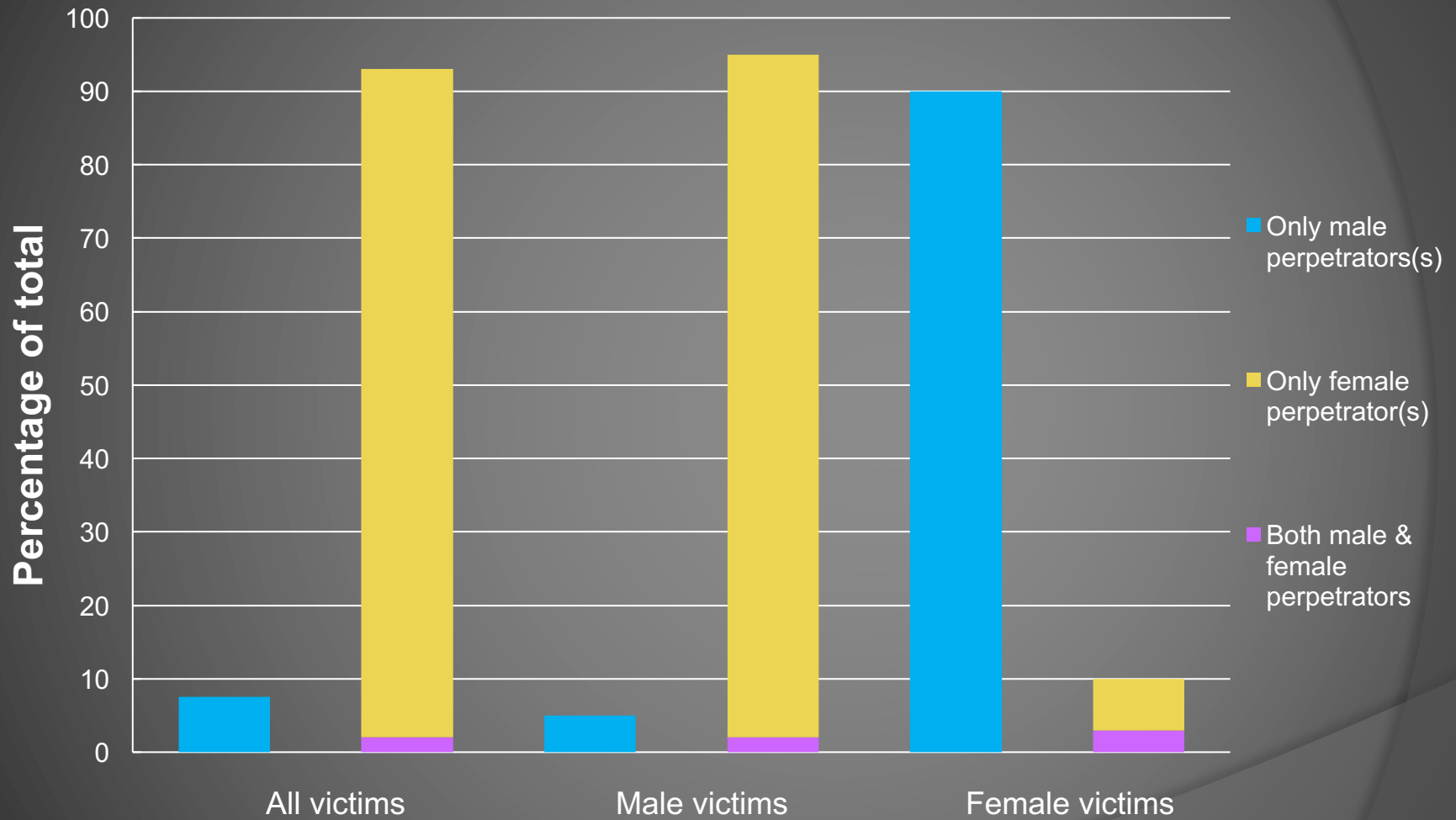
“Unwilling” sexual misconduct by staff as reported by former state prisoners from the National Former Prisoner Survey (NFPS) 2008.



**“Unwilling” Staff Sexual Victimization of Adult Prisoners**



# Sexual Victimization in Juvenile Facilities Reported by Youth from the National Survey of Youth in Custody (NSYC) 2012.



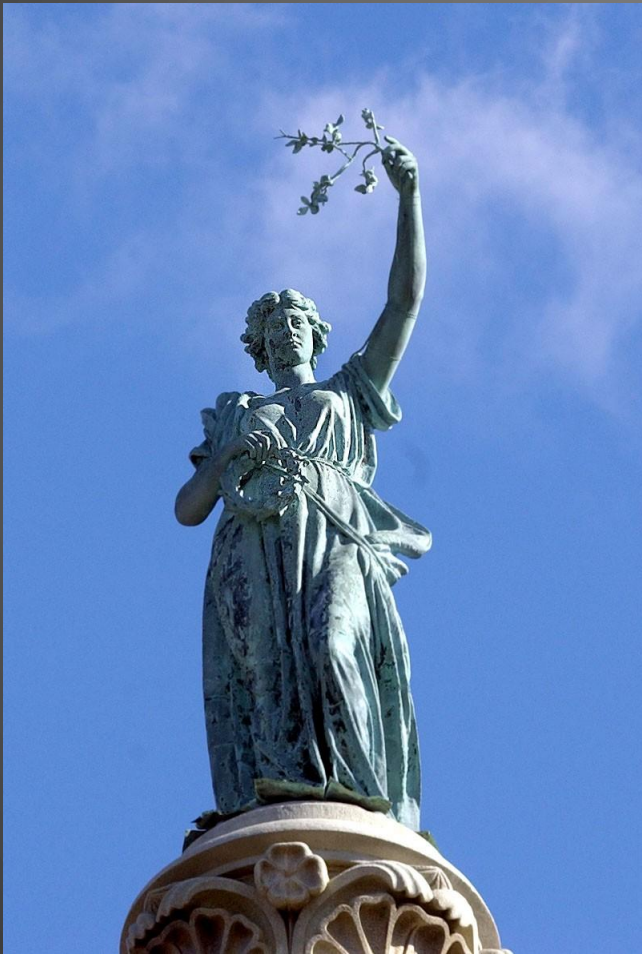
**Staff Sexual Victimization of Detained Juveniles**

# Female perpetrators



- Public fixation with Lynddie England, flouted gender roles at Abu Ghraib.
- DRC: 41% of women & 10% of men reported **female** perpetrator.
- US juvenile detention: 94% reported **female** abuser.
- Thorny yet important for women's rights advocates.

# Challenges in Research



- Emphasis on **victim penetration**
- Definitions and **cross-population** comparison
- **Normalization**: screen everyone
- Frameworks (**crime vs. health**)
- **Confidentiality** / self-administered
- **Numerous** Qs, behaviorally specific

# Strategies & framings



- Honor & build upon feminist **anti-rape legacy**.
- “**Us vs. them**” is pointless, counter-productive, contrary to equality & inclusion.
- Frame as **next step** in decades-long fight against SV.
- Don’t underestimate it: women’s orgs **hold power** on this topic.



**Women** still suffer greatly -- and have unique needs. Victimized **men** have **massive** unmet needs, including gendered concerns.

Can we be **gender-sensitive** and **gender-inclusive**? I believe *this* is our dual imperative as we move forward.

# All Survivors Project (ASP)

- Sexual violence against men and boys in armed conflict
- UCLA-based human rights reporting & United Nations advocacy
- Former Yugoslavia, Sri Lanka, Syria, CAR, DRC & elsewhere

Compassion is not a finite resource.



PAUL HARTNETT/RYNCA/GETTY

# Relevant Publications:

- ⦿ **Sexual Victimization by Women More Common than Previously Known** (2017), Scientific American website. With Ilan Meyer.
- ⦿ **Sexual Victimization Perpetrated by Women: Federal Data Reveal Surprising Prevalence** (2016), Aggression and Violent Behavior. With Andrew Flores and Ilan Meyer
- ⦿ **The Sexual Victimization of Men in America: New Data Challenge Old Assumptions** (2014), American Journal of Public Health. With Ilan Meyer.
- ⦿ **The Hidden Victims of Wartime Rape** (2011), The New York Times.
- ⦿ **Male Rape & Human Rights** (2009), Hastings Law Journal.



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Thanks for your kindness toward Clark. 😊

