
THE LOGIC OF WARTIME RAPE

[What types of activities would the members of your group typically do together?] The group rape of women. Afterward, we would feel good and talk about it a lot, discuss it among ourselves, and laugh about it.

—RUF ex-combatant, Sierra Leone, March 29, 2008

What explains variation in the use of rape during civil conflicts? Despite the lack of clear evidence about basic patterns of wartime rape, ideas proliferate about its causes. One scholar counted more than a dozen different theories in the various literature, with explanations ranging from biology (men are evolutionarily prone to rape) to the type of war (ethnic wars create the conditions necessary for mass rape) (Wood 2009). Few of these theories are satisfying, and as I argue throughout the book, many fail to account for the remarkable variation in the forms of rape, the patterns of how rape is committed across time and space, and the identity of its perpetrators and victims.

In the first part of this chapter, I introduce an explanation of wartime rape that I call *combatant socialization*. Starting from the well-documented fact that the majority of reported wartime rape—when rape is widespread—is gang rape,¹ I argue that wartime rape may be the result of a violent socialization process that takes place among the rank and file of combatant groups, especially groups with low levels of internal social cohesion. I maintain that factions with particularly low levels of internal cohesion are those that use extreme forms of forced recruitment to garner fighters—whether abduction (by insurgents) or its equivalent, press-ganging (by states). Drawing on literature from a variety of disciplines—particularly sociology, psychology, and criminology—and across a number of related contexts, I argue that gang rape is a form of group violence that increases social cohesion and performs various functions that are essential from the perspective of the armed group. Gang rape—unlike, for example, marital rape—is

arguably universally taboo; as a stigmatizing form of violence, it can help to sever ties to fighters' pasts. Gang rape is also a form of public, sexualized violence, which serves to communicate norms of masculinity, virility, and strength between fighters of both sexes. All of these are qualities of immense importance to fighters in armed groups, especially to those who have recently suffered the violence and humiliation of abduction. Finally, because gang rape carries risks—sometimes grave or debilitating risks, including sexually transmitted infections (STIs)—for the perpetrator, it can help to forge ties of trust among strangers.²

In the second part of the chapter, I present a series of competing, existing arguments about wartime rape. I consider the most common and influential explanations and separate them into three broad sets of arguments—opportunism/greed, ethnic hatred, and gender inequality—from which I derive a set of hypotheses and observable implications that I test in subsequent chapters. The explanations for wartime rape that I include have been put forth by scholars as well as by policy-makers, practitioners, and human rights advocates.³

Every explanation examined here can likely account for at least one case of wartime rape; indeed, detailed case studies of particular events and incidents often inform the development of more general explanations. The purpose of this chapter, however, is not to provide an exhaustive list of every possible cause of wartime rape but rather to distill those that are most prominent in both theory and policy. Of course, wartime rape may have any number of conceivable causes, and none of the arguments presented here, including combatant socialization, can fully explain every instance. In subsequent chapters, I use a number of methods—including statistical analysis and three fieldwork-based case studies—to determine which explanations find the most support across the universe of recent civil wars. In other words, which explanations for wartime rape are generalizable across contexts? Which explanations are best able to account for the central puzzles described in the introduction? The answers to these questions are essential both for scholars who analyze wartime violence and for those in the policy world working to mitigate the severity and consequences of wartime rape.

In this chapter, I first present the combatant socialization argument, along with its main assumptions and its basis in numerous fields of research. In particular—relying on the literature from psychology, sociology (especially military sociology), and political science—I address questions of how and why cohesion forms through a process of socialization. I explore puzzles about the power of social groups in perpetrating violence, including large-scale violence like genocide. I also raise two theoretical questions: First, why does violence serve to create cohesion among fighters in armed groups? Second, why is *sexual* violence selected by some groups, and what other alternatives exist for building unit cohesion? I then discuss a number of related arguments about rape and other forms of civilian

abuse and explain how these arguments are distinct from combatant socialization. In the second part of the chapter, I examine the three broad sets of competing arguments that I consider throughout the remainder of the book. Table 1.2, which summarizes the main arguments and the hypotheses tested throughout the book, is presented at the conclusion of this chapter.

Combatant Socialization

The central argument of this book is that wartime rape is best understood as a form of *group violence*.⁴ Through this lens, it is possible to draw on a number of related fields of study that have focused on similar types of group violence in order to address some of the more puzzling aspects of wartime rape. As outlined in the introduction, one of the most persistent puzzles of wartime rape is why gang rape is far more frequent during wartime than in peacetime. Estimates of peacetime gang rape as a proportion of all peacetime rape vary but nearly always comprise a minority of reports; one set of scholars estimates that peacetime gang rape comprises between 2 and 27 percent of all cases (Horvath and Woodhams 2013, 2). In contrast, studies of wartime rape have found that 75 percent or more of reported cases of rape are gang rape. Although many scholars have argued that wartime rape is a continuation of peacetime gender violence (e.g., Boesten and Fisher 2012), I argue instead that wartime rape is distinct from rape during peacetime in several fundamental ways. First, the increased prevalence of multiple-perpetrator rape in wartime suggests that wartime rape has a different purpose than peacetime violence. Second, evidence shows that members of armed groups who perpetrate wartime rape are different from the types of people who rape during peacetime. Third, the victims of wartime rape differ from those who are raped during peacetime, particularly in terms of their relationships to perpetrators.⁵ Finally, wartime rape is frequently more brutal than peacetime rape. All of these differences mean that, although gendered forms of violence exist in both peacetime and wartime, wartime rape requires a different type of explanation than peacetime gender violence.

The need for a different explanation suggests that the focus in much of the previous literature on combatants' opportunities to commit violence—and related principal-agent explanations for rape—is incomplete. Mere opportunity cannot account for the manner in which rape is actually perpetrated—often as part of a group, and under intense social pressure to participate. Principal-agent explanations, in which leaders direct their subordinates to commit violence, are also problematic—and occasionally contradictory. Some scholars understand agents to be “overworking” when they commit sexual violations (Mitchell 2004), while

others argue that principals order or encourage rape as part of a military strategy to undermine the morale of the opposition (e.g., Leiby 2009).

That mass rape is a part of military strategy (or a “tool of war”) is now a widely held belief. For example, the former foreign secretary of Britain William Hague wrote in an editorial in 2012 that “more often than not [rape] is carried out not by invading armies but by one group against another: deliberately to destroy, degrade, humiliate and scar political opponents or entire ethnic and religious groups” (*Times*, October 15, 2012). Similarly, physician-turned-activist Dr. Denis Mukwege said the following during an interview about rape in the DRC:

The most important reason [that rape is so prevalent in the DRC], among others, is that rape is used as a war strategy. When a woman is publicly raped, and so violently, not only is she traumatized, but the whole community is traumatized—her husband, her children, and the whole village. The result is often that a population will leave the village and will leave it to the armed bands who can then use the cattle and the fields. And so that’s just as good a result as using weapons. (Mukwege and Enslar 2009)

Overall, however, the explanation of rape as a military strategy suffers from a lack of supporting evidence. As previously argued, rape is rarely directed by commanders—although there are notable exceptions, both in recent conflicts and in the historical record.⁶ In addition, in much of the current debate, the consequences of rape are frequently conflated with its goals (Aranburu 2010; Wood 2012; Cohen, Hoover Green, and Wood 2013, 9–10; Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2013). It is indisputable that rape may have the effect of displacing a population or weakening the opposition. However, this does not necessarily imply that these outcomes were the result of an explicit strategy. Returning to the example of the DRC, in the most comprehensive studies that have been conducted with combatants, they did *not* specifically mention a strategy of using rape to take land and animals (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2013). To determine the motivations for rape—and whether it is being used strategically—researchers must study the perpetrators themselves, a task I take up in the three case study chapters.

Abductors’ Central Dilemma

Combatant groups that forcibly recruit new members—whether by abduction into an insurgency or by press-ganging into a state military—face a central dilemma: how to create a coherent group out of strangers who do not know each other and feel no loyalty toward the group of which they are now members. The

process of being abducted or press-ganged is violent; it often involves beating, forced labor, and, for women, rape and other forms of sexual violence.⁷ Many of those interviewed for this book reported feeling frightened and isolated when they were first abducted. The perpetration of costly, risky group violence is a means of overcoming these problems and of building trust and loyalty in such groups.

Scholars have noted that battlefield experiences, and group perpetration of atrocities such as mass killing, can forge strong ties between strangers. Gang rape, as a public, sexualized form of violence, is another such means for increasing group cohesion (e.g., Goldstein 2001). Despite its prevalence, not all rape in wartime is gang rape, and bonding among perpetrators can also occur in the aftermath of single rape—that is, in perpetrating a rape alone, and then recounting it to peers afterward. Scholars have noted that perpetrators may brag about the rapes in which they participated, in order to “revel in a sense of enhanced masculinity” (Sanday 2007, 83).

I argue that combatant groups with the lowest levels of social cohesion are those that recruit their members both randomly and through extreme force.⁸ Forcibly and randomly recruited combatants, whose members initially know very little about one another, may be more likely to commit wartime gang rape than those recruits who voluntarily join a fighting force. While social cohesion has not been found to be necessary for the battlefield effectiveness of an armed group, it is nonetheless essential for the group’s longevity.⁹ Social cohesion may decrease the chances that abducted fighters will try to escape or turn violent against the leadership. In addition, the collective responsibility for group atrocities like gang rape can serve to further increase ties of loyalty to the group. Overall, social cohesion is especially important in combatant groups comprised of kidnapped strangers—to enable the survival of the group—and rape is a powerful means of creating this cohesion.

Though the term “socialization” has various meanings, I understand socialization to be a process through which individual actors become committed to an armed group, including learning the norms and rules of the fighting force—and especially the norms and rules regarding rape and sexualized violence. As Checkel (2015, 11) argues, the endpoint of a process of socialization is either a learned role (where the individual may not agree with the action but still performs it) or the full internalization and acceptance of the norms and rules as the “right thing to do.” As applied to the use of rape by armed groups, socialization is complete when rape regularly occurs in the absence of overt orders, coercion, or threats.¹⁰ Scholars have argued that socialization can be achieved through the mutual hatred of an enemy group, as a result of a guiding ideology shared by all members of the group, or, most relevant for this study, from a set of benefits that derives from a group activity (O’Neill 2001, 104). Gang rape illustrates this last

method of socialization: benefits for the group (greater cohesion) are created through acts of group violence (gang rape).

Creating cohesion through gang rape need not be a conscious decision by the combatants or their commanders. It is unlikely that combatants themselves identify gang rape with the explicit purpose of forming social bonds, although the quotation from the RUF ex-combatant at the start of this chapter suggests that some do. Rather, combatants may perceive that regular participation in rape develops out of the dynamics of the combatant group. Wood (2016) argues that this type of violence comprises a third category of political violence, which is neither strategic nor opportunistic. She defines a “practice” as “violence which is neither ordered nor authorized but is tolerated by commanders” (1).¹¹ Individual combatants do not necessarily want to be integrated into the group that has just forcibly kidnapped them, but leaving the group is often not a viable option. Becoming more socially cohesive with one’s peers is a means of survival for abducted fighters and a way of gaining acceptance in a violent and confusing situation. If trapped in a group of hostile strangers, individuals will often choose participation in costly group behavior over continued estrangement from their peers. The fact that rape can also carry personal risks for the perpetrators, including danger to physical health, may reinforce its utility as a costly signal of loyalty and commitment, as a particularly useful intragroup organizing device, and finally as a tool of cohesion. In sum, gang rape is a particularly efficient method of both creating and perpetuating cohesion—not just as an initial hazing mechanism but also as a sustained socialization practice once the norms and beliefs about its use are internalized.¹² The cohesive benefits of rape may be one of the central reasons that leaders of the combatant units may not be able to prevent it from occurring—or may not sincerely attempt to do so. As Wood (2016, 16) argues, commanders may view actively prohibiting violence as a practice “too costly in the short term,” in terms of discipline, resources, or lessening respect for the command, often in part because they are “little troubled by the suffering of women and others targeted with rape.”

In one of the few existing studies of how this process works inside armed group units—albeit in a very different, non-civil war context—Donna Winslow (1999, 429) examines the practices of “non-conventional methods for promoting unit cohesion” within the Canadian Airborne Regiment (CAR). She argues that the need for unit cohesion was especially strong in the CAR because the men had to rely on each other when jumping out of airplanes, a particularly difficult and emotionally demanding task. This extreme and unique reliance on one another may be akin to the emotional upheaval and need for survival experienced by abducted combatants. Winslow documents how the CAR engaged in a variety of degrading and sometimes sexualized rituals whose ultimate purpose, she maintains, was the creation of bonds of loyalty and friendship within the group. Winslow cites

research showing that the more severe these violent rituals, the stronger the bond to the unit. Bonding within armed groups, she concludes, can sometimes take the form of inappropriate or harmful practices. Similarly, I would argue that the “need” for bonding is greater in groups that have forcibly and randomly recruited their fighters; individuals in these groups must almost immediately begin to rely on one another for basic survival despite having little foundation on which to base this trust.

Table 1.1 presents the logic of the relationship between the recruitment mechanism and violent outcomes. The argument suggests that groups that can rely on existing social ties for in-group cohesion may do so; this is a far easier method of creating a coherent group of combatants with strong internal bonds—and certainly less costly than extensive military training exercises designed to forge social ties. For example, in the early stages of the war, the Civil Defense Forces (CDF) in Sierra Leone recruited fighters mainly through social and kinship ties within individual communities, and they committed far less rape than did other armed groups. Scott Gates (2002, 115) makes a similar argument: that ethnically homogenous groups will have stronger “solidary norms,” or social attachments, than other types of armed groups.¹³ However, a combatant group that relies on the random abduction of strangers for its membership must turn to alternative methods for creating in-group cohesion. One of these is the use of costly group behaviors, such as gang rape; other potential methods of producing social cohesion are explored later in this chapter. This need for social bonding increases during periods of rapid recruitment of new fighters. For example, following a number of deaths from battle, particularly *fast* recruiting may intensify the causal effects of abduction; that is, when units need to build cohesion very quickly, gang rape may be particularly likely. In both the Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste case studies, periods of intensive abduction are associated with such peaks in rape.

TABLE 1.1 Combatant socialization argument: Recruitment, unit cohesion, and violent outcomes

RECRUITMENT MECHANISM		OUTCOME
<i>Voluntary recruitment</i> (strong social ties; high cohesion)	→	Rare acts of costly group behavior that contribute to cohesion
<i>Weak forced recruitment—coercion/conscription</i> (some strong social ties; medium cohesion)	→	Some acts of costly group behavior that contribute to cohesion
<i>Extreme forced recruitment—abduction/press-gang</i> (weak social ties; low cohesion)	→	Frequent acts of costly group behavior that contribute to cohesion

Extreme forms of forced recruitment—abduction and press-ganging—are distinct from weaker forms, such as coercion and conscription, in at least two ways. First, and as explored in more depth in the next section, evidence suggests that abduction and press-ganging are not generally committed by bloc, unlike coercion and conscription, where groups of family or friends subsequently serve together. Second, abduction and press-ganging often involve direct violence, including beating and sexual violations. Coercion and conscription, on the other hand, more commonly involve implicit or explicit threats of violence—thus allowing fighters a degree of agency (albeit a small degree) in deciding to join. Such differences in recruitment practices prove to be highly consequential for the internal cohesion of armed groups. To draw on the previous example, as the CDF relied more heavily on abduction later in the war, the shift toward extreme forced recruitment corresponded with a predictable increase in rape.

The combatant socialization argument suggests the main testable hypothesis for this book:

H1: Insurgent groups that depend on abduction, and states that depend on press-ganging, are more likely to perpetrate rape than groups that use more voluntary methods of recruitment.

Assumptions

The argument makes two assumptions about recruitment into armed groups. First, it takes the type of recruitment mechanism as exogenously given. How combatant groups choose recruitment mechanisms—which groups abduct fighters and which recruit them without force or coercion—remains an open question in the field. One potential explanation is proposed by Weinstein (2007), who hypothesizes that groups with initial access to material resources, who later run out of these resources to distribute, may turn to abduction as a last resort. Weinstein cites the case of Renamo's turn to abduction in Mozambique as an example. This account, however, does not satisfactorily explain other cases, such as that of Sierra Leone, a country rich in diamond resources, where groups with access to material inducements used forcible recruitment even from their earliest stages. Data from Sierra Leone show that few members of the RUF were offered material resources, such as drugs and diamonds, even during the beginning of the war, and that the vast majority of members were forcibly recruited. A different theory about forced recruitment has been offered by Beber and Blattman (2013), who explore the incentives for rebel groups to recruit child soldiers coercively. The authors argue that abducting child fighters is preferable to using more voluntary methods when the following conditions exist: children lack other

options, supervision is costless, and leaders lack access to resources. However, it is not clear how the model would extend to adults, who presumably face different constraints.¹⁴ Finally, Humphreys and Weinstein (2006) briefly suggest that forced recruitment may be more likely in cases where a rebellion begins because of the “private desires of leaders” rather than as a popular movement, for which volunteer fighters should be abundant. However, without better data on the origins of rebellions, it is difficult to test their proposition.

Second, I assume that abduction and press-ganging are *not* committed by bloc, where groups of family or friends who are abducted together subsequently serve together in military units.¹⁵ Although no systematic data exist, this assumption is supported by findings from at least four recent studies. First, a survey of ex-combatants in Sierra Leone found that abducted combatants typically knew few others in their units (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004).¹⁶ Second, Weinstein (2005, 612) makes a similar argument about Renamo in Mozambique: “Coercive recruitment yielded a rebel movement that lacked any coherent social bonds. The practice of abduction meant that rebel recruits represented the entire diversity of Mozambique’s ethnic and religious population.” Third, in her study of the socialization processes of abducted child soldiers in the Lord’s Resistance Army in Uganda, Vermeij (2009, 63) states, “Most children are taken to Sudan and separated from children from their home village.” She argues that this separation is designed to prevent children from escaping and to further sever their ties to their previous lives. Finally, through interviews with members of the Salvadoran Army, which used widespread press-ganging to recruit soldiers, Hoover Green (pers. comm.) found that few soldiers knew anyone in their units upon joining.

Previous research clearly supports the idea that rape can create bonds between people in social groups, and may provide psychological benefits to the perpetrators, by inducing feelings of power and victory that improve group morale (Benard 1994; Card 1996; Sanday 2007).¹⁷ But not all armed groups turn to this form of morale-boosting socialization; rape plays an especially vital role in groups with low social cohesion whose members know very little about one another. The combatant socialization argument presented here expands on the previous literature by tracing the source of variation in group rape to the initial recruitment choices of armed groups. I turn next to the military sociology literature on how social cohesion forms and why it matters in military units.

Cohesion and Military Units

According to the military sociology literature, small groups are the foundations of armed factions. Beginning with research conducted in the aftermath of World War II, scholars have focused on the role of personal relationships within armed

units as a key explanatory variable in how militaries function. One of the earliest and most influential series of studies, which focused on the German Army in World War II, emphasized the importance of the “primary group”—defined as the squad or section—rather than ideology in sustaining the army’s members (Shils and Janowitz 1948). In what has now become conventional wisdom, these studies found that the combatants’ main reason for fighting was a strong sense of commitment to their fellow combatants. Primary groups are “emotionally central” to the individual, and the creation of bonds among members is a major goal of military training, accomplished in part through severing previous social ties and building new loyalties (Morris 1996, 691).

In more recent research, social psychologists generally identify two main types of cohesion: social, sometimes also called interpersonal, cohesion; and task cohesion. Social cohesion is a measure of affect—in essence, how much the members of a unit like each other. Task cohesion, on the other hand, refers to the ability of the group to achieve tangible collective goals. Much of the research on cohesion in military units is concerned with whether and how social cohesion predicts military effectiveness, or a unit’s propensity to win battles or to perform other complex military tasks (MacCoun 1993). As a result of the World War II-era studies of primary group cohesion, it is widely believed that social ties and effectiveness are positively correlated: in other words, greater levels of social cohesion are thought to increase the battlefield effectiveness of military units (Kier 1998; MacCoun, Kier, and Belkin 2006).¹⁸

However, despite the theory’s popularity, research over the last few decades has found that the positive correlation between social cohesion and military effectiveness is neither simple nor straightforward. In her comprehensive review of the military cohesion literature, Elizabeth Kier (1998) argues that social cohesion is not necessarily linked to military effectiveness and that strong social cohesion may even be counterproductive to the achievement of military and organizational goals.¹⁹ Kier maintains that the claims that primary group cohesion is the major source for combat motivation are often overstated or incorrect. Along with other scholars, she stresses that only task cohesion has been found to be correlated with effectiveness, although the direction of causation is unclear (MacCoun 1993; Kier 1998; MacCoun, Kier, and Belkin 2006).

Researchers have found that social cohesion may develop easily in some settings and can be formed arbitrarily in experimental situations (MacCoun 1993).²⁰ Kier (1998) further argues that social cohesion is mainly a function of situation (e.g., a sense of tradition within the group) and structure (e.g., the stability of membership or group size). Although social cohesion is not closely related to the characteristics of individual combatants, she maintains, some studies have found

that the more attributes that group members shared, such as social class, age, or ethnicity, the more socially cohesive the group. Such shared attributes, however, do not seem to affect task cohesion (MacCoun 1993).

To be clear, I make no claims about the influence of rape on military effectiveness—or on task cohesion.²¹ Available evidence, in fact, suggests little correlation between the social cohesion created through acts of rape and the ability of armed groups to be successful fighters in battle. By one estimate, the main rebel group in Sierra Leone—which reportedly committed the vast majority of the rape—lost almost two-thirds of the battles it fought over the course of the war.²²

Instead, I argue that gang rape allows armed groups who forcibly and randomly recruit their fighters to create and to maintain a coherent fighting group in the most basic of senses: to produce social bonds where they are lacking, to increase trust among people who may otherwise be predisposed to fighting each other, and to create a sense of collective responsibility that reduces attempts at desertions or mutinies and allows the armed group to endure. Given what is known about task cohesion, it is doubtful that participation in rape would increase task cohesion, which—in well-resourced militaries—is formed through careful training exercises that mimic the chaos of fighting in war. My main focus is therefore the creation of social cohesion through participation in violence.²³

This argument is supported by military research that suggests the group perpetration of violence—including rape—enables armed units to develop social cohesion. For example, Osiel (1999, 155) argues that mass murder in World War II was a means for “securing a spectacular measure of . . . cohesion.” Additionally, in his famous study of Reserve Police Battalion 101, Christopher Browning (1992) describes the cohesion that developed from both the enormous pressures the men felt to conform and their fear of being ostracized if they refused to participate in killing. In an example from a different time period—during the Argentinean counterinsurgency war (1975–1980)—one scholar cites “socially bonding torture practices” as a method used to create cohesion among groups of abducted combatants in the state forces (Robben 2006, 363).

In related work, researchers have also established that violence can serve a powerful function in organizing the structure of groups with continual influxes of new members (Humphreys and Weinstein 2008; Kaminski 2003). Scholars have shown that performing acts of brutal violence can be part of the process of integrating new members and maintaining social order among existing members. This violence is also believed to be useful in cutting ties to a combatant’s previous life, making it more difficult for an individual fighter to desert, and creating a sense of loyalty to the group as well as collective responsibility for violent acts.²⁴ Finally, findings from the research on group cohesion indicate that social

cohesion increases after “successful performance” (MacCoun 1993, 294). The effect of performance on cohesion may be stronger than the effect of cohesion on performance; in fact, research provides direct evidence that successful performance creates social cohesion. This principle undergirds the use in military exercises of group success experiences (MacCoun 1993). Group violence may provide the members of armed groups with similar positive feelings of success and collective accomplishment, and this feeling, in turn, translates into social cohesion.

Why Sexual Violence?

Given that previous research has suggested that violence in a variety of forms can produce bonds of social cohesion, why do armed groups with especially low cohesion turn to *sexualized* violence? Reasons for selecting rape over other, non-sexual forms of violence are debated in the literature, and findings from a variety of fields are suggestive—but not conclusive. Overall, this research confirms that sexual violence promotes cohesion in a number of ways.

Research shows that perpetrators both gain and maintain social status within a group during the course of a gang rape (Amir 1971; Groth and Birnbaum 1979). Many studies in psychology and sociology on gang rape find that perpetrators experience an increase in the esteem they feel for one another (Brownmiller 1975; Franklin 2004; O’Sullivan 1991; Scully 1990). Public health researchers have analyzed gang rape in the U.S. context and consistently found a relationship between sexual violence and status within groups of perpetrators. In a study of young male perpetrators of violence against women, one set of researchers found that sexualized violence is related directly to increasing “male social stature among peers” (Reed et al. 2008, 265).

Much of the recent research supports this idea that rape increases the social status of its perpetrators. In a study of juvenile gang rapists in the Netherlands, perpetrators gave a few reasons for participating, including a fear of retribution if they did not join in and a desire to fit in as part of the group. Fear of being ostracized from a group has similarly been hypothesized to be a major motivating force for the prevalence of wartime gang rape (Henry, Ward, and Hirshberg 2003). Sexual desire is often mentioned only as a secondary motivating reason for gang rape (Bijleveld et al. 2007). Scholars have found that the rewards to perpetrators include participation in a group-wide act of violence and the ability to brag about taking part in the attack (Bijleveld et al. 2007). Very few of the perpetrators reported trying to stop acts of gang rape; indeed, many later recalled the attack as “an enjoyable activity that had given them status” (Bijleveld et al. 2007, 24). In other theoretical work on gang rape, scholars have found that it is an outcome of psychological

processes within the group. Scholars have noted that gang rape involves collective responsibility for a crime, the loss of individual identity and values, and the creation of cohesion and camaraderie (Henry, Ward, and Hirshberg 2003; Hauffe and Porter 2009).

Some of the research on gang rape emphasizes the homosocial (and possibly latent homosexual) aspects of participating in a sex act with male peers (Blanchard 1959). Similar arguments have been made about fraternity gang rape (Sanday 2007) and about sexual violence by street gangs in the United States (Bourgois 1996, 211).²⁵ But other scholars deemphasize the sexual nature of the attack, claiming instead that the bonding elements of the attack are the primary motivator (Brownmiller 1975; Groth and Birnbaum 1979; Franklin 2004; Bijleveld and Hendriks 2003). The collective act of humiliating a victim is the main source of increased bonding among the perpetrators. Several interview subjects in Sierra Leone mentioned that rape was shameful only for the victim. For example, one respondent said, “[During a gang rape] sometimes we would feel shy in front of each other, especially when the commander is around. But the sex was a humiliation to the [victims].”²⁶ This aspect of rape seems to be one of the most persistent, across both time and cultural contexts: rape often confers lasting shame on the victim, but rarely on the perpetrators.

A number of largely qualitative studies demonstrate the connection between social cohesion and sexual violence empirically. These studies include interviews of perpetrators—and friends of perpetrators—in several countries. One study in South Africa found that of the incidents of gang rape disclosed by participants, 76 percent were “carried out for fun, as a game or because the men were bored” (Jewkes and Sikweyiya 2013, 118); further, 41 percent of respondents reported that “they felt fine, good or closer to their friends after the rape” (119).

Beyond the case of South Africa, other research has focused the practice in Cambodia of *bauk* (literally, “plus”), which involves the group rape by men of a single female victim. Reviewing a series of studies focused on aspects of youth sexuality, a set of authors found that “male bonding is a major factor underlying the practice . . . and appears to be closely associated with peer pressure to prove their masculinity” (Wilkinson, Bearup, and Soprach 2005, 166). In interviews, young Cambodian men described the cohesion-building aspects of *bauk*: “my team and I do it like this because we need sex and want to have fun together” (162) and “we follow our friends who ask us to join. We want our friends to enjoy with us. Close friends always share things together” (164). Some also mentioned the social pressure to participate: “I know that *bauk* is not good. . . . I have a sister too . . . but my friends force me. . . . I cannot stay by myself” (163). The role of masculinity in *bauk* was also emphasized by some of the interviewees:

“[A man] wouldn’t be a man if he was unable to rape her” (164). Finally, a unique ethnographic study of sexuality in Papua New Guinea had similar findings about gang rape. There, the authors of the study write, “the underlying psychosocial dynamic for socially acceptable gang rape derives from a strong emphasis on male bonding coupled with ideologies of female pollution and danger” (NSRRT and Jenkins 1994, 102).

Besides these country-specific studies, an innovative and very large survey on violence against women published in *The Lancet* inquired about motivations for rape; the study included more than ten thousand men in six Asian countries (Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Papua New Guinea) (Jewkes et al. 2013). The respondents were asked about their participation in single- and multiple-perpetrator rape as well as their motivations for doing so. Across both types of rape, the most common motivations—selected from a series of prepared statements—were entitlement (“I wanted her,” “I wanted to have sex,” or “I wanted to show I could do it”) and entertainment (“I wanted to have fun” or “I was bored”). However, when disaggregated, the answers differed between perpetrators of single rape and gang rape. In particular, perpetrators of gang rape were more likely to mention reasons of anger and punishment (“I was angry with her” or “I wanted to punish her”) as well as rape after drinking than were perpetrators of single rape (and the differences were statistically significant).²⁷ These findings provide additional suggestive evidence for rape as a bonding experience among perpetrators: a shared goal of punishment provided the central motivation, likely facilitated by group alcohol consumption.

Precisely *how* cohesion is created through rape is the source of some debate. Some scholars argue that norms of masculinity—especially salient in the context of armed groups—are best communicated through sexualized actions. Morris (1996, 706–7) argues that sexual violence is central to some types of all-male or mostly male groups because “rape-conducive sexual norms” are “imparted . . . inadvertently” to members of military organizations. Indeed, there are multiple examples from related contexts, including urban gangs and fraternities, that male or mostly male groups commit sexualized violence—perhaps because such violence communicates normative masculinity, strength, and virility. In their studies of fighters in the DRC, Eriksson Baaz and Stern (2009, 499) argue that military organizations contribute to “a certain heterosexual male violent masculinity” that affects all combatants, including women, and may contribute to the selection of sexualized forms of violence.

Psychological research suggests a related set of reasons for building cohesion through sexual violence. In a series of psychology studies on “precarious manhood,” Vandello et al. (2008, 1326) argue that manhood is a status that is “achieved rather than . . . ascribed” and that requires visible social proof.²⁸

They argue that when manhood status is threatened, strategies commonly used to restore it include dangerous physical aggression, especially public physical aggression that is “risky to enact and costly to fake” (1327).²⁹ The abduction or press-ganging of recruits into an armed group—a process often involving terrible abuse—is a particularly status-threatening and anxiety-provoking event. Applying the findings above to the case of forcibly recruited combatants, it might be especially important to this population to restore some semblance of manhood and social status through public acts of risky violence. While the Vandello et al. studies do not consider sexual violence in particular, their research can help explain how sexualized public displays of aggression may be considered by the fighters—albeit subconsciously—central for communicating messages about masculinity in the aftermath of the trauma of their own abduction and press-ganging. As Franklin (2004, 31) writes,

Participants in . . . group rapes usually recall feeling positive emotions at the time. During the assault, there is a drug-like high produced by the excitement and danger. Afterwards, there is a feeling of closeness and camaraderie, a sense of bonding produced by communal transgression. But there may also be an enormous, collective sigh of relief, in that they have survived this public test with their masculinity intact. In other words, underneath the experienced veneer of camaraderie and warmth is a desperate struggle to achieve dominance, maintain status, or even to get through the ordeal with one’s masculinity intact.

Others have argued that rape is selected because it creates intense shame for the victim, perhaps more so than other forms of violence. Quoting psychologist Inger Skjelsbæk, Alison (2007, 81) writes, “Sexual violence is ‘preferred’ . . . because ‘this is the form of violence which most clearly communicates masculinisation and feminisation.’” Eriksson Baaz and Stern (2009, 498) summarize the previous work on why violence is sexualized as suggesting “a complex web of contributing factors” that include the perpetuation of cycles of violence by those who feel victimized, along with opportunity, the disintegration of social norms and sexual desire. Why sexual violence is chosen thus remains uncertain, but these previous studies point to potential answers.

Rape Is More Costly than Previously Recognized

One aspect of rape that has been overlooked in much of the previous research—and that may help explain why it is selected over other forms of violence—is the risk that rape carries for perpetrators. Most scholars view rape as a costless form of violence for the perpetrator, in both peacetime and wartime contexts. For

example, in a study involving interviews of over one hundred convicted rapists in U.S. prisons, one scholar concluded that “rape is a low-risk, high-reward act,” because rapists reported little fear of being reported or caught (Scully 1990, 137). Similarly, some scholars maintain that rape is a weapon particularly well suited for conflict. Bloom (1999) notes that no expensive or advanced technology is required to perpetrate rape. In addition, Bloom argues that because combatants typically know that, until recently, rape has not been prosecuted as a crime against humanity, rape may be as effective as mass murder but without the same risk of postwar prosecution. Mass rape is considered by some as a useful mechanism by which to clear a population from contested territory, while also lacking the threat of provoking international outrage, since rape is viewed as a “lesser crime” than lethal violence (e.g., Bloom 1999).

Such views are also apparent in the policy and advocacy discourse. As part of the November 2012 launch of a large policy initiative aimed at ending rape in war, William Hague stated that “rape and sexual violence is used as a deliberate weapon of war . . . to humiliate, scar and destroy whole ethnic groups or religious or political opponents, *cheaply*, silently and devastatingly” (emphasis added).³⁰ Activist Eve Ensler, in an interview on NPR (Mukwege and Ensler 2009) about rape in the DRC, said that “rape is a very cheap method of warfare. You don’t have to buy scud missiles or hand grenades. You just send soldiers in, and they take care of communities.”

However, evidence suggests instead that rape is *especially costly* when compared to other forms of violence. If rape were as easy, cheap, and effective as the discourse often implies, then it should occur even more often than it does. Rape is an intimate form of violence; it requires that the perpetrator use his or her body as the weapon or, in the case of object rape, have very close contact with the victim—features that introduce risks to both individuals and armed groups. In one of the first studies of group rape, Amir (1971) recognized risk taking as one of the central elements in the group-bonding process. I argue that wartime rape is costly for perpetrators for at least three reasons: the risk of disease, the time it takes to perpetrate, and its emotional toll. I consider each of these costs in turn.

First, and most significantly, rape is known to be the cause of the rampant spread of sexually transmitted infections in conflict zones. Scholars regularly note that STIs may adversely affect the health of victims of wartime rape (e.g., Keen 2005, 45; Ghobarah, Huth, and Russett 2003). Villagers I interviewed in Sierra Leone frequently described how rape victims experienced abdominal pain, swollen stomachs, “bad water” (a local term for vaginal discharge), itching, bleeding, and the inability to conceive, as well as mental health consequences.³¹ Additionally, some scholars have claimed that through campaigns of rape, infected

combatants may purposely spread HIV/AIDS to victims as a form of biological warfare. Mullins (2009) reports that infected men raped women during the Rwandan genocide with the explicit intention of giving victims the fatal disease. More recently, there are reports from the DRC that HIV/AIDS has been deliberately spread through rape (UN Human Rights 2009). However, whether STIs are in fact used as intentional biological weapons—and if so, how frequently—has not yet been established conclusively.

Only one of the ex-combatant interviewees in Sierra Leone reported concern about contracting HIV/AIDS, perhaps because the rate of AIDS appears to be relatively low in the country, or because life expectancy is so short in Sierra Leone—even absent the war—that a disease with devastating consequences in the long term is simply not a sufficient deterrent.³² “Fighters didn’t care about AIDS,” reported one ex-combatant.³³ Others confirmed this: “Not a lot of fighters knew about AIDS,” and “no one was thinking about AIDS.”³⁴ However, HIV/AIDS is a major problem in many countries, and concerns over contracting the disease likely vary widely.

Despite the focus on the health consequences for rape victims, there is silence regarding the effects of STIs on the perpetrators of rape in modern wars.³⁵ Interviews with ex-combatants in Sierra Leone revealed the high physical costs of participating in rape. Respondents reported that gonorrhea and syphilis were common during the war, infecting both perpetrators and victims of rape. Sexually transmitted infection was not trivial, considering the illnesses made it difficult for combatants to fight effectively. Because the combatants were based in the jungle, with little or no access to antibiotics, the diseases quickly worsened, often rendering those infected unable to urinate, or even to walk or to run.³⁶ To treat people infected with STIs (as well as other common illnesses, like malaria and typhoid), the combatants would seek out pharmacies in the towns they raided to steal antibiotics and would also kidnap doctors and nurses who could care for the sick.³⁷ Contracting an STI could also be fatal. Commanders sometimes faced difficult decisions about what to do with fighters who were stricken with severe STIs. A former RUF commander reported that he was forced to kill two men sick with gonorrhea when his unit had to flee an area. He was concerned that the men would be tortured and killed by the army if they were left behind, and there was no way to carry them along.³⁸ Similar stories were also shared by others.

Thus, STIs were not only costly to the individual combatant, but a price incurred by the group as a whole, limiting the fighting ability of combatants and requiring groups to bear the burden of caring for the sick. Many of the fighters in Sierra Leone shared concerns over contracting diseases as a result of rape, as discussed at length in chapter 4. In interviews, the fighters accurately identified

syphilis and gonorrhea both by name and by their relevant symptoms. For instance, one former fighter in Sierra Leone described the symptoms of STIs as follows: “the body drops down and you feel not active; sometimes they [those fighters affected] would notice a pain in the urethra after only three or four days.”³⁹ A rebel commander said that as many as ten of his men had suffered from STIs: “They had pain and itching in their [genitals]; it hurt to urinate and there was a lot of pus.”⁴⁰ Another said, “You would know that you are sick within two or three days.”⁴¹ The medical literature confirms these reports; symptoms of gonorrhea in men appear within one to fourteen days of exposure and include pus and pain in the testicles and lower abdomen. Syphilis involves flu-like symptoms, sometimes as little as two weeks after contracting the disease.⁴²

Because of the short time period between contracting gonorrhea or syphilis and the onset of extremely unpleasant symptoms, fighters in Sierra Leone were aware of the costs of participating in rape as well as the direct relationship between rape and illness. Based on my interviews, there is no doubt that the combatants knew they were getting sick as a consequence of rape. One respondent noted that the incidence of sexually transmitted infections led his peers to target younger women and girls: “One solution [to the problem of STIs] was to not rape anyone above twenty years old—if women have already been used by others, you are more likely to get [sick].”⁴³ Therefore, as in other wars throughout history, the possibility of a disease epidemic among the fighters was a major potential cost to those engaging in rape on a mass scale.

While ex-combatants reported concern over contracting STIs after the war had ended, they may not have cared about such risks during the conflict. Combatants, after all, face far more serious threats than STIs in the midst of war. Evidence from other civil wars, however, suggests that fighters do evaluate the risks associated with rape. In a study by the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI) of sexual violence in the DRC, researchers found in interviews with *current* fighters in the Mai Mai militia that combatants expressed concern over contracting STIs, including HIV/AIDS, if they were to participate in rape. One respondent said, “The consequences for those who have committed rape can be mostly to get contaminated by diseases.” The researchers summarized the fighters’ views on STIs as a “form of unavoidable punishment that would result even if one were not formally ‘caught’ raping” (HHI 2009, 40). A second example of armed groups weighing the costs of sexually transmitted disease during the course of a conflict is the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda. Annan et al. (2009) argue that the loss of a high-ranking LRA commander to AIDS early in the conflict led the rebel leader Joseph Kony to create strict rules prohibiting the rape of noncombatants in order to limit the spread of STIs to fighters. Thus, there is mounting

evidence that armed groups carefully consider the costs of rape for the perpetrators, especially in terms of the effects on the health of fighters. This may be one reason why rape is not even more common during wartime.

Beyond the risks of disease, there are two additional potential costs from the perpetrators' perspective. The first is that rape is relatively costly in terms of time. It is more complicated to carry out rape than to commit other types of violence and torture, such as using guns to kill or machetes to amputate. Furthermore, a gang rape takes much longer to complete than does a single-perpetrator rape (Porter and Alison 2006). Several former child soldiers shared stories of having to stand guard while fellow soldiers participated in rape, in order to warn their superiors if enemy combatants approached the area.⁴⁴ Gang rape is therefore comparatively inefficient as a form of violence. This is supported by the interview evidence: ex-combatants reported that rape was often perpetrated in the aftermath of fighting, not as part of the active violence of fighting.

Finally, because of the close physical contact required, rape carries the potential of emotional hardship for the perpetrator that other types of violence arguably do not. In particular, intimate violence is thought to be especially traumatizing to the perpetrator. For example, historians argue that the gas chambers during the Holocaust were developed in response to the trauma endured by the armed units charged with the horrific task of mass shootings in Russia (Marrus 1987, 50). While acts of gang rape are later recalled with enjoyment by some perpetrators (Bijleveld et al. 2007, 24), others feel that they were forced by peer pressure to participate and are haunted by their acts (Houge 2008). Carpenter (2006) argues that forced participation in rape is experienced as a form of psychological torture by the perpetrator. Of course, all intimate violence involves close contact with victims, but only rape requires the body itself to be used as a weapon; this level of intimacy has been found to be especially disturbing for perpetrators of gang rape. These feelings may help explain, in part, the use of objects in wartime rape. Research shows some perpetrators of gang rape find the act to be nonerotic; they do not ejaculate, and they use objects instead of their bodies to rape the victim (Brownmiller 1975; Groth and Birnbaum 1979; O'Sullivan 1991).

Disease, time costs, and the emotional toll—as well as numerous other group-level costs that I have not considered in depth, such as alienating or enraging civilian populations (Gottschall 2004) or attracting international condemnation—would all seem to indicate that wartime rape is a counterproductive, or irrational, form of wartime violence for both the individual and the group.⁴⁵ These costs pose a significant challenge to the conventional wisdom that rape is easy and costless. But if rape is so costly, why don't commanders try to prevent it?

Evidence from my interviews suggests that commanders were concerned with the costs of rape, which can partly explain why they did not actively encourage or order it. But in general, commanders also did not discourage rape, because of its utility in forming a group identity within their factions.

Research on the rationality of seemingly counterproductive violence can help to make sense of why, if rape is costly, wartime rape still occurs, and on such a large scale. Three related arguments about seemingly irrational violence by armed groups are useful here. First, gang rape can be viewed as a form of “coupled violence,” in which the violence being committed is not essential to the aims of the war. The violence may, in fact, be counterproductive to explicitly military goals, but it is in line with the goal of seeking other goods desirable to combatants (Hovil and Werker 2005). Hovil and Werker draw on Berman’s (2003) research on religious extremism to illustrate their argument. Berman finds that seemingly counterproductive forms of religious violence are not so counterproductive after all, and that extremist violence reduces defection and increases group loyalty. Similarly, gang rape may not advance military goals and may appear counterproductive to the strategic goals of the perpetrating group by, for example, terrorizing the civilian population. However, gang rape is committed with the (likely subconscious) goal of creating social bonds among members of an armed group, a paramount aim in armed groups made up of strangers.

A second related logic may be found in Fearon (1995), who notes that, in the war in the former Yugoslavia, Serbian combatants exhumed bodies in Croatian ancestral cemeteries and machine-gunned the remains of the corpses. Such an act raises questions about why combatants would incur costs to themselves, such as wasting ammunition and spending time performing the unpleasant task of desecrating graves, when there is no tangible military or strategic benefit. Fearon (1995, 4) argues that the graves were culturally very important to the Croats, and “Serb gunners knew this, of course, knew that the Croats knew it, and knew that the Croats knew that they knew it.” Thus intimidation and humiliation were the “goods” that combatants in this case were seeking, for the larger purpose of persuading moderates on both sides that coexistence would not be possible after the conflict.

Finally, a third mechanism may be found in a rational choice model of cults and religions (Iannaccone 1992). In this model, costly and potentially stigmatizing behaviors for the individual may be beneficial to the group. Iannaccone argues that this situation creates a free-rider problem—that is, individual members of a group may be tempted to abstain from the costly behavior if they feel they can continue to benefit from membership in the group. The group can overcome this problem by penalizing alternative behaviors. In the case of wartime rape, the group pressure created through public acts of gang rape, closely observed

by other group members, raises the cost of not participating. Thus, even in the absence of direct orders to rape, many combatants will feel compelled to participate. Stigmatizing behaviors are chosen specifically *because* they increase group participation. Gang rape is stigmatizing behavior. It is costly to the individual, requires participation in a group practice, and in turn—as research has clearly established—increases group solidarity.

Gang Rape and Perpetrator Motivations

The research on gang rape, even in peacetime conditions, is sparse, and the behavior of and interactions among perpetrators of gang rape have received little scholarly attention; in fact, one scholar noted that gang rape may be the least-studied violent crime (Franklin 2004). Research on perpetrators' motivations in wartime rape is particularly spare. One set of scholars called this a "theoretical vacuum" in the literature (Henry, Ward, and Hirshberg 2003, 535), while a new edited volume on the general theme of gang rape noted that the research is "still in its infancy" (Horvath and Woodhams 2013, 286). Current research on perpetrators of gang rape tends to be highly descriptive, often comparing features of single-offender and group rape, including the location of the attack, the ages of the victims and perpetrators, the presence or absence of physical violence, and the degree of resistance by the victim (e.g., Hauffe and Porter 2009; Porter and Alison 2006; Ullman 2007). Researchers have found that perpetrators of group rape are often younger than lone perpetrators and that group rape is typically more violent than rape committed by a single offender (Bijleveld and Hendriks 2003; Gidycz and Koss 1990). In a study of perpetrators of peacetime gang rape, there was little evidence of explicit premeditation of the attack, beyond simply agreeing that the group was to have sex with a victim. In a few studies, researchers have analyzed the interactions between perpetrators and victims (e.g., Hauffe and Porter 2009). The behavior and interactions of perpetrators of gang rape with one another, on the other hand, have received little scholarly attention. While a small number of studies compare various aspects of gang rape and single-perpetrator rape, relatively few *theories* exist to explain group rape.

In one of the earliest and most influential studies of the subject, Amir (1971) introduced a sociology-based theory of group rape.⁴⁶ Amir maintains that sexual identity inevitably becomes a source of anxiety in young males, especially in cultures lacking explicit rites of passage to adulthood. Group rape, he argues, serves as a rite of passage in which aggression and humiliation are key features. Gang rape enables the perpetrators to establish status and reputations of toughness within the group. Amir argues that engaging in gang rape occurs only

occasionally in such groups, and particularly during periods when the status of members of the group is being questioned or threatened. Amir writes that gang rape can assist in “solidify[ing] the status claims of a member as well as the cohesiveness of the whole group” (1971, 185).

Gang rape is notable for its performance aspects. Research indicates that perpetrators of gang rape often watch one another and organize an order of participation. Researchers believe that the intended “audience” of the performance is the other perpetrators, with the victim serving as a “vehicle” for the perpetrators (e.g., Sanday 2007; Holmstrom and Burgess 1980; Theidon 2007). In a study of crack-dealing gangs in East Harlem, one anthropologist described the performance elements of gang rape, where the perpetrators recounted manipulating their bodies so that the other members could better see the rape (Bourgois 1996, 211). Others report similar findings: perpetrators use the victim as a “vehicle for interacting with other men” (Groth and Birnbaum 1979, 115), and the perpetrators who watch the rape are “the public” for whom it is performed (Bijleveld et al. 2007, 28); some even argue that gang rape is a form of “cultural theater” (Franklin 2004, 25).

Studies of gang rape in the context of U.S. college fraternities and street gangs may offer contexts suitable for understanding acts of wartime sexual violence. In fact, researchers of fraternity gang rape have made explicit connections between college fraternities and military organizations (Martin and Hummer 1989). In Peggy Reeves Sanday’s (2007) study of the phenomenon of gang rape on college campuses, she too notes that one result of gang rape is a bonding among men, especially in male-segregated institutions. In other similar environments, researchers have argued that there is a strong social pressure to engage in acts of gang rape. Bourgois (1996, 208) writes that, among drug gangs in East Harlem, nonparticipation in gang rape meant being excluded from a “violent male ritual.” Others report that perpetrators feel they will be mocked, or labeled a homosexual, if they fail to participate (Bourke 2007, 376).

Perhaps most significantly, the social processes found in group rape contrast starkly to those in rape committed by a lone perpetrator. Single-offender rape is more often believed to be the result of personal sexual desire than is gang rape (Hauffe and Porter 2009). Additionally, the role of the victim varies in these two types of assault. Whereas victims of gang rape are, as previously described, more often considered a vehicle for creating esteem and social bonds among perpetrators, the victim in lone-perpetrator rapes is seen as a sexual outlet (Hauffe and Porter 2009; Bijleveld et al. 2007). Similarly, in the criminological literature, perpetrators of gang rape are viewed as fundamentally different from perpetrators of single rape. Gang rapists are believed to be less pathological than are single rapists (Bijleveld and Hendriks 2003; Brownmiller 1975); the difference can be attributed to the

fact that pressures from a group can cause individuals to behave in ways that they never would if they were alone (Groth and Birnbaum 1979; Porter and Allison 2006; Franklin 2004). This is supported by the finding that perpetrators of group rape are far less likely to have previously committed sexual offenses than are lone perpetrators (Bijleveld and Hendriks 2003). Indeed, criminologists see co-offenders of gang rape as having more in common with groups who commit other types of violence than with perpetrators of single rape (Bijleveld et al. 2007), suggesting that ordinary civilians—like abducted combatants—are far more likely to perpetrate gang rape than to rape alone.

The differences identified between lone perpetrators and group perpetrators help explain acts of wartime gang rape, particularly those perpetrated by groups of forcibly recruited combatants. Forced combatants are not carefully selected for their propensity to commit violence; rather, they are randomly pulled out of their communities and made to join fighting forces. Malamuth (1996, 276) cites instances in which ordinary men participated in wartime rape and other forms of coercive sex, including the conflicts in Bosnia and the case of comfort women forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese during World War II. These findings help make sense of how seemingly typical men (and women) can commit rape on a massive scale during wartime when they might refrain from such behavior in peacetime, an unresolved question in the literature (Mezey 1994; Henry, Ward, and Hirshberg 2003).

Group Violence

The notion that “ordinary men” commit atrocities in groups that they might not commit alone has been the subject of significant interest in the fields of psychology, sociology, anthropology, and history.⁴⁷ A wealth of literature from these disciplines addresses the role that ordinary people have played in genocides; this research is useful for understanding group violence more broadly, including group rape. These studies explore a difficult question: Why are people who otherwise have strong moral inhibitions against violence willing to participate in the execution of terrible atrocities during wartime?

Much of the earlier literature reflects on experiences during the Holocaust. In his seminal study, Browning (1992) describes how most members of Reserve Police Battalion 101 were horrified by their task of mass murder, and yet they perpetrated the killings nonetheless—not because they feared being punished if they refrained (indeed, Browning documents cases in which some refused to participate with little consequence), but because of group pressures not to shirk their duties. Some have argued that the majority of those who participated in the Holocaust were simply sadists who derived great pleasure from carrying out their

brutal jobs. However, Kelman and Hamilton (1989) argue that while some Nazi officials and concentration camp commanders could probably be described as such, dark psychological explanations are inadequate for explaining events like the Holocaust, during which so many of the perpetrators had little direct contact with the victims. Likewise, in her analysis of Adolf Eichmann and his role in the Holocaust, Arendt (1963, 253) highlights the “terrible and terrifying” normality of many perpetrators.

Building on this earlier work, more recent literature explores group violence during the Rwandan genocide. Much of it rejects the idea that the genocide was motivated on the individual level by ethnic hatred, focusing instead on the intense social pressures to participate in the killing. For example, Straus (2006, 119) argues that the demographic characteristics of the *genocidaires* were nearly identical to those of the adult male Hutu population, leading him to conclude that “Rwanda’s perpetrators were ordinary in all but the crimes they committed.” Fujii (2009, 19), like Straus, emphasizes the ordinariness of the perpetrators, arguing that “local ties and group dynamics” motivated people to join in the genocide. The dynamics explored in both studies are remarkably similar to the descriptions of pressures to participate in gang rape that I heard in my own research.

More broadly, cutting-edge psychological research finds that individuals—members of violent groups, such as rebel groups and national militaries—must initially overcome an innate hesitation to commit violence, and especially violence that is physically close, such as rape (Littman and Paluck 2015). Once this hesitation is overcome, whether through training that simulates battle or simply through force or pressure to commit violence, violent behavior then tends to lead to more violence. This occurs through one of several processes: desensitization, moral disengagement, or other forms of “dissonance reduction” that allow individuals to justify committing violence they once found repugnant (87–88, 94). In addition, violence serves to strengthen “identification”—or cohesion—with the broader group, by providing “new and peripheral members . . . recognition, respect and status” (90). Psychological studies have also revealed that individuals who suffer in order to join groups are more likely to experience cohesion with group members than those who have not suffered. Members of the LRA in Uganda reported higher cohesion with the group when they had perpetrated acts of violence against relatives and friends (93). Overall, evidence shows that the psychological process is a cycle of violence and group identification (89): “When individuals identify with groups that use violence to achieve their political, economic, or social goals, they will be motivated to comply with the group’s violent standards, whether or not the violence is condoned by the broader society and, to some extent, regardless of the individual’s own views.”

Scope of the Argument

What Alternatives Exist for Socialization and Cohesion Building?

That some armed groups turn to sexual violence to build cohesion begs the question of whether plausible alternatives for socialization and cohesion building might exist—and under what conditions these alternatives might be selected over sexual violence. The research on what Paul Kenny (2011, 2) calls “organizational socialization,” or “the process by which the self-concept of the individual becomes inseparable from his membership of the organization,” suggests a number of potential pathways to cohesion building within military units. Kenny sorts these pathways into three main types: (1) training exercises, especially boot camp drills; (2) a shared sense of the burden to face external threats and stressful events; and (3) rituals, including the recruitment process, hazing, and initiation rites. Using a paired case comparison of the Wehrmacht in World War II—generally viewed as a case of strong social cohesion—and the US Army in the Vietnam War—a case of weak social cohesion—Kenny concludes that intensive training is necessary but not sufficient in producing cohesion. Indeed, he finds that unit-level rituals may create cohesion within small groups while contributing to an overall disintegration of the broader military organization. Other studies focused on similar pathways have found that group experiences of stress are among the more important cohesion-building processes (e.g., Bartone et al. 2002).

This research has several implications for the present study. First, armed groups that forcibly recruit their fighters are unlikely to engage in intensive and costly boot camp training exercises (which are exactly the types of exercises known to build both task and social cohesion). As Kenny (2011) argues, boot camp training is not intended to enhance military skills, which are developed during combat training, but rather to indoctrinate and to instill the importance of following orders. As is described in the El Salvador case study, the Armed Forces of El Salvador offered cursory combat training, but made no investments in boot camp training. I argue that this choice in how to expend resources made the Armed Forces more likely to turn to violence to create cohesion. In general, and in the absence of intensive boot camp drilling, weaker, less organized, and less resourced armed groups typically turn to other activities to break ties to the past and build cohesion among group members.

Second, shared stressful experiences can create bonds. Battle itself may serve as such a shared experience, but many modern civil wars are not particularly battle heavy. As Collier and Hoeffler (2007, 717) write of recent civil wars, “Poorly equipped and organized armies may often not engage in direct battles with the

opposing forces.”⁴⁸ They argue that this is one reason why the number of deaths caused directly by battle may be only a small percentage of the total number of people who die during modern civil wars. Given the paucity of battles, armed groups are forced to build and maintain social cohesion through other activities of their own making. In addition, research suggests that it is important that fighters view the burdens of combat as shared by commanders. In the Vietnam War, perceptions that officers had it easier than the rank-and-file soldiers were deeply corrosive to cohesion (Kenny 2011).

Third, rituals are crucial for forging social ties, especially in small groups. Kenny (2011, 14) argues that “the recruitment process and the initiation stage have a highly significant impact on identity formation.” He cites ritual killing among the child combatants in the LRA in Uganda as an example. But rituals are not limited to initiation rites or coerced violence; they can include strict dress codes, graduation ceremonies, or more mundane tasks (Kenny 2011, 18). In my interviews, members of armed groups in Sierra Leone and of the militias in Timor-Leste reported similar rituals. One former militia member in Timor-Leste described the bloodletting initiation rite of a militia group called Aitarak: “The members of groups like Aitarak would each cut their hands and put the blood in a cup for all to drink. There was a swearing ceremony.”⁴⁹ Participation in acts of gang rape can also be seen as a ritualized method of increasing cohesion. Why the rituals sometimes become violent, and why this violence becomes sexualized, are critical questions that must, again, draw on the research about the importance of public violent acts that demonstrate masculinity.

In sum, several alternative methods for building cohesion exist within armed groups. Previous research implies at least two conditions under which such alternatives to sexual violence might be selected: first, when groups are well resourced and can invest in basic training exercises, and second, when groups experience frequent battles or other stressful experiences shared by commanders and fighters alike. The frequency of rape in modern civil wars—particularly by groups that abduct and press-gang their fighters⁵⁰—may be the result of armed groups that do not invest heavily in basic training and do not typically fight many battles. Instead, violent rituals, both sexual and otherwise, are used to fill the void. As is explored later in the chapter on El Salvador, at least two other factors serve to weaken the appeal of sexualized violence for cohesion building: ideological pressures from within the group, usually arising from political beliefs about the legitimate uses of violence; and political pressures from outside the group, such as strong preferences against sexual violence by an external sponsor.

How Does the Practice Begin?

The argument presented thus far raises the question of how a combatant group begins to employ rape. A definitive answer is elusive, yet the process may be elucidated by research on individual propensity toward rape and the essential role of leadership in group rape.

A selection mechanism may initially be at work. Because of the nontrivial proportion of men who may want to rape, the existence of these “bad apples” in every armed group likely means that some incidents of rape are committed by every armed group in every conflict. Indeed, a much-cited study of “normal” men’s inherent desire to rape is based on a set of surveys in the early 1980s of college-aged men in Canada and the United States (Malamuth 1981). Respondents were asked to report the likelihood that they “personally would rape, if they could be assured of not being caught or punished.” Answers were given on a 5-point scale, with 1 being “not at all likely” and 5 being “very likely.” Researchers found that about 35 percent of the men answered somewhere in the 2-to-5 range; that is, they would be more than “not at all likely” to rape (140). Feminist scholars have long argued that men who rape are usually ordinary people—not, on average, mentally ill or pathological. Rather, such scholars typically maintain that there exists a male proclivity to rape, although its source—whether social pressures (e.g., Sanday) or biology (e.g., Brownmiller)—is a point of much debate.

In addition to the likely presence of at least some “bad apples” in small armed group units, research on gang rape suggests that leadership plays a major role. One study of thirty-nine incidents involving convictions for multiple-perpetrator rape found that in nearly every case, there was a clear leader who either ordered or modeled the behavior to the others in the group. Further, leadership—defined as providing the initial idea for the attack, selecting the target, or being the first to commit the sexual act—was especially strong in larger groups of perpetrators (i.e., three to five people) (Porter and Alison 2001). Leaders are typically the most “delinquent” of the group, with greater emotional problems than so-called followers, and are believed to be more likely than followers to reoffend (Woodhams et al. 2012, 731). A leader typically reports acting “out of a need to prove his leadership—and by implication his masculinity—to the others . . . [while followers] feel enormous pressure to live up to [the leader’s] expectations” (Franklin 2004, 31).

Although this research provides a basis for the idea that a small percentage of fighters may actively seek to rape noncombatants, and also that these fighters may become leaders in initiating incidents of gang rape in small groups, it is only in some cases that rape becomes a widespread practice of an armed group. Rape may then spread across armed groups as the groups experience an influx of new

recruits, due perhaps to an explicit decision to grow the size of the group, or to replace fighters who have been lost to battle, disease, or desertion. I examine these dynamics in the case study chapters.

Related Arguments

The combatant socialization argument is distinct in important ways from three other, related explanations of the roots of wartime violence. First, the argument differs from more general theories of rape as “male bonding” for two key reasons. Theories of male bonding, obviously, apply specifically to men and are predicated on the idea that men form friendships with one another through voluntary acts of misogynist, sexualized violence in male-only groups (Sanday 2007). However, bonding through acts of rape is not exclusive to male perpetrators, nor are the acts necessarily founded on enjoyment or sexual gratification. Scholars who advocate this perspective often also argue that men behave differently in sex-segregated environments, such as military units, than they would in mixed-gender contexts. One of the central findings of anthropologist Peggy Reeves Sanday, in her early study of rape-prone societies (1981) and in her later work on gang rape on college campuses (2007), is that men in all-male environments are far more likely to engage in sexual violence against women than are those in more gender-equal environments. Related to this argument is the idea that the presence of women in all-male groups mitigates the violent behavior of men by changing the ways in which men relate to one another. Claudia Card (1996) hypothesizes that the involvement of women in combat and leadership roles would render gang rape highly unusual.⁵¹

The combatant socialization argument does not assume that most perpetrators of rape—whether male or female—independently desire to participate in such violence, at least not for reasons of sexual gratification; this position is supported in large part through interviews in the case studies. Interviews with ex-combatants, some of whom expressed intense regret as they recounted their stories, support the idea that perpetrators of gang rape are ordinary people who would likely not perpetrate rape on their own. One ex-combatant in Sierra Leone relayed a story of raping a woman, which he described as “an act of someone with no conscience.” He concluded with something of an apology: “I beg for people to take us back as sons and brothers because what we did to them was really, really terrible.”⁵² As previously described, earlier feminist literature on rape also often

argues that all men harbor an implicit desire to rape women (e.g., Brownmiller 1975).⁵³ Theories of rape as male bonding, however, cannot explain variation—why some groups of men commit rape and others do not, why women also participate, or why such a high proportion of wartime rape is gang rape, as opposed to single-perpetrator rape.

Second, the combatant socialization argument is distinct from a theory of civilian abuse advanced by Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy Weinstein (2006). Humphreys and Weinstein also emphasize that the lack of social cohesion is an essential factor in the commission of civilian abuses, and they find a strong negative relationship between the “density of social ties” (i.e., whether a recruit knew friends, family members, or community leaders in his or her faction) and the level of civilian abuse. A mechanism they hypothesize is that social ties may serve a policing function. Knowing other people in the unit, they argue, made it more difficult to “defect,” or to misbehave in a manner costly to the group.

I concur with the basic premise that an absence of social ties has an effect on violence perpetrated against civilians, and I build on this previous work to explain variation in *forms* of violence rather than *levels* of violence. I argue that the selection of particular types of (sexual) violence serves a deeper purpose for the armed group. Humphreys and Weinstein’s (2006) mechanism does not explain why some forms of violence are selected over others; in other words, why rape or amputation and not just looting? In their conclusion, Humphreys and Weinstein suggest that other mechanisms besides the policing function may be at work including “uncertainty over the relative status of different members within the organization [that] may result in individuals performing violent acts to establish their position within the organization” (444). The combatant socialization argument expands on this alternative mechanism.

A final related argument centers on the importance of norms of violence in armed groups. The norms around the use and nonuse of violence that are communicated by leaders of armed groups, along with the norms that individual fighters may espouse, interact in ways that can help explain the use of wartime rape. Elisabeth Wood (2008; 2009; 2012) presents a theoretical framework for understanding how the norms of the leaders and the fighters can either reduce or encourage the likelihood of rape and other forms of sexual violence. Wood argues that individual combatants’ beliefs, leadership strategy, small group dynamics, and military hierarchy can all contribute to the content and diffusion of norms of violence within a fighting unit. Wood maintains that the use of rape

depends on the armed group's norms and values, mediated by the strength of the group's institutions such as socialization and discipline.⁵⁴ Based on detailed case studies, Wood hypothesizes that groups will not use rape if they have an effective command structure that prohibits rape or when they are dependent upon a civilian population.⁵⁵ While not disputing the argument that group norms are vital in understanding the variation in rape during war, a question remains open: from where do these norms arise? My argument helps to resolve this question by locating the origin of group norms in the recruitment choices of the armed groups.

Competing Explanations for Wartime Rape

The disparate literatures on the causes of wartime rape can be divided into three broad categories: opportunism/greed, ethnic hatred, and gender inequality. Far from being exhaustive, these arguments represent the most salient testable theories across a vast range of literatures, and each yields a unique set of observable implications that can be explored on both the macro and micro levels. I later test these explanations, using a cross-national dataset of all recent major civil wars, to determine their generalizability; then, I utilize detailed case studies to establish whether these explanations find support in particular cases.

Opportunism/Greed

The most common argument made for why rape occurs during wartime centers on the idea that war affords men an unprecedented opportunity to rape. There are several variations on this theme. First, some observers view rape as a "natural," unavoidable outcome of war. War, and the breakdown of the state that may accompany conflict, results in a lawless chaos; it destroys the social norms, institutions, and legal prohibitions that exist in peacetime, which in turn unleashes the latent desire of at least some men to commit rape (e.g., Goldstein 2001; Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2009). This perspective has been articulated in previous research during interviews with former fighters. For example, a former child soldier who fought with the Sierra Leone Army said, "I liked it in the army because we could do anything we liked to do. When some civilian had something I liked, I just took it without him doing anything to me. We used to rape women. Anything I wanted to do [I did]. I was free" (Peters and Richards 1998, 194). In another study, a former captive of the RUF rebel group in Sierra Leone explained rape as a result of the absence of constraints: "In normal

circumstances [the members of the RUF] would restrain themselves. But they would rather experiment with their sexual freedom and they were not under any form of governance or rules” (Keen 2005, 44).

Conflicts marked by high levels of rape from all factions are frequently cited as evidence for this perspective. Reported perpetrators of rape in the ongoing war in the failed state of the DRC include nearly every possible type of actor, including the armed forces, the national police, the rebel forces, and civilians, both male and female (Evans 2007; Johnson et al. 2010). More broadly, there is an expectation that young men, carrying weapons and possibly intoxicated or drugged, will inevitably rape women. This view is captured in a reporter’s description of the wartime violence in Liberia: “Rape is common because of the number of drugged and drunk young men roaming the countryside with guns” (Wax 2003). One former combatant whom I interviewed in Sierra Leone said, “Guns and war—these gave men the feeling that they could rape with impunity.”⁵⁶

According to opportunism/greed arguments, male combatants commit rape for private motivations—namely, sexual gratification—rather than for any sort of military strategy or group purpose.⁵⁷ From this perspective, rape is understood as a costless activity and often considered a form of “consumption,” similar to looting. Men, in this view, have an inherent desire for sex with women that goes unfulfilled during their duties as fighters. Rape, then, may be the result of a lack of access to sex that would normally take place within combatants’ peacetime relationships with their wives and girlfriends.

Indeed, ex-combatants and others I interviewed in both Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste frequently named sexual gratification as one of the reasons for widespread rape. As one ex-combatant in Sierra Leone reported, “The rebels used rape because they did not have girlfriends in the bush.”⁵⁸ Another former fighter in Sierra Leone stated, “The men needed to ejaculate; as long as [the victims] were female, the fighters didn’t care.”⁵⁹ A former rebel commander in Timor-Leste described the rape by pro-Indonesia militias: “The militias were capturing women for sexual satisfaction. Sometimes they were killed afterwards, sometimes they were released.”⁶⁰ An NGO worker also reported that at least some of the rape perpetrated by the militias in Timor-Leste was the result of private motivations: “The militia would have ‘support the referendum’ parties, and they would pressure the village chief to provide music. They would drink and have a party and sometimes rape the local women.”⁶¹ Finally, a Timorese victims’ rights advocate, when asked if the militia-perpetrated rape was directly ordered by the Indonesian military, replied, “It was a chaotic situation. Some individual men in that situation have a personal motivation to commit rape. And some men will take advantage of that opportunity.”⁶²

The uncontrollable need for sexual fulfillment undergirds central assumptions made by some about the causes of wartime rape, particularly regarding access to sex for soldiers. Part of the role of comfort women enslaved for Japan's army was reportedly to prevent the rape of civilians, mitigating the risk of public outrage and the spread of disease (Goldstein 2001; Wood 2009). Additionally, a common story told about the widespread rape in the DRC is that the poorly paid fighters lack the ability to pay for sex workers. A news article featuring an interview with a Congolese army colonel stated that, because fighters have "almost no money, soldiers and deserters are tempted to rape because they are isolated deep in the forest, and cannot afford wives or prostitutes" (Murdock 2011).⁶³

A related version of the opportunism/greed argument has also been offered by scholars using a principal-agent model to explain excess violence—that is, violence beyond the sanctioned killing of enemy combatants—by armed actors (e.g., Mitchell 2004; Butler, Gluch, and Mitchell 2007; Leiby 2011).⁶⁴ As Neil Mitchell (2004, 50) argues, killing during wartime may at times occur by accident, but "rape is not done by mistake." Mitchell maintains that rape is a singular type of violence, and the presence of rape can be used as a "universal barometer" (181) to understand the nature of control that a commander exerts. The perpetration of rape by armed actors, he maintains, indicates that a commander cannot or will not control his fighters, while a lack of rape suggests a commander in control. In Mitchell's view, rape by combatants is both "selfish" and "non-strategic" and, critically, costless from the perspective of the commander. The sum of these strands of the opportunism/greed argument suggests a testable hypothesis:

H2: Rape by state actors and by insurgents is more likely during periods of state collapse, when peacetime barriers against rape have disintegrated.

In addition, state actors may be more likely to rape when military professionalism is particularly weak. National militaries that are poorly resourced and poorly trained may provide fewer checks on the behavior of soldiers and may be more likely to engage in the abuse of civilians. Ouédraogo (2014) writes that weak military professionalism was the proximate cause of an episode of rape and other violence perpetrated in 2011 by members of the military in Burkina Faso. This perspective offers a related hypothesis:

H3: Rape by state actors is more likely when military professionalism is low.

A second influential set of arguments about opportunism/greed focuses on a selection mechanism, or the types of people who want to join armed groups. Mueller (2000) argues that a small number of criminal types caused the violence

during the wars in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. These bands of people, whom Mueller describes in turn as “criminal and hooligan opportunists” (42) and “common, opportunistic, sadistic . . . marauders,” (43) are organized together to commit crimes during the context of war (ethnic war, in these cases, but the theory is not limited to ethnic war). According to Mueller, the gangs are loosely organized by political elites who use coercive violence for political ends. The people who behave violently are understood to be rough types who enjoy violence, and the war provides an excellent excuse to do so without the usual constraints of peacetime. Research on rape in peacetime contexts lends credence to the notion of a selection mechanism. For example, in studies of college fraternities, scholars have suggested a selection mechanism as a reason that fraternities and sports teams seem more likely to engage in gang rape than do other types of campus organizations; they argue that certain types of sexually aggressive men are more likely to join fraternities or sports team (O’Sullivan 1991). One potential cause of wartime rape, then, is that some armed groups attract people who seek to rape.

Jeremy Weinstein (2007) proposes a related explanation, arguing that civilian abuse, broadly defined, is more likely when insurgent groups have access to material resources, including contraband or external funding.⁶⁵ The theory suggests two mechanisms for why resources may lead to violence. The first involves *recruitment*: Weinstein argues that insurgent groups with access to material resources attract “opportunistic joiners” (103), or those with shorter time horizons and less commitment to the long-term goals of the group, in contrast to groups that rely on ideology alone to recruit fighters. In practice, this means that groups with material resources attract more violence-prone recruits and, as a result, will be more likely to commit civilian abuses on a mass scale.

A second mechanism is about *accountability*: the availability of material resources enables insurgent groups to be unaccountable to the civilian population, which in turn leads to exploitative violence, including looting and sexual violence. In other words, the more combatants rely on the civilian population for material support, the less likely they may be to abuse them. Of course, the likelihood of rape and other forms of abuse may lessen as the reliance by combatant groups on civilians increases—for all forms of support, not only material support. Some groups actively cultivate civilian support for a variety of reasons. But material support is one of the most crucial forms, and most observable ways, by which a civilian population can assist an armed group. In the case studies discussed later, I briefly consider this explanation of needing or wanting civilian support as one potential reason for the absence of civilian abuse on the part of some armed groups. In short, regardless of the

mechanism, Weinstein (2007) argues that the availability of material resources is a powerful predictor of whether civilian abuses will occur.

Insurgents may be more likely to rape in conflicts where insurgencies are fueled by “economic endowments,” especially those that are easily converted into selective incentives to entice new recruits (Weinstein 2005, 599), such as contrabands like drugs or diamonds, or external support from a diaspora.⁶⁶ Together, these arguments suggest a fourth hypothesis:

H4: Rape by insurgents is more likely in conflicts where insurgent groups rely on material resources.

Violence against civilians, according to these scholars, is an unfortunate consequence of selecting or attracting fighters who are abusive and unaccountable to the noncombatant population; it is not an instrumental means to an end. The forms of violence used by armed groups, including rape, are selected by individual fighters due to personal preferences.

Ethnic Hatred

One of the most frequently cited environments for extreme violence, including widespread rape, is ethnic war (e.g., Horowitz 1985; Bloom 1999; Plümper and Neumayer 2006). These scholars argue that, because they “engage intense emotions and a sense of existential threat,” ethnic conflicts are likely to be more violent than non-ethnic conflicts (Fearon 2006, 862). For example, Plümper and Neumayer (2006, 735) write that “reports of systematic rapes and rape-related murder of women, forced impregnation and forced abortion are particularly abundant during ethnic wars.” Further, they theorize that rape plays a key role in humiliating the ethnic opponent in a war. In addition, Alison (2007, 79) argues that rape in wartime rarely occurs “indiscriminately”; rather, especially in the context of modern ethnic wars, “rape is intentionally committed by specific men against specific women.” Conventional wisdom in the policy and advocacy arenas, seemingly based on high-profile cases such as the wars in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Rwanda, concurs that ethnic wars are especially likely to be conflicts with widespread rape. An Amnesty International representative quoted in a BBC article on wartime rape illustrates this point: “Rape is often used in ethnic conflicts as a way for attackers to perpetuate their social control and redraw ethnic boundaries” (Smith-Spark 2004).

The mechanism for the hypothesis is that combatants rape to symbolically demonstrate ethnic loathing or dominance over their ethnic opponents. In this way, rape may form a fundamental, and rational, part of combatant groups’ strategies in war: namely, to intimidate other, competing, ethnically opposed

combatant groups (e.g., Bastick, Grimm, and Kunz 2007). Drawing on lessons learned from well-documented conflicts, NGOs and human rights advocates who are seeking prosecutions for rape as a war crime commonly hold this view. Human rights advocacy organizations tend to argue that rape during conflict is the result of its terrible power—particularly during ethnic wars—as a “weapon” or as part of a “strategy of war.”⁶⁷ From this perspective, wartime rape is an organized, top-down phenomenon, explicitly ordered—rather than tolerated—by commanders to terrorize ethnic opponents. Scholars have suggested that rape may be selected as a form of violence due to its ability to instill grave fear in populations. This fear is at least partly founded on the presumed stigma that rape may place on a victim and the victim’s family (Benard 1994; Card 1996).⁶⁸ This argument suggests the following hypothesis:

H5: Ethnic wars are more likely than non-ethnic wars to be associated with higher conflict-wide levels of wartime rape.

The ethnic hatred argument includes two additional variations. First, some have argued specifically that rape is more likely to feature in genocidal wars than in ethnic wars more broadly. These observers view rape as a “central technique” (Mullins 2009, 15) in the technology of genocide in such conflicts as those in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Darfur. Second, drawing on previous work by Catharine MacKinnon (1993), feminist scholars refer to a category of “genocidal rape.” Lisa Sharlach (2000, 89) argues that rape—even if the victim is not killed—should fall under the UN definition of genocide in the 1948 genocide convention, which includes “causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group and/or deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.” Sharlach maintains that the physical and psychological harms inflicted on a rape victim, and on the victim’s ethnic group in the form of mass trauma, are a type of genocidal violence. Scholars also argue that genocidal rape—typically but not always perpetrated by the state—may occur in different forms: rape may occur immediately prior to the lethal violence of the genocide, either as a form of lethal violence itself (i.e., a victim may be raped until she or he dies) (Rittner and Roth 2012) or as a way of inflicting devastating long-term physical or psychological trauma (e.g., victims may be physically unable to or emotionally incapable of having children after a rape) (Koo 2002).⁶⁹ This suggests another hypothesis:

H6: States or insurgents that perpetrate genocide are more likely to commit wartime rape than those who do not.

Of course, not all genocides involve mass rape. In some cases, sexual contact with an ethnic other was understood to be polluting to the perpetrator. For example, sexual relationships with Jews during the Holocaust were strictly forbidden as a form of *Rassenschande* (race defilement), although more recent research has revealed reports of rapes of Jewish women, as well as forced sterilization and forced prostitution (Hedgepeth and Sidel 2010). Scott Straus (2006) hypothesizes that genocidal violence may be more likely when ethnic groups are well integrated into societies, through proximity and intermarriage.⁷⁰ Elisabeth Wood (2009), extending this hypothesis to sexual violence, argues that wartime rape may be more likely in cases where ethnic groups are uninhibited by racial pollution norms and perceive each other as potential sexual and marital partners. One explanation for the lack of rape in the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict is that the members of the Israel Defense Forces do not generally view Palestinians as potential sexual or marital partners (Nitsan 2012).⁷¹

A second variation of the ethnic hatred argument is that rape can be used in a campaign of ethnic cleansing, or forced expulsion, during secessionist wars.⁷² Rape can be a method of ensuring that an ethnic population will flee a disputed territory, guaranteeing that displaced people will not return, and “sexually contaminating” women of a given ethnicity (e.g., Bloom 1999; Sharlach 2000; Farr 2009.)⁷³ Of course, rape can be used as a tactic of intimidation in nonethnic wars as well. One scholar speculates that secessionist wars, in which a country is partitioned into new states, are more likely to feature rape as a tool for increasing hatred between warring groups—essentially, as a method of enforcing the idea that “life together is finished” (Hayden 2000, 32).⁷⁴ This argument suggests the following hypothesis, with applications to both nonethnic and ethnic wars:

H7: Wars with secessionist aims, and especially those that involve ethnic cleansing, are more likely to involve insurgent-perpetrated rape.

Gender Inequality

Feminist scholars have identified, both implicitly and explicitly, a causal relationship between gender inequality and wartime rape (e.g., Hansen 2001; Koo 2002). In addition, a common contention, especially in the human rights advocacy community, holds that wartime rape is more likely in countries where women have fewer political and legal rights. For example, a Human Rights Watch report asserts that “women’s subordinate and unequal status in peacetime renders them predictably at risk for sexual violence in times of war” (Jefferson 2004). Others

have argued that rape may be more likely when women are gaining rights and men may feel threatened (Baron and Straus 1989). A 2011 news article describes a series of brutal rapes of women in northeastern India that illustrates this logic; many of the victims were young, educated women with jobs, while most of the perpetrators were conservative, uneducated, and offended by the newfound freedoms of the victims (*New York Times*, March 26, 2011). However, most arguments about the relationship between gender inequality and wartime rape predict a correlation between the relative lack of women's rights and widespread rape.

Scholarship on the status of women and the use of rape during war focuses in particular on the symbolic meaning of rape and the role that gender inequality may play in facilitating a culture that accepts or encourages violence against women. These scholars typically view rape as an act of violence by the men in a society directed toward the women in the society (or toward the men who control a particular group of women). According to this perspective, rape is a violation—unrelated to on-the-ground wartime strategy—that allows men to inflict psychological harm on women and their communities (e.g., Seifert 1996; Benard 1994; Green 2006). Rape is selected as a type of violence because it is shameful not only for the victim, but also for her husband and male relatives, who are seen to have failed to protect the victim (Bastick, Grimm, and Kunz 2007). Women may become victims because of their symbolic roles as mothers, and as “bearers of honour” (Bastick, Grimm, and Kunz 2007, 14) particularly in ethnic conflicts, or simply because they make easy targets. Some argue that gender inequality creates social norms that encourage violence and aggression against women, including wartime rape (e.g., Baron and Straus 1989; MacKinnon 2006). Similarly, Peggy Reeves Sanday (1981) argues that rape-prone societies are ones that tend to be heavily segregated by sex, and in which the social contributions of women are not highly valued. Others maintain that wartime worsens existing gender inequality, making women especially vulnerable to violence (Farr 2009). Scholars have established that gender inequality is strongly associated with civil war onset (Caprioli 2005; Fearon 2010), but have not investigated whether gender inequality is correlated with specific forms of violence once conflict has begun, including rape. The gender inequality arguments imply the final hypothesis:

H8: Conflicts in countries with greater gender inequality are more likely to be correlated with higher conflict-wide levels of wartime rape.

Each of these arguments has unique observable implications that I test, using both macro- and micro-level data, in subsequent chapters. The observable implications are summarized in table 1.2.

TABLE 1.2 Wartime rape: Arguments, hypotheses, and observable implications

ARGUMENTS	HYPOTHESES	OBSERVABLE IMPLICATIONS	
		MACRO LEVEL	MICRO LEVEL
Combatant socialization	H1: Extreme forced recruitment → state- and insurgent-perpetrated rape	Rape is more likely by armed groups engaged in extreme forms of forced recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Rape is more likely to be perpetrated by armed groups engaged in extreme forms of forced recruitment (i.e. press-ganging by states; abduction by insurgents) – Reports that rape is cohesive, not divisive – Rape is not directly ordered by commanders – Perpetrators of both sexes
Opportunism/greed	H2: State collapse → state- and insurgent-perpetrated rape	Rape is more likely when state collapse is more severe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Rape covaries with looting/property crime – Reports that rape is due to lack of access to sexual partners – Rape is viewed by commanders as costless or as a reward for fighters – Victims are same demographic as peacetime spouses/sexual partners
	H3: Low military professionalism → state-perpetrated rape	Rape is more likely when national militaries are poorly resourced and poorly trained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Rape is more likely to be perpetrated by branches of the national military with poorly funding and training (non-elite units)
	H4: Material resources → insurgent-perpetrated rape	Rape is more likely when insurgents funded by contraband or external sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Rape is more likely to be perpetrated by insurgent groups funded by contraband or external sources (e.g. diaspora communities)
Ethnic hatred	H5: Ethnic wars → conflict-wide rape	Rape is more likely in ethnic wars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Victims are frequently raped by perpetrators of a different ethnicity – Rape is more prevalent in regions where the population has a different ethnicity than combatants – Evidence of rape being used as a targeted or collective form of punishment – Rape is ordered by commanders
	H6: Perpetrators of genocide → state- and insurgent-perpetrated rape	Rape is more likely during periods of genocide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Victims are frequently raped by perpetrators of a different ethnicity – Reports of victims being raped and then killed

ARGUMENTS	HYPOTHESES	OBSERVABLE IMPLICATIONS	
		MACRO LEVEL	MICRO LEVEL
	<i>H7</i> : Secessionist aims/ ethnic cleansing → insurgent-perpetrated rape	Rape is more likely during wars with secessionist aims, or those with campaigns of ethnic cleansing	– Rape reported during campaigns of forced displacement
Gender inequality	<i>H8</i> : Greater gender inequality → conflict- wide rape	Rape is more likely in countries with more pronounced gender inequality	– Armed groups that demonstrate a commitment to gender equality (recruiting and arming female fighters; ideology) are less likely to rape

In this chapter, I have presented an argument about combatant socialization—the main argument of the book—as well as its theoretical foundations in a number of disciplines. I have also discussed the three competing sets of arguments I will consider in the subsequent chapters: opportunism/greed, ethnic hatred, and gender inequality. In the next chapter, I turn to testing the macro-level implications of the arguments on a cross-national sample of major civil wars.