WOMEN & WARS

EDITED BY CAROL COHN

WITH A PREFACE BY CYNTHIA ENLOE

Women and Wars

For my daughter Mariel
And in loving memory of Edna Kaplan and Sara Ruddick

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polity

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Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
Al-Shabaab	Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen (Somalia)
AMB	al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade
ASC	Assembly of Civil Society (Guatemala)
AUC	United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BASIC	British American Security Council
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BCPR	Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (United Nations)
BINGO	big international nongovernmental organization
CDF	Civil Defense Forces (Sierra Leone)
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CHRGJ	Center for Human Rights and Global Justice
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CNDD-FDD	National Council for the Defense of Democracy/Forces of Defense of Democracy (Burundi)
CPC	Civilian Protection Component (Mindanao)
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRSV	conflict-related sexual violence
CSMR	Committee of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia
CSO	civil society organization
DDR	disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DPA	United Nations Department of Political Affairs
DRA	Dutch Refugee Association
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
EU	European Union
FAD	Feminist Approach to Development
FAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo
FMLN	Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (El Salvador)

FORO	Foro Nacional de la Mujeres (Guatemala)
Frelimo	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique
FRODEBU	Front pour la Démocratie au Burundi
GAD	Gender and Development
GAFM	Gender and Forced Migration
GAM	Free Aceh Movement
GBV	gender-based violence
GDP	gross domestic product
GRP	Gender and Reparations Project
GWG	Gender Working Group (Aceh)
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IANSA	International Action Network on Small Arms
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IAWG	Interagency Working Group
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICM	Intergovernmental Committee for Migration
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICTJ	International Center for Transitional Justice
ICTR	International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
IDDRS	Integrated DDR Standards
IDF	Israeli Defense Force
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP	internally displaced person
IFI	international financial institution
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMT	International Monitoring Team (Mindanao)
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRB	Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
IWGRW	International Working Group on Refugee Women
IWNAM	International Women's Network against Militarism
JPuD	Women's Peace Network (Aceh)
JPuK	Women's Policy Network (Aceh)
LoGA	Law on the Governing of Aceh
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army (Uganda)
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MARWOPNET	Mano River Women's Peace Network

MDRP	Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program
M4P	Mothers for Peace
MIRF	Moro Islamic Revolutionary Front
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MP	Member of Parliament
MPC	Mindanao Peoples Caucus
MWC	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NKHR	North Korean Human Rights
NIWC	Northern Ireland Women's Coalition
NMA	Naga Mothers' Association
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NSAG	non-state armed group
NWUM	Naga Women's Union of Manipur
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSRSG/CAC	Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict
PCR	post-conflict reconstruction
PIJ	Palestinian Islamic Jihad
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
PLA	People's Liberation Army (China)
PMS	premenstrual syndrome
PMSC	Private Military and Security Company
POP	people-oriented planning
POW	prisoner of war
PSO	peace support operation
PTSD	post-traumatic stress disorder
RAWA	Revolutionary Women of Afghanistan
RCD	Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie
Renamo	Resistência Nacional Moçambicana
RUF	Revolutionary United Front (Sierra Leone)
SADF	South African Defense Force
SALW	small arms and light weapons
SDN	Sub-Committee on De-escalation and Normalization (Sri Lanka)
SEA	sexual exploitation and abuse
SGI	Sub-Committee on Gender Issues (Sri Lanka)
Sida	Swedish International Development Agency
SIHRN	Sub-Committee on Immediate Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs (Sri Lanka)

SPLA	Sudanese People's Liberation Army
SPLM	Sudanese People's Liberation Movement
SPLM/A	Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Army
SPM	Sub-Committee on Political Matters (Sri Lanka)
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary-General
SSNP	Syrian Socialist National Party
SSR	security sector reform
SSWC	Save Somali Women and Children
STD	sexually transmitted disease
STI	sexually transmitted infection
TB	tuberculosis
TCC	Troop Contributing Country
TNT	trinitrotoluene
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAMID	African Union/United Nations Hybrid operation in Darfur
UNDDR	United Nations Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDPKO	United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations
UNECHA	United Nations Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
UNODA	United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
URNG	Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity
US	United States
USA	United States of America
USCRI	United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
USDOD	United States Department of Defense
VA	United States Department of Veterans Affairs
WAD	Women and Development
WCRWC	Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization

WICM	Women in Crisis Movement
WID	Women in Development
WIFM	Women in Forced Migration
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WREI	Women's Research and Education Institute
WSP	Women Strike for Peace
WTO	World Trade Organization

Contributors

Carol Cohn is Director of the Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights and Professor of Women's Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Her major research interests include gender and armed conflict, the gendered discourses of US national security elites, and gender mainstreaming in international security institutions.

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Ruth Jacobson is a former Lecturer at the Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford in the United Kingdom. In the mid-1980s, she lived and worked in a war zone in Mozambique where she saw the impact on women and girls at close quarters. Subsequently, she has contributed to feminist organizing in the field of humanitarian relief and post-conflict organizations.

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Foreword: Gender Analysis Isn't Easy

I can't tap dance. I watch old Fred Astaire movies and think, "He makes it look so easy." There are many things I haven't learned how to do – to do calculus, to speak Turkish. Thanks to the hard, patient tutoring of so many feminist friends and colleagues, what I have learned how to do is gender analysis. Of course, friends continue to teach me – I'm not "there" yet.

That is, gender analysis is a *skill*. It's not a passing fancy, it's not a way to be polite. And it's not something one picks up casually, on the run. One doesn't acquire the capacity to do useful gender analysis simply because one is "modern," "loves women," "believes in equality," or "has daughters." One has to *learn* how to do it, practice doing it, be candidly reflective about one's shortcomings, try again. To develop gender analytical skills, one has to put one's mind to it, work at it, be willing to be taught by others who know more about how to do it than you do. And, like any sophisticated skill, gender analysis keeps evolving, developing more refined intellectual nuance, greater methodological subtlety. One has to get to the point where one can convincingly describe the processes of gender analysis and its value to others, including to those who are skeptical, distracted, and stressed out. It takes myriad forms of energy to do gender analysis and to convince others of its necessity.

Carol Cohn and her smart contributors, first, are offering us a sophisticated, up-to-date gender analytical tool kit. Second, they are showing us what can be revealed if we learn how to use that gender analytical tool kit.

It's always more engaging to learn a new set of skills if your guides can show you exactly what you'll see with these tools that you would otherwise miss – and why those new findings matter. For instance, using their gender analytical skills, these contributors expose the diverse forms of violence wielded during wars: guns and bombs aren't the only weapons. They pull back the curtain on the differences between girls' and boys' experiences of being made to serve in adult men's fighting forces. "Children" turns out not to be a very useful category when trying to rebuild any society after a war. Cohn's contributors also show us why we will never usefully understand armed conflicts if we stubbornly focus our attention solely on the immediate war zone; we have to learn how to do gender analyses of refugee camps, of markets, of peace negotiations. Their gender analytical skills make it clear, too, that the months and years so comfortably labeled "postwar" in practice are riddled with wartime ideas about men-as-actors and women-as-victims,

misleading ideas that serve to perpetuate the very conditions that set off the conflict in the first place.

The contributors whom Carol Cohn has brought together are among the most experienced users of gender analytical skills in the globally important (and maddeningly complex) field of war, armed conflict and postwar peacebuilding. Their experiences are of using their gender analytical skills while in the midst of confusing relationships "on the ground." These are analysts who've been in refugee camps where water is short, collecting firewood is risky, power hierarchies are dysfunctional, and donors' attention spans are short. They are analysts who have sat in long hearings where diplomats with no mud on their shoes decide whether or not a Gender Unit in a peacekeeping operation will get a decent budget. They have talked to women quite reasonably afraid to describe what actually happened to them and their daughters when rival male soldiers swept through their villages. They have met with local women's groups who have tried to get local male military commanders to listen to their proposals. In New York and capital cities, these gender analysts have lobbied government, nongovernmental organizations, and UN agencies to put aside their usual "only men really matter" ways and, instead, to take women seriously when they evaluate their policies' outcomes, when they write their peacekeepers' mandates, and when they allocate their funds.

Thus, as readers, we each can read *Women and Wars* with the triple aims of acquiring new gender analytical skills; finding out what the causes and dynamics of armed conflict look like if we view them through a gendered lens; and learning how to convince others to adopt these crucial gender analytical skills. This is the sort of book you'll want to make notes on, quote to others, take with you in your knapsack.

Cynthia Enloe

Acknowledgments

No piece of intellectual work is ever solely the product of one mind, and this is perhaps nowhere more true than in the case of a textbook designed to introduce readers to the tremendously rich literature about women and war. This book would not exist without the indefatigable efforts of activists, scholars, and practitioners around the world who work to prevent wars or to bring them more swiftly to an end, to expose wars' gendered workings, and to construct a less violent, more just world. It has been my pleasure and privilege to get know many of them, and to read and read about many more; I deeply regret that this book cannot begin to do justice to the complexity of their thinking or to the courage of their work, but I am enormously grateful for all they have taught me, and hope that they find at least some of it reflected in these pages.

So many friends and colleagues have contributed to the ideas in this book, it will be impossible to thank them all. But I must start with two friends, Cynthia Enloe and Sara Ruddick, with whom I have been in rich dialogue for so long that my thinking often feels like an extended conversation with each of them. There are no adequate ways to describe what their friendship, nuanced thought, fearless originality, intellectual honesty, and personal generosity have meant to me.

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the UN, I have also been lucky to have the friendship and education offered by, among others, Sheri Gibbings, Sylvia Hordosch, Maha Muna, Nadine Puechguirbal, Kristin Valasek, and my sisters in the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. Additionally, it has been a great pleasure and honor to learn from colleagues such as Balghis Badri, Cynthia Cockburn, Luz Méndez, Ndeye Sow, and Dubravka Zarkov.

I have benefited from a very supportive institutional home in the time I have worked on this book. I wish to thank my faculty and administrator colleagues at the University of Massachusetts Boston, including Ann Blum, Elora Chowdhury, Amani El Jack, Jean Humez, Rajini Srikanth, Dean Donna Kuizenga, and Provost Winston Langley for their friendship, support, vision, and wonderful scholarship. Most critically, I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to my Associate Director at the Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights, Sandra McEvoy, who has been exceptionally generous, skilled, committed and hardworking in keeping all of the moving parts of our complex program functioning and making such a success of it – enabling me to pour the necessary time and energy into this manuscript. She is a valued interlocutor, scholar, co-teacher, and all-around co-conspirator who enriches every dimension of my and the Consortium's work.

This book has truly been a collective effort. The idea for it was hatched between Louise Knight, of Polity Press, and Laura Sjoberg, who brought me into the project. I am grateful to Laura for the extensive work she put into the early stages of this project, and to Louise, Emma Hutchinson, and David Winters at Polity for their support and guidance throughout the development of this book, and for their patience. The early stages of this project also benefited greatly from the collective wisdom of the "April 11th group," which came together to brainstorm the conceptual framework for the book; participants included Dinu Abdella, Cynthia Enloe, Ruth Jacobson, Ramina Johal, Milkah Kihunah, Jennifer Klot, Dyan Mazurana, Sandy McEvoy, Julie Mertus, Sonali Moonesinghe, Selma Scheewe, and Laura Sjoberg.

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It is customary to "last but not least" thank one's family; the incommensurability between that formulation and what one's closest family members both give and put up with is hard to fathom. My family's love, support, understanding, and forbearance have meant the world to me. I owe special words of appreciation to my grandmother Edna, an extraordinary human being and activist, whose 1916 high school valedictory speech on "Women in the Current War Effort" still tickles and teaches me; to my mother Helen, who taught me more than I can say; and to my daughter Mariel, for all the joy.

CHAPTER 1

Women and Wars: Toward a Conceptual Framework

Carol Cohn

This is a book about the relationships between women and wars: the impacts wars have on women, the ways women participate in wars, the varying political stances women take toward war, and the ways in which women work to build peace.

There is an old story about war. It starts with war being conceived of as a quintessentially masculine realm: in it, it is men who make the decisions to go to war, men who do the planning, men who do the fighting and dying, men who protect their nation and their helpless women and children, and men who negotiate the peace, divide the spoils, and share power when war is over.

In this story, women are sometimes present, but remain peripheral to the war itself. They raise sons they willingly sacrifice for their country, support their men, and mourn the dead. Sometimes they have to step in and take up the load their men put down when they went off to fight; they pick up the hoe, or work in a factory producing goods crucial to the war effort – but only as long as the men are away. To the men in battle, they symbolize the alternative – a place of love, caring, and domesticity, and indeed, all that is good about the nation which their heroic fighting protects.

The gendered reality of war is far more complex than this old story portrays. War itself is more complexly gendered than this masculinized story allows, and women's role in and experience of war is far more integral and varied. In this book, we will show that one cannot understand either women's relation to war or war itself without understanding gender, and understanding the ways that war and gender are, in fact, mutually constitutive.

Which women? Which wars?

The starting point for thinking about women and wars must be that women's experiences of war and their relations to war are extremely diverse. Women both try to prevent wars and instigate wars. They are politically supportive of wars, and they protest against wars. Women are raped, tortured, maimed, and murdered, they are widowed, the children they have nurtured are lost to violence; but women are also members and supporters of the militaries and armed groups that commit these acts. Women stay home, resolutely striving to sustain family and community relationships; and women are displaced, living in

camps without any of the structures that they have built to make life possible. Women are empowered by taking on new roles in wartime, and disempowered by being abducted from their homes and forced into armed groups or military prostitution. When the war is over, women work to rebuild their communities, and women are ejected from their families and communities because they have been raped, or been combatants, or lost a limb to a landmine.

The diversity of women's experiences of and relations to war is due to both diversity among women and diversity among wars. "Women," of course, are not a monolithic group, but instead individuals whose identities, options, and experiences are shaped by factors including their age, economic class, race, clan, tribe, caste, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, physical ability, culture, geographic location, state citizenship and national identity, and their positioning in both local and global economic processes. Their relations to war are shaped by, but not reducible to, these multiple factors; they are also thinkers who make their own sense of the multiple social, cultural, economic, and political forces which structure their lives. The multiplicity of these factors and the sense women make of them gives rise to contradictory interests among women, and even within any particular woman. This means that attempts to generalize about "women and war," while in some ways unavoidable in a book of this kind, always run the risk of doing conceptual violence to the realities of women's lives. And that we must, at a minimum, reject comfortable assumptions such as "women are naturally more peaceful than men" or "women are war's victims," and instead commit to exploring the specificity of different women's relations to wars and the multitude of factors which shape those relations.

This, in turn, requires paying attention to the specificity of wars. Wars are neither a uniform phenomenon, nor a uniformly gendered phenomenon. They vary along many dimensions including the weapons, tactics, and strategies employed, the political motivations and goals, the global economic and political relationships within which they are embedded, the kinds of militaries and armed groups engaged in the fighting, the number, range, and type of other actors involved in the conflict, and the resources available for recovering from war.

Thus, understanding that there is great breadth and diversity of women's experiences of war is a critical first step, but we also need more than a catalogue of what women do and what happens to them. In order to understand the specificity and complexity of women's different experiences of and actions in war, we need to start by understanding the contexts within which that experience is embedded, the series of interlocking systems, relationships, and processes which constitute the conditions under which women act. These include the gender systems within which women live; the specific kinds of wars being fought; and the wider set of actors and economic, political and social processes, from local to global, which shape both women's lives and the societies within which they live before, during, and after war.

Our approach to thinking about gender

"Gender" is a complex term which has been employed in many different ways by scholars, policy makers and activists; unfortunately, this means that when any two people use the word "gender," they may not be sharing a common understanding at all. For many policymakers in international institutions, for example, "gender" is often little more than a more "neutral-sounding" word for women; so when they refer to "gender issues" they really mean those things they think of as "women's issues," and when they talk about something like "gendering peacekeeping," they are most likely referring to adding women to peacekeeping forces or addressing women's needs during a peacekeeping mission. For others, however, "gender" is taken as referring to *both* men and women, and a "gender issue" might, for example, be the problem of how to disarm male fighters at the end of a war if their identities as men are bound up with possessing and using guns. In answering that question, a feminist economic researcher who sees "gender" as a structural, material relationship between men and women would likely come up with different solutions than a feminist sociological theorist who understands "gender" as a "situated accomplishment." If, as this book shows, gender is a crucial factor both in how women and men experience wars *and* in war itself, it is critical for us, at the outset, to unpack some of the meanings of gender that will prove analytically useful to the study of women and war.

Gender as structural power relation

Among the many different uses and meanings of the word "gender," one common place to start is to understand that gender is a social structure which shapes individual identities and lives. It shapes how people see themselves and are seen by others. It shapes the kinds of daily activities and paid work in which people are likely to engage. It shapes the kinds of material and cultural resources to which they have access, and the kinds of power and authority they might wield.

But gender not only structures our lives as individuals; it also shapes, and is shaped by, the institutional and symbolic universe we inhabit, and the material processes – such as economic growth or decline, "globalization," militarization, or climate change – which constitute the context and conditions within which our lives play out. This is because gender is not simply a set of ideas about male and female people and their proper relations to each other; gender is, more broadly, a way of categorizing, ordering, and symbolizing power, of hierarchically structuring relationships among different categories of people, and different human activities symbolically associated with masculinity or femininity. So, as will be shown later in this chapter and throughout the book, the institutions that are constitutive of the wider economic, political, social, and environmental processes formative of war are themselves

structured in ways that both draw on and produce ideas about gender, that rely on gendered individuals in order to function, and that are permeated with symbolic associations with gender in their practices and conceptions of their missions.

In understanding the many different meanings of gender, as well as the ways they are linked, the conceptual lynchpin that holds them all together is this: gender is, at its heart, a structural power relation. Just as colonialism, slavery, class, race, and caste are all systems of power, so is gender. Each rests upon a central set of distinctions between different categories of people, valorizes some over others, and organizes access to resources, rights, responsibilities, authority, and life options along the lines demarcating those groups.

There are many different ways of talking about a system that structures power relations along the lines of gender difference. One of the first to gain prominence was the word "patriarchy." Although the literal meaning of the word is "rule of the father," patriarchy is generally taken to have a broader meaning. A patriarchal system is one in which not only are fathers the heads of families, with authority over their wives and children, but also where men exercise power and dominate women through control of society's governmental, social, economic, religious, and cultural institutions. While some writers are reluctant to use the word, either due to worry that it will scare readers or because they feel that it does not adequately address the nuances of gendered power relations, others see its sustained value in its foregrounding of power, which can sometimes seem to disappear in discussions about "gender." One of the foremost scholars on women and war, Cynthia Enloe, states, "Patriarchy allows you to talk about the relationship of constructed masculinities and constructed femininities, over time and in relationship to each other and as they relate to structures of power. If you just use 'gender,' then you can, in fact, never ask about the power relationships that both construct masculinity and femininity and relate them to each other unequally."[1]

Other gender analysts attempt to ensure the centrality of power to discussions of gender by talking about "gender subordination," a term which they see as useful in pointing to the male–female gender binary, as well as to the ways in which *within* each category there are gendered hierarchies. Others find "gender system," "gender order," and "gender hierarchy" to be useful in pointing to the complexity of hierarchical gender statuses both between and among men and women. R. W. Connell (1987), for example, has focused attention on the multiplicity of masculinities that exist, finding that "hegemonic masculinity" not only helps legitimate men's power vis-à-vis women, but also legitimates some men having greater power than other men, those with "subordinate masculinities." Still other writers employ the concept of "masculinism," "the ideology that justifies and naturalizes gender hierarchy by not questioning the elevation of ways of being and knowing associated with men and (hegemonic) masculinity over those associated with women and feminism" (Hooper 1998, p. 31).[2]

Whichever specific term is used to connote gender as a structural power relation, there are two key points to keep in mind for the purposes of this book. First, it is important to notice that in no case is gender ever reduced to a monolithic picture of one unified category of people, men, having power over another unified category of people, women. Instead, each of these terms points to the necessity of seeing that there are not only power differentials *between* each category, but also *within* each. This is because gender never stands alone as a factor structuring power in a society, but rather is inflected through, and co-constituting of, other hierarchical forms of structuring power, such as class, caste, race, ethnicity, age, and sexuality. It is the intersections of these structures that produce multiple masculinities and femininities, and concomitant power differentials, *within* each category.[3]

Second, we need to remember that the many different phenomena which the word "gender" is used to encompass become coherently linked only when they are seen as facets of the way in which gender functions as a system of power. So three key phenomena we will shortly examine in this chapter – gendered identities, gendered social structures, and gendered symbolic meanings – should not be understood in isolation, but rather as three co-constituting aspects of *gender as a social system which structures hierarchical power relations*.[4] Further, the interrelations between them are critical to understanding why women's – and men's – experiences of war can only be understood through the lens of gender analysis.

Gendered power relations and the relation of sex and gender

A system which empowers some categories of people at the expense of others requires political, social, economic, cultural, legal, and educational institutions which actualize and undergird this distribution of power. It also requires an ideology that justifies that unequal access; it has in some way to "make sense" or to appear legitimate that some people have access to resources, or even to rights over their own bodies, which others do not. Typically, this involves a set of beliefs about what each category of person is like. Both colonialism and slavery, for example, have relied on racism, a system of belief which posits supposedly "biologically" distinct racial categories (with, at the most, only marginal relation to physiological fact), and attributes different characteristics as inherent in people in each category. The characteristics belonging to each are not only seen as distinct but also distinctly coded as opposites, one inferior and one superior, and as less and more suited to different kinds of work, different life options, and different access to power. So the arrangement of power in which colonizers have the right to govern the colonized and to exploit and expropriate both their natural resources and labor only appears legitimate if the people who are colonized are understood as racially inferior – primitive, childlike, heathen, uncivilized, ignorant, and thus unfit for governing themselves – and the people who colonize are understood as

their racial superiors with an "opposite" set of characteristics – advanced, mature, god-fearing, civilized, intellectually superior, and beneficent, and thus well-suited for having power over others "for their own good."

In a parallel manner, men's greater access to power and resources than women's has long relied for its justification on a set of beliefs about men's and women's reputedly biologically based characteristics. *If* men are believed to be stronger, more rational, more in control of their emotions, smarter, independent, tougher, better able to make and stick to a decision, courageous, more aggressive and thus willing to fight when necessary, more active, better at math and science, more oriented toward achievement and changing the world in which they live, while women are believed to be weaker, irrational, governed by their emotions, less intelligent, dependent, soft, indecisive, timid, passive, bad at math and science, and much more interested in domestic relationships than in public life, *then* it might appear to make the most sense for men to be in charge. These beliefs would suggest that in the public sphere of industrialized states, men would be better skilled than women at running governments, corporations, factories, religious and educational institutions; in the family they would be better suited to make the decisions, control the finances, and control and protect women and children (who are both seen as unable to protect themselves).

There are two key things to highlight in thinking about this system. First, that blatant inequality – that is, men's and women's unequal access to power, authority, and resources – is not only legitimated, but also made to appear natural and unremarkable, by a belief system that divides humans into two categories, male and female, and then sees a huge range of different characteristics as residing *within the individuals* in each group. This way, men's dominance of political, economic, and social institutions is seen as simply a result of their inherent *individual* capacities (and women's lack of those capacities), rather than as a result of *social structures* which systematically advantage men and disadvantage women.

Second, it is critical that the different characteristics attributed to males and females are seen to be based in their respective *bodies*, for if the differences are seen as biological, then male dominance is seen not only as "natural" but also unchangeable. Although feminist theorists have challenged the belief that the body is somehow a simple biological given, independent of culture, and unchanging, it remains true that for many people, that which is seen as biologically based is seen as "natural" and immutable.

It was in response to this set of social beliefs underlying male dominance – that it is legitimate because it derives from biologically based differences between males and females – that the concept of gender (in its nongrammatical usage) was first developed. Feminist social scientists and historians observed that, although male and female biological difference is relatively consistent, what societies believe about what men and women are "naturally" like varies substantially across cultures and through history. So the

term "gender" was used to mark and make visible a distinction between the biological differences between males and females (or "sex" difference) and the socially constructed meanings ascribed to those differences ("gender"). Gender is constructed through a process in which humans are divided into categories (male and female) and a multiplicity of dichotomously conceived traits, characteristics, and meanings are associated with each category, which is then conceived as the opposite of the other (masculinity and femininity). Critically, the meanings attached to each category are not neutral; rather, those coded as masculine are consistently valorized over those coded as feminine, and those individuals and activities marked as masculine are considered to have more status and value than those seen as feminine. So if before the concept of gender was developed it was widely taken for granted that what we expect men and women to be like – their personalities, the kind of work they do, the roles they take in family and community life – flows directly from their biological sex, the concept of "gender" interrupts that (too) easy equation. Gender insists that, however much is biologically given, societies construct a much greater set of differences than biology dictates, and that those socially constructed differences, in turn, legitimate a social order based on the domination of men over women, and some men over other men.

This distinction between "sex" and "gender" – between what appear to be unvarying biological sex differences and the far more varied social constructions of masculinity and femininity – is pivotally useful, but has also been somewhat complicated in recent years. Although it has been true throughout history that most (although not all) societies have understood people to be either "male" or "female" on the basis of a set of biological characteristics including appearance, reproductive anatomy, and reproductive capacity, we now know that sex categories are not that simple. In fact, it is estimated that in at least 1 percent of births there are morphological features which make it difficult to see the infant as clearly a member of either biological sex category (Chase 1998; Diamond & Sigmundson 1997; Fausto-Sterling 2000); instead, they are biologically intersex. So the idea that there are only two biological sexes must itself be understood as a social construction.

What is significant to us in a book about women and wars, however, is that in most societies there is a taken-for-granted belief that there are (only) two sexes, and that one's seemingly "natural" and self-evident membership in either group (sex) brings with it a vast array of meanings, options and constraints (gender) beyond that which biology itself dictates. The imputed character traits, capacities, strengths, and weaknesses are seen then to be appropriately shaping the relations between the sexes, as well as the kinds of work each does, the activities each engages in, and the kinds of resources, power, and authority each can or cannot access. And it is these social facts, these social arrangements as they intersect with other social structures, such as class, caste, race, and ethnicity, which are the most important shapers of women's (and men's) experiences of war. Together they constitute: the

conditions of women's lives before wars start; the practices women engage in and vulnerabilities they experience during war; the ways in which women will be viewed in war by everyone from enemy soldiers and political leaders to humanitarian assistance workers and policy makers; and the resources women can call upon to deal with wars' consequences.

One powerful way to see these connections between gendered social arrangements and women's experiences of war is to think about women's oft-focused-upon vulnerability in war. One can start by thinking about gendered divisions of labor; if gathering firewood and fetching water for the household are viewed as "women's work," for example, women will, during a war, be more vulnerable to rape, as these responsibilities take them to areas outside their villages or camps where they are isolated and more easily attacked. If taking care of children, the sick and the elderly is seen as "women's work," it will be harder for women than for men to quickly flee a village that is about to be raided and torched. If the gender arrangements of a society place men but not women in the paid labor force of the formal economy, and/or allow men but not women to own land, the women left behind when men depart to fight or die in battle will have little access to resources to support their families; this leaves them vulnerable to a variety of socially, economically and sexually exploitative relationships. In each of these cases and many more throughout this book, it is not a woman's biology that is the principal shaper of her experiences of war, but the gender arrangements within which she lives. So in seeking to understand "women and wars," it will be crucial to always be viewing women through the lens of gender analysis.

Gendered selves

If gender is not simply a pure manifestation of biological sex difference, but rather a social construction, how do people come to believe the specific things they do about what women and men, and girls and boys, are and should be like? And if gender is understood as a structural power relation, why do so many females and males accept it as both natural and reasonable that men (as a group) have more power than women? How do they come to experience themselves and their own identities in alignment with ideas about masculinity and femininity that would make this feel acceptable?

Theorists and researchers in different disciplines have come up with a multiplicity of answers to these questions. While an exhaustive exploration of their theories is beyond the scope of this book, several points are worth highlighting as they are helpful to us in understanding the gender relations that shape women's experiences of war.

Most critically, scholars' ideas about the nature of gender identity have undergone significant changes in the past several decades. Early western psychoanalytic conceptions saw the development of a coherent and stable gender identity as a product of the family relationships of early childhood;