

Conflict-Related Sexual Violence against Men

A Global Perspective

Across time and space, wartime sexual violence against men is committed more frequently than commonly assumed. The past decade in particular witnessed an increase in scholarly and political attention on male-directed sexual violence during war, contributing toward the steady and continuous inclusion of male victims in dominant conceptualizations of conflict-related sexual violence.¹ In policy terms, the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2106 from June 2013 and more recently resolution 2467 from May 2019 constituted particularly significant political moves toward recognizing male-directed sexual violence. Despite important progress, however, male survivors of sexual violence arguably remain only a marginal concern, and dominant work on gender-based violence often continues to imply that wartime sexual violence against men constitutes a (rare) exception to the norm.

Even in 2019, at the time of writing this book, men and boys as victims are often not more than a mere afterthought in scholarship and policy-making on the topic. To illustrate: In late May 2019—and in the wake of the Nobel Peace Prize being awarded to Nadia Murad and Dr. Denis Mukwege for their efforts to prevent and respond to wartime sexual violence—various UN agencies, (mostly Western) governments, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and civil society organizations came together in Norway for a high-level conference on ending sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian crises. Both in the official conference material as well as in the media reporting about the event, it was merely noted that “boys and men are affected too,” without any further exploration. Even though recent years saw “a major shift towards including male victims in international policy on wartime sexual violence” (Touquet and Gorris 2016: 1), and a marked increase in scholarly

publications, much remains unknown about the scope, forms, and dynamics of sexual violence against men.

In light of this global neglect of this type of gender-based violence, in this chapter I critically review the existing body of knowledge on conflict-related sexual violence against men from a global perspective. Pulling together the existing scholarship into one overarching framework, I situate this book within this body of literature. By comprehensively reviewing this relatively new area of study that emerged within the past decade, I build on intersecting bodies of interdisciplinary literature, specifically within the (sub)fields of feminist international relations and masculinities studies, as well as the constantly growing body of research on conflict-related sexual violence. The overview in this chapter thereby evidences that much prevailing scholarship on the topic remains largely descriptive and undertheorized, characterized by a lack of empirical data. Despite a few noteworthy exceptions, male survivors' experiences and perspectives remain strikingly underexplored. This then constitutes the epistemological point of departure for this book, which centralizes male survivors' voices in order to uncover and make sense of their lived realities.

The overview pursued throughout this chapter is structured in accordance with the most prevalent themes reflected in existing research. The chapter commences by revisiting the conceptual links between masculinities and sexual violence against men. I then critically examine existing definitions and conceptualize the understanding of conflict-related sexual violence against men adopted in this book. The next part examines the scope and frequency of male-directed sexual violence during armed conflicts across time and space, evidencing that sexual violence is committed more frequently than commonly acknowledged. I proceed by reviewing numerous explanations regarding the occurrence of sexual violence as prevalent throughout the literature.

MASCULINITIES, CONFLICT, AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Since crimes of sexual violence against men are immediately underpinned by masculinities constructions, I open this chapter by reflecting upon the conceptual and theoretical relationships between masculinities and sexual violence. I specifically focus on the conceptual linkages between masculinities and violence as well as masculine vulnerabilities, both of which are fundamentally important for understanding the dynamics of male-directed sexual violence. Even though the study of armed conflict was traditionally silent on gender, recent decades nevertheless witnessed an increasing utilization of gender lenses and particularly diverse feminist theories² to elucidate the gendered dimensions of armed conflicts.³ Predominantly guided by feminist curiosities to comprehend, unravel, and uproot patriarchal structures and gendered inequalities within theaters of war, a diverse set of studies increasingly seeks to examine conflict, violence, and peace-building

through a gender lens.⁴ Feminist scholarship on gender and armed conflict has provided crucial explanations for causalities between gender relations and war, for the gendered dynamics and consequences of political violence, as well as for the occurrence of gender-based violence, including (sexual) violence against women and girls.

Although significant contextual variation and gendered specificities exist between sexual violence against women and men, much of this feminist theorizing is instrumental for understanding the gender dynamics and dimensions of male-directed sexual violence. As Solangon and Patel (2012) attest, analyses of sexual violence against men can well be explored “through applying causal theories based on female victims of sexual violence” (417). Sivakumaran (2007) likewise observes synergies between many of the conceptual and theoretical building blocks that can be utilized to explain sexual violence perpetrated against both women and men. Somewhat surprisingly, however, I find that much of the existing scholarship on the topic of sexual violence against men, with only a few exceptions, fails to sufficiently draw on and incorporate this body of feminist work and theorizing into their analyses. As noted by feminist legal scholar Nancy Dowd (2010) on a more general level, integrating feminist theorizing with masculinities perspectives can foster a more holistic and robust understanding of the gender dynamics of international politics in general and of sexual and gender-based violence (against women and men) specifically. Dowd argues that “what masculinities has to offer feminist theory, in general, is the enrichment, contextualization and refinement of theory, as well as making men simply visible! What feminism has to offer masculinities theory is a set of tools to address much more strongly inequality, subordination and how to shift from power-over to power-with” (231).

Linking existing feminist theoretical explanations for the gendered dynamics of conflict to the related phenomenon of conflict-related sexual violence against men, as I attempt to do in this book, can therefore help us to develop a more holistic understanding of these forms of violence.

Masculinities and Violence

One obvious and necessary way to build upon extant feminist theorizing is to deconstruct the ways in which wartime sexual violence against men (as well as against women) is immediately underpinned by masculinities. In brief, and as elaborated in the introduction, male-directed sexual violence is predominantly understood to compromise male survivors’ masculine identities, while simultaneously awarding a sense of hypermasculinity to the (mostly but not always) male perpetrators.

Recent years in particular have witnessed increasing attention to masculinities in scholarship on gender and armed conflict.⁵ The majority of these studies, however, have focused narrowly on hyper- and militarized masculinities—largely at the expense of the diversity of other masculinities constructions, as well as masculine vulnerabilities. This concentration on the intersections between

masculinities and the various forms of violence associated with them constituted a primary unit of analysis for many of the earlier critical masculinities studies. If masculinities are integrated into gendered analyses of war and armed conflict, much of the existing literature thus tends to focus on the men who commit violence and the forms of violence perpetrated by men.⁶

Arguably, analyzing the “violences of men” (Hearn 1998) seems sensible and understandable, given that certain notions of masculinities are a driving force behind many of the obvious gender inequalities prevalent throughout society and much of the (gender-based and sexual) violence perpetrated against both women and men. A key point to this analysis is the observation that most male survivors of sexual violence have been violated by men, exposing the empirical reality that when engaging men as victims of violence, we similarly predominantly encounter men as perpetrators.⁷

Michael Kimmel (2010), one of the founding members of the (sub)field of men and masculinities studies, states that violence often constitutes one significant, if not *the* single most important, marker of manhood. Across time and space as well as statistically, it is men who predominantly commit violence, whether during peacetime or armed conflicts. Similarly, men (or masculine actors) predominantly control systems of institutionalized violence, such as prisons, the police, and the military. Influential gender scholars such as Connell (2000), Cockburn (2001), and Hutchings (2008) have found clear (causal) linkages between certain forms of hyper- and militarized masculinities on the one hand and violence and militarism on the other hand. As poignantly argued by Cynthia Cockburn (2010), for instance, certain notions of masculinities and militarization are dependent upon and constitutive of each other, whereby masculinity needs militarization and violence for its fulfilment, and militarization needs (militarized) masculinities. Similarly, Kimberly Hutchings identifies a connection between masculinities and war, grounded in a set of substantial commonalities and shared norms, whereby “the standards that govern the being and conduct of men overlap with the standards that govern the being and conduct of war makers” (2008: 391). Deriving from these apparent correlations between (militarized) masculinities and the perpetration of violence, it perhaps seems not surprising that it is also men who predominantly engage in warfare. At the same time, however, it is also men who across time and space remain disproportionally affected by many (albeit not all) forms of conflict-related violence, and men indeed make up for the vast majority of battle-related deaths during armed conflict.

Instead of equating men and masculinities with violence, it is important to recognize that most men are not violent; yet when violence occurs, it is most often perpetrated by men (see Kimmel 2010; Cockburn 2001). Drawing connections between masculinities and violence is therefore not to suggest that all men are naturally violent. Rather, “interrogating where and how men are situated in relation to the creation, perpetration and institutionalization of violence” (Cahn, Ní Aoláin, and Haynes 2009: 104) reveals that especially within the context of war,

certain forms of militarized and hypermasculinities are more closely linked to violence than other often more common and peaceful conceptions of manhood. Frequently, although not universally, these forms of hyper and militarized masculinities may materialize in order to aspire to a hegemonic conception of manhood that stands at the top of the gender hierarchy.⁸

Against the backdrop of this evidence regarding some men's disproportionate perpetration of violence, the enduring question arises of why some masculinities notions are so closely connected to violence. Although we want to avoid oversimplifying or essentializing, it is important to point out that in many societies, violence "may literally make the man" (Ní Aoláin, Haynes, and Cahn 2009: 104) and often constitutes an important element to attaining dominant and hegemonic conceptions of masculinity. Since (hegemonic) masculinity is not automatically a given but rather socially constructed and must be achieved, it requires particular behaviors and actions in specific situations. Frequently in various societal contexts, and at certain points in time (such as war, political or economic instability, disaster emergencies), violence may be seen as either necessary or at least acceptable and tolerated in order to attain hegemonic masculine attributes. Cahn, Ní Aoláin, and Haynes (2009) point out that "in multiple contexts, engaging in violence is a rational choice for men when few other opportunities may be provided to gain economic security . . . , social status and value within their communities, and security . . . for their families and communities" (107). As argued by Cynthia Cockburn, war therefore deepens already existing sexual and gendered divisions, "emphasizing the male as perpetrator of violence, women as victims" (2010: 144).

In light of these insights, feminist scholars in particular have posited the "frustration-aggression" hypothesis for understanding the linkages between some norms of masculinities and violence (see Porter 2013). According to this explanation, especially in situations of armed conflict, turmoil, or economic insecurity, men are confronted with significant barriers to achieving the dominant or traditional markers of manhood, which in turn can cause "feelings of shame, humiliation, frustration, inadequacy and loss of dignity" (Porter 2013: 488). The inability to live up to masculine expectations in more conventional ways may then lead to frustrations, which some men may respond to with violence to attain socially expected standards of manhood. Explaining violence as an expression of, or a reaction to, frustration thereby supports Dolan's (2002) claim that violence is not an inherent or embodied masculine trait, but rather constitutes a response of men feeling unable to fulfill hegemonic but increasingly unattainable models of masculinity. From this perspective violence "represents both an expression of power and dominance and simultaneously an expression of masculinity nostalgia, disempowerment and male vulnerability" (MacKenzie and Foster 2017: 14). Importantly, these reflections do not attempt to justify or excuse violent behaviour, but rather aim to aid our understanding of and explanations for masculine violence.

Such explanations and observations, however, have all too often resulted in false and misleading portrayals of men as universal aggressors in armed conflict and women as universal victims. Interestingly, these essentialist and dichotomous categorizations of “all the men are in the militias, and all the women are victims”—as Cynthia Enloe (2004) has fittingly put it—are criticized from what can be seen as two quite distinct yet partially interlinked lines of argumentation. On the one hand, critical feminist scholarship criticizes much of the prevailing gender discourse for essentializing women as weak and vulnerable victims in need of patriarchal (and often white, Western) protection from the global gender order, challenging the dominant framing of women as passive and vulnerable victims. Previous studies have convincingly argued that these simplistic portrayals automatically render women as ever vulnerable, ignore the diverse experiences and roles women embody within the context of armed conflicts, and overshadow their (political) agency.⁹

Another group of scholars in turn criticizes the mainstream gender discourse for putting forward an unreconstructed view of men that essentializes them as perpetrators only, thereby neglecting men as potential victims and ignoring male vulnerabilities.¹⁰ According to this body of research, common gendered stereotypes risk reducing men as (naturally) violent and exclusively view them in their instrumentalist capacities as perpetrators, or potentially as agents of change in the fight against violence against women, but not as possible victims. This ignores men’s diverse experiences of victimhood during armed conflicts, as well as the manifold ways that men are vulnerable to violence and impacted by masculinities constructions themselves—foregrounding the all-encompassing destructive potential of patriarchy in all its manifestations (Enloe 2017).

Even though approaching the problem from partially different angles and with diverging areas of focus, both lines of argumentation express concern regarding the mainstream literature’s view on gender relations. Perceiving men solely as perpetrators (and rarely as vulnerable) and women overwhelmingly as victims (and rarely as agents and actors) is therefore a “heavily gendered narrative of war” (Zarkov 2001: 71). This dominant account neglects women’s agency while simultaneously ignoring masculine vulnerabilities during wars. Even though dominant conceptions of masculinities are seen as incompatible with victimhood, as deconstructed in the introduction, vulnerabilities are fundamentally human and thus unavoidable. Among the forms of conflict-related male vulnerabilities that in recent years have received increasing attention are crimes of sexual violence against.

CONCEPTUALIZING SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST MEN

Drawing on these theoretical reflections, let us turn to conceptualizing and defining conflict-related sexual violence against men. To this end, here I scrutinize different definitions of male-directed conflict-related sexual violence as prevalent

throughout the literature in order to lay out the foundational understanding of such violence employed in this book. This overview demonstrates that previous conceptions of SGBV during war largely marginalized violence against men while at the same time placing a heavy emphasis on penetrative rape over other forms of sexual violence. These exclusions ultimately necessitate a gender-inclusive and holistic conceptualization of sexual violence, inclusive of male victims and a variety of sexual crimes, as laid out in this section.

While conflict-related sexual violence broadly constitutes a form of gender-based violence (GBV)—an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will based on socially ascribed gender differences—in this book I specifically focus on *sexual violence* as one poignant manifestation of GBV.¹¹ While much criticism has rightfully been directed toward the hyperattention to and hypervisibility of sexual violence (over other forms of gender-based violence and discrimination), these assertions do not (yet) necessarily apply to sexual violence against men, which remains underexplored.

According to feminist scholar Skjelsbaek (2001), sexual violence can broadly be understood as any form of “violence with a sexual manifestation” (212). Defining what constitutes sexual violence, however, can be difficult and is conditioned by various theoretical, conceptual, and methodological challenges, as well as different contextual, cultural, and social factors. As Leiby (2009) observes, “what is understood as sexual violence varies widely across ethnic, religious and social groups” (81), as well as across scholarly disciplines, and therefore different definitions circulate across the literature. Many of these existing definitions are problematic in different ways and from various perspectives, as they (implicitly or explicitly) exclude sexual violence against men and/or place a heavy emphasis on penetrative rape.

Earlier classifications of sexual violence were often too narrow, reductionist, essentialist, or exclusive, frequently not at all acknowledging men and boys as victims.¹² These exclusions are exemplified through studies that emphasize that sexual violence is committed exclusively against women and girls. To provide just one example, Sharlach (2001: 1) defines rape as “any sexual penetration of a *female* by a male (or with an object) that takes place without *her* consent.” Furthermore, most of the earlier UNSC resolutions on conflict and gender under the framework of the Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda exclusively include women and girls (or at times women and children) as potential victims.¹³ These definitions thereby systematically excluded the possibility of men as victims of sexual violence. Only in 2013, with UNSCR 2106, was sexual violence against men acknowledged by the UN's WPS agenda for the first time.

Despite these shortcomings, however, more recent definitions have tended to employ gender-neutral language, thereby also recognizing men and boys alongside women and girls as potential victims of sexual violence. Progress in this regard, and within the policy sphere, can be observed over time: In fact, the most

recent resolution of the WPS agenda—UNSCR 2467, passed in April 2019—six times explicitly mentions men and boys as (potential) victims, more than any other resolution before that. Despite these advances, however, the binary framing of women/girls and men/boys leaves out gender-nonconforming identities as recognized victims of sexual violence, necessitating further efforts to queer not only the Women Peace and Security Agenda but international politics and discourses around gender-based violence more broadly (Hagen 2016).

In addition to these gendered biases, various conceptualizations of conflict-related sexual violence similarly place a heavy emphasis on penetrative rape, thereby excluding and ignoring various other forms of sexual (and gender-based) violence, such as sexual torture, forced castration, and sexual threats. According to Rubio-Marin and Sandoval (2011), “limiting the analysis to a rape-centred understanding of sexual violence may obscure other forms of equally grave sexual and reproductive violence” (1065). Only concentrating on rape overlooks the multiple ways in which people are otherwise sexually victimized. Similarly, various definitions of SGBV primarily concentrate on sexual violence while not including other manifestations of gender-based violence, which receive less attention and resources and are considered less significant or relevant. Critical feminist scholars in particular therefore emphasize the need for a broader conceptualization of sexual and gender-based violence, beyond sexualized crimes only, including other manifestations of structural and systematic gendered violence and discrimination along a continuum.¹⁴

Definitions of conflict-related sexual violence specifically against men often include various physical acts of sexual violence, such as rape, sexual torture, and/or genital beatings, while not paying sufficient attention to what Ní Aoláin (2000) refers to as “connected” harms. Examples of connected forms of sexual violence (also) affecting men may include instances where men are forced (often at gunpoint) to themselves commit sexual violence, often against (female) family or community members. Other forms of connected sexual harms include situations where men are forced to watch (mostly female) members of their families and communities being sexually violated in front of them. The following case provides an example of such indirect or connected forms of sexual violence, quoted from Coulter (2009: 145) and taken from the Sierra Leonean context: “John’s mother and his aunt were raped and sexually abused in front of him. John said that this all happened in his presence and that it hurt him immensely, but most of all, he said, he was shamed by the sexual violation of his mother in his presence; perhaps also he was ashamed on a personal level as he could do nothing to protect her.”

In these cases, the sexual violations are clearly acted out on female bodies, and women and girls are without a doubt the immediate physical and psychological victims, even though men may also be targeted psychologically and/or emotionally. In the northern Ugandan context, there are various cases of NRA government soldiers or LRA rebels either forcing abductees (in the case of the LRA) or civilians

to rape female family members, or forcefully making them watch armed combatants rape their sisters, daughters, or wives.

Feminist scholarship has demonstrated that these harms can be linked to the (perceived) “masculine loss of power demonstrated in the inability to protect ‘their’ women” (Ní Aoláin 2000: 79). While the dynamics surrounding these connected harms can thus problematically be framed around patriarchal assumptions of vulnerable women in need of male protection, they nevertheless also reflect the lived realities and harms experienced by many men in situations of armed conflict. The exclusion of these harms from dominant conceptions of sexual violence against men thus potentially results in a too narrow understanding of such crimes, underacknowledging complex and intertwined gendered and sexual harms.

At the same time, sexual violence against men is frequently coded, classified, and categorized as torture, often without any recognition of the sexual component and nature of the crime. Only in the mid-1990s, in light of the massive perpetration of sexual violence during the Rwandan genocide and the wars in the former Yugoslavia, did scholarly developments and international jurisprudence move toward more fully establishing a connection between what has previously been treated as two distinct categories. Landmark cases at both the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights contributed toward recognizing acts of rape and sexual violence (against women) as constituting torture and inhumane treatment. These developments led to the now commonly held conviction that—as articulated by a female sexual violence survivor cited in a recent article by Gray, Stern, and Dolan—“if torture were a tree, then sexual violence would be one of its branches” (2019: 11).

In scholarship and policy making, however, there often seems to be a gendered distinction between the application of these categories to men’s and women’s experiences respectively. Whereas forms of violence experienced by women are often coded as sexual violence, acts of violence against men—even if they have clear sexual components—are frequently subsumed under the heading of torture. While sexual violence can and often does meet the threshold level of harm to constitute torture, in concert with others, I caution that to exclusively categorize certain acts as torture without recognizing their sexual component, including the resulting sexual and gendered consequences, can be highly problematic. As noted by Sivakumaran (2010), “The danger of characterizing sexual violence against men and boys only under the rubric of torture is that men and boys will continue to be seen as unsusceptible to sexual violence, reinforcing the view that sexual violence is a problem for women and girls only” (273)—reproducing and reinforcing men as “nonsurvivors” of sexual violence. In addition, exclusively classifying sexual violence against men as torture without acknowledging the violations’ sexual components may further prohibit men from accessing necessary harm-responsive, gender- and sex-specific health and psychological services, because sexual violence as such is not documented and recognized.

This problem of misrepresenting sexual violence against men as torture, however, is not only conditioned by the external categorizations of the violence, but can also be linked to survivors' self-representations and perceptions of these acts. Classifications of male-directed sexual crimes as either torture *or* sexual violence may thus prove problematic from a survivors' point of view, given that these respective categories can be perceived differently by individual survivors, depending on the gendered social, political, and cultural context. As I examine more carefully and specifically applied to northern Uganda elsewhere in this book (see chapter 4), sexual violence against men is often perceived (by survivors and communities/societies alike) to negatively impact male survivors' masculine identities in many intertwined ways.

In contrast, crimes of torture may not necessarily have such compromising effects on male survivors' masculinities. Indeed, these crimes may at times instead have an opposite effect. Here it is worth referring to recent research by Harriet Gray and Maria Stern, who rightly point out that *torture* is a very slippery term, politically malleable and employable in multiple ways (2019). The way these two categories—sexual violence and torture—are filled with meaning in international legal and policy spaces . . . is neither fixed nor stable” (Gray, Stern, and Dolan 2019: 8).

Historiographies of torture reveal that traditionally and contemporarily, torture aims to “destroy a person's self and world” (Scary 1985: 35), and various torture methods and techniques were specifically developed and designed to harm men. Having survived such acts may under certain circumstances be associated with a particular masculine status and might to some extent even reward masculinity, albeit of course at great personal, physical, and psychological costs.¹⁵ Categorizing certain violent crimes and harmful acts as either torture or as sexual violence might thus have different effects on survivors' (perceived) masculine identities.

However, there often is “an overlap between these categories,” and the terms “slip and slide across one another” (Gray, Stern, and Dolan 2019: 3), thereby complicating the “simplistic assumption that gender norms will call men to frame their experiences as ‘torture,’ and women, theirs as ‘sexual violence’” (ibid.: 19). In these authors' study of refugee (male and female) survivors of sexual violence in Uganda, they found that “many male participants . . . deliberately spoke about the violences to which they have been subjected as ‘sexual’—in contrast to the prevalent assumption that men are more likely to describe their experiences under the label of ‘torture’” (ibid.: 13). This mirrors my own observations from northern Uganda, where Acholi male survivors explicitly described their experiences as *rape* and *sexual violence* (see chapter 3).

A Holistic Definition of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence against Men

Departing from these challenges and limitations of existing conceptualizations, I define conflict-related sexual violence more inclusively and broadly. I specifically draw upon the understanding of sexual violence as described in the Rome Statute

of the International Criminal Court, which has been praised for its progressive and inclusive character, and specifically for its gender-sensitive approach. By utilizing gender-neutral language, the Rome Statute acknowledges that sexual violence can be committed against women and men as well as gender-nonconforming identities alike. The Rome Statute likewise approaches sexual violence in broad terms, including rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, enforced sterilization, and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity. Therefore, not only does the definition put “beyond any doubt that men and boys can be raped” (Sivakumaran 2013: 84), it also includes various acts of sexual violence that are not limited to penetrative rape, thereby broadening our understanding of sexual violence.

Building on this broadened approach, conflict-related sexual violence in this book is defined as acts or threats of violence of a sexual nature perpetrated directly on and against victims, which the victim may be forced to perform or watch being performed on others within the family or community. This conception uses gender-neutral language and thus accounts for male, female, and gender-nonconforming victims alike. Male-directed sexual violence in particular can therefore broadly include penetrative anal and/or oral rape, sexual torture, mutilation and beatings of the genitals, castration or enforced sterilization, sexual humiliation, and sexual slavery and enslavement.¹⁶ Cases of men being forced to perform coercive sexual intercourse (often with female family members) and of females being raped in front of male family members can likewise constitute connected forms of male-directed sexual violence.

SCOPE AND PREVALENCE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST MEN

Deriving from this conceptual understanding of conflict-related sexual violence against men, I now turn to the scope and frequency of such violations. This is important to illustrate my argument that male-directed sexual violence is perpetrated more frequently than commonly assumed. While incorporating this examination of prevalence and existing evidence, however, I also underscore that empirically and politically, frequency and numbers should not matter as to whether or not these crimes are addressed. Even if the numbers were significantly lower than they appear to be, male-directed sexual violence requires the attention, recognition, and responses scholars and policy-makers are increasingly advocating for.

Existing Evidence

In recent years, a growing body of literature has offered various examples of male-directed sexual violence in different settings, such as part of military campaigns, in detention, and during displacement and forced migration, as well as in different geographical contexts. Previous research has documented cases of sexual violence against men in over twenty-five conflicts, and in at least fifty-nine when

including boys as victims.¹⁷ The existing literature documents male-directed sexual violence during the conflicts in, among others, El Salvador, the former Yugoslavia, Egypt, Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Peru, Syria, Libya, and northern Uganda.

Mirroring dynamics of sexual violence in general, the numbers, intensities, and occurrence of sexual violence against men are characterized by variation and differ across space and time. Variation theory, as primarily applied by Wood (2006) and others (see Swaine 2015), demonstrates huge variability in the scope of conflict-related sexual violence in different cases, which can also be extended to such violence against males. Systematically assessing the frequency of conflict-related sexual violence in general, including against men, proves immensely difficult for a variety of reasons, as discussed in more detail below. Nevertheless, despite numerous conceptual, methodological, and epistemological challenges, existing research offers preliminary insights into the frequency of male-directed sexual violence across different settings.

To provide just a few contemporary examples: Recent evidence about the civil war in Syria uncovers horrible accounts of systematic human rights abuses, including torture, starvation, and widespread sexual violence against civilians and combatants. Research conducted for the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) demonstrates that in Syria and in the context of forced migration in neighbouring countries, various forms of sexual violence against men continue to be deployed systematically and are widespread. For instance, according to the findings underpinning that UNHCR report, “between 19.5 to 27 percent of male survey respondents . . . confirmed having experienced sexual harassment or unwanted sexual contact as boys.” Similarly, a 2013 rapid assessment of 520 Syrian male youth and boys (ages twelve–twenty-four) in Lebanon “revealed that 10.8 percent had experienced an incident of sexual harm or harassment in the previous three months” (UNHCR 2017: 4). These findings are further supported by a recent report released in 2019 by Lawyers and Doctors for Human Rights, a Syrian human rights group, which “revealed extensive, pervasive and brutal sexual violence against male Syrian political prisoners across time, government security agencies and their detention centers” (Loveluck 2019).

In Libya, the International Commission of Inquiry on Libya of the United Nations similarly documents widespread and systematic sexual abuse of male and female detainees by security forces under the Gadhafi regime, as well as during the post-Gadhafi period. More recently, shocking accounts emerged of systematic sexual violence and torture of male and female refugees in migration camps across the country. For instance, a report by the International Organization for Migration from 2016 found that seven out of ten migrants crossing from North Africa to Europe—most of whom transit through and spend time in Libya—had experienced different forms of exploitation, including kidnapping, forced labor,

illegal detention, and sexual violence. Mirroring global refugee dynamics, many of these migrants are men.

Another contemporary example of the widespread occurrence of sexual violence against men and boys points to the situation of the Rohingya from Myanmar in Bangladesh. A 2018 report by the Women's Refugee Council (WRC)—the first of its kind to focus on sexual violence against men in this context—documents how government soldiers burned, mutilated, and hacked off the genitals of men and boys, and how they are forced to witness sexual violence perpetrated against female family and community members (WRC 2018: 2).

Focusing on conflict-related sexual violence against men in Peru, Leiby's (2009a) work further uproots common contextual assumption about the extent of sexual violence against men. According to the official report of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Comisión para la Verdad y Reconciliación, CVR) out of 583 documented cases of sexual violence, "only 11, or 2 percent, were perpetrated against men" (79). Leiby's work in the commission's archives and with additional primary sources, however, demonstrates that "the percentage of male victims of sexual violence is higher than commonly expected and higher than previously reported [by the CVR]" (82). Instead of the 2 percent of male victims referred to in the commission's final report, her work indicates between 22 and 29 percent of male sexual violence survivors among the violations covered by the CVR. One potential explanation for this divergence is the commission's conceptualization of sexual violence, which despite being technically gender neutral focuses solely on penetrative rape, thereby excluding other forms of sexual violence, which were instead coded as torture. Leiby's analysis instead shows that the most frequently reported forms of sexual abuse against men were cases of sexual humiliation (46 percent), sexual mutilation (20 percent), and sexual torture (15 percent). The case of Peru therefore constitutes a poignant example illustrating some of the difficulties of (mis)categorizing male-directed sexual violence as torture and the consequential challenges of too narrow and too reductionist conceptualizations.

In Liberia, a survey of 1,666 adults affected by the country's civil war found that 32.6 percent of male combatants experienced sexual violence, while 16.5 percent were forced to be sexual servants (Johnson et al. 2008). A similar large-N study by Johnson et al. (2010) in the eastern territories of the Democratic Republic of the Congo found that the rate of reported sexual violence among men was 23.6 percent, while 64.5 percent of male study participants reported being exposed to forms of conflict-related sexual violence. According to the empirical data underpinning that study, there are approximately "1.31 million men as survivors of sexual violence in the eastern region of the DRC" (559). Numerical indicators for the eastern DRC, however, vary substantially, with other studies suggesting between 6 and 10 percent of men as victims of sexual violence (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2013), to about 20 percent of sexually violated men (Peel et al. 2000). A preliminary study by Chris Dolan and RLP screening 447 male refugees residing in

settlements in western Uganda, of which the vast majority originated from the DRC, revealed that “13.4 percent had experienced an incident of sexual violence in the preceding 12 months, rising to 38.5 percent if looking at their whole lives’ (Dolan 2014: 2). Such statistical discrepancies and divergences in just one case indicate the general difficulty of quantifying the extent of conflict-related sexual violence against men, but also point to its widespread and common occurrence.

In combination, these studies from a variety of case sites suggest that male-directed sexual violence within the context of war and armed conflict is more widespread than has thus far been acknowledged. In addition to these existing initial insights, other conflict situations across time and space are yet to be analyzed with a focus on sexual violence against men. Clearly, more empirical work is needed, especially on the extent to which boys or male adolescents as well as non-heterosexual men and gender-nonconforming identities are victimized by sexual violence in (post)conflict scenarios.

Challenges of Quantifying Sexual Violence

There are, however, significant challenges with regard to quantifying sexual violence against men, underpinned by stereotypical views of gender that are partially (co)responsible for the underreporting and misrecognition of sexual violence against men. According to Dolan (2014), “As with efforts to document sexual violence against women and girls, precise evidence of prevalence against males is hard to come by in most conflict-affected countries. Internalised feelings of shame, fear of stigmatisation, and legal frameworks and social services that do not recognise men as victims prevent the majority of victims from reporting to the authorities” (2).

Assessing the frequency of sexual violence against men thus proves difficult “because of the extreme stigma attached to sexual abuse of males and the ensuing reluctance to report such rapes” (and other cases of sexual violence) (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2010: 45). A subsequent effect of this under- or nonreporting is the “invisibility of men and boys as (non-)survivors of sexual violence” (ibid.) and a systematic silencing of such forms of violence.

Caution is required, however, not to oversimplify the potential reasons for the under- and nonreporting of sexual violence against men and to refrain from implicitly blaming victims for the difficulty of establishing more concrete numbers. A study by RLP therefore proposes three potential reasons, in addition to fear and stigma, for why male survivors may be hesitant to report sexual violations committed against them: (1) fear of arrest on suspicion or accusation of being homosexual; (2) fear of social and familial ostracism; (3) lack of access to services. In fact, it is not only the problem of nonreporting that makes it difficult to determine the extent of the violence; it is also the ways sexual violations of men are treated and considered from the outside, and in particular how they are often marginalized, silenced, and neglected.

For instance, men's reluctance to report their sexual victimizations may often be exacerbated by legislation that criminalizes homosexual acts, making survivors fear prosecution. Such is evidently the case in northern Uganda, as documented later in this book, where sexual violence against men is often falsely equated with homosexuality, and where same-sex acts are criminalized and outlawed, punishable by life in prison—further exacerbated by the tabled but then withdrawn Anti-Homosexuality Bill. Furthermore, external service providers and those working with male survivors, such as NGO representatives, medical professionals, and social workers, often do not recognize the physical and psychological signs of male-directed sexual violence or simply do not acknowledge the reality of sexual violence against men.

The complications of categorizing and coding sexual violence against men as torture, as elaborated above in reference to Leiby's work in Peru, constitute another factor contributing to the difficulty of measuring such violence. Even if and when we possess data and figures, as in the studies cited above, caution is nevertheless required. Methodologies vary across studies, or may be untransparent or unknown. As with sexual violence in general, the factual numbers of male-directed sexual violence may likely be higher than reported.

EXPLANATIONS FOR SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST MEN

Departing from this overview on prevalence, I now proceed by scrutinizing different explanations for the occurrence of conflict-related sexual violence against men put forward in the literature. I show that specific explanations for sexual violence against men are not yet well established, frequently lacking empirically grounded data, but that feminist explanatory frameworks for the occurrence of sexual violence in general provide important insight into understanding these dynamics. Possessing a critical and sustained understanding of different attempts to explain conflict-related sexual violence, in general and against men in particular, proves necessary to determine the context-specific dynamics of such violence in northern Uganda in the following chapter.

Scholars such as Leiby and Cohen remind us that a “phenomenon as complex as wartime rape may have any number of conceivable causes” (Cohen 2016: 3) and that “even within the same conflict, sexual violence can serve multiple functions in different contexts and at different points in time” (Leiby 2009: 445). Reiterating that there is rarely ever one all-encompassing or mono-causal explanation to account for the dynamics of conflict-related sexual violence is therefore fundamentally important for this discussion of prevalent explanatory frameworks.

Furthermore, explaining the occurrence of sexual violence is inherently difficult without sufficient empirical data from the perpetrators' perspectives. Cohen (2016: 20) argues that to “determine the motivations for rape—and whether it is

being used strategically—researchers must study the perpetrators themselves.” Yet in spite of a few noteworthy exceptions, there is a persistent lack of data on perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence, referred to as a “theoretical vacuum” in the literature. For male-directed sexual violence specifically, data from the perpetrators’ sides remains almost entirely absent, despite some first attempts in Elise Féron’s recent book (2018) to incorporate a perpetrators’ perspective, hence constituting a prevailing lacuna in the literature. Conducting such research, however, would obviously imply various ethical, methodological and practical challenges and difficulties. Yet despite this lack of perpetrator-centric data, by analyzing patterns of sexual violence against men from a survivors’ point of view, we can nevertheless begin to unravel and unpack some of the collective dynamics and infer arguments and explanations regarding potential causes from the outside.

Again, we can gain important insights from feminist scholarship on the gendered dynamics of conflict and violence more broadly and on sexual violence specifically, and from integrating masculinities and feminist perspectives. Although most of the existing research on male-directed sexual violence fails to sufficiently engage with feminist debates, Sjöberg’s (2016) layered theoretical exploration of gender subordination and Eriksson Baaz and Stern’s foundational work on sexual violence (2013) constitute novel contributions for bridging this divide. Their work will therefore be referenced extensively in this section.

Overall, existing explanations for conflict-related sexual violence are manifold and diverse, although most dominant explanatory frameworks broadly classify the occurrence of such violence as either *strategic* or *opportunistic*, with respective subsidiary precisions. For Wood (2014), strategic sexual violence broadly refers to “instances of rape [and sexual violence] purposefully adopted in pursuit of organization objectives,” while opportunistic sexual violence is generally “carried out for private reasons rather than organization objectives” (47). According to Eriksson Baaz and Stern (2013), these two most common theoretical frameworks for explaining, understanding, and analyzing sexual violence during conflict can generally be categorized as “the sexed” (opportunistic) and “the gendered” (strategic) story respectively. Elisabeth Wood (2018) also adds a third manifestation to this classification, situated somewhere in between and in conversation with the two opportunistic and strategic categories: that of sexual violence as a pervasive policy or practice within armed groups. In this reading, sexual violence would not be officially ordered but nevertheless tolerated and perpetuated, thus occurring fairly regularly.

The “Sexed Story”

In essence, the “sexed story” proposes that conflict-related sexual violence can mostly be attributed to male perpetrators’ unfulfilled sexual needs and can be “facilitated by a lack of command structure or norms against sexual violence within the armed group” (Henry 2009: 50). This explanation is based upon

the (essentialist) assumption “that sexual release is a ‘natural’ need for men, exacerbated by the stress of battle conditions” (Sjoberg 2016: 188). At the core of the sexed story thus lies the “substitution” argument, according to which “sex by force occurs in military contexts because soldiers do not enjoy ‘normal’ access to women in other ways” (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2013: 17). The sexed story and the related “opportunistic rape argument” have received considerable scholarly attention in relation to sexual violence against women, especially throughout earlier scholarship on the topic. The widely cited work on wartime rape by Susan Brownmiller (1975), for instance, largely pursues this line of argumentation, although partly phrased differently.

While the opportunism variable has been found to be of explanatory value in some cases of sexual violence against women and girls, it has also been heavily critiqued, as being sex essentialist and deterministic and for depoliticizing rape in conflict. The sexed story is also inherently heteronormative and relies on constrained categorizations of male perpetrators and female victims, and thus “overly negative towards men” (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2013: 19). At the same time, the opportunistic rape argument has not yet been considered to explain the occurrence of male-directed sexual violence during conflict settings specifically, in part because of its hetero-normative foundations and expectations. Sjoberg (2016) therefore argues that purely relying on the sexed story is problematic because it takes away an explicit gender analysis, ignores elements of power, and thus oversimplifies the complexity of conflict-related sexual violence.

The “Gendered Story”

By centralizing a gender lens, the “gendered story” departs from this ascribed sex essentialism that characterizes the sexed story. Focusing on gender and militarization, this explanatory frame “sheds light on the power of gender ideologies as underlying rationales for the ‘use of’ sexual violence in armed conflict” (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2013: 19). According to the gendered story, sexual violence in conflict constitutes an effective instrument of humiliation and intimidation in a gendered manifestation. For Sjoberg (2016), “Understanding sexual violence in war and conflict as gendered adds explanatory value not only for that sexual violence, but for understandings of war and gender” (188) more broadly.

It is indeed the gendered story that primarily “underwrites the dominant framing of conflict-related sexual violence” (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2013: 15) throughout contemporary scholarship. Scholars and humanitarian practitioners alike have fostered the “weapon of war” narrative to appeal to international security actors and to motivate them to act. In light of this, the “rape as a weapon of war” framing has widely been accepted by civil society organizations, aid agencies, and governments. The United Kingdom’s Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative, for instance, perpetuates this discourse (Kirby 2015), while the UN campaign “Stop Rape Now” explicitly focuses on preventing and ending the “use of sexual violence as a tactic of

war.” The majority of existing studies follow and/or reproduce this line of inquiry and consequently suggest that wartime sexual violence is primarily strategic and systematic, often portrayed as a weapon of war, aimed at punishing and intimidating its victims, mainly through gendered subordination and disempowerment.

Taking these dominant framings into account, however, Eriksson Baaz and Stern (2013) themselves offer a compelling critique of the persisting narrative of sexual violence as a weapon of war, which too unilaterally frames sexual violence along gendered storylines, ignoring the intricacy and oversimplifying the complexity of gendered conflict dynamics more broadly, while specifically ignoring the explanatory power of patriarchy in understanding sexual violence (see Kreft 2019). Building on findings from extensive fieldwork in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, they caution that this exclusive framing sidelines the multiplicity of conditions under which sexual violence occurs, without sufficient consideration for its actual causes, manifestations, and actors. In concert with Eriksson Baaz and Stern (2013), Sjöberg (2016) also underscores that the gendered story fosters the essentializing and misleading assumption of male perpetrators and female victims.

Gendered scholarship on conflict and security in general also increasingly seems to neglect sexuality and sexual acts from discourse around sexual violence, instead exclusively focusing on gender (as separated from sex) while uncritically and unilaterally adopting the strategic rape-as-a-weapon-of-war narrative. Such is particularly the case for discussions about male-directed sexual violence that solely center around gender as linked to dominance and control without seriously considering how sexuality and sex are organically connected to power, and thus to gender, as convincingly demonstrated by Foucault (1978) in *The History of Sexuality*. In his contribution about wartime sexual violence against men, Sivakumaran (2007), for instance, claims that “rape is about power and dominance *and not sex*.” Eriksson Baaz and Stern observe these “curious erasures” of the *sexual* in wartime sexual violence, which “has been seemingly theorized away as irrelevant, and even dangerously misleading in efforts to explain and redress conflict-related sexual violence” (2018: 2). Despite rigorous feminist scholarship on the interconnections between sex, sexuality, violence, power, and dominance more broadly (Brownmiller 1975; Millet 1970) and despite an arguably excessive (and often not particularly helpful) reliance on sexual and biological factors to explain wartime rape throughout earlier scholarship, it appears that more recently consideration of the “sexual” has largely been forgotten “or bypassed in our attention to *wartime* sexual violence” (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2018: 2). This point is of particular significance for analyses of male-directed sexual violence, owing to heteronormative and homophobic assumptions, according to which same-sexual acts cannot possibly be about sex, sexual desire, pleasure, or opportunity—that is, the sexual—but must solely center on dominance and control as linked to gender. While gender must undoubtedly remain the cornerstone of any analysis of sexual violence, sexuality and sex similarly need to be foregrounded in any such discussions.

In light of this critique, it is therefore insufficient to exclusively rely on either of these dominant explanatory frameworks in illuminating wartime sexual violence. The dichotomizing distinction between sexual violence as *either* opportunistic (the sexed story) *or* strategic (the gendered story) is often essentializing and does not accommodate for the actual complexity of lived realities in (post)conflict zones. Frequently, sexual violence in any given case can be explained only by an alternating combination of the sexed and the gendered story, which often are more closely connected than commonly suggested. As emphasized by Leiby (2009b: 465), “Even with the same case, sexual violence can be used for multiple purposes.”

Against this background, I concur with Sjöberg (2016), who convincingly argues that conflict-related sexual violence “is sexed, sexual and gendered, and all of these observations matter in theorizing it” (139). Undoubtedly, conflict-related sexual violence is a multifaceted phenomenon, and henceforth any mono-causal explanatory model is unlikely to account for its occurrence in all its variation and polyvalent complexity.

EXPLANATIONS FOR WARTIME SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST MEN

Building upon these most common theoretical frameworks for wartime sexual violence in general, I now specifically scrutinize explanations for conflict-related sexual violence against men. As shown above, existing scholarship demonstrates strong synergies between male- and female-directed sexual violence, as both are part of the gendered dimension of armed conflict. Comparable to gendered violence against women, male-directed sexual violence frequently is an expression of aggression, power, and dominance over the enemy. Stemple (2011) argues that sexual violence (and in particular rape) is closely related to, and in many ways constitutes a form of, the exercise of domination and subjugation of its victims, specifically in a gendered manifestation. Responding to common misrepresentations of conflict-related sexual violence as only (or almost exclusively) affecting women, Stemple (2011) posits that sexual violence and rape “is almost always about gender, which is not to say it is always about women” (825). These dynamics are effectively captured under the gendered story and compatible with the rape-as-a-weapon-of-war argument presented above.

Sexual Violence against Men: “Emasculate” and “Feminize”

Throughout the literature, a consensus prevails that “ideas about masculinity directly underpin the use of sexual violence against men” (Wright 2014: 14). An accurate understanding of the empirical reality of conflict-related sexual violence thus requires theoretical models to take into account the manifold ways in which masculinities feature in wartime sexual violence, and their intersections with constructions of ethnicity. Alison suggests that sexual violence against men

“is no less gendered nor any less ethnicized” (81) than sexual violence against women. According to such arguments, sexual violence against men is a highly masculinized act of male-to-male communication, asserting the perpetrators’ dominant (hyper)masculinities while subordinating and compromising the victims’ masculinities.

In line with this, a dominant narrative explains sexual violence against men as aiming to “emasculate,” “feminize,” and/or “homosexualize” its victims. Surveying the relevant literature on this topic reveals that the vast majority of existing studies suggests that “emasculating” victims is among the most common, if not *the* single most prevalent, driver of male-directed sexual violence. It is thereby widely argued that “sexual violence against men involves forms of emasculation in which perpetrators seek to feminize their victims by rendering them weak, violated and passive, in contradistinction to stereotypical masculine ideals” (Auchter 2017: 1340). Lewis (2014) similarly attests that “the emasculation of the victim is widely recognized as being a motivation for the perpetration of male-directed sexual violence” (211). Deriving from a socially constructed premise that masculinities are incompatible with vulnerabilities, and that manhood is irreconcilable with victimhood, sexual violence is theoretically considered to compromise men in their masculine identities by foregrounding their gendered and sexual vulnerabilities.

Throughout the literature, it is widely presumed that when a perpetrator forcibly overpowers another man, the perpetrator humiliates the victim by perceivably subordinating him to the status of a woman or a homosexual man within a patriarchal gender hierarchy. The male victim is therefore considered subordinate to the perpetrator, who embodies a superior form of masculinity. Meger (2016) argues that in this way, “sexual violence is useful for delineating between ‘man’ and ‘other,’ with anything not approximating the social ideals of masculinity falling in the latter category” (179). The seeming paradox that male-on-male sexual acts only seem to cast “a taint of homosexuality” (Sivakumaran 2005) on the victim, but not on the perpetrator, can be explained through the gendered dimension of penetration in heteronormative societies. As explained more fully and context-specifically applied to gender dynamics in Acholiland in chapter 4, it is also the act of penetration that communicates, performs, and transfers power and dominance in a gendered manifestation, and not only the gendered body of the victim. Alison (2007) further argues that sexual violence in particular appears to be the preferred form of violence because it most clearly communicates gendered dominance, power, and control and thus demonstrates perceived gendered subordination while also highlighting the perceived hypermasculinity, and thus superiority, of the perpetrator.¹⁸ Sexual violence against men within theaters of war can thus constitute a highly communicative and performative act.

Cases of male-directed sexual violence hence often (intentionally or unintentionally) compromise survivors’ masculine identities. However, existing scholarship thus far has failed to critically engage with the conceptualization and

associated terminologies of so-called emasculation and feminization. Borrowing from feminist critiques, in the introduction I argue that these concepts and terms are problematic in conceptual, analytical, and normative terms, while furthermore not being reflective of the highly fluid character of survivors' lived realities.¹⁹ At the same time, mono-causal generalizations that universally portray the emasculation of victims as the sole or primary driver of male-directed sexual violence are often too reductionist and simplistic, failing to account for the messy complexities of conflict and violence. Crucially, conflict-related sexual violence needs to be analyzed context-specifically and circumstantially, rooted in conflict-related micro-dynamics of politics and violence, as well as localized gender constructions—as I intend to do in this book in the northern Ugandan context.

It therefore appears that previous attempts of explaining male-directed sexual violence during wartime thus primarily pursued the gendered story, arguing that sexual violence is often a strategic weapon of war. As a result, scholarship on sexual violence against men thus far turned a blind eye to the sexed story and the opportunism argument to explain such violence. This neglect of opportunism as a potential variable for understanding the occurrence and dynamics of male-directed sexual violence largely derives from heteronormative and heterosexual assumptions. According to such homophobic presumptions, same-sex violations can simply not be assumed to be opportunistic, but must instead serve a strategic and military objective, and male combatants cannot be expected to rape other men for sexual gratification.

Wartime Sexual Violence as Gender Subordination

Taking into account many of the above arguments and critiques, Sjöberg's (2016) recent application of gender subordination theory to sexual and gender-based violence in conflict zones advances an understanding of the dynamics of such violence, including against men, in all its complexities. Framing sexual violence as a form of hierarchical gendered subordination, Sjöberg's work accounts for male survivors or female perpetrators alongside the conventionally adopted categories of male victimizers and female victims, thereby moving beyond prewritten scripts. Effectively, gender subordination must be conceptualized as (dis)placement along gendered hierarchies by way of undermining victims' gendered and sexual identities. To cite Sjöberg (2016): "Gender subordination is fundamentally a power relationship in which those perceived as female/feminine are made less powerful than those perceived as masculine/male. This power relationship extends through the perceived possession of gendered traits and the gendering of perceived behaviors and actions" (39).

Crimes of sexual violence against men thus communicate a power relationship between the victimized, who in Sjöberg's (2016) terms are "perceived as female/feminine" and less powerful and thus displaced from their gendered personhood, and the perpetrator, or "those perceived as masculine/male" (39). These dynamics

adeptly apply to male rape as one particular form of sexual violence against men among many.

Despite these previous attempts of explaining sexual violence against men, however, existing research has not yet provided sufficient explanatory models for amplifying the occurrence and complex dynamics of male-directed sexual violence within and across localities. The overview of existing explanatory frameworks in this section similarly showed that there is not one unilaterally applicable explanation to account for the occurrence of sexual violence, whether perpetrated against women or men.

CONCLUSION

This chapter critically reviewed the limited yet growing body of literature on conflict-related sexual violence against men, thereby situating this book within existing scholarship on gender and armed conflict. I have demonstrated that such forms of violence occur more frequently than popularly assumed and that such crimes are closely rooted in gendered patterns and dimensions of violence in general. This constitutes the overall backdrop for the analysis to unfold throughout this book.

While recent years have seen a shift toward including men and boys in dominant political conceptualizations of wartime sexual violence, male survivors and their perspectives nevertheless remain only of peripheral interest to policy-making and scholarship alike, and male survivors' lived realities are particularly underexplored. Situated within and in response to these broader epistemological gaps, in this book I integrate empirical data from the perspectives of male sexual violence survivors in northern Uganda into intersecting bodies of scholarship within gender and IR. This sheds important contextual light on male survivors' lived realities and carries implications for the growing body of literature on conflict-related sexual violence against men.

While wartime sexual violence against men in general remains underresearched, specific intersections between sexual violence against men and other areas remain particularly poorly explored. Survivors' gendered harms and vulnerabilities, the ways in which they exercise agency as well as the nexus between sexual violence against men and (transitional) justice are specific areas that warrant further study, as addressed in this book. Against this background, and following from these global reflections, the following chapter now turns toward portraying the locally specific and contextual dynamics of wartime sexual violence in northern Uganda in empirical detail.