Gender and Civil War

The strongest pattern in civil war is probably its gendered nature, meaning that men and women tend to assume different roles in civil war, and that differences in the status of men and women in a society correlate strongly with aspects of civil war such as onset and recurrence. The gendered nature of civil war can be found on different levels of analysis. To give some examples, which will be discussed in some more detail later in the chapter: on the individual level the overwhelming majority of civil war combatants are men (Henshaw 2013); on the organization level organizations engaged in contentious politics are less likely to use violence if they espouse a gender-inclusive ideology; on the country level the countries with the smallest difference in the status of men and women are the least likely to experience civil war. A small stream of studies show that the gendered nature pertains to the origins, dynamics and resolution of civil war. It follows that unless the gendered nature of civil war is spurious explaining this pattern should shed light on strong causes at work. However, unless plausible theoretical arguments are given for why and how gender matters, any empirical associations are likely to be dismissed as
spurious, random flukes, or flawed findings. For this reason this chapter will open with a presentation of the main theoretical arguments that have been offered for why gender matters for civil war. After the theory has been introduced, key empirical results concerning the gendered nature of civil war are presented. The section after that deals with alternative explanations implying that the gendered nature of civil war is spurious. The chapter ends with conclusions regarding what we presently know about the gendered nature of civil war, remaining lacunae, and suggested avenues for future research.

**Theory**

So why would gender equality be related to civil peace? The theoretical arguments can be divided into two categories. To simplify, gender equality is related to civil peace because women are more peaceful than men, or because gender-unequal societies are imbued with intolerant and warlike norms among both men and women. Figure 1 below is scheme of the arguments.
The first category of explanations then includes arguments building on the basic assumption that women are innately more peaceful than men, either because of upbringing and position in society, or because of biological difference. It is further argued that when women are empowered this female peacefulness will impact on societal outcomes so that more civil peace results. Following the literature this chapter will refer to this category of explanations as the essentialist argument. The second category includes arguments that instead assume that socially constructed ideas about gender roles influence how conflict is dealt with, and as gender roles are redefined in the direction of increased equality between men and women, norms about conflict change as a result. In particular, as gendered norms about dominance and honor change peace benefits. This is the constructivist argument. These two explanations are not mutually contradictory on logical grounds, and each may thus have some explanatory power (Tickner 1992, 1997; Caprioli 2000, 2005; Goldstein 2001; Melander 2005).
In the essentialist argument, empowerment of peaceful women is the more proximate cause linking gender equality and more peaceful outcomes. Numerous studies show that women tend to have somewhat more peaceful attitudes than men (Frankovic 1982; Smith 1984; de Boer 1985; Shapiro and Mahajan 1986; Fite, Genest, and Wilcox 1990; McGlen and Sarkees 1993; Togeby 1994), and that women play crisis games and behave in simulated negotiations in a somewhat less confrontational style than men (e.g., McDermott et al. 2007). Thereby there seems to be some support for the notion that women in general are more peaceful. A complication is that there are also studies that show that the gender gap in warlike attitudes goes away when attitudes to gender equality are taken into account: both men and women who are more favorable to gender equality tend to hold more peaceful attitudes (Cook and Wilcox, 1991, Tessler and Warriner, 1997, Tessler et al., 1999, Brooks and Valentino, 2011). This suggests that the gender gap is not about inherently peaceful women but about ideas about gender among both sexes. The essentialist explanation has also been questioned on the grounds that it would seem unrealistic that the peaceful women should be able to substantially impact outcomes given how male dominated the sphere of war and peace is (e.g., Bjarnegård and Melander, 2013).

In the constructivist argument, normative change among both men and women, and perhaps in particular among men, is the more proximate cause. This argument is about how socially constructed gender roles, which may also in part be shaped by evolutionary forces, have consequences for tolerance and attitudes to violence. Two mechanisms through which gender roles influence war and peace can be identified: othering and honor culture.

Psychological studies show that almost from infancy individuals notice three basic differences: age, gender, and race. Furthermore, the first adults that children observe regularly interacting are their parents. The way men and women relate to each other therefore becomes the fundamental
template for differentiating between groups of people, and to the extent that the father dominates and controls the mother this model teaches the child that domination by one group over another is appropriate and normal. Much psychological research also shows that children who grow up in violent homes have a greater tendency to become violent themselves. In harshly patriarchal societies, the lives of women and girls are clearly less valued than the lives of men and boys, and it is argued that this kind of othering facilitates the dehumanizing of others which is almost a precondition for war and genocide. On the other hand, Hudson holds that “the first ‘other’ is always women, and if one can make peace with the first other without resorting to coercion, one will have a template in place to know how to do so with other ‘others’”. That is to say, when patriarchal dominance by men over women is reduced, the type of othering that breeds intolerance and violence is weakened, and more companionate marriages instead serve as templates for respectful and equal interaction with others (Hudson et al 2009; Hudson and den Boer 2012; Hudson et al. 2012)

Honor culture refers to a system in which individuals are assigned status and right to precedence based on how well one lives up to a code of honor that entails deterring or redressing affronts with violence for men, and chastity and family fidelity for women. Traditional ideals of manhood everywhere prescribe at least to some extent that men have a superior position relative to women, and that men must be warlike and dominant. Real men are supposed to by though, brave, resistant to pain, and able to steel themselves against potentially weakening influences of soft emotions. For men violence or threats of violence is an appropriate response to affronts, and men who back down lose honor and status. Moreover, the male privileges vis-à-vis women are linked to their role as warriors or potential warriors, and these privileges tend to be seen as natural. A man of honor is also expected to act as the head of the family and to guard over the chastity of female
family members. Women tend to embrace and perpetuate this understanding of what manhood means. This honor culture, although present to some degree in all societies, is changeable. Furthermore individuals, both men and women, differ with regard to how much they accept traditional honor culture or rather espouse more modern and less warlike and oppressive ideals. This argument hence implies that individuals who espouse a more traditional honor culture should hold both more warlike attitudes as well as attitudes that men should be privileged vis-à-vis women, both in society and in the home. Also, societies with stronger honor culture should as a consequence be more violent and warlike (Tickner 1992, 2001; Enloe 1993; Gibson 1994; Nisbett and Cohen 1996; Gill 1997; Goldstein 2001; Pin-Fat and Stern 2004).

Both the essentialist and the constructivist arguments are compatible with and draw on more ultimate causes for why women supposedly are more peaceful than men, and for why gendered othering and honor culture exist, respectively. These ultimate causes can be found in socioeconomic developments and in evolutionary psychology. The socioeconomic explanations do not depend on the evolutionary arguments, and vice versa, but neither are these more ultimate explanations mutually exclusive. That is to say, there are socioeconomic explanations for why women would be more peaceful than men, and for why gendered othering and honor cultures exist. Likewise, there are evolutionary explanations for why women would be more peaceful than men, and for why gendered othering and honor cultures develop.

A socioeconomic argument for why women would be at the same time more peaceful on average than men, and subordinated to men, can be made as follows. Because women have less power and privilege than men wars and other forms of organized violence tend to be decided upon by men and benefit men in the first hand. Women can therefore become a peaceful influence if empowered. Because of gender roles, women are furthermore trained to deal with conflict in a
less confrontational way than men. It should be noted that proponents of this line of reasoning do not claim that these differences between men and women are deterministic, but instead talk about more or less pronounced tendencies. The socioeconomic reasons for why women are subordinated to men, and for traditional gender roles, relate to social consequences of the different reproductive roles of men and women. Where fertility rates and infant mortality are high, life spans short and where there are few safe alternatives to breast feeding infants, women tend to spend a large part of their adult lives either pregnant or breastfeeding infants. This has been the pattern everywhere up until relatively recently, and it is still the case in the poorest societies. Men have been much freer in this regard, and hence able to accrue advantages in the public sphere, including consolidating a hegemonic ideology legitimizing male superiority.

Having many (surviving) children used to be a means of the family patriarch to leverage power and secure his old age. Although these patterns are pervasive, they also change: when life spans increase, infant mortality rates go down, and wealth becomes delinked from the number of children, lower fertility rates leave room for women to be more than mothers at the same time as the role of the male patriarch becomes less functional and dominant (MacInnes 1998). This line of reasoning invoking socioeconomic developments to explain why societies with less oppression of women are more peaceful does not require any assumption about women being inherently more peaceful than men in terms of biologically inherited predispositions. The most common perspective is that these differences instead are socially constructed and can develop relatively fast when constraints and opportunities change (Hudson and den Boer 2012).

Also the evolutionary argument for why gender equality is related to civil peace eschews determinism and instead refers to tendencies and changing patterns. The evolutionary approach takes note of the many patterns that recur in some recognizable form in all or almost all known
human cultures, such as the gendered nature of war, and invokes evolution to explain how come these patterns can be found to some extent almost everywhere. Yet, evolutionary forces only predispose male and females to particular behaviors under certain conditions. Humans of both sexes are prone to both aggression and cooperation, cruelty and altruism, and so on, depending on the circumstances. Evolutionary derived predispositions are shaped by culture, which changes much faster than evolution. Despite the existence of human universals, and striking patterns regarding masculine ideals, male privileges, and so on, culture can therefore be seen as more important for understanding human behavior today, even in an evolutionary perspective.

The evolutionary argument revolves around the different reproductive roles of males and females. Because of pregnancy and breastfeeding females inevitably have higher initial investment in producing offspring than men. A basic evolutionary principle is that the sex with higher parental investment becomes a limiting resource, and the other sex therefore competes more intensively for reproductive access. Furthermore, a consequence of internal female fertilization is in the words of Lord Kilbrandon that “maternity is a matter of fact, paternity one of mere inference.” It follows that sexual jealousy has been selected for more strongly among men than among women. Higher female parental investment and paternity uncertainty result in sexual conflict. Intense male competition for reproductive partners and male control over female sexuality are accordingly evolutionary favored adaptations that can be found in more or less all known cultures. The great majority of traditional cultures are patrilocal, meaning that after marriage the wife moves to her husband’s household. As a consequence, women tend to be at a disadvantage relative to their husband in terms of availability of kin, whereas the men are more closely related. These conditions are conducive to male-male alliances that cooperate in controlling women and warring against outgroup male coalitions. Whereas a male dominance hierarchy structure
dampens male-male competition within the group, competition for status has nevertheless been particularly important for reproductive success for males. For these reasons, evolution has selected for a predisposition among men to strive to be (or be perceived to be) fierce so as to deter affronts and gain status, controlling in relation to women, loyal to male kin (or perceived kin), and ruthless toward outgroup male competitors. Hence, it is possible to provide evolutionary arguments for why a culture of honor develops, in which men must prove their manhood by acting though and warlike.

To summarize, socioeconomic developments, and or evolutionary forces, provide ultimate forces for why gender should be related to patterns of war and peace. Three more precise arguments were identified, which are compatible with both types of explanations. First, women may be more peaceful on average than men. Second, when in patriarchal societies men in the family dominate women, this oppressive othering serves as a template for how other “others”, such as political opponents, and ethnic and religious minorities, are treated. Third, honor culture trains men that violence is the appropriate way of dealing with affronts and proving one’s manhood. The proximate causes condition these three mechanisms. Empowerment of women enables the more peaceful women to impact outcomes in a more peaceful direction. Changing norms regarding gendered othering and honor culture influence both men and women, and perhaps in particular men, to be less warlike in their attitudes and behaviors.

**Individual Level of Analysis**

Civil war is sub-category of the broader phenomenon of war, which also encompasses interstate wars. War in general is extremely gendered with regard to the identity of participants. Most strikingly, Goldstein assesses that less than one percent of all warriors throughout history have been women (2001, 10). There are reasons to believe that the rate of female participation is
higher in civil war than in interstate war but as will be discussed below the empirical evidence shows that the actual fighting in civil wars is overwhelmingly done by males. At the same time, many women have participated in different capacities, including in combat roles, in numerous civil wars, and this female civil war participation has often been downplayed and overlooked. Both the pattern that most warriors are men, and that female participation in fighting has been overlooked or downplayed, are telling and speak to the peculiar gendered nature of civil war and the study of civil war.

The skewed distribution of male and female civil war combatants can hardly be explained by innate qualities of the biological sexes that would make men suitable for the warrior role and women unsuitable. There is an abundance of evidence that women can be extremely capable fighters, and if those individuals who are the most suitable filled the ranks of civil war fighters, the distribution between men and women would be much closer to fifty-fifty. Clearly something else is going on in addition to innate differences between the sexes in terms of warrior qualities (Goldstein 2001).

A handful of studies use statistical methods of inference to test for generalizable explanations for why some individuals take up arms in situations of civil conflict or genocide, while most people do not. It is perhaps unsurprising but nevertheless striking that male sex turns out to be an extremely strong predictor of participation in civil conflict violence. Yet, gender is typically treated merely as a necessary control, and no explanations are offered or tested for why men are so much more prone to civil conflict violence than women (e.g., Verwimp 2005; Humphrey and Weinstein 2008; McDoom 2013). The strongly gendered nature of the use of violence in civil conflict is seemingly taken as a given and in need of no explanation. But if male sex is the
strongest individual-level predictor of use of violence in civil conflict this actually cries out for an explanation.

Henshaw (2013) has carried out the most ambitious study of the extent to which men and women, respectively, participate in civil conflict. She maps female participation in a random sample of 72 rebel groups active between 1990 and 2008. In more than two thirds of the rebel groups the active combatants, i.e., those participating in direct armed attacks, are exclusively male. In groups with female direct participation in fighting male active combatants outnumber the women. The male numerical dominance is less pronounced, but still strong, when female insurgents who fulfill other roles than direct participation in armed attacks are taken into account. It is reported that if taking into account females participating in all capacities, several exceptional rebel movements may have somewhere between almost one third to almost one-half female participation (e.g., the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka, the Communist Party of Nepal, Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front of El Salvador, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). The data collected by Henshaw thus show a very strong male overrepresentation in participation in rebel groups, which is particularly pronounced for active participation in combat and leadership roles. Thus, participation remains extremely gendered in contemporary civil conflict.

At the same time, Henshaw takes a different angle on this pattern and points out that her data show that female participation in rebel groups is “much greater than what is recognized by current scholarship” (8). With her study she identities and addresses an important and overlooked variation in need of explanation in that some rebel groups attract large numbers of female participants while other groups attract none or very few. Henshaw presents several findings on what differentiates rebel groups with female participation from other rebel groups. For example, rebel groups with a leftist, redistributive ideology along Marxist or socialist lines are more likely
to have female participants. She also situates her study in a discussion of scholarly work suggesting that female combatants may be undercounted because they are pressured to deny their participation, and that female combatant participation is minimized both in the social context in which it occurred as well as in research (Sharlach 1999; Enloe 2000; Sjoberg and Gentry 2007; MacKenzie 2009, 2012; McEvoy 2009).

Indeed, it seems that both among people embroiled in war or preparing for war, and among many students of war, there is a usually unstated assumption that fighting is a male thing, and that this is the natural order and the way it should be. Clearly this has more to do with imagined differences in warrior qualities and beliefs about proper gender roles, than any actual differences between men and women with regard to the capacity to become a warrior. The extent to which war fighting is unreflectively treated as a male sphere shows the strength of warrior masculinity, that is the notion that war, preparation for war, and warlike behavior is what being a real man is perceived to be about, and also what distinguishes real men from the contrast category of submissive and nursing women. Indeed, recognizing the capacity of women to fight, and the actual track-record of women fighters, threatens to undo the ultimate test of manhood, which is also the way men are goaded into becoming warriors: real men prove their worth and gain precedence by acting warlike and though so that the weak women are protected (which often entails control by the men). This concern is reflected in this quote by a U.S. Marine Corps general on the effect of female participation in combat: “War is man’s work… it would be an enormous psychological distraction for the male who wants to think that he's fighting for that woman somewhere behind, not up there in the same fox hole with him. It tramples the male ego. When you get right down to it, you’ve got to protect the manliness of war” (cited in Enloe 1993, 153-154).
Sub-National Units of Analysis

Asal et al. seek to explain why some organizations engaged in contentious politics chose violent tactics, non-violent tactics, or a mix of both, specifically investigating the effect of an organization’s ideology relating to gender. In a sample of 104 ethno-political organizations in the Middle East, they find that organizations with a gender-inclusive ideology are much more likely to engage in protest, and less likely to use a violent or mixed strategy compared to other groups.

With regard to theory, the authors state that “Much of the feminist literature … suggests that gender-inclusive ideologies should make organizations more peaceful” and that “theorists argue that the choice of violence is related to patriarchal attitudes, while the choice of nonviolent resistance is explicitly connected to a feminist perspective” (308). It is not clearly stated, however, what the theoretical explanation is for why gender-inclusive ideology is associated with non-violent tactics, and why and how patriarchal attitudes lead to violence. One has to go to the cited works to find out what causal mechanisms the authors found plausible and relied on to formulate their hypothesis. The authors’ selection of cited works gives the impression that they agree with the analysis that patriarchy leads to violence through othering and its concomitant fostering of violent domination. There is no indication that the authors believe that participation by inherently peaceful women in itself influences organizations to be less violent. Instead they emphasize that “there is a world of difference between a movement that includes women, while still advocating policies that may prove damaging to women’s interests in the long run, and one that actively advocates for their inclusion” (308). It seems clear that the authors rely on a constructivist view on gender and peace rather than the essentialist perspective, but this kind of work probably needs to spell out the theoretical argument more fully in order to seem convincing to readers who are not familiar with gender theory.
Write about sexual violence here?


**Country Level of Analysis**

Before research on the causes of civil war began to use statistical methods to test for associations derived from gender theory about a decade ago, a number of cross-cultural studies drawing on anthropological research examined whether pre-industrial societies with more inequality between men and women were more warlike. The distinction between civil war and interstate war does not apply directly to pre-state societies, but in this context it is nevertheless relevant to note that Goldstein in a review of the cross-cultural anthropology studies concludes that “overall, women’s low status correlates somewhat with frequent warfare” (2001, 397). The idea guiding the study of gender and civil war onset is similarly that countries with a lower status for women should be more prone to civil war. A challenge for these studies is coming up with measures of the relative status of women that are available for most or all countries of the world, and for long periods of time, since onset of civil war is quite rare and statistical tests aiming to parse out the effects of different but correlated explanatory factors require many observations and a good deal of variation in the dependent variable. This has necessitated the use of more or less rough proxy measures, and most studies use several alternative measures for gender equality to compensate for the potential weaknesses of the individual measures.
In her pioneering 2005 study, Caprioli (2005) uses two different proxies for gender equality, namely fertility rate and female labor force participation. The dependent variable is incidence of intrastate armed conflict, and her models take into account prior conflict and the length of any preceding peace spell, among several other control variables. Higher fertility rates and lower female labor force participation significantly predict intrastate armed conflict.

In line with her previous work on gender and interstate conflict (2000), and building on a large cited feminist literature, Caprioli discusses two main theoretical arguments for why gender equality matters for civil conflict. She argues that gender inequality amounts to cultural violence and norms that legitimize violence, and that militarization of masculinity feeds into a gendered nationalism that help mobilize people to fight other groups. Clearly Caprioli draws primarily on a constructivist perspective.

Melander (2005) tests for the effect of three independent variables: (1) an indicator of whether the highest leader of a state is a woman; (2) the percentage of women in parliament; (3) the female-to-male higher education attainment ratio. The dependent variable is an ordinal measure taking the values no intrastate armed conflict, minor intrastate armed conflict, and full-scale civil war, and the models include a lagged dependent variable (as well as numerous controls) so that what is explained is change in the level of intrastate armed conflict. Melander finds no effect of the female leadership indicator but strong pacifying effects of the other two measures of gender equality. Melander also tests for interaction between democracy and female parliamentary representation, and finds that the pacifying effect of gender equality in parliament is greatest in democracies.

The theoretical framework draws on the distinction in Caprioli (2000) and the feminist literature cited above in identifying ways in which gender equality may influence civil conflict, namely
empowerment of more peaceful women (the essentialist argument), othering and militarized masculinity (the constructivist argument). That female leadership has no effect, also when parsing out the potential effect of female leaders who came to power for dynastic reasons, could be interpreted as suggesting that the constructivist argument fares better than the essentialist argument but the number of observations in which the highest leader of a state was a woman is low. The study concludes that although the effect of gender equality is evident the results do not provide grounds for concluding whether the essentialist or the constructivist argument has more explanatory power.

Gleditsch et al. (2011) find that an index representing the degree to which women’s equal political, social and economic rights are respected in a country is significantly associated with a lower risk of civil war onset. The authors also examine the effect of polygyny, since a previous study claimed to have found a strong relationship between polygyny and civil war (Kanazawa 2009). Gleditsch et al. conclude that their results are difficult to reconcile with a claim about "civil war emanating from reproductive frustration in polygynous groups", and instead emphasize how socially constructed gender roles legitimizing violence provide a more plausible explanation.

DeMeritt et al. (forthcoming) investigate whether the peace following terminated civil wars are more likely to hold when female participation is higher in different spheres of society. They find that two measures of gender equality are associated with a reduced risk of civil war relapse, namely the female-to-male literacy rate, and female parliamentary representation. Contrary to the some of the other results presented here, they find that female labor force participation predicts an increased risk of relapse. Like most works reviewed above DeMeritt et al. invoke both the essentialist argument and the constructivist arguments to motivate their hypotheses.
Gizelis (2009) studies the prospects for peacebuilding success using a dependent variable that reflects avoiding conflict relapse as well as meeting democratic standards in societies emerging from civil conflict. She finds that there is a statistically significant interaction between the female-to-male life expectancy ratio and United Nations peacebuilding operations, so that UN peacekeeping is much more likely to succeed in societies in which the status of women is higher measured before the onset of the civil war. In line with previous research, Gizelis refers to both the essentialist argument and the constructivist argument. She adds that gender equality entails higher social capital in that the traditional exclusion of competent individuals who are women is diminished, and that peacekeeping forces thereby gain more effective local partners. Interestingly, Gizelis notes that her argument does not require that equal societies are more peaceful, and she stresses that “higher social capital and domestic capacity could also make countries or communities more able to organize collective violence” (509). This suggests that in line with a constructivist perspective, the effect of female participation is not hardwired but depends on the context.

**Alternative Explanations**

In 2004, Paul Collier and Anki Hoeffler published their famous article “Greed and grievance in civil war.” They contrasted two arguments explaining civil war: rebellions are caused by atypical opportunities for building a rebel organization or by atypically severe grievances. Using proxy measures that they admit are open to different interpretations the authors conclude that “the grievances that motivate rebels may be substantially disconnected from the large social concerns of inequality, political rights, and ethnic or religious identity” (2004, 589). This study generated enormous interest, and has been cited more than 4000 times. The following year, Mary Caprioli published the first quantitative study on the relationship between gender equality and civil peace.
Using two proxy measures for gender equality she concluded that “states characterized by gender inequality are more likely to experience intrastate conflict” (2005, 161). She also noted that “the insignificance of average GDP per capita growth rate suggests that poverty or growth rates whether negative or positive are not in themselves a predictor of internal violent conflict without gendered structural violence supporting norms of violence” (174). Except for those studies aiming to test hypotheses derived from feminist theory, only a handful of studies on civil conflict and related phenomena have cited these findings. As a rule, mainstream research on civil war does not consider gender equality as an alternative explanation and does not include measures of gender equality as control variables. The study of civil war would benefit from a debate and cumulation of studies on which explanatory factors that may conceivably cancel out the findings on the effects of gender equality. This section briefly discusses a few alternative explanations.

It could be that the association found between gender equality and peace is spurious in that both phenomena may be driven by some larger normative change entailing that violence and domination in general is viewed as less acceptable. It should be acknowledged that in any observational study the possibility always exists that some third factor would explain away the findings if taken into account. But a general objection of such a sweeping and unspecified character carries little weight unless that potential third factor supposedly driving a general normative change devaluing violence can be specified theoretically, operationalized, and then shown empirically to make the relationship between gender equality and peace go away. A second problem with this objection that there might be a larger normative change that the studies on gender do not capture is that it comes close to being circular: violence in general becomes less common because violence in general becomes less popular. In contrast, the arguments tested in
the reviewed studies imply an empirical association between two quite different phenomena: gender equality and peace. Hence, the gender argument is far from circular or tautological.

A related possible objection is that measures of gender equality actually tap into development in general, and that the tests pick up a causal relationship between development and peace, rather than between gender equality and peace. However, the reviewed studies each control for one or several standard measures of development and the variables reflecting gender equality are statistically significant whereas the measures of development often are not. The onus is therefore on the sceptics to present the correct, and theoretically justified, measure of development and to demonstrate that the relationship between gender equality and peace no longer exists when a superior measure of development is used.

At the same time, and as previously noted, it seems highly likely that various aspects of development, such as changes in means of production and technological innovations, are important drivers of gender equality. This means that development causes gender equality, which in turn causes peace. Gender equality would then be the mechanism through which development impacts peace. This is an interesting possibility, but the reviewed results also show that the pacifying effect of gender equality cannot be reduced solely to development having an indirect effect through gender equality since the measures of gender equality remain significant when controlling for measures of development. Instead, in several of the studies development in general seems to have no direct effect on peace when gender equality is taken into account. A vague speculation that the relationship between gender equality and peace would be entirely driven by development in some form can of course be correct nevertheless, but it lacks empirical support so far. That is to say, no large study has been published that demonstrates that gender equality can be crowded out as a significant predictor of civil peace by development indicators.
At the very least, and given the record of published studies, it seems reasonable that gender equality would have a pacifying effect given equal levels of economic development. For example, contraceptive pills may become available at a low cost as a consequence of economic development, but men may refuse women the freedom to use them. Such differences in the treatment of women given equal levels of economic development should according to the theoretical arguments dealt with in this chapter be related to peace, and if so gender equality and economic development would be complementary and partially overlapping drivers of peace.

Whereas development in the study of civil war typically is conceived of as a societal level variable alternative explanations operate also on the individual level. In particular, honor ideology may correlate with conservatism and social dominance orientation (SDO), and either of these two variables may explain both the variation in honor ideology as well as proneness to violence, so that any association on the individual level between honor ideology and violence would be spurious. Scruton defines conservatism as “the political outlook which springs from a desire to conserve existing things, held to be either good in themselves, or better than the likely alternatives, or at least safe, familiar, and the objects of trust and affection” (90). Individual-level measures of conservatism (other than those that simply rely on self-identification) are based on the notion that conservatism consists of resistance to change and endorsement of inequality (Wilson and Sibley 2013). Given these views of conservatism it is hard to see the logic that would predispose conservatives to take up arms in civil conflicts more often than other people. Sometimes militaristic views are considered to indicate conservatism, or to be part of the definition of conservatism, but in this context that only muddies the water: including the endorsement of violence in the definition or measurement of conservatism brings dependent and independent variables closer to each other by definition or measurement, and gives no
explanatory leverage. What is more, conservatism is mute with the regard to the gendered pattern of war. If conservatism would be the main cause of violent participation in civil conflict then we would expect to see almost as many female and male combatants (since women are only a little less conservative than men). The fact that warriors traditionally have been men does not help the conservatism explanation, but only begs the question why this tradition has evolved in the first place, which again cannot be explained by invoking conservatism. Granted, individuals who are more conservative tend to be less favorably disposed to equal rights for women, but again conservatism is no explanation for why power, war and political violence is coded masculine.

The same argumentation can be used to counter the possibility that SDO provides a better explanation for the pattern that gender equality correlates with civil peace. SDO is an individual-difference variable that captures “a general attitudinal orientation toward intergroup relations, reflecting whether one generally prefers such relations to be equal, versus hierarchical, that is ordered along a superior-inferior dimension” (Pratto et al. 1994, 742). Social dominance theory provides an explanation for why a lot of people would like to discriminate against and dominate other groups but does not explain the gendered nature of war and political violence. There is a weak or at best moderately strong correlation between sex and SDO, meaning that men tend to have higher SDO than women, but this moderate difference can hardly explain the overwhelming male dominance in war and violence in general. Also, SDO provides no explanation for the human universal that men dominate women, and not the other way around. Hence, invoking SDO cannot negate the need for theory that explicitly deals with the gendered nature of war and power.

It seems reasonable to expect that individuals who espouse honor culture and othering tend to be high on SDO, and conservatives more often than not, because of the overlapping element of endorsing inequality. But there is no theoretical logic that would entail that conservatism or SDO
explains individual-level participation in civil conflict better than honor ideology and othering, and neither can conservatism or SDO explain the gendered nature of war and violence. The exact interrelationship between honor ideology, conservatism, and SDO is an important area for future research.

**Avenues for Future Research**

A key challenge in the research on gender and civil war is developing tests that are closer to the operation of the theorized causal mechanisms. This entails making the theoretical arguments more precise as well. Exactly how do empowered women affect change in processes of conflict formation, mobilization, escalation, de-escalation, resolution and prevention? How, more precisely, does gendered othering result in more civil conflict, and how does reduced othering translate into civil peace? What is the exact relationship between honor cultures and civil conflict at the level of the society or culture, and how does individual adherence to honor culture result in civil conflict participation? Future research should try to establish whether the causal mechanisms indeed are at work as the more coarse tests carried out so far imply. When developing new tests researchers should aim to be able to distinguish between the impact of empowered peaceful women, othering and honor culture, and the new arguments that will be developed.

Much leverage on the gendered nature of civil war can probably be gained by conducting more research seeking to explain relevant variation in individual-level dependent variables such as participation in civil conflict or peacemaking. Such research is in many ways more demanding and sensitive than the kind of studies reviewed in this chapter, but such a development would be in line with the current boom in micro-level studies on issues of peace and conflict. For example, unpublished research suggests that adherence to honor culture is an individual-difference variable
that can be measured in surveys, and which predicts the use of violence in contentious politics. Bjarnegård et al. (2014) carried out a survey in Thailand in 2012 on both a nationally representative sample and a special sample of hardcore political activists. The authors show that self-reported political violence (bringing a weapon to a political protest, using a weapon, or causing material damage) is significantly and strongly predicted by the interaction of an index measuring patriarchal values (male privilege and dominance in society as well as in the family, extending to control over female sexuality) and a question measuring the ideal of male toughness (“A man shouldn’t show emotions and weakness”). This result holds also in the nationally representative sample when the specially sampled activists are removed. This is potentially an important step forward in that previous research on the role of gender attitudes has identified effects on other attitudes (e.g., militarism) or behavior outside the realm of participation in political violence (e.g., street crime, sexual violence in peacetime).

A methodologically more ingenious example, but in the context of interstate conflict, is an unpublished study by Dafoe and Caughey (2013). Previous research has identified the American South as a case of honor culture. The authors treat the haphazard variation in the cultural backgrounds of US presidents as a natural experiment and analyze the effect of a Southern background on US behavior in international militarized disputes. Using matching and taking into account other characteristics they find that disputes under Southern presidents are approximately twice as likely to involve US uses of force. This study shows that the effects of honor culture on military conflict can be studied at the level of the highest decision maker of a state.

Another important area for future research is endogeneity and reverse causality. It is conceivable that gender inequality, and in particular the militarized masculinity of honor cultures, is the consequence of experiencing war and turmoil, and the concomitant need to foster warriors. Many
studies conclude that gender equality suffer as a consequence of violent conflict (refs). Yet, many other studies present the opposite view in that the overall result of war tends to be that gender equality in general improves despite many setbacks and war-related problems (refs). One way in which studies could be designed to get at this problem on the individual level of analysis is suggested by an unpublished study of determinants of value change among Swedish soldiers deploying to Afghanistan (Sundberg 2014). The author surveys the same soldiers before and after deployment, and also exploits the largely haphazard variation in combat exposure during deployment, to investigate how the experience of war influences personal values. The results show that although combat exposure increases the probability of value change, the overall conclusion is that values tend to remain stable. This study does not investigate gender values or honor culture, but the unusual research design and the result that personal values tend to be resilient are relevant.

A general challenge for the research on gender and civil war is how to deal with the gendered nature of civil war without blinding oneself to relevant variation and falling prey to oversimplifications. For example, the pattern that active combatants in all war, including civil war, tend overwhelmingly to be male has on the one hand been ignored or taken for granted. This means that the many women who have participated as active combatants are overlooked or defined away as uninteresting in research. In practice, female combatants have as mentioned above been actively pressured to deny their experience and discriminated against in post-conflict situations. This has of course been very detrimental to advancing our deeper understanding of war, and not the least to the women affected. In practical work it is essential to see the needs and capabilities of individuals regardless of sex. The agency of women in various capacities in civil war is clearly underresearched. At the same time, the strongly gendered nature of civil war seems
to hold also with a more nuanced and less stereotypical view of female agency. Hence, a full understanding of the phenomenon of civil war requires explanations that can account for the gendered nature of civil war. Theories are needed that are nuanced enough to deal with this kind of complexity.

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