Visible Wars & Invisible Girls, Shadow Industries, and the Politics of Not-Knowing

Carolyn Nordstrom

ABSTRACT
Girls constitute invisible casualties of war. This is an invisibility that is actively constructed by those who enact this violence, or who benefit from it in some way; it is an invisibility that takes on cultural dynamics when a dearth of statistics, accounts, and accountability perpetuate a tradition of "not-seeing" these forms of violence in the world. If silence is political, "not-knowing" is at the core of power and its abuses. In-depth ethnographic explorations of girl's lives on the frontlines demonstrate that they constitute a considerable percentage of war's victims. But this article shows the violence they face is far greater than traditional definitions of war indicate. Girls are at risk of being raped, maimed and killed in torture and battles. But as well, they are often subjected to violence within their own communities. Some of this violence is organized: international profiteering, for example, reaps billions of dollars of profits by forcing girls in warzones into illegal labor and sex industries. These analyses raise the question of the very definitions and distinctions between war and peace, of the power and profit that adheres to both, and to the very constructions of invisibility that render violence and global profiteering possible.

INTRODUCTION
What we "Don't-See"

By Wednesday, five days after the attack, the police could not confirm the names or numbers of children injured or killed. (Ndebele 1995:328)

It took years of studying war firsthand for me to learn that children constituted a major percentage of war deaths in the contemporary world. Behind the rhetoric of soldiers fighting soldiers that fuels military propaganda and popular accounts of war around the world, children are maimed, tortured, starved, forced to fight, and killed in numbers that rival adult civilian casualties, and outnumber those of soldiers. Through working in warzones across several continents I slowly learned that these youthful casualties - by formal estimates, some one and a half million in recognized armed conflicts in the last decade alone (Machel 2001; UNICEF 1996) - were largely invisible. Most of the military texts, the political science analyses, and the media accounts of war did not discuss the tactical

targeting of children. And in the cases that did achieve public attention, I had seen mostly boys. Where were the girls?[1]

The invisibility of children in war is not at first apparent. Every war has the "horror image" of the child victim. The gaunt eyed child looking out from behind the metal fence of a Nazi concentration camp in WWII. The tiny skull in one of the "killing fields" of Cambodia. The small body of a child casualty in Mai Lai. The wizened eyes and bloated belly of the starving child war refugee in Africa. Zlata's story (1994) of ex-Yugoslavia. The wars I have studied all stigmatized the actions of the "other side" by telling of the rape, maiming and murder of girls. But these images and stories are "symbols:" used as political justification and military propaganda, for the demonization of the enemy, and as a call to arms. This does not detract from the fact that these atrocities exist. But it is a truth of one: one person; one picture; one child's story transformed into a universal icon. Where are the millions of others whose plight is equally tragic? When we ask this question, it becomes more obvious that the images of children in war are very

clearly circumscribed. While references to "collateral damage" victims are rife in military and media presentations, discussions of the strategic targeting of children are rare. Yet the fact that as many children are tortured as adults and more children die in war than soldiers today shows children are targeted, and that child casualties are not merely "unfortunate collateral accidents." While starvation among refugee children is a frequent topic of analysis and a common subject of documentation, the rape of these children is not. Current United Nations figures show eighty percent of female refugees in the world today are raped, girls included. While the blackmarketeering of arms and mercenaries is familiar to analyses of war, the "blackmarketeering" of girls - the contemporary slaving of war orphans for example - is a more hidden topic, especially when the "buyers" are westerners. Underage prostitution and sexual slavery are lucrative "industries," generating billions a year.

As a society in general we are taught to "not-see" many issues surrounding violence and war, especially when it comes to children. If silence is political, not-knowing is at the core of power and its abuses. Of the hundreds of information releases on war most Westerners have been exposed to, how many contain data on: the number of girls (not women) raped in former Yugoslavia; the number of children (not adults) killed during the Khmer Rouge's military dictatorship in Cambodia; the number of girls tortured during the dirty war in Argentina or in apartheid South Africa; the number of war orphans in Central America; or the number of girls (not boys) who have fought in wars. Nor do they describe in the girls' own words their experiences, their politics, and their strategies for survival. Rigorous investigations into these questions often provides no more than vacuums of information.

To begin to explore these dynamics of "un/acceptable" war stories about children in the midst of war, I first turn to the narratives of three girls I encountered on the frontlines of the war in Mozambique, where I conducted field research in 1988, 1989, 1990-91 during the war years, and again in 1994, 1996, 1997, 1998, and 1999 in the post-war years. I have spent years on the frontlines of several wars on several continents doing ethnographic research.[2] During this time, I have listened to hundreds of girls' words on their experiences of war, and seen hundreds more survive or die on the fronts of violence. The three Mozambican stories I have selected in no way begin to cover the experiences of girls in warzones. The three narratives are intended to show that war's violence is not a monolithic event, divorced from the peace and violence of the domestic sphere, or the exploitations of the larger economic universe. "Girls," as well, can not be constructed as a monolithic category. Girls' experiences of life and childhood are as shaped by distinctions of age, class, religion, ethnicity, the foibles of power and the horrors of oppression as are adults, though we are more inclined in literature and media to explore the impact of these realities in the lives of adults.[3]

Somewhere between the frontlines and the sweatshops in which I have seen children exploited, between the girls raped in war and prostituted in peace, I have lost the clear distinction dividing war and peace. I think this is a positive step, a useful ambiguity. It is a step that leads us into questions of who profits from war, from silence, and from the lives and labor of girls on a global scale. It is a step that opens a door on a vast horizon of political ploys and economic gains.

BEGINNING (THE CONFOUNDING) OF THE QUESTION CONCERNING GIRLS AND WARZONES

The Stories of Three Girls in Mozambique
Q: What did you do?
A: I held my M-16 on them.
Q: Why?
A: Because they might attack.
Q: They were children and babies?
A: Yes.
Q: And they might attack? Children and babies?
A: They might've had a fully loaded grenade on them. The mothers might have thrown them at us.
Q: Babies?
A: Yes.
Q: Were the babies in their mother's arms?
A: I guess so.
Q: And the babies moved to attack?
A: I expected at any moment they were about to make a counterbalance.
- Paul Meadlo, Court-Martial Testimony
       (Hammer 1971: 161-162)[4]

These three stories are situated in a war that took a million lives in ten years. The 1976 - 1992 war in Mozambique is considered one of the most destructive wars of contemporary times. Mozambique won a war for independence in 1975, and instituted a black majority Marxist government. The Apartheid-governments of then-Rhodesia and South Africa were threatened by such political developments, and actively worked to destabilize the Mozambican government. Still in the grip of Cold War era politics the Frelimo government was aided by Communist block countries while the rebel forces were supported by anticommunist groups that ranged from Western democracies to right wing religious organizations. As the goals of international groups backing Renamo were often destabilization and not political reform, tactics were developed to undermine the viability of the country. In a word, they were dirty: using terror to effect political will (Nordstrom 1997a).

The impact of these terror tactics - the targeting of people, infrastructure, and social services - resulted in one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world: in 1990 the UN estimated roughly one in three children under five did not survive. I noticed that at war-zone feeding centers for war victims, the vast majority of children present were boys. When I asked about this, people explained that when parents took their children to the centers, someone - and that someone was usually girls - had to stay home to take care of the elderly and the household chores. In Mozambican society, girls are valued for the stability and the work they provide to families, and this mitigates tendencies to channel scant resources towards boys. Girls are expected to help with onerous tasks such as collecting water and firewood, hauling supplies, and farming. Thus when troops kidnapped people and forced them to porter goods and do heavy labor, the society in general was equally appalled by the treatment of these civilian prisoners - men, women, girls and boys alike. The sexual violation of girls is considered a heinous act in Mozambique. In regular society a pubescent girl might be expected to explore her sexuality in healthy ways, but culturally, people find it repugnant if the powerful - especially soldiers, officials, and foreigners (as in the case of peacekeepers) - use their influence or sheer strength to force sex on girls.

War brings many forms of violence into the center of people's lives, and children suffer and die from many different causes: from starvation and disease due to the targeting of infrastructure, from bullets and bombs, from dirty tactics intended to terrify a population. While unspoken strategies may target children, generally the public voice of militaries claim child casualties are unintended "collateral" harm. But the sexual violation of children is an intentional act that can not be cast as collateral damage. For this reason, a thread of sexual violation carries throughout the following narratives. At the same time, these stories serve to illustrate larger military and political realities affecting girl's lives across war and "peace."

1992 marked the end of the war in Mozambique. To date, this country represents one of the real success stories in defeating cycles of political violence: Mozambicans have a sophisticated view of peace that entails defeating not only war, but all the tendrils of social, structural, and interpersonal violence war can unleash in civil society. But even here, peace accords do not mean peace for all.

The First Girl's Story

In 1990, at the height of the war in Mozambique, I flew into a town in the center of the country that had been occupied for several years by the rebel Renamo forces credited with the majority of the human rights abuses. The town had recently been retaken by the Frelimo government forces, and had suffered significant fighting. People in the town were dying at an alarming rate from war, from disease, and from starvation. I had arrived by hitch-hiking a ride with an emergency humanitarian cargo plane, bringing in the barest trickle of critical foodstuffs and supplies to meet a flood of need. Later in the day I sat on the ground with several women who were telling me about the difficulties of living and dying under military occupation. Not far from where we sat, a young girl of perhaps ten was lying on the ground looking vacantly at the sky. Watching the girl was jarring in the sense that her actions, her very presentation of self, did not fit the circumstances she was in. She was unclothed, and seemingly unconcerned about it - unusual in Mozambique where poverty stricken refugees wore tree bark to cover their bodies when their own goods were lost to the war. She lay at an odd angle,

and engaged with no one, her eyes seeming to look even beyond the sky. For this girl to stand out so clearly to me in a village where twenty five people a day were dying was a statement of her suffering. The women noticed me watching the girl, and with a sad shaking of their heads explained to me that she had been one of the casualties of the war: she had been raped and concubined to Renamo soldiers during their occupation. The girl had never been the same. No one knew the details of her traumatic experiences: she never spoke of it. Such sexual abuse by soldiers was common, the women explained.

There is no question that what happened to this young girl is an inexcusable tragedy of war and a serious human rights violation. Her particular story may not be widely known, but stories of children like her circulate in every warzone: the socio-political currency of human rights organizations, non-governmental organizations, journalists, and researchers working to stem the flow of serious breeches of military protocols. While the general international public may not know about the specifics of war-victim's lives, or the extent to which children are targeted, most of us know that there are girls who are violated by soldiers.

Yet there are other equally tragic stories that do not tend to reach inter/national public awareness, ones that only recently have begun to be thought of as human rights violations. While these realities are as definitive of warzones as those of sexual violations by soldiers, they are muted in general discourse and obscured in formal analyses. Within the same month as I encountered the girl who had been raped by soldiers I heard two other stories that expand considerations of what constitutes warzones.

The Second Girl's Story

This story came to light when a friend of mine and I stopped by her cousin's house one day. It was my first visit to the cousin's house, and I did not know the family. While there, I noticed a young girl, about the same age as the one in the account above. She was lying on a mat looking skyward with somewhat unfixed eyes, her body in a rather awkward position, reminiscent of the girl in the story above. After leaving, my friend told me she was quite worried about her little cousin. An adult familial was forcing sex on her.[5]

While discourses on conflict and war seldom conjoin the stories of girls raped by enemy soldiers and girls raped by friendly soldiers or familials, the two girls might well have seen their plights as very similar. Such juxtapositions lead me to ask how different these two stories are; and why the first constitutes part of war's discourse, while the latter does not. These questions challenge the degree to which we can, or should, dichotomize war from not-war; the extraordinary from the everyday.

Typically discussions of sexual violations at the hands of military and rape camps do not take place at the same conceptual time as discussions of intra-societal rapes. How many soldiers raped a member of their own community as well as participating in the rape camps? How many girls were battered or sexually violated by familiars during the time span women and girls were raped in rape camps? What were the similarities and differences - not as constructed or analyzed by researchers - but as *experienced* by the girls themselves? If physical and sexual violence is a politics of power, are these two realms of experience really so different?

If we return to the point raised above that virtually every war has the quintessential horror story of the "child war victim" without illuminating the realities each child faces, a potential answer to this question emerges. These images of young war victims share one uncontested message: this is an unconscionable atrocity. No political, social, or moral system formally condones war practices that violate children. Thus the mere invocation of the girl war casualty is a moral statement: "*They* who did this are immoral, barbaric."

The image of the child casualty of war is thus a powerful political (and often nationalistic) statement: those who perpetrate such illegal - unconscionable - acts are the enemy, the unjust, the threat we fight against. A key operative word here is "they" as distinct from "we." The lines are drawn, the politics moralized, the (in)justice defined. How then, can violations of children *within* one's own community, or the community of allies, be discussed in the same breath?[6] The "we" can no longer be differentiated from the "they."

The Third Girl's Story

Most people in Mozambique were unaware of the plight of the third girl that I relate here; certainly no media networks took the story outside of Mozambique. I was working with the Mozambican Ministry of Health studying the impact of war on health and healing systems, and I heard this information first hand from health care professionals. This lack of knowledge was not mere happenstance. It was consciously created. It represents what I call here the politics of invisibility. It is also, as we will see, an economics of invisibility. There is a popular assumption that what is not reported is not significant. Major events are newsworthy; minor events are not. This assumption cloaks a disturbing reality: that what is not reported can be carefully negotiated - in Machiavellian fashion - to appear not to exist. The feat is common in war: it explains how human rights violations continue within every military in the face of 70,000 conventions confirming the sanctity of human rights.

The fifteen years of post-independence war in Mozambique produced an estimated 200,000 to 300,000 war orphans. In a country with one small orphanage and a massive population flux (roughly one-quarter of the population were forced from their homes by conflict) little data exists on exactly what happens to these orphans. The answer for one child came to light when she was dumped unceremoniously at a hospital. A group of European men were making and marketing pornographic films. Their actions came to light when the dog they were forcing this girl to have sex with mauled her. The doctors at the hospital were unable to save the child. The hospital staff, and those they called in to witness the atrocity, were outraged. They petitioned the government to treat this as a formal crime; and the government representatives were equally outraged. Yet no reports hit the presses; no formal court proceedings took place. Officials associated with the western embassy who counted the pornographers as countrymen stepped in to quiet the situation. Leverage was effectively applied. The major offenders were quietly escorted out of Mozambique without any reprisal. The crime was hushed. And the network that existed to produce these films was not exposed to public or judicial scrutiny.

This point is an important one: atrocities such as using war orphans for pornography do not rest on a few men making a few films. They function as part of a large transnational network of production, distribution, exploitation, and financial gain. This represents an international industry, a multinational (non)corporation, no matter how illegal it is. This network is largely unaffected by deporting a handful of men from a single locale. The only way such a system of exploitation is undermined is by exposing the system in full, and this is precisely what was hidden in this, and similar, occurrences. The fact that the embassy assisted, whether to save face and reputation, or because it was implicated in some way, demonstrates the considerable linkages, and power, such war-profiteering systems are based on.

ALL THE FRONTLINES

Girls and Global Realities - Sheer Facts

All that's left alongside the flattened shacks of families wiped out in an attack on Crossroads...are the trampled remnants of once-thriving vegetable gardens. Now, children who survived the onslaught and are on holiday from school, play among the ruins. (Njabulo 1995:327)

In classic political science and media analyses, the term war zone is a circumscribed place. It is a battlefield that can be marked on a map, and it contains soldiers locked in combat with opposing soldiers, and the hapless civilians that get caught in the crossfire. When I first began to study war from the frontlines, I looked for this war zone. Finding it proved difficult.

Theoretically, I came to decide, war is best characterized not as a locale but as a process; not as distinct sets of troops, but as a compendium of international actors and forces visible, ethnographically, at any site of inquiry (Nordstrom 1997a). I now speak of warzones - not as places but as vast sprawling processes where the tragedies of individual's lives at the frontlines intersect with a host of transnational realities. Return for a moment to the ten year old girl victim of war I introduced in my first example above. I met this girl in the center of Mozambique, a place of individual stories far removed from the capital of the country, which

itself is far removed from the capitals of global powers. A local casualty in a local war. But as I stood in this town, and others like it, I met a remarkable cast of characters that circle the globe following war, profit, peacemaking, and power.

Arms merchants from Asia and the Americas, military advisors from all sides of the political spectrum, blackmarketeers and gem runners from nameless countries, aid workers and diplomats from well named countries walked these warzones. Journalists plied their trade in words, religious leaders tended the spiritual, and mercenaries killed for profit. Each carried their own ideas of what constitutes peace and war, and each imposed these ideas on those they met. These people do not coalesce on the frontlines without history or background. They are linked in with home countries, international sites of power and prestige, and global networks supplying war and brokering peace. These vast networks span not only warzones, but peacezones as well. They function in times of political upheaval as well as in times of political stability - which means they are invested in certain kinds of power arrangements, certain kinds of political and economic structures, across all distinctions of site, state, or war and peace.

Each person crafts their own unique visions of power and their place within its structures. But trends emerge, and for better or worse they shape not merely local realities, but international ones. Thus, the three stories from Mozambique are not as isolated - either in terms of war experiences or in terms of their relationship to peacetime conditions - as traditional theory would have us think. As I write about the tragedies and atrocities, the silences and the solutions that have taken place in Mozambique, similar occurrences are taking place throughout the world, and I present below an overview of these considerations. The majority of the individual stories comprising these figures are as muted to public awareness as the ones I have presented above. Many of the following statistics do not distinguish female and male, and thus I have been limited to the generic "children." I have chosen to present these in "bullet" format to let the sheer weight of numbers speak to realities the victims of violence can not.

- In the wars of the last decade far more children than soldiers have been killed and disabled (UNICEF 2002; 1995a: 2).

- In the last ten years, approximately 2 million children have died in wars; 6 million have been physically disabled; more than 5 million have been forced into refugee camps; and more than 12 million have been left homeless (Machel 2001; UNICEF 1995a: 2).

- 1 in every 130 people in the world has been forced to flee their homes and communities, 70-80 percent are women and children (Lang 1995: 54-58). Recent estimates show that upwards of eighty percent of girl and women refugees are sexually assaulted.

Many more children will face lives of disruption and violence, and will die equally traumatic deaths that are not included in these "war" statistics. Expanding out to more encompassing "warzones":

- Some of the most lethal wars are the most invisible: disease and malnutrition claim some 35,000 young lives *every day* (UNICEF 2003).

- The number of under-18s involved in prostitution probably exceeds 2 million. Best estimates suggest a figure of 1 million for Asia alone - and 300,000 for the United States (UNICEF 1995c: 34).

- As many as 200 million children in the world under 15 spend most of their waking hours working (Save the Children 1999; UNICEF 1995b: 117).

- There are 100 million street children in the world (Swift 1995). Many of these children "disappear, are beaten, illegally detained and confined, sexually exploited, tortured and systematically killed by agents of the state"(Millet 1994:292-294).

- The United Nations reveals that a quarter of the world's women are violently abused in their own homes (UNICEF 1995a:26).[7] Yet these figures seldom specify what the statistics are for girls. In addition, between 40 to 60 percent of known sexual assaults have been committed against girls fifteen years of age and younger worldwide, regardless of region or culture. The vast majority of child sexual abuse involves older men abusing young girls (United Nations 2000).

There is some irony in concluding this section with the final observation:

▸ 90% of the world's children live in countries that have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is the most widely ratified human rights convention in history.

SHADOW INDUSTRIES AND ABUSIVE ECONOMICS

When local soldiers come through, they may beat and rape you, but when white soldiers come through they beat and rape and kill you.
(fieldnotes, Mozambique 1990, conversation with a young girl in a town under attack)

I have chosen to consider war-related casualties and child prostitution, underage labor and domestic abuse together in the preceding section to underscore the fact that the distinctions between war-zones and peace-zones are not only blurred, they are often fictional. This is not only to point out the salience of Turpin and Kurtz's (1997) classic question concerning the relationship of wife-beating and war, but to underscore the degree to which the quest for political and economic power shapes war and peace alike in key ways. There are two aspects of this, the institutional and the personal.

To begin with the institutional: very little work has gone into mapping the vast international networks that profit in some way from children in general and girls in particular. It is widely recognized that girls are forced to provide sexual and physical labor, are forced to fight in wars, are forced to suffer innumerable human rights violations. It is less widely recognized that forcing a girl to provide physical or sexual labor involves a host of adult industries that are often defined as legitimate: cooks to cook for the girls, landlords who own the property where girls are forced to labor, airlines and shipping lines officials who arrange transport for undocumented workers internationally, immigration officials who turn a blind eye, doctors who treat the girls, vendors who sell their "wares," and so on through a host of actors and profiteers. All of these many related enterprises are central to the existence of child labor.

Take, by way of example, the third girl's story from Mozambique, cited above. All too often such a tragic incident is seen to stand alone, out of context: violent pornographers (marginalized by social conventions) kill a war orphan (the proverbial "nameless and faceless" victim) in Mozambique (a country on the periphery of world centers). Pornographers, war, and crimes of this sort are cast as cultural aberrations, fleeting episodes much like an illness that erupts at the societal level and is treated by a combination of law and outrage. As such, these incidents are themselves then seen as marginalized from the course of everyday events in the larger world. Such a view manages to hide the broader reality that defines such tragedies. To begin with, pornography is a multi-billion dollar a year industry worldwide. An integrated set of linked industries spans divisions of il/legal to make the production and distribution of sexually-focussed media products a set of world-wide multinational networks (Asia Watch and The Women's Rights Project 1993; IMO 1995; Nordstrom 1997b). The men who were making the pornography in Mozambique came from Europe: they needed equipment, airtransport, supplies and start-up wages: they were financed and outfitted. Once in Mozambique, they needed assistants to procure the girls and the "actors," to set up filming facilities, to feed and house all involved, and to run interference with the authorities. They needed editing equipment and studios. They needed production facilities to make distribution copies. And they needed people to distribute these: people to pack and transport films to various destinations worldwide; people at those destinations to wholesale and retail these products, people to advertise to potential customers, and legal consultants to keep them out of prison. This is a complex and integrated transnational system. And as far as multinationals go, the sex industry as a whole is one of the larger and more powerful ones.

These are *shadow industries*: transnational institutions that reap billions of dollars a year in profits and affect the lives of millions of people, enterprises that control sufficient wealth and power to affect political and economic policy nationally and internationally (Nordstrom 2000). These industries are as invisible to public scrutiny as they are powerful. Perhaps one of the most critical questions in this analysis is how do we as a society *not* see these authoritarian enterprises and the role

77

they play in world politics and economics. How these industries develop, interrelate, and operate - by whom and for whom - is far from evident. They are seldom studied as formally recognized institutions and industries. The billions they generate annually are not analyzed in *Money Magazine* or itemized in World Bank fact sheets. They are not formally included in the calculations of the International Monetary Fund as they draft policies for the countries of the world. The successful businesspeople and managers are not profiled in media business sections. Power without visibility; profit without sanctions: shadow institutions.

The institutions that develop around profiteering involving the abuse of children are not isolated to countries or regions; to "war" or "peace." The networks that make such trafficking possible demand sophisticated and enduring infrastructure with global linkages. Any hard and fast divisions between "war(zones)" and "peace(zones)" is not only misleading, it is dangerously wrong. Such divisions obscure the processes by which abuses of power and privilege - and by extension the solutions to these - can be carried out. They exist, even flourish, across zones of contention and conflict. It is here that profit is realized. Sharon Stevens (1995:10-11) points out a key aspect underlying modernist economics and children in general when she writes:

> What are the implications for society as a whole, if there are no longer social spaces conceived as at least partially autonomous from the market and market-driven politics? Where are we to find the sites of difference, the terrain of social witness, critical leverage, and utopian vision, insofar as the domain of childhood - or of everyday life or of a semiautonomous realm of culture - is increasingly shot through with the values of the marketplace and the discursive politics of postmodern global culture? And what happens to the bodies and minds of children in the process?

I noted at the beginning of this section that there was both an institutional and a personal aspect to the ways in which lines between "war" and "peace" are blurred in reality. The institutional

arrangements I have been discussing are facilitated by personal factors: social habits move fluidly across conflict zones, they are put into place by people whose actions resonate across war and peace. To put this point bluntly: would we as readily find the physical and sexual abuse of girls in war if child prostitution did not flourish in many countries, if domestic physical and sexual violence were not common, and commonly accepted, throughout the world? Many of those who take sex tours to patronize underage girls and boys are unlikely to find the abuse or exploitation of children in war, or in peace, a significant cause for concern. That the prostitution of children is a multi-billion dollar a year "industry" gives some indication of the sheer numbers of adults who are *not* outraged at the sexual exploitation of children.

Turning more specifically to war, those who are encouraged to use physical and sexual violence against noncombatants in war have families and personal lives themselves - and a number carry these kinds of abusive actions back into their communities with them. Studies consistently show that domestic violence (physical and sexual) increases dramatically during war; and that people in uniform show significantly higher rates of domestic and sexual violations in war and out (Ashworth 1986; Nordstrom 1996). War and nationalism provoke gendered violence in populations in general. Mladjenovic and Litricin (1993) writing in the midst of the war in former-Yugoslavia in 1993, found from the statistics gathered by the SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence that with the war: 1) death threats increased from 30% to 55% of all calls; 2) the percentage of the presence of guns among violent men doubled; 3) war veterans turned violent against female family members for the first time; 4) violence in inter-ethnic marriages increased; and 5) men were violent against their wives after being exposed to nationalist propaganda in the media (called the Post-TV News Violence Syndrome).

It is misleading to look at the abuse of children in war, in another country, in another culture, in a different context as if that were somehow different and more barbaric than the patterns of abuse that characterize our own everyday cultures, in peace or in war. In some cases, the level of abuse children suffer in "peaceful societies" may rival, or surpass, that of countries at

war. The United States provides an apt example. The U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect recently released their report "A Nation's Shame: Fatal Child Abuse and Neglect in the United States" based on a two and a half year nationwide study. The report found abuse and neglect in the home a leading cause of death for children, claiming the lives of at least 2,000 children and seriously injuring more than 140,000 each year. Possibly more shocking, the vast majority of abused and neglected children are under the age of four. "When it comes to the deaths of infants and small children...at the hands of parents or caretakers, society has responded in a strangely muffled, seemingly disinterested way" stated panel members. I am reminded of a conversation I recently had with a female police officer in a "peacetime" farming community in Central California. She was telling me of some of the cases of child abuse and murder she had seen in the last year. In one case, a parent had attached raw lamp wires to a socket and to their child's genitals to stop the child from wetting the bed. She lamented that incidents such as these seldom even made the newspapers; had they occurred in the context of war, they would certainly be considered human rights abuses.

I am sure that the children who suffered at the hands of military torturers during the dirty war in Argentina (Suarez-Orozco 1987) and the girl in California would find fewer differences than similarities in their experiences. That legal systems have so rarely prosecuted violators of children's rights, and in fact have often engaged in persecuting the victims themselves (Asia Watch and The Women's Right Project 1993:1), shows that this is not an idiosyncratic set of practices, but a system of social practices that permeate civil, judicial, governmental, and military structures internationally.[8] Rather than seeing "war abuses" or "child (s)exploitation" as "outside" the rules and boundaries of "average" or "normal" society, perhaps we should be asking instead what it is that makes such behaviors possible wherever they are found, and what patterns of in/tolerance link them.

WHY CHILDREN?

At stake here are notions not only of innocence, but of nature, individual freedom, social values of enduring love

and care (as opposed to temporally restricted economic and bureaucratic transactions), the family as basic unit of society, the bounded local community as the site of value definition and transmission, and the possibility of noncommodified social domains outside the realm of the market and market-driven-politics.
(Stephens 1995: 9-10)

So why, then, are girls raped, maimed, starved, overworked, and killed across wars and peacezones? There are several possible explanations. Recent ethnographic studies have explored (para)militaries' use of dirty war terror tactics against civilians in an effort to control populations through intimidation and fear.[9] Dirty war tactics have become increasingly common to wars in general in the second half of the 20th century, and do not yet appear to be abating as we move into the 3rd millennium (Sivard 1996). The most severe violations of human codes of ethics and morality are employed to break a society's political will through the strategic deployment of terror. As girls generally represent the most vulnerable and politically innocent members of society, their abuse renders the most terror: society, dirty war strategy postulates, is undermined by the violation of those considered most "inviolable."

A second reason as to why girls are maimed, molested, and killed in war has to do with the subjugation and humiliation of "the enemy." This war is a symbolic one, fought out on the physical bodies of those least able to protect themselves and least implicated in the war effort. The message transmitted is that if a state is so weak as to allow this to happen to its children, how can it possibly have the political and moral strength to govern a population. Mankekar (1995) sums up the relationship between (constructions of) childhood - especially that of girls as the quintessential innocents - and nation in drawing attention to "the synecdochic relationship between the purity of girl-children and the purity of the nation...Significantly, the purity of childhood seems to implicate nothing less than the moral state of the nation."

Yet these explanations do not address the fact that a number of people both in and out of war are perpetrating the same violences upon their own

children, families, and communities. Given this consideration, I am increasingly finding a third reason for the abuse of children in war and in peace. Beyond the constructions of terror and their relationship to socio-political power, beyond notions of purity and moral-nationalistic upstanding, appears a tragic fact: children are abused by those with more power and strength simply *because they can be.*

To explain: many of the world's discourses on war, from Sun Yat Sen to Clausowitz, valorize the moral contest between equals. This belief continues to pervade both popular and military ideologies. But the myth of contests between equals appears to be just that, a myth, and a dangerous one that hides a seamier truth: violence is often conducted against those who by their very nature cannot fight back. To a large degree, global statistics on violence show that whether in battle or in domestic life, the more powerful harm those who pose little threat. I have already pointed out that the United Nations figures show children's deaths outnumber soldier's deaths today. Noncombatants constitute the vast majority of war deaths. That is to say, the unarmed and undefended are largely the targets of the armed. The trend continues through civil life: on the streets, muggers prey on the weaker; in the homes United Nations statistics show the vast majority of violence revolves around men abusing women, adults abusing children. Racism also tends to follow domination through unequal force: rarely does one adult confront another in a racist attack: the norm is that an armed group attacks a smaller group, or a single, unarmed person. This can be found from homophobic assaults to ethnic-targeting. The same holds true in rape: while it is estimated that underage boys are sexually assaulted with a frequency that is close to that of girls, this rate falls off for adult men much more than it does for women.[10]

Thus, child labor, child prostitution, child abuse, and children's casualties in war exist because adults *can.* Children have little recourse to rectify their own problems in the face of these pathologies of power.

AN IMPOSSIBLE SITUATION

The underlying political-legal philosophy on which they [western political systems of government] are based is the classical one, that there are those who have a right to expect obedience and others who have a moral obligation to obey. Empirically, however, we have to conclude that the right of the elite to expect obedience is a right derived from possession of the power necessary to impose values and institutions on others.   (Burton 1988: 196)

The major civil and human rights abuses children face are perpetuated by adults. Yet children must rely on adults to protect their rights. Children do not have direct access to United Nations forums and decision-making consuls; to directly represent themselves in courts of law; to State's policy forming committees; to NGO grants. In fact, children may find it difficult to elicit police protection, find a hospital on their own, or learn about what their rights are and are not in the many local, national, and international laws and conventions. Children are bound by laws that they have no input in drafting or voting on. They are governed by institutions they can in no way control themselves - institutions that may or may not protect their rights. A child who faces abuse at the hands of an adult learns not all adults uphold the laws of the land; they also learn that only adults can rectify the situation.

STARTING A SOLUTION
Asking?

Much of the tragedy befalling children is preventable...Brutality, violence, rape and torture - all would stop tomorrow if the will to stop them existed, or if the rest of us devised means to compel them to be stopped. (UNICEF 1996:11)

The act upon which all solutions ultimately depend is lifting the veil of silence that surrounds the many wars children are subjected to. Solutions can not be implemented if we do not know how many girls are targeted in war, sold into forced labor, harmed in their homes and communities - or if we do not know who is doing this and why. We can not seek answers to these questions until we begin *asking* the questions.

As important as international human rights laws are, anyone who has worked on the frontlines

of violence knows laws unto themselves are as powerful as the paper they are written on. A law can not enforce itself. Laws, charters, protocols, and conventions exist proscribing each and every human rights abuse I have documented in this article. Calling for more enforcement is as effective as calling for more laws: until the multinational shadow industries that profit in the gray areas of il/legality no longer employ segments of the enforcement personnel this is unlikely to provide solutions, and as long as these shadow industries remain multi-billion dollar a year enterprises success in buying off enforcement is unlikely to change. As long as societies in general "don't see" shadow industries as coherent political and economic organizations and recognize those who reap (literally) untold profits on girls' violations, human rights law and enforcement is a pipe dream.[11] Of course, as long as societies in general "don't see" what happens to girls on the many frontlines of war in the world today, the problem itself remains moot: un-seen equates to un-exist.

In conclusion, to ask the question "where are the girls" and to begin to explore their untold stories in studies of conflict, violence, power and control - in politics and economics - is to create the very possibility of knowing as a cultural product. If researchers begin to map and theorize the "terra incognito" of shadow industries that thrive on remaining uncharted, we can begin to dismantle systems of power and profit structured on the sheer fact of invisibility.

ENDNOTES

1. Given the excellent studies incorporating the stories and voices of children that do exist - demonstrating the vibrancy of agency and the philosophies forged by children themselves - the vacuums of knowledge and the silence of nonadults in generalized presentations becomes all the more socially charged and politically loaded. To give but a few examples: Cynthia Enloe (1989, 1993) changed the face of international relations with her straightforward question: "where are the women?" Veena Das' inclusion of children's realities during the 1985 rioting in India throws in stark relief the lack of youth in most studies of communal violence (Das 1991). Ed Cairn's work on children and political violence in Northern Ireland stands out against a plethora of studies that equate political violence with adults (Cairns 1987, 1995). Marcelo Suarez-Orozco's study of the impact of dirty war on children in Argentina - where he discusses strategies of torture directly specifically at children, points out how little we know about how many children have suffered political torture around the world (Suarez-Orozco 1987). Neil Boothby has looked at the devastating problems unaccompanied children face in conflict conditions, and, when I met him in 1989 in Mozambique, was putting his theories into practice working with traumatized boy soldiers (Ressler, Boothby, and Steinbeck 1988). R.W. Connell's book of children's voices describing their relationship to political thought and ideology shows how seldom children are presented as having political (Connel 1971). Sharon Stephen's edited volume *Children and the Politics of Culture* (Stephens 1995) explores the cultural politics of childhood across economics, social, political and bureaucratic spheres; and Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Carolyn Sargent's 1998 edited book *Small Wars: The Cultural Politics of Childhood* takes readers across the landscapes of war - broadly defined - across the world that can define children's lives and possibilities.

2. I have conducted some ten years of in-site fieldwork in warzones, with longer periods in Southern Asia and Southern Africa, and shorter visits in East and Southeast Asia and the Balkans.

3. I use both the terms girls and children throughout this text, and while this reflects the fact that girls share certain realities *as* children, and others specifically *as* female youth, it also reflects the sheer paucity of data that in many cases would allow me to distinguish when it is important to speak of girls as distinct from children. Casualty statistics, if they indicate actual numbers of children at all, generally do not give breakdowns of on the basis of gender, age, class, etc. These observations alone are a powerful study in what we can and can not, quite literally, know about our world.

4. Quoted in: Tim O'Brien, *In the Lake of the Woods*, London: Flamingo, 1995:138.

5. Incest is found worldwide, though the cultural underpinnings vary from locale to locale. In Mozambique, some men believe that if they want to do better in business or politics, have more power, or surmount some misfortune and thus gain advantage over others, having sex with a girl in their family can in certain conditions constitute part of a formulae towards achieving their aims. Yet the very act of such *feiticeiria* [metaphysical medicine/magic to gain one' ends], is culturally critiqued: In popular conception, people who employed *feiticeiria* in the pursuit of power over kin and colleagues stood outside the bounds of truly moral, and trustworthy, society.

6. I am grateful to Gavin Mount at Australian National University for his conversations with me on this topic.

7. This figure moves up to 50% Thailand; 50% Papua New Guinea and the Republic of Korea; and to 80% Pakistan and Chile. In the USA domestic violence is the biggest single cause of injury to women.

8. The girl in Mozambique who is kidnapped and sold into domestic and sexual labor during the war to Apartheid South Africa and the girl forced into indentured prostitution or factory work half a world away would in all likelihood feel a great deal of kinship; they would certainly find the systems that allowed and perpetuated these injustices, and the abuses they were subjected to, similar. And both would know that these systems exist in part because of the complicity of some state officials. As Human Rights watch takes care to point out: from border guards to the police that patronize brothels, from government officials who condone these practices to judicial systems that prosecute the victims of sexual slavery and not the traffickers or patrons (underage sex is a crime) - official and government systems are strongly implicated in the functioning of systems that profit on children. The "buyers" of "child merchandise" are as international as the profiteers who provide them and the people who transport them. "A review of the 160 foreigners arrested in Asia for sexual abuse of children between 1992 and 1994 showed the accused to be 25% American, 18% German, 14% Australian, 12% British, and 6% French."

9. Kirin and Povizanovic 1996; Rupesinghe and Rubio 1994; Nordstrom and Robben 1995; Warren 1993; Nordstrom and Martin 1992.

10. I do not intend this statement as a sweeping generalization: there are people who do fight for their survival and that of their nation, and a number of them embrace what has been called "just war" tactics. I would expect such people are as equally outraged that power and the search for gain has so frequently degenerated to exploitation of inequalities.

11. For example, who exactly profits from the physical and sexual exploitation of children, what industries do they control, what assistance (from both state and nonstate actors) do they have? What exactly are the distribution routes or the supplies and personnel that keep these industries thriving (both legal and illegal)? Who exactly are the consumers, what networks bring consumer and profiteer together, and how do the former justify their actions (ethical and unethical)? How have we as a society been taught not to ask; not to see these questions?

REFERENCES

Abitbol, E. and Louise, C. n.d. *Up in Arms: The Role of Young People in Conflict and Peacemaking*. London: International Alert.

Allison, D. 1992. *Bastard Out of Carolina*. New York: Plume.

Allison, D. 1994. *Skin: talking about sex, class and literature*. Ithaca: Firebrand Books.

Ashworth, G. 1986. *Of Violence and Violation: Women and Human Rights*. London: Change.

Asia Watch and The Women's Rights Project. 1993 December. *A Modern Form of Slavery: Trafficking of Burmese Women and Girls into Brothels in Thailand*. New York: Human Rights Watch.

Burton, J.W. 1988. "Conflict Resolution as a Function of Human Needs", in Coare, R. and Rosati, J. (eds.) *The Power of Human Needs in World Society*. Lynn Reinner.

Cairns, E. 1995. *Children and Political Violence*. London: Basil Blackwell.

Cairns, E. 1987. *Caught in the Crossfire: Children in Northern Ireland*. Belfast: Appletree Press; and Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Clements, K. 1992. "Introduction", in K. Clements (ed.) *Peace and Security in the Asia Pacific Region,* Palmerston North: Dumore and Tokyo: United Nations University.

Community Aid Abroad, Australia and OXFAM, UK and Ireland. 1994 February, "UN Interventions in Conflict Situations".

Connell, R.W. 1971. *The Child's Construction of Politics*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

Das, V. 1991. "Our Work to Cry: Your Work to Listen", in V. Das (ed.) *Mirrors of Violence: Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Enloe, C. 1993. *The Morning After*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Enloe, C. 1989. *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*. London: Pandora.

Fetherston, A.B. 1995 Spring. "UN Peacekeepers and Cultures of Violence", *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 19-23.

Fetherston, A.B. and Nordstrom, C. 1995 January. "Overcoming Habitus in Conflict Management: UN Peacekeeping and War Zone Ethnography", *Peace and Change* 20 (1): 94-119.

Filipovi , Zlata. 1994. *Zlata's Diary*. New York: Viking Press.

French, M. 1992. *The War Against Women*. London: Hamish Hamilton; New York: Summit Books.

Gettleman, J. 1995 Spring. "Women, War, and Development", *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 19 (1):39-42.

Graburn, N. 1987. "Severe Child Abuse Among the Canadian Inuit", in N. Scheper-Hughes (ed.) *Child Survival*, Dordrecht: D. Reidel.

Hammer, R. 1971. *The Court-Martial of Lt. Calley*. New York: Coward, McCaan and Geoghegan. 161-162.

International Organization for Migration. 1995. "Trafficking and Prostitution: The Growing Exploitation of Migrant Women from Central and Eastern Europe", Geneva: International Organization for Migration.

Kirin R.J. and M. Povrzanovic (eds.). 1996. *War, Exile, Everyday Life*. Zagreb: Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research.

Lang, H. 1995 Spring. "Women as Refugees: Perspectives from Burma", Cultural Survival Quarterly 19 (1): 54-58.

Machel, G. 2001. *The Ipact of War on Children*. New York: PalgarveMacmillan.

Magaia, L. 1988. *Dumba Nengue: Run For Your Life. Peasant Tales of Tragedy in Mozambique*. Trenton: Africa World Press, Inc.

Mankekar, P. 1995 June 25. "To Whom Does Ameena Belong?: Towards a Feminist Analysis of Childhood and Nationhood in Postcolonial India". Paper presented at Stanford University.

Millett, K. 1994. *The Politics of Cruelty*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Njabulo, Ndebele. 1995 "Recovering Childhood: Children in South African National Reconstruction", in Stephens (ed.) *Children and the Politics of Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Nordstrom, C. 2000 August. "Shadow Sovereigns", *Theory, Culture & Society* 17 (4): 35-54.

Nordstrom, C. 1997a. *A Different Kind of War Story*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Nordstrom, C. 1997b. *Girls and Warzones: Troubling Questions*. Uppsala, Sweden: Life and Peace Institute.

Nordstrom, C. 1996 May. "Rape: Politics and Theory in War and Peace", *Australian Feminist Studies* 11 (23): 147-162.

Nordstrom, C. and A. Robben (eds) 1995. *Fieldwork Under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival*. University of California Press, Berkeley.

Nordstrom, C. and J Martin (eds.) 1992. *The Paths to Domination, Resistance, and Terror*, pp.260-274. University of California Press, Berkeley.

O'Brien, T. 1995. *In the Lake of the Woods*. London: Flamingo.

Phillips, B. 1994 April June. "Mozambique: Teenage Sex for Sale", *BBC Focus on Africa* 15 (2).

Poston, M.M. 1994 August. "Guns and Girls: UN Peacekeeping and Sexual Abuse in the Context of Gender and International Relation". MA Dissertation: School of Development Studies, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK.

Ressler, E., Boothby, N., and Steinbock, D. 1988. *Unaccompanied Children: Care and Protection in Wars, Natural Disasters, and Refugee Movements*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rupesinghe, K. and M. Rubio (eds.). 1994. *The Culture of Violence*, Tokyo: United National University Press.

Save the Children. 1999. *Children's Rights: Reality or Rhetoric?* London: International Save the Children Alliance.

Stephens, S. 1995. "Children and the Politics of Culture", in Stephens (ed.) *Children and the Politics of Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Suarez-Orozco, M. 1987. "The Treatment of Children in the 'Dirty War': Ideology, State Terrorism, and the Abuse of Children in Argentina", in N. Scheper-Hughes (ed.) *Child Survival*. Boston: D. Reidel.

Swift, R. 1995 July. "Bruce Harris interviewed by Richard Swift", *New Internationalist*, p. 31.

Turpin, J. and L. Kurtz. 1997 *The Web of Violence*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

United Nations. 2000. *The World's Women 2000: Trends and Statistics*. New York: United Nations Publications.

United Nations. 1990. "The Rights of the Child", *Fact Sheet* No. 10. Geneva: UN.

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. 1995 April 17-19. "Statement of the First Regional Consultation on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children", Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

UNICEF. 2003. *The State of the World's Children 2003*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

UNICEF. 2002. *Adult Wars, Child Soldiers*. Geneva: UNICEF.

UNICEF. 1996. *The State of the World's Children 1996*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

UNICEF. 1995a. *The State of the World's Children 1995*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

UNICEF. 1995b. *Annual Report*. Geneva: UNICEF.

UNICEF. 1995c. *The Progress of Nations 1995*. New York: UNICEF.

Warren, K. (ed.). 1993. *The Violence Within: Cultural and Political Opposition in Divided Nations*, Boulder: Westview Press.