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978-1-107-50281-9 - Research Methods in Conflict Settings: A View from Below

Edited by Dyan Mazurana, Karen Jacobsen and Lacey Andrews Gale

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RESEARCH METHODS IN CONFLICT SETTINGS

Increasing numbers of researchers are now working in regions experiencing high levels of conflict or crisis, or among populations that have fled violent conflict to become refugees or internally displaced persons. Understanding of these conflicts and their aftermath should be shaped not only by the victors and their elite companions but also by the local people whose daily lives become intertwined with the conflict – and it is this “view from below” that this volume’s authors seek to share. Yet conducting rigorous research in these kinds of field contexts presents a range of ethical, methodological, logistical, and security challenges not usually confronted in nonconflict field contexts. This volume compiles a rich variety of lessons learned by experienced field researchers, many of whom have faced demanding situations characterized by violence, profound and well-grounded distrust, and social fragmentation. The authors offer options, ideas, and techniques for studying the situations of people affected by conflict and, by focusing on ethical and security issues, seek ways to safeguard the interests and integrity of the research “subjects” and of the researchers and their teams.

Dyan Mazurana is Associate Research Professor at The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, and Research Director of Gender, Youth, and Community at the Feinstein International Center, Tufts University. Mazurana’s areas of specialty include women’s and children’s rights during and after armed conflict, armed opposition groups, serious crimes and violations committed during armed conflict, and remedy and reparation. Her most recent books include *After the Taliban: Life and Security in Rural Afghanistan* (2008 with Nojumi and Stites) and *Gender, Conflict, and Peacekeeping* (2005 with Raven-Roberts and Parpart). She has published more than seventy scholarly and policy books, articles, and international reports in numerous languages.

Karen Jacobsen is Associate Research Professor at The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, and Research Director of the Refugees and Forced Migration Program at the Feinstein International Center, Tufts University. Jacobsen’s current research focuses on urban refugees and internally displaced persons in countries of first asylum, and on livelihood interventions in conflict-affected areas. She works closely with UNHCR and other refugee aid agencies. Her book, *The Economic Life of Refugees*, was published in 2005, and she is finishing a book on refugee camps. She has published a range of scholarly and policy articles and reports on displacement, livelihoods, and research methods.

Lacey Andrews Gale is Visiting Fellow at the Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, and Research Associate in the Africana Studies Program at Bowdoin College. Her current research and consulting work focus on community leadership, mental health and resilience, intergenerational relationships, and storytelling among refugee diasporas in the United States. Gale has worked with refugee populations in West Africa and the United States since 1998. She has published scholarly and policy articles on issues of gender and family, child fostering, youth leadership, durable solutions, host-refugee relationships, and transnational connections and remittance sending among refugee diasporas.

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Research Methods in Conflict Settings

A VIEW FROM BELOW

Edited by

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Valerie Amos is the current Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator (USG/ERC) for the United Nations. In this role Ms. Amos is responsible for the oversight of all emergencies requiring United Nations humanitarian assistance. She also acts as the central focal point for governmental, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental relief activities. Ms. Amos has a long-standing commitment to development, particularly on the African continent. As a Minister in the British Government, she worked with colleagues globally to tackle poverty in Africa by increasing aid flows through debt relief initiatives and promoting private-sector investment on the continent. She has been active for more than thirty years in the promotion of human rights, social justice, and equality on the African continent. Ms Amos was the first black woman appointed to a British Cabinet and the first black Leader of the House of Lords. In the United Kingdom, she has played a central role in the Government's broader diversity and community-cohesion agenda. She is currently Chair of the Royal African Society, a member of the Fulbright Commission, and a Fellow at the Centre for Corporate Reputation, University of Oxford.

Mònica Bernabé is a Spanish freelance journalist working in Afghanistan for the newspaper *El Mundo*. She first traveled to Afghanistan in 2000, during Taliban rule, and established the Association for Human Rights in Afghanistan (ASDHA), which assists Afghan women and victims of the war. As President of ASDHA, Bernabé works with women's rights activists in Afghanistan. She has lived in Afghanistan since 2006 and is the only reporter from Spain permanently established in that country. In 2010 she was awarded the Julio Anguita Parrado Prize for international journalism. Bernabé's most recent publication is a book entitled *Afganistán, crónica de una ficción* (*Afghanistan, chronicle of a fiction*) (Debate, 2012).

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Molly Bingham has worked since 1994 as a freelance photojournalist covering international stories, and she recently launched a new project addressing journalism's future called Transforming the Media (<http://www.transformingthemedias.com>). She has worked widely in Africa and the Middle East, including Rwanda, Burundi, DR Congo, Gaza, Iran, and Afghanistan and Iraq. During the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 Bingham was arrested by Saddam Hussein's security services along with three other journalists and held in solitary confinement in Abu Ghraib. She and her colleagues were released unharmed to Amman, Jordan, after eight days. In addition to her journalistic projects Bingham worked in a documentary capacity as the Official White House Photographer to the Vice President from 1998 to 2001. She has also reported several special projects for Human Rights Watch. Since 2003 Bingham has expanded her journalistic work to include written stories and film. With her colleague Steve Connors she coreported, directed, and produced a documentary film called *Meeting Resistance* (<http://www.meetingresistance.com>) about the Iraqi resistance, which was released in theaters in 2007. Bingham's written work has been published in *Vanity Fair*, *Nieman Reports*, and others as well as op-eds in the *New York Times* and the *Boston Globe*. She is a graduate of Harvard College and was a Nieman Fellow.

Cathrine Brun, Ph.D., is Associate Professor in Development Geography at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. Her teaching and research are in the areas of gender, humanitarianism, and displacement due to conflict and disaster. Her main geographical area of study is Sri Lanka, where she collaborates with universities, aid agencies, and citizen groups. She has published widely; some recent publications include "Birds of freedom: Young people, LTTE and representations of gender, nationalism and governance in northern Sri Lanka" (*Critical Asian Studies*, 2008); *Spatialising politics: Culture and geography in postcolonial Sri Lanka* (with T. Jazeel, Sage, 2009), and "A geographer's imperative: Research and action in the aftermath of a disaster" (*Geographical Journal*, 2009).

Steve Connors has worked since 1984 as a freelance photojournalist. He began taking photographs while serving as a British soldier in Northern Ireland in the early 1980s. After leaving the military in 1984 he worked for London newspapers and housing charities and then spent the early 1990s covering the wars following the breakup of Yugoslavia and later spending time in Russia. Connors has worked for most of the world newspapers and magazines including *Time*, *Newsweek*, and the *New York Times* in the United States; the *Guardian*, the *Observer*, and the *Telegraph* in London; and in Europe he has

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worked for *Der Spiegel*, *Stern*, and *Paris Match* among others. Connors worked in Afghanistan for fifteen months starting in November 2001 and then went to Iraq during the 2003 invasion. Of the fourteen months Connors worked in Iraq (April 2003–June 2004), ten months were devoted to filming the documentary *Meeting Resistance*, which he coreported, directed, and produced with fellow photojournalist Molly Bingham. The film, an intimate exploration of the motivations and methodology of Iraqi antioccupation fighters, was Connors's directorial debut. *Meeting Resistance* was released in theaters across the United States in 2007. Since finishing touring with the documentary, Connors is focusing his attention on the field of conflict prevention and resolution.

Paul Fishstein, M.S., is currently a Research Fellow at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He is conducting research on the relationship between aid and security in Afghanistan for the Feinstein International Center at Tufts University, and on the role of economic policy in building state legitimacy. In 2004, Fishstein joined the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), a Kabul-based policy research institution, as Deputy Director, then served as Director from 2005 to 2008. From 2002 to 2004, he worked in Kabul and at provincial levels on USAID-funded initiatives to strengthen the management of health care delivery. He first worked in Afghanistan during 1977–1979 as a teacher trainer in Kabul and northern Afghanistan and from 1989 to 1993 managed refugee assistance and “cross-border” reconstruction activities in Quetta and Islamabad, Pakistan. Fishstein has also worked as a Researcher at the World Bank, focusing on agricultural policies and food security in India and Africa, and he has provided assistance on financial analysis, organizational development, and sustainability planning to health organizations in developing countries.

Lacey Andrews Gale, Ph.D. (coeditor), is Visiting Fellow at the Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, and Research Associate in the Africana Studies Program at Bowdoin College. Her current research and consulting work focuses on community leadership, mental health and resilience, intergenerational relationships, and storytelling among refugee diasporas in the United States. Gale has worked with refugee populations in West Africa and the United States since 1998. She has conducted research and published scholarly and policy articles on issues of gender and family, child fostering, youth leadership, durable solutions, host/refugee relationships, and transnational connections and remittance sending among refugee diasporas. Lacey is an editorial consultant for academic centers and development agencies and leads contemplative, nature-based retreats through her organization littleseed (www.littleseedmaine.org). She holds a Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology from Brown University.

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Mélanie Gauthier began her career as a consultant for digital editing in image and sound with the National Film Board of Canada. Since 1999, Gauthier has been part of numerous teams as a sound recordist and sound designer. She travels around the world creating sound tracks and sound atmosphere for documentary films. Gauthier has compiled a sound library of thousands of hours that she uses to create sound tracks for a variety of projects. Gauthier won Best Sound in Documentaries at the 2008 Géméaux Awards, which honors French-language achievement in Canadian television, for her work on the film *The Other Side of the Country* (Catherine Hébert, 2007).

Sébastien Gros was originally trained in the fine arts and photography. For the last fifteen years, he has been working in film. The majority of the films he has worked on are fiction, including both feature-length films and television series. Over the last several years, Gros has become increasingly interested in camera work for documentaries. Unlike films of fiction or television, where the focus of camera work is lighting and technical aspects, in documentary filming, the focus is on how the camera person interacts with and approaches people. Gros has a natural ability to put his characters at ease, and the results are an intimate look into people's daily lives and emotions through his camera.

Catherine Hébert is Director and Producer of Mango Films Independent Film Production (www.mangofilms.ca). She holds a degree in international journalism from Université Laval and the École supérieure de journalisme in Lille, France. Her deep interest in human rights, history, and politics is the cornerstone of her work. In 2002, she began directing news reports for *Points Chauds*, an international news program broadcast on Télé-Québec. Her first documentary, *Tea at the Embassy*, describes the struggle of an eighty-year-old activist and former prisoner of war from the Japanese concentration camps. In 2004, she filmed *Mangos for Charlotte*, a news report on the conflict in northern Uganda. Her news report, *The Face I Once Had*, called attention to acid attacks on women in Bangladesh and won Best News Report at the 2006 Géméaux Award, honoring French-language achievement in Canadian television. In 2006, she filmed the award-winning feature documentary *The Other Side of the Country*, released in theaters in 2007. The film is an immersion into a Uganda ravaged by twenty years of war. Hébert's recent film, *Notes on a Road Less Taken*, is her most personal film to date, told in the form of a quest for stories during her walk from the Strait of Gibraltar to Bamako, Mali. *Notes on a Road Less Taken* ran in theaters for many weeks and won the Grand Prize for Best Canadian Feature at Rencontres internationales du documentaire de Montréal in 2011.

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Tania Kaiser, Ph.D., is a Senior Lecturer in Refugee Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. She specializes in East Africa, particularly Uganda and Sudan, West Africa, and Sri Lanka. She has conducted research and written on issues of conflict, gender, and development; humanitarian protection and assistance; and social research methods. She has degrees in Literature and Anthropology from the Universities of Bristol and Oxford.

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Kate Lapidès is a freelance photographer and writer based in Colorado. She has photographed and produced stories on humanitarian issues for non-profits working in Africa, Asia, Central and Latin America, and the rural United States. Clients include Save the Children, the International Rescue Committee, Resurge International, United Somali Women of Maine, The Family Intercultural Resource Center, and Ronald McDonald House Charities. Lapidès is the recipient of two Individual Artist grants from the Colorado Council on the Arts for her work creating community photography projects for immigrant and Native American communities and underserved youth in Colorado. She was a National Press Photographers Association Women in Photojournalism National Juried Show finalist and has been a visiting instructor for Anderson Ranch Arts Center's summer workshop programs for children since 2010. Her editorial documentary work has been exhibited at Telluride Mountainfilm, the New Orleans Photography Alliance, the Rhode Island Humanitarian Film Festival, and, most recently, the Red Brick Center for the Arts in Aspen, Colorado. Her writing has been published in *Mountain Gazette*, *Women's Adventure*, *Trailrunner*, and the former *Silverton Mountain Journal*. She is a regular contributing writer and photographer for *Breckenridge* magazine and works as the Marketing Editor at Colorado Mountain College.

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Dyan Mazurana, Ph.D. (coeditor), is Associate Professor and Research Director of Gender, Youth, and Community at the Feinstein International Center, Tufts University. She teaches graduate courses on armed conflict at The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University. Mazurana's areas of specialty

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include women's human rights, war-affected children and youth, armed conflict, and peacekeeping. Her books include *After the Taliban: Life and Security in Rural Afghanistan* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008) with Neamatollah Nojumi and Elizabeth Stites; *Gender, Conflict, and Peacekeeping* (Rowman & Littlefield 2005) with Angela Raven-Roberts and Jane Parpart; *Where Are the Girls? Girls in Fighting Forces in Northern Uganda, Sierra Leone, and Mozambique* (Rights & Democracy, 2004) with Susan McKay; and *Women, Peace and Security: Study of the United Nations Secretary-General as Pursuant Security Council Resolution 1325* (United Nations, 2002) with Sandra Whitworth. She has published more than seventy scholarly and policy books, articles, and international reports in numerous languages. Mazurana works with a variety of governments, UN agencies, and human rights and child protection organizations regarding improving efforts to assist youth and women affected by armed conflict, including those associated with fighting forces. Her current research focuses on efforts of communities to heal (physically, mentally, spiritually), rebuild individual and societal relations, and restore moral boundaries in the midst or aftermath of extreme violence. She has worked in Afghanistan, the Balkans, and Nepal, as well as southern, West, and East Africa. Her current research focuses on accountability, remedy, and reparation in Uganda.

Isis Nusair, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Women's Studies and International Studies at Denison University. She teaches courses on transnational feminism; feminism in the Middle East and North Africa; and gender, war, and conflict. Her current research focuses on the impact of war and displacement on Iraqi women refugees in Jordan. Nusair previously served as a researcher on women's human rights in the Middle East and North Africa at Human Rights Watch and at the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network. She is the coeditor with Rhoda Kanaaneh of *Displaced at Home: Ethnicity and Gender among Palestinians in Israel* (SUNY Press, 2011).

Michael Wessells, Ph.D., is Professor at Columbia University in the Program on Forced Migration and Health. A longtime psychosocial and child protection practitioner, he is former Co-Chair of the United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Force on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings. Recently, he was co-focal point on mental health and psychosocial support for the revision of the Sphere humanitarian standards. He has conducted extensive research on the holistic impacts of war and political violence on children, and he is author of *Child Soldiers: From Violence to Protection* (Harvard University Press, 2006). Currently, he is lead

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researcher on interagency, multicountry action research on strengthening community-based child protection mechanisms by enabling effective linkages with national child protection systems. He regularly advises UN agencies, governments, and donors on issues of child protection and psychosocial support, including in communities and schools. Throughout Africa and Asia he helps to develop community-based, culturally grounded programs that assist people affected by armed conflict and natural disasters.

Andrew Wilder, Ph.D., is the Director of Afghanistan and Pakistan Programs for the United States Institute for Peace. Prior to joining the Institute, Wilder served as Research Director for Politics and Policy at the Feinstein International Center at Tufts University. From 2002 to 2005, he served as founder and Director of Afghanistan's first independent policy research institution, the Kabul-based Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU). This was preceded by more than ten years managing humanitarian and development programs in Pakistan and Afghanistan, including serving as the Director of the Pakistan/Afghanistan program of Save the Children, as well as holding positions with the International Rescue Committee and Mercy Corps International. Wilder is the author of *The Pakistani Voter: Electoral Politics and Voting Behaviour in the Punjab* (Oxford University Press, 1999) and has written numerous book chapters, journal articles, and other publications. His recent research explores issues relating to state building, reconstruction, and stabilization efforts in Afghanistan, specifically examining the effectiveness of aid in promoting stabilization objectives. Wilder has also conducted extensive research on subnational governance, elections, and police reform efforts in Afghanistan, and on electoral politics and the politics of civil service reform in Pakistan.

Elisabeth Jean Wood, Ph.D., is Professor of Political Science at Yale University. Her current research focuses on sexual violence during war. She is the author of *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador* (Cambridge University Press, 2003) and *Forging Democracy from Below: Insurgent Transitions in South Africa and El Salvador* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), as well as various scholarly articles. She previously taught at New York University (1995–2004) and has been a visiting scholar at the University of Cape Town and the Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas (San Salvador) and a scholar at the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies (1995–97). She is also a Professor at the Santa Fe Institute and serves on the editorial boards of *Politics and Society*, the Contentious Politics series of Cambridge University Press, and the *American Political Review*.

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Foreword

The incidence of conflict in the world and the proportion of the world's people suffering from its consequences has steadily decreased over the past hundred years. Many of us have far less of a chance of dying a violent death than our grandfathers or grandmothers did. Most conflicts today are characterized by regions or nations turning in on themselves with devastating consequences for ordinary people. The distinction between combatant and noncombatant, so central to the Geneva Conventions and the protection of civilians, is all too often disregarded. In many conflicts the destruction of a people, and the direct targeting of women, children, the elderly and their way of life, are seen as a goal, or a justifiable means to an end. We label such inhumanity war crimes, crimes against humanity, or acts of genocide. Such acts are brutal in their execution and leave behind deep psychological and physical injuries that linger long after the fighting has ended. The effects of today's armed conflicts extend over time and space far beyond the defined battlefield and often shape the lives of generations to come.

The humanitarian agencies of the United Nations, Red Cross, and Red Crescent Societies and humanitarian NGOs (international and local) seek to help people affected by conflict, by keeping alive the notion of a shared humanity and the importance of the innate dignity of each person. It is not about charity. It is fundamentally about values, and a belief about "people helping people." To do our job well, we need a profound understanding of the politics and power dynamics of those waging war. When active armed violence ends and rebuilding begins, sustainable recovery depends on development structures that are responsive to available resources as well as the capacity and aspirations of the particular conflict-affected community. Context is everything. Without an understanding of context, humanitarian aid can be ineffective and postconflict reconstruction fails to materialize, leaving people vulnerable.

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Exploring, describing, verifying, and understanding the situation in which people find themselves require knowledgeable, courageous, and highly skilled researchers, journalists, and filmmakers. These researchers, journalists, and filmmakers show the harsh reality of conflict to the outside world. They help amplify the voices of those in harm's way. People working in conflict-related settings confront a range of ethical, methodological, logistical, and security challenges not usually confronted in nonconflict field situations. If such researchers, journalists, and filmmakers are to be credible, and are to build a coherent body of knowledge that shapes our understanding of what really is going on in conflict and its aftermath, they have to learn, develop, refine, and practice critical skills that allow objective and rigorous work to be carried out in conflict zones and among deeply distrustful and distressed communities.

Research Methods in Conflict Settings: A View from Below is a compilation of rich insights and lessons learned by experienced field researchers, journalists, and filmmakers, all of whom have worked in demanding situations. The authors offer options, ideas, and techniques for studying the situations of people affected by conflict and, by focusing on ethical and security issues, raise key questions and seek ways to safeguard the interests and integrity of those being researched and of themselves and their teams.

The authors of this book all write from many years of experience working in conflict settings. They draw lessons from their work in conflict-affected countries around the world including Afghanistan, Burundi, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, and Uganda, among others. They demonstrate that it is both possible and necessary to conduct sound and rigorous research and documentation in the challenging contexts of conflict zones. All of them have worked under harsh and challenging conditions and continue their efforts to expand our collective knowledge and improve our collective ability to understand better the realities on the ground and give relief and the hope of a better future to conflict-affected communities.

Their insights will benefit students, professional researchers, advocacy or action researchers, and journalists seeking to work with people affected by conflict, as well as governments and humanitarian and development policy makers. Governments and humanitarian organizations that commission research to inform their policies and programs can better understand how to conduct and evaluate research projects.

The United Nations Charter speaks of us as "One people." One humanity. Peace, prosperity, freedom from fear, and human dignity are inalienable rights

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of us all. The contributors to this volume through their attitudes, approaches, and insights help us to understand how we can make progress in turning those values and principles into reality.

Valerie Amos
Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs
and Emergency Relief Coordinator
New York, March 2013

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