

Preface

The effects of warfare on women and children came to us while working on a new course together that we crafted called *Global Health in Times of Violence*. In teaching the course, we drew upon publications by anthropologists working in war torn areas such as Paul Farmer, Philippe Bourgois, Nancy Scheper-Hughes, Javier Auyero, Merrill Singer and Patrick Clarkin, to name just a few. These medical and social anthropologists provided broad introductions to the notion that while pundits and politicians focus on the number of war dead by counting the soldiers and combatants, there is little focus on women, children and other noncombatants who also die or become injured during times of war. This prompted us to look into the bioarchaeological literature for case studies in ancient and historic times where, in addition to discussing warriors and fighters, there were data from the burials of women and children. We could not find many and this led us to ask scholars with bioarchaeological data if they had information that could shed light on the effects of warfare on women and children. This volume of case studies from the Americas addresses this gap in the literature by framing studies in such a way as to highlight what we can know not only about warriors and warfare but also about other members of the community during war.

Bioarchaeology provides a more nuanced lens through which to examine the effects of warfare on life, morbidity, and mortality, bringing individuals not traditionally considered by studies of warfare and prolonged violence into focus. Inclusion of these groups in discussions of warfare can increase our understanding of not only the biological but also the social meaning and costs of warfare. The case studies here demonstrate that during periods of violence and warfare, many suffer beyond those individuals directly involved in battle. From pre-Hispanic Peru to the Greater Southwest to the Civil War-era United States to the present, warfare has been and is a public health disaster, particularly for women and children. Individuals and populations suffer from displacement, sometimes permanently, due to loss of food and resources and an increased risk of contracting communicable diseases, which results from the poor conditions and tight spaces present in most refugee camps, ancient and modern. These issues not only affect the immediate health of women and children; they can impact the growth and development of the current

generation of children, as well as that of future generations, their effects resonating for years. In addition, though rarely considered in studies of violence and warfare, male combatants wounded in the course of battle create new needs within their communities, which can affect overall morbidity and mortality.

This themed set of case studies highlights the value that studying the effects of warfare in many different times in places has. By investigating these different examples, it may be possible to find commonalities that can help us protect vulnerable groups, or raise awareness of the effects of warfare on noncombatants, or identify factors associated with resilience in the face of warfare. Given the state of the world today, these themes speak to everyday headlines in the newspapers and have potential to be of broad interest to both anthropologists and non-specialists.

Las Vegas, NV, USA

Debra L. Martin

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Martin, D.L.; Tegtmeyer, C. (Eds.)

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