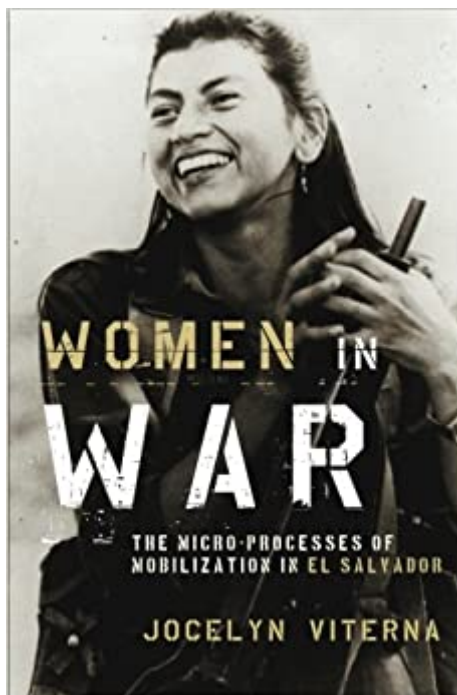




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# Women In War: The Micro-processes Of Mobilization In El Salvador (Oxford Studies In Culture And Politics)



## Synopsis

Waging war has historically been an almost exclusively male endeavor, yet over the past several decades women have joined insurgent armies in significant and surprising numbers. Why do women become guerrilla insurgents? What experiences do they have in guerrilla armies? And what are the long-term repercussions of this participation for the women themselves and the societies in which they live? *Women in War* answers these questions while providing a rare look at guerrilla life from the viewpoint of rank-and-file participants. Using data from 230 in-depth interviews with men and women guerrillas, guerrilla supporters, and non-participants in rural El Salvador, *Women in War* investigates why some women were able to channel their wartime actions into post-war gains, and how those patterns differ from the benefits that accrued to men. By accounting for these variations, *Women in War* helps resolve current, polarized debates about the effects of war on women, and by extension, develops our nascent understanding of the effects of women combatants on warfare, political violence, and gender systems. In the process, *Women in War* also develops a new model for investigating micro-level mobilization processes that has applications to many movement settings. Micro-level mobilization processes are often ignored in the social movement literature in favor of more macro- and meso-level analyses. Yet individuals who share the same macro-level context, and who are embedded in the same meso-level networks, often have strikingly different mobilization experiences. Only a portion are ever moved to activism, and those who do mobilize vary according to which paths they follow to mobilization, what skills and social ties they forge through participation, and whether they continue their political activism after the movement ends. By examining these individual-level variations, a micro-level theory of mobilization can extend the findings of macro- and meso-level analyses, and improve our understanding of how social movements begin, why they endure, and whether they change the societies they target.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Jocelyn Viterna develops an 'identity-based' theory of political mobilization to explain why and how some women, but not others, joined the clandestine camps of El Salvador's armed revolutionary movement during the 1980s. Her account wisely encompasses broad political and economic factors while emphasizing the importance of activist strategies and the collective identities of the women targeted for recruitment. All future research on social movements, political violence, and gender will have to grapple with Viterna's provocative theory." --Jeff Goodwin, New York University "Women in War is an in-depth look at how women were mobilized, served, and transformed by their roles as combatants and non-combatants by the FMLN - the guerrillas - in the Salvadoran civil war. Having myself served for a year in the midst of that conflict as a physician, the gender dynamics, insights, and experiences that Women in War present are a valuable contribution to understanding the post-conflict reality of these women in today's El Salvador." --Charlie Clements, M.D., M.P.H, author of Witness to War "In this stellar book, Jocelyn Viterna brings much needed sophistication to the literature on women and war. She shows that the tired debate on political participation in war as empowerment or victimization should be superseded by analysis of the specific conditions under which women exert agency and those under which they are victimized. This book should be read not only by scholars of civil war and insurgency, but also by policy-makers working toward post-conflict reconciliation and development." --Elisabeth Jean Wood, Yale University "Viterna develops a sophisticated, micro-level, political mobilization theory to explain individual variations in social movement participation. This is an important contribution to the study of gender, violence, and political mobilization. Highly recommended." --CHOICE "Women in War provides an innovative theory of micromobilization that will serve collective action scholars and students for decades to come. Viterna's participation identity theory complements the microstructural revolution of movement recruitment and participation that scholars such as David Snow, Doug McAdam, Bert Klandermans, Roger Gould and important others pioneered in the 1980s and 1990s. By emphasizing the process of activist role taking, her conceptual scheme convincingly moves beyond social networks alone as the principal causal force driving political participation. ...a 'must read.'" --Mobilization "Women in War [is] a very historically, methodologically, theoretically, and empirically

compelling read. It is a stellar piece of sociology and necessary reading for gender, social movements, revolution, and violence scholars as well as students seeking models for their own research designs." --American Journal of Sociology

Jocelyn Viterna is Associate Professor of Sociology at Harvard University.

Very well researched and theorized. Having worked for the UN Truth Commission, I'm not sure I agree with all the findings regarding women's agency in the FMLN, but her book does capture the revolutionary nature of this group and why it was so successful. I've referred it to others doing work on El Salvador. I know this book will offer a valuable perspective.

really interesting.

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