

WHO REBELS? THE DETERMINANTS OF PARTICIPATION IN CIVIL WAR

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Abstract

A range of apparently rival theories attempt to explain why individuals choose to participate in rebellion. To date, however, competing accounts have typically not been grounded in systematic, empirical studies of the determinants of participation. In this paper, we aim to fill this gap by examining the determinants of recruitment and abduction in the Sierra Leone civil war. We find some support for all of the competing theories, suggesting that the rivalry between them is artificial. Objective indicators of grievances and frustrations tend to matter. Poorer individuals with less education are significantly more likely to join fighting groups and political alienation is a strong predictor of participation. Theories that begin with the logic of collective action are supported as well. Selective incentives, including offers of material rewards and protection, and social sanctions, proxied by an individual's social ties and a community's norms of reciprocity, also help to distinguish joiners from those who remain on the sidelines. Yet while a rivalry is artificial as an overall framing for the debates around participation, our analysis suggests that the process of recruitment works differently for different groups. For the Civil Defense Forces (CDF), voluntary recruitment was motivated by a combination of grievances and social pressure. For the RUF, voluntary recruitment was rare and strategies of abduction were consistently pursued. The RUF found volunteers among the politically alienated; its abductees, however, were those made vulnerable by personal economic crisis.

¹ This research draws on a large survey led by the authors together with the Post-conflict Reintegration Initiative for Development and Empowerment (PRIDE) in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Financial support was provided by the Earth Institute at Columbia University, and logistical support came from the Demobilization and Reintegration Office of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). We are particularly grateful to Alison Giffen and Richard Haselwood for their extensive work on this project, to Allan Quee, Patrick Amara and Lawrence Sessay, our partners in the field at PRIDE, to Desmond Molloy at UNAMSIL, and to students in our jointly taught graduate seminar on African Civil Wars who through theoretical debates and empirical exercises shaped the analysis offered in this paper.

In spite of a voluminous literature on the topic, political scientists continue to debate the conditions under which men and women take up arms to challenge the state. Many studies begin with an examination of individuals' life opportunities. Experiences of poverty, oppression, and discrimination, it is argued, distinguish those who participate from those who remain on the sidelines. Other scholars focus less on expressive motivations and more on the constraints to collective action. Individuals participate in violence, some propose, not owing to the depth of their discontent, but rather because they have been offered benefits that are contingent on their participation. Still others suggest that participation is motivated by the threat of social sanction: the existence of norms of reciprocity separates revolutionary communities from quiescent ones. Why do some individuals take enormous risks to participate as soldiers in civil war? What differentiates those who are mobilized from others who stay out of the conflict?

Understanding participation in violence is not simply a question of academic concern. Since 1945, civil wars have engulfed 73 countries and caused the deaths of more than 16 million people.² Recent attempts to differentiate countries that experience civil war from those that do not test two competing lines of argument: the first, that civil wars occur in countries characterized by ethnic diversity, discrimination, and inequality, appears to rest on weaker empirical grounds than the second, which indicates that violence takes place in countries where the conditions for insurgency—poverty, weak state capacity, and difficult-to-penetrate terrain—are present.³ Both arguments rest on assumptions about what motivates individual participation. Yet attempts to parse the two explanations employ only cross-country data. Individual-level data allows for a much finer test of these competing perspectives, with insights of relevance for policymakers concerned with preventing the onset of civil conflict.

Claims about the motivations of individual soldiers appear frequently also in debates about the utility of various strategies of conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. If insurgent armies have been forged through the promise of resource rents from the extraction of minerals, peace-making may depend on the ability of external actors to

² James Fearon and David Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97 (2003).

³ See Fearon and Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,"; Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers* 54 (2004).

purchase the support of potential spoilers. If such armies have motivated participation instead by mobilizing popular discontent with government policies, post-conflict arrangements must take more seriously the establishment of institutional arrangements that address discrimination, oppression, and inequality. Data on individual participation in civil war offers insight into the formation and cohesion of armed factions, something that cannot be assessed using country-level data but which is essential for theorists and practitioners of conflict resolution.

We use survey data collected from demobilized ex-combatants in Sierra Leone to advance the study of mobilization for civil war in three ways. First, we revisit the literature and make existing theories operational and testable with micro-level survey data. We distinguish between classic arguments advancing expressive motivations, approaches that highlight the importance of selective incentives as a solution to the free-rider problem, and theories that identify social networks and community ties as critical to mobilization. Few previous studies have explicitly tested these competing hypotheses in the same analysis. Instead, the accumulating literature tends to offer case studies with evidence to support one of the main explanations for civil war mobilization, without systematic efforts to assess the others.

Second, we show how tools of survey research pioneered for the study of participation in advanced industrialized democracies can be employed to analyze political behavior in situations of violent conflict. For obvious reasons related to access, much work on civil war mobilization is ethnographic, involves small samples of interview subjects, and selects explicitly on the dependent variable – interviewing only participants in violence. But to properly assess competing explanations, we need a research design with four main qualities: it must produce data on a random sample of ex-combatants; it must allow for a comparison of the characteristics of participants and non-participants; it should have a sufficiently large number of observations to allow for statistical estimates of significance and; it should include data that allow for the comparison of both objective characteristics and subjective, attitudinal differences across subjects. This paper demonstrates that carefully collected, quantitative data puts scholars in a much better position to assess the relative merits of competing accounts of individual participation in violence.

Finally, we use our empirical analysis to raise questions about critical, yet untested assumptions that shape existing theoretical debates about mobilization. Competing account of why people join are not necessarily rival; indeed, our analysis suggests that different logics

of participation may coexist in a single civil war. Understanding that groups make strategic choices about how to recruit suggests an important, future research agenda: under what conditions do groups employ various recruitment strategies? In addition, the idea that individuals have agency in making choices about participation proves to be empirically suspect. Recognizing the coercive capacity of military factions requires a reframing of the theoretical debate: under what conditions do civilians have agency?

We begin with a brief discussion of the war in Sierra Leone and explain why it is a useful case in which to conduct our analysis. We then turn to previous work on mobilization for civil war and specify testable hypotheses about the conditions under which individuals join armed factions. The section that follows describes our data and research design. We then analyze variation in participation, using data on individual soldiers and civilians to explore the correlates of recruitment into a military faction. We conclude with a discussion of our results and their relevance for theoretical debates about high-risk collective action.

II The War in Sierra Leone

The war in Sierra Leone began on March 23, 1991 with a cross-border invasion by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) from Liberia into the border districts of Kailahun and Pujehun. The group, formed originally by student radicals opposed to the one party regime of the All People's Congress (APC), had received training in Libya and subsequently, material support from the Liberian warlord and later president, Charles Taylor.

The advance of the rebels in the countryside was as much a product of the government's failings as it was of RUF capacity. Atrocities committed by government forces were reportedly widespread. The APC government was deposed by a military coup in 1992, and replaced by the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC). The NPRC sought to achieve an outright victory over the RUF by hiring a South African security firm with close ties to diamond mining interests, Executive Outcomes, to help it prosecute the war in the mid-1990s. Following democratic rallies and a palace coup, the NPRC returned the country to civilian rule with elections in 1996. The new civilian government, in an effort to put an end to the war, coordinated its actions with local civil defense militias, consolidating an offensive paramilitary force, the Civil Defense Force (CDF), to fight what remained of the insurgency in forward bases all over the country.

In 1997, the democratically-elected government of President Kabbah was driven into exile following a military revolt. The coup brought a fourth group into the conflict, the military junta, or, Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), alongside the regular Sierra Leone Army (SLA), the RUF and the CDF. The AFRC forged an unlikely alliance with the RUF, inviting the insurgents to join a power-sharing arrangement. Following a Nigerian-led intervention in 1998, the democratic government was restored and the AFRC/RUF alliance was removed from the capital, Freetown. A fifth faction, containing elements of the AFRC, SLA, and RUF also formed, calling itself the West Side Boys, and operated under a different command structure from either the RUF or the AFRC.

The AFRC/RUF regrouped in the bush, rebuilding its military strength with resources garnered from international businessmen and arms suppliers that were willing to provide resources up-front in exchange for mineral and diamond concessions. The combined forces launched a successful and devastating attack on the capital, Freetown, on January 6, 1999, although they were later repulsed by West African peacekeeping forces. Under tremendous pressure to consolidate control of its territory, Kabbah's government signed a peace agreement with the RUF in Lomé in July 1999 and an interim government was formed with RUF representation.

In early 2000 a United Nations force (UNAMSIL) deployed to take the reigns from the Nigerians, but it was weak and poorly organized. Distrust was high, and the RUF reacted, taking large numbers of UN troops as hostages. The British government intervened with a sizable force, at the same time that Guinean troops pushed back on the RUF forces operating near its border. These interventions substantially weakened the RUF. The government took the opportunity to arrest large numbers of RUF leaders in Freetown, and with a more effective UN force in place, the warring factions were largely broken down and demobilized. President Kabbah, securely back in power, declared the war at an end in February 2002.

A short history of the war suggests that it not unlike many recent conflicts in the developing world. It was a conflict of some duration, characterized by widespread atrocities. Multiple military factions were formed and more than 80,000 individuals (of approximately 4 million) took up arms to challenge the state, protect the government, or defend their communities. But what makes the war in Sierra Leone particularly interesting from the perspective of mobilization is that it gradually became the poster child for theories that

distinguished “new” civil wars driven by greed and economic motivations from “old” conflicts shaped by ideologies and political demands.⁴

Take the coverage of the civil war in the New York Times, for example. Four years into the war, the Times’ Africa correspondent offered a diagnosis of the ills plaguing Sierra Leone:

“Somewhere just beyond the mountainous peninsula that houses this tumbledown capital lies a war zone that is defined not by battles pitting Government forces against armed rebels, but by the stealthy hit-and-run banditry of a new type of African guerrilla warfare. In four years of fighting for control of this mineral-rich, but loosely governed country of four million people, the shadowy rebels of the Revolutionary United Front have abandoned their efforts to hold onto conquered territory and have given up all pretense of a political rationale for their struggle.”⁵

Five years later, the New York Times called for an international effort to end the banditry and atrocities spreading across West Africa. “The notorious Revolutionary United Front has terrorized the West African country,” the editorial argued, “killing and maiming tens of thousands of people and looting the nation’s diamonds.”⁶ And when the war came to an end and a hybrid tribunal was established to prosecute violators of human rights, the RUF was not alone on the trial docket. The newspaper reported that leaders of the Civil Defence Forces were to be tried first for “cannibalism, rape, and the indiscriminate killing of civilians.”⁷ Leaders of each of the fighting forces faced indictments for their participation in Sierra Leone’s violent civil war.

Sierra Leone’s experience of civil war also figured prominently in the analysis of leading academics making the argument that civil wars are fueled by competition for valuable primary commodities, rather than political, ethnic, or religious differences. Indeed, the World Bank, in publicizing studies done by its researchers, offered the following quotation from Paul Collier: “Civil wars are far more likely to be caused by economic opportunities than from grievance, and therefore certain rebel groups benefit from the conflict and have a

⁴ Mats Berdal and David Malone, *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000); Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

⁵ “Bandit Rebels Ravage Sierra Leone,” Howard French, *The New York Times*, February 17, 1995, Section A, Page 10, Column 1.

⁶ “West Africa’s Widening Conflict,” Editorial Desk, *The New York Times*, December 6, 2000, Section A, Page 32, Column 1.

⁷ “Sierra Leone War Crimes Trial Opens Without Chief Suspect,” Somini Sengupta, *The New York Times*, June 4, 2004, Section A, Page 4, Column 3.

very strong interest in sustaining it. Such wars from *Sierra Leone* to Colombia create opportunities for a minority of people at the same time as they destroy them for the majority.”⁸

Some scholars have cautioned against a casual division of wars into criminal insurgencies and those based on political motivations. Stathis Kalyvas suggests that along three dimensions—the motivations of combatants, the level of popular support, and the degree of violence—new civil wars are not all that different from old ones.⁹ In particular, he draws on ethnographic evidence to suggest that the distinction between collective and private motivations doesn’t hold up to empirical scrutiny. This on-going debate suggests that the question of why people participate in violence is as yet unresolved. And given the extensive debates that exist about motivations in the context of Sierra Leone, this is a good case in which to put existing theories to the test. We now turn to classic and more modern accounts of participation, extracting hypotheses that can be tested against new, micro-level data.

III Motivating Participation

At least three major schools of thought aim to explain patterns of participation (and non-participation) in civil war. The first comes largely from scholars of revolution and pinpoints a range of expressive motivations, emphasizing the **grievances** that underlie participation. Olson’s analysis of collective action has given rise to two more approaches. The first emphasizes the importance of **selective incentives**—participation must be beneficial not only to groups but also to individuals. This in turn requires that private benefits be made available in exchange for participation. Critics that claim this reading of Olson is overly narrow or materialist, focus instead on the importance of **social sanctions**.

Some have suggested that these arguments are rival or incompatible. Indeed, critiquing new approaches that seek to synthesize structural and collective action arguments that explain participation, Mark Lichbach advocates “Popperian-type crucial tests among paradigms” in which competing predictions are placed in “creative confrontation” across a broad sample of movements, a carefully chosen set of comparisons, or within a case study of

⁸ “Greed for Diamonds and Other ‘Lootable’ Commodities Fuels Civil Wars,” The World Bank, Press Release No. 2000/419/S, June 15, 2000.

⁹ Stathis Kalyvas, “New and Old Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?” *World Politics* 54 (2001).

a single movement.¹⁰ We take up this challenge here, turning to dominant theories of participation in a search for distinct, testable hypotheses that can be evaluated within a single case.

GRIEVANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Scholars of social revolution argue that the depth of an individual's discontent with his or her economic position in society is a major causal factor that differentiates participants in violence from non-participants. Discontent, when aggregated across individuals in a particular social class or ethnic group, provides the foundation for mobilization and the onset of violence against the state. There are however many variants of this basic argument, each emphasizing different elements of individual motivation.

The first identifies *social class* as the critical variable differentiating those who rebel from those who remain on the sidelines. Karl Marx, for example, proposed that the industrial proletariat would be the main engine of rebellion, owing to individuals' shared experiences of exploitation at the hands of capital.¹¹ However, the locus of participation in actual rebellions—poor, rural people rather than the urban working class—shifted the debate in the literature toward making distinctions among the mass of undifferentiated rural dwellers. Jeffrey Paige, in an analysis of agrarian revolutions, concludes that wage-earning peasants drive rebellion in contexts where landlords dependent on income from the land are less able (or willing) to assent to peasant demands.¹² James Scott's description of rebellion in Southeast Asia focuses on the subsistence crisis among peasants, demonstrating how population growth, capitalism, and the growing fiscal claims of the state pushed rural residents to the edge of survival. Those that faced this subsistence crisis, Scott suggested, became morally outraged and experienced a new willingness to risk their lives in opposition to the state.¹³ Intensive study of the Latin American revolutions suggests access to land, rather than poverty, as the main indicator of one's class position. Timothy Wickham-Crowley argues that peasants physically dislocated from land by elites, or those without access to it in the first place (squatters, sharecroppers, and migrant laborers), are the most

¹⁰ Mark Lichbach, *Annual Review of Political Science* (1998), p. 421.

¹¹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1968 [1848]).

¹² Jeffrey Paige, *Agrarian Revolutions* (New York: Free Press, 1975).

¹³ James Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1976).

prone to revolt.¹⁴ Others have challenged this focus on land, suggesting that income inequality is the prime source of discontent and motivator of participation.¹⁵ Although the literature has not reached consensus on the exact characteristics of the poor, rural resident that elects to rebel, it clarifies the importance of one's position relative to others in society as a key factor shaping the decision to partake in violence.¹⁶

A second approach focuses on ethnic and political grievances rather than class differences as the factor shaping individuals' decisions to join military factions. For some, the logic of ethnic mobilization begins and ends with long-standing cultural practices that distinguish ethnic groups. Differences between these practices, sometimes reflected in a history of animosity between groups, are believed to make conflict more likely.¹⁷ The expectation this argument generates is of ethnically homogenous factions where one's identity is the key determinant of participation. For most, however, the interaction of ethnic difference and the process of modernization create the conditions for political violence. Theorists of ethnic violence identify modernization as the culprit in the politicization of ethnicity.¹⁸ The upward social mobility made possible in an environment of economic change inevitably rewards some groups over others. When dominant groups use the power of the state to prevent the mobility of minority groups, it is argued, ethno-nationalist and separatist sentiments are more likely to be observed. Donald Horowitz, in particular, identifies sizable minority groups in countries with an ethnic majority as the most prone to undertake violence.

A third variant focuses on personal dislocation and the frustrations that arise from an individual's inability to express her concerns through "normal" non-violent channels. Sociologist Emile Durkheim argues that the anomie arising from modernization processes

¹⁴ Timothy Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes Since 1956* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992).

¹⁵ Edward Muller and Mitchell Seligson, "Inequality and Insurgency," *American Political Science Review* 81 (1987).

¹⁶ Although we do not have the data needed to test the argument, a variant on standard class accounts suggests that what matters most is a psychological mechanism—relative deprivation. Rather than assessing one's position as compared to others in society, individuals may judge their situation relative to their own expectations and past experiences. Individual frustration with a gap between expectations and actual achievement, it is hypothesized, may be a sufficient condition for participation. James Davies first identified this mechanism in his study of revolutionary mobilization in the United States, Russia, and Egypt. See James Davies, "Toward a Theory of Revolution," *American Sociological Review* 6 (1962). Ted Robert Gurr offered a more general theory of deprivation, arguing that gaps between expectations and capabilities determined the degree of relative deprivation and therefore the potential for violence. See Ted Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970).

¹⁷ Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

¹⁸ See Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*; Robert Melson and Howard Wolpe, "Modernization and the Politics of Communalism," *American Political Science Review* LXIV (1970).

and social transformations can account for suicidal behavior.¹⁹ Robert Merton emphasizes anomie as a source of deviant behavior as individuals use non-legitimate means to attain goals such as wealth, power, or prestige that are valued in their societies but are unavailable to them through other channels.²⁰ Most recently, describing conflicts in West Africa, Robert Kaplan has emphasized how the weakening of social structures can account for the rise of violence.²¹ Paul Richards, in a cogent critique of Kaplan's thesis, also emphasizes the frustration of individuals, but points to the growing isolation of most citizens from the loci of political decision-making in Africa.²²

Together, these three variants imply that an individual's social position determines his or her propensity to participate in violence. Individuals are more likely to join military factions if:

H₁: They are economically deprived.

H₂: They hail from an ethnic group excluded from political power.

H₃: They feel alienated from mainstream political processes.

These hypotheses are consistent with one set of arguments about the rebellion in Sierra Leone. Although he ascribes the origins of its leadership to student activists in Freetown taken with Libyan revolutionary populism, Richards describes ways in which the RUF exploited experiences of oppression, repression, and discontent among alienated rural youth. He points to political conflict on the border between Sierra Leone and Liberia, where supporters of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) found their political aspirations impeded by the dominance and corruption of the ruling All People's Congress. A stolen election gave rise to a short-lived rebellion in the late 1980s, the Ndogboyosoi rebellion, which although it was crushed by the army, offered fertile ground for recruitment to the RUF. Richards identifies also the collapse of state infrastructure and the erosion of rural schooling opportunities as critical to understanding the RUF's expansion. Rebels and civilians alike, he argues, saw the rebellion as a chance to resume their education and to express their discontent with the misuse of Sierra Leone's diamond wealth for politicians'

¹⁹ Emile Durkheim, *Suicide* (New York: The Free Press, 1879).

²⁰ Robert Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: The Free Press, 1949).

²¹ Robert Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy: How Scarcity, Crime, Overpopulation, and Disease Are Rapidly Destroying the Social Fabric of Our Planet," *Atlantic Monthly* 44 (1994).

²² Paul Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest: War, Youth, and Resources in Sierra Leone* (Oxford: James Currey, 1996).

personal gain. The context for violence in Sierra Leone was one of declining living standards and visible inequalities with “a patrimonial state running out of resources (especially resources to support education), the emergence of rural slums in diamond districts, and the agrarian failures of an urban- (and mining) biased development policy.”²³

SELECTIVE INCENTIVES

Critiquing decades of scholarship that highlighted the centrality of grievance (or other shared interests) in explaining collective action, Mancur Olson observed that common interests are not sufficient to motivate participation.²⁴ When successful, revolutionary mobilization produces public goods. Because enjoyment of these benefits is not contingent on participation, rational, self-interested individuals will not bear the costs of acting and instead choose to free-ride on the willingness of others to participate. Olson’s formulation turned the literature on participation on its head: instead of assessing the depth of grievances held by particular classes and ethnic groups, the question became why anyone choose to rebel at all.

Recognizing that collective action is often observed in practice, Olson offered an explanation for why some individuals choose to participate and take on unnecessary costs. He introduced the idea of selective incentives—inducements to participation that are private and can be made available on a selective basis. Samuel Popkin famously applied this perspective to the study of rebellion in Vietnam, arguing that revolutionaries offered incentives (in the form of material benefits) to peasants contingent on their participation.²⁵ For example, one of his interviewees commented: “[Before joining,] I thought about my grandmother. I worried that she would live in misery if I went off and joined the army because no one would be left to look after her. I brought these apprehensions up with the cadres and they said that they were certain that the village authorities would take care of my grandmother. After I left, my grandmother was given 0.6 hectare of rice field.”

More recently, Mark Lichbach catalogued examples of how selective incentives operate in a wide variety of contexts, from organized and unorganized rural protests to strikes, riots, and rebellion.²⁶ He identified a range of possible private goods that might be

²³ See Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*, p. 52.

²⁴ Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965).

²⁵ Samuel Popkin, *The Rational Peasant* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

²⁶ Mark Lichbach, *The Rebel’s Dilemma* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998).

offered to rebel recruits, from money, loot, and land to positions of authority. Acceptance of the role of selective incentives in motivating participation is now widespread, leading Jeffrey Goodwin and Theda Skocpol to conclude that “it is the on-going provision of such collective and selective goods, not ideological conversion in the abstract, that has played the principal role in solidifying social support for guerrilla armies.”²⁷

While much of this literature emphasizes the positive incentives that can be given to individuals who take part in a fighting group (“pull” factors), the theory only requires that the private benefits of joining outweigh the private costs of not joining. For example, Azam’s study of recruitment emphasizes not only the wages paid to fighters but the impact of rebellion on the wages of those that choose to remain as farmers.²⁸ In an environment of conflict, a key determinant of welfare for non-participants is the level of violence they will have to endure. Thus protection from violence (a “push” factor) may be a key private benefit that fighting groups offer to individuals as well. Indeed, joining a military faction may be the most important strategy individuals use to avoid the indiscriminate violence perpetrated by the opposing side(s).²⁹

Although a number of the determinants of the efficacy of selective incentives (for example, poverty which may indicate a relatively high marginal return to benefits) are consistent with rival explanations for participation, some distinct hypotheses can be identified. In particular, individuals are more likely to join military factions if:

H₄: They are offered selective incentives by a group fighting in their area.

H₅: They believe they would be safer inside a fighting faction than outside of it.

It is worth noting that Olson offered a second explanation for the extent of observed participation in collective action—one that has received far less exploration in the literature on revolutionary mobilization. Coercion, he argued, could resolve the free-rider problem that undermines the capacity for collective action. While compulsory participation is less likely among traditional pressure and interest groups, both state and non-state militaries have

²⁷ Jeffrey Goodwin and Theda Skocpol, “Explaining Revolutions in the Third World,” *Politics and Society* 17 (1989).

²⁸ Jean Paul Azam, “On Thugs and Heroes: Why Warlords Victimize Their Own Civilians,” *Economics and Governance* 7 (2006).

²⁹ Jeffrey Goodwin, *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); T. David Mason and Dale Krane, “The Political Economy of Death Squads: Toward a Theory of the Impact of State-Sanctioned Terror,” *International Studies Quarterly* 33 (1989).

pursued abduction as a strategy to swell their numbers. We return to the dynamics of abduction in the discussion of our results.

Debates about participation in Sierra Leone's civil war also speak to the Olsonian logic of participation. Arguing against a focus on the mobilization of discontent, some have proposed that the RUF's success in recruitment owes more to its willingness to engage the "wrong kind individuals."³⁰ Ibrahim Abdullah argues that when the student movement disintegrated under pressure from the government, the locus of revolution shifted from the university campus to the streets and slums of Freetown. Unlettered, migrants to Freetown who lacked employment formed the basis for Sierra Leone's insurgency. Many were thugs and drug-users; they lacked connections to the educated elite and had weak ties to rural communities. External financial support from Libya and Liberia enabled this group to get off the ground. Subsequently, its position of dominance in the eastern districts enabled the RUF to extract resources from the mining and trade of diamonds, the monitoring and taxing of trade across the border, and looting of household property. These material rewards, along with a healthy dose of coercion, Abdullah suggests, explain the decision of most who joined the insurgency.

SOCIAL SANCTIONS

A third school of thought links an individual's decision to participate to the characteristics of the community in which he or she is embedded. Conditional cooperation—which enables groups to overcome the free-rider problem—is more likely in strong communities capable of monitoring individual behavior and bringing to bear a variety of social sanctions to induce cooperation. For Michael Taylor, a prominent proponent of this argument, a strong community is defined by: (i) a membership with shared values and beliefs; (ii) relations between members which are direct and many-sided and; (iii) practices within the community of generalized reciprocity.³¹ He suggests that the degree to which a community approximates these characteristics varies; an assessment of the relative "strength" of a community (on these dimensions) will help one understand its potential for undertaking collective action.

Taylor applies his argument in a reanalysis of Skocpol's cases of social revolution. He argues that the speed with which widespread rebellion unfolded in France and Russia, as

³⁰ Ibrahim Abdullah, "Bush path to destruction: the origin and character of the Revolutionary United Front/Sierra Leone," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 36 (1998).

³¹ Michael Taylor, "Rationality and Revolutionary Collective Action," in *Rationality and Revolution*, edited by Michael Taylor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

compared to China, is directly attributable to the strength of their peasant communities, their autonomy from outside control, and their preexisting networks which facilitated collective action. In France, for example, Taylor identifies the rural economic system as the foundation of community strength: patterns of economic activity in which important resources were held and regulated by collectivities created the norms and organizational capacity for shared action. The situation of peasants in China was much different. Peasants were embedded in a larger economic system of interlinked villages and towns, they operated independently as households with no common lands, and high degrees of mobility undermined the creation of dense ties and shared norms. As a result, preexisting communities could not provide the basis for revolution in China; political entrepreneurs worked tirelessly over time to mobilize people for participation. Taylor likens the Chinese case to the experience of Vietnam, suggesting that Popkin's political entrepreneurs had to mobilize the peasantry with offers of material benefits *largely because* the countryside was awash in weak communities characterized by hierarchy, inequality, an absence of peasant associations and cooperatives, and significant mobility.

The importance of preexisting social networks and shared collective identities was not lost on earlier scholars of revolution. Indeed, Barrington Moore identified the presence of strong horizontal networks within peasant communities as a necessary condition for mobilization.³² James Scott argued that cohesive villages with strong communal traditions were in a much better position to act on their moral outrage over the subsistence crisis.³³ Even Theda Skocpol, whose work drew attention to the impact of declining state strength on revolution, pointed to the role of autonomous peasant communities with considerable solidarity as the engine of mobilization.³⁴ The community perspective suggests a number of additional hypotheses. Individuals are more likely to participate in a military faction if:

H₆: Other members of their community are already participating voluntarily in the movement.

H₇: Their community is **discrete**, in the sense of being relatively small and isolated.

³² Barrington Moore Jr., *Social Origins of Democracy and Dictatorship* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966).

³³ See Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*.

³⁴ Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

Arguments about the importance of social sanctions also figure prominently in the literature on mobilization for the war in Sierra Leone. As the weak national army melted away under pressure from an emerging RUF, local defense militias became a major bulwark against brutal RUF attacks in rural areas. Dr. Alpha Lavalie set the precedent with the Tamaboro offensive in 1991-92: he dispatched displaced Poro (secret society) initiates to “act as guardians of their settlements, enforce traditional Mende warfare curfews, and act as a local defence force.”³⁵ Decentralized local defense militias prospered and replaced the tattered national military. Patrick Muana describes the characteristics of the Kamajoi, Sierra Leone’s most well-known militia:

“These fighters are conscripted with the approval and consent of the traditional authority figures, maintained and commanded by officers loyal to those chiefs. This ensures a high level of commitment on their part and an insurance against atrocities on the civilian population on whom they rely for sustenance, legitimacy, and support... the prime condition for conscription is to be a Mende of local parentage; good behaviour can be guaranteed by reference to the Chiefdom people and the chief.”³⁶

Organized by chiefs who rose to even greater prominence with the disappearance of central authority, CDF militias grew from within communities. Although often conscripted, participation and good behavior were induced by the threat of social sanction. The CDF militias grew significantly in final years of the conflict, taking advantage of their intricate knowledge of local terrain to inflict serious damage on the RUF.

IV Data and Research Design

Testing hypotheses about the determinants of participation in civil war requires systematic data on the characteristics of combatants and non-combatants. Given the difficulty of gathering data in war-torn countries, previous approaches have employed ethnographic data and qualitative information—gathered largely from combatants—to draw inferences about the factors explaining mobilization. This paper introduces a new dataset and research design that allow for the careful assessment of competing hypotheses using survey data gathered from both ex-combatants and non-combatants in post-war Sierra Leone.

³⁵ Patrick Muana, “The Kamajoi Militia: Civil War, Internal Displacement, and the Politics of Counter-Insurgency,” *Africa Development* 22 (1997).

³⁶ See Muana, “The Kamajoi Militia,” p. 88.

THE SURVEY

The survey was conducted between June and August 2003, slightly more than a year after the war came to an end. The study targeted a sample of 1000 ex-combatants; a total of 1043 surveys of ex-combatants were completed. The main method for gathering information was through the administration of a closed-ended questionnaire by an enumerator in the respondent's local language. Interviews were conducted at training program sites and in community centers around the country.

To ensure as unbiased a sample as possible, the survey employed a number of levels of randomization. First, teams enumerated surveys in geographic locations and chiefdoms that were randomly selected. Estimates of the population of ex-combatants presently residing in the chiefdoms were made based on data from the National Commission on Demobilization, Disarmament, and Reintegration (NCDDR) and the National Statistics Office. The estimates of the population distribution were used to generate weights that were used to draw 63 clusters of 17 subjects throughout the country. These clusters fell within forty-five chiefdoms or urban localities and these forty-five localities formed the basic enumeration unit.

Within each enumeration unit, sites were also randomly selected, with both urban and rural areas represented. Specific numerical targets were set for the major factions, based on the randomization and the estimated national distribution of faction members. Broad goals were also provided to guide survey teams in meeting gender and age targets based on the estimated national share of women and children in the groups: enumerators were instructed that on average one in twelve individuals interviewed should be a woman, and one in nine should have been under the age of 16 at the end of the conflict. Enumerators were instructed to compare actual numbers of children and faction members to target goals each day.

Enumerators worked through both official (UN and government) contacts and local community leaders to develop lists of ex-combatants in each enumeration unit. Teams identified pools of candidates from more than one source: some from the town or village Chief, some from the village youth coordinator, some from various DDR and NCDDR skills training centers, and so on. In every case, the teams aimed to identify two to three times the targeted number of potential respondents and then to randomly select respondents using a variety of methods. In most instances, Chiefs and DDR staff asked a number of ex-

combatants to meet at a public location and teams selected candidates randomly from that pool (by choosing every third person or selecting numbers from a hat). While this method worked well in most parts of the country, in some areas less than twice the target population was identified. This challenge tended to arise in remote rural areas, enumeration units with small ex-combatant populations, and regions where communities remain highly polarized.

SAMPLING NON-COMBATANTS

Because data on non-participants are essential for isolating the causal factors explaining mobilization, the survey team identified non-combatants in each selected cluster as well. Non-combatants were sampled in proportion to the number of ex-combatants targeted in each cluster, yielding an overall sample of 184 from the same forty-five chiefdoms and urban localities (just short of the 204 targeted). As for combatants, the main method for gathering information was through the administration of a closed-ended questionnaire by an enumerator in the respondent's local language. The questionnaire mirrored that given to combatants, although sections covering an individual's war experience (as a combatant) were excluded.

There are some clear advantages and disadvantages to the sampling strategy employed for non-combatants. Enumerating non-participants only in chiefdoms where clusters of ex-combatants were drawn makes a great deal of sense on efficiency grounds, as the combination of poor road transport and Sierra Leone's heavy rainy season would have rendered infeasible an entirely separate sampling strategy for the non-combatant population. At the same time, to the extent that ex-combatants returned to their home communities after the war (our estimates suggest that more than half did), our sampling strategy yields a set of non-combatants in the same set of communities from which the combatants joined, allowing us to better identify individual level determinants of mobilization. The disadvantage is that, while our ex-combatant survey provides a nationally representative sample, our non-combatant survey does not.³⁷ Therefore, appropriate weighting is required to reflect the biases in our sample frame.

³⁷ We are exploring ways to utilize Sierra Leone's 1989 Household Survey to generate a nationally representative comparison group. The most obvious constraint is that, beyond basic measures of wealth, the 1989 survey provides few questions that speak to the hypotheses identified in this paper.

EMPIRICAL STRATEGY

To test our hypotheses, we present a model to predict the likelihood that individuals joined a fighting group during the war in Sierra Leone. Our comparison group is the full set of non-combatants, many of whom were approached directly by combatant groups and elected not to participate. We focus explicitly on the two main combatant groups—the RUF and the CDF—as fighters in these groups account for nearly 90% of the sample.³⁸ Using a logistic model, we focus first on overall determinants of participation by examining the factors that distinguish those who joined either group voluntarily from those who remained outside of the factions. Then, employing a multinomial logistic model, we explore the power of the hypotheses to explain participation in each of the two groups and an additional category to account for those who were abducted.

In our analysis, to correct for the biases in our sample, we re-weight our observations to account for the fact that while our sample includes 1043 ex-combatants and 184 non-combatants, fighters made up approximately 2.5% of the population in Sierra Leone. We do this re-weighting not at the national level, but instead within chiefdoms which allows us to adjust for different combatant/non-combatant ratios across chiefdoms. This re-weighting also allows us to use better data on the distribution of combatants to correct ex-post for imperfections in our original sampling frame.

V General Determinants of Voluntary Participation

We begin with the question of what distinguishes those who participate voluntarily from those who remain on the sidelines of civil war. Our dependent variable, *Join Any Group*, takes a value of one if an individual voluntarily joined either of the major factions, the RUF or the CDF. It takes a value of zero if he or she did not join any faction. Cases in which individuals were abducted into a faction or joined one of the other smaller factions are excluded from the analysis. In a later section, we disaggregate this variable more finely. Table 1 reports the results of our analysis.

GRIEVANCES AND PARTICIPATION

Our first hypothesis tests the claim that individuals are more likely to join fighting groups if they are suffering from economic deprivation. Economic deprivation may come in many

³⁸ The Sierra Leone Army accounts for 5% of the sample, but most SLA recruits were conscripted through traditional channels before the war began and therefore do not belong in the analysis.

forms and multiple indicators can be considered. The United Nations Development Program, in developing its human development index, emphasizes three key elements of underdevelopment: income, education, and health. We employ measures to capture each of these three aspects of economic deprivation.³⁹ The first, *Mud Walls*, provides a measure of material wellbeing, recording the material used in the construction of walls for an individual's house. If they are constructed from mud, among the cheapest but least durable form of wall design used in Sierra Leone, this variable takes a value of one. A second measure, *Education*, records the level of schooling completed by an individual. This variable takes the value one if the individual received no formal education; two, if primary education was completed; and, three, if post-primary education was achieved. Our third measure captures the infant mortality rate of the district in which an individual resides. It is worth noting that this measure is collected at the level of the *district* and does not therefore capture an individual's personal health status.⁴⁰ For all three measures, we find that effects move in the expected direction and are strongly significant. Poorer individuals with little or no educational background living in districts with adverse health conditions are significantly more likely to join one of the two main fighting groups in Sierra Leone. Quantitatively, these differences are particularly pronounced for education: individuals with little or no education are nearly eight percentage points more likely to join a faction than those with secondary education or more.

We employ two individual-level proxies, *SLPP Supporter* and *Mende*, to capture the degree of political exclusion experienced by individuals in the pre-war period in Sierra Leone. Since the beginning of the post-colonial period, many accounts of political dynamics in Sierra Leone emphasize the shifts in power from control by Mende ethnic group members to control by the Temne and back again.⁴¹ Though simplistic, such narratives capture popular images of elite level politics in Sierra Leone over the last forty years. Indeed, one common, if unsubstantiated, view of the origins of the war suggests that the violence was an attempt to regain power by Mende supporters of the SLPP. The results in Table 1 do not provide evidence for this argument. Membership in the Mende ethnic group enters

³⁹ Without measures of access to land, income, and patterns of wealth over time, we are not in a position to test precisely some of the theories advanced earlier. We are confident, however, that education and home construction variables offer fairly good proxies for household economic status. Both have been used consistently in analyses of poverty in Africa.

⁴⁰ A better measure would capture the infant mortality rate chiefdom by chiefdom. Unfortunately, good pre-war data on access to health care is not available.

⁴¹ Jimmy D. Kandeh, "Politicization of Ethnic Identities in Sierra Leone," *African Studies Review* 35 (1992).

negatively although the effect is not statistically significant. SLPP support enters positively, but the coefficient is substantively small and not significantly different from zero.

Turning to the third hypothesis, it may not matter that individuals are on the losing side politically, but that they may not feel represented by *any* party on the political stage. In our survey, we asked respondents which party they supported before the war. Fully one-third of non-combatants claimed to have supported no party at all; among combatants, approximately *one-half* did not back a particular political party. Although both of these figures are sizable, the difference between them is sufficiently large to allow us to identify a relationship between alienation from the political system, *Does Not Support Any Party*, and recruitment into a faction. Notably, this effect is substantively very large and persists after controlling for age—a correlate of both recruitment and political alienation in Sierra Leone.⁴²

SELECTIVE INCENTIVES

Our first measure of selective incentives, *Offered Money to Join*, records whether individuals were offered material rewards (money or diamonds) in exchange for their participation. The variable employs data from a survey question that asked respondents what they were told they would receive upon joining a fighting group. For combatants, the question referred to the group they eventually joined.⁴³ In the case of non-combatants, the question referred to offers made by the group with which they had the most contact, conditional upon that group having attempted to recruit them. All non-joiners that were not approached by a group are classified here as if they were not offered material incentives. Importantly, our results suggest that material offers make participation more likely.

We examined the importance of “push” factors as well—in particular, whether the protection offered by fighting factions might have been sufficient to motivate participation. Our proxy, *Felt Safer Inside*, uses a survey question that elicited the respondent’s assessment (during the war) of whether they felt that “life would be safer” inside or outside of the group. For those that joined, the response was given with respect to the time at which they joined. Those that did not join answered the question with respect to the moment in which

⁴² Of course, party support and ethnic identity are relatively crude proxies for pre-war political attitudes about the government in power and the political system more generally. Although we might have asked more specific questions about pre-war attitudes, the experience of war and the passage of time would have made such answers less reliable as an accurate measure of exclusion or alienation.

⁴³ It is possible, therefore, that individuals were offered material incentives by one group but subsequently joined another that did not offer material incentives. In this case the individual would be classified here as a joiner but *not* as one that was offered material incentives to join.

they had the most frequent contact with some armed group (and the response refers to the safety in that armed group). Only 5% felt that they would have been equally safe inside or outside of the group. However, whereas 74% of non-combatants felt that it would be safer to remain outside of the fighting group, only 38% of combatants felt that outside was safer than inside. Table 1 suggests that the relationship between personal security and the decision to join a fighting group is strongly significant at conventional levels, even after controlling for a range of other factors, and is substantively large. Whereas an individual that felt safer outside had a less than 1% probability of joining, individuals who believed it to be safer inside were twelve percentage points more likely to join. The possibility of improving one's personal security, it appears, provides an important motivation for joining a faction in times of war.

SOCIAL SANCTIONS

Hypothesis six suggests that when individuals have personal ties to members of a fighting group they are more likely to join. To create a measure of social ties, we asked both joiners and non-joiners how they first encountered an armed group. In the case of combatants, we asked them how they first encountered the group that they ultimately joined; for non-combatants, we asked them how they first came into contact with the group with which they had the most frequent contact. Our measure takes a value of one if an individual responded that her first contact came when a friend or relative joined the group and zero otherwise.⁴⁴ Other possible avenues for making first contact included being approached by the group either peaceably or through an attack on a settlement or an ambush. For many who joined, the first contact was made when they actively sought out the group. Empirically, 21% of non-combatants reported friends joining as the first connection they had to a group; for combatants, the percentage is similar, at 23%. Combatants and non-combatants differed more in other ways, however, with non-joiners more likely to have been approached or to have been attacked while joiners commonly sought out the fighting units themselves. Although the difference in the likelihood of having social ties with individuals in a group is small (across combatants and non-combatants), once we account for other factors, the estimated marginal effect is detectable and reaches statistical significance at the 90% level; the estimated effect however is substantively small.

⁴⁴ Individuals may have had friends in a given group but not in the one that they eventually joined. In this case, we code these individuals as having joined a group but as not having friends in a group.

As a test of the final hypothesis, we employ two measures that capture the degree to which communities are small and isolated. In both cases, our proxies are at a high level of aggregation, recording features of settlements within the chiefdom or district in which an individual was based.⁴⁵ The first, *Accessible by Foot or Boat Only*, drawn from data made available by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), measures the share of villages in a given chiefdom that can be approached only by foot or by boat.⁴⁶ Such villages are in fact quite common in Sierra Leone; in more than 50% of chiefdoms, at least one-third of villages are inaccessible by means other than foot or boat. The second proxy, *Rurality*, captures the share of villages in a district with populations below 5,000 inhabitants. Our measure is drawn from the 1985 Sierra Leone census data; missing values for the small number of Western rural areas are imputed using the mean national score for chiefdoms outside of Freetown. We enter these two measures independently. Rurality strongly increases the likelihood of participation, but the proxy for community isolation is not statistically significant. In fact, the isolation of communities, though it may facilitate collective action, can also leave communities disconnected from the goals of larger revolutionary movements, a point we return to briefly in the next section.

VI Group-Specific Patterns of Recruitment

The evidence suggests that in marked contrast to theoretical debates which advance grievances, selective incentives, and social sanctions as rival theories of mobilization, distinct proxies for each emerge as significant in models predicting voluntary participation in the Sierra Leone civil war. It appears that individual decisions to join are shaped simultaneously by personal grievances, cost-benefit calculations, and the social pressures that emerge from tight-knit communities. Yet like much theoretical work on recruitment into armed groups, our analysis so far has proceeded as if the logic of recruitment is identical for all groups. As ethnographic and qualitative students of conflict make clear, however, the dynamics of violence can vary substantially from conflict to conflict and even among groups within a conflict. Elsewhere, we have argued that systematic differences in the structure of armed

⁴⁵ We use chiefdom and district measures for ex-combatants and non-combatants at the onset of the war. This measure thus captures background social conditions before violence began. Though some individuals moved during the war before joining, qualitative accounts suggest that pre-war community ties often played a role in motivating participation, particularly in the CDF.

⁴⁶ We note that the absence of road infrastructure may also be a measure of poor public goods provision.

factions in Sierra Leone help to account for systematic differences in their behavior.⁴⁷ It is reasonable to expect as well that differences may exist across groups in strategies of mobilization.

We explore these differences using a model that disaggregates our dependent variable. We construct a categorical variable that captures whether an individual remained on the sidelines, was abducted into a fighting faction, joined the RUF voluntarily, or elected to participate in the CDF as a volunteer. This approach allows us to explore the extent to which general patterns of participation are consistent across groups. Table 2 reports the results of our analysis.⁴⁸

The results suggest that important differences obtain across the major categories of participation. Objective indicators of grievance play a larger role in accounting for voluntary recruitment into the CDF than the RUF. The only significant measure of economic grievance that appears to matter for RUF recruitment is infant mortality—something we can capture only for districts and not at the level of the individual. Strikingly, a lack of access to education does not predict RUF (voluntary) recruitment, although it is strongly associated both with CDF recruitment and the likelihood of abduction. While there is variation across groups in the importance of economic indicators, political alienation emerges as a significant predictor of joining *both* the RUF and the CDF, and is also associated with vulnerability to abduction.

Proxies for selective incentives and social sanctions also exhibit some differences across groups. While push factors—the insecurity of remaining outside the group—are important for both CDF and RUF recruits, the evidence suggests that offers of material rewards are more salient for RUF than for CDF mobilization, a result consistent with accounts linking the group to the extraction of diamonds.

Our proxies for community cohesion play a somewhat greater role in accounting for CDF recruitment. Individuals from small, isolated communities are more likely to join the CDF. The estimated effect is small but it is notable that it works in different directions for the RUF and the CDF. While the relationship with RUF recruitment is statistically insignificant, the sign on the coefficient links isolation with a decreased capacity for collective action in support of the RUF. These differences point to the possibility that

⁴⁷ Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy Weinstein, “Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War: Determinants of the Strategies of Warring Factions,” Unpublished Manuscript, 2005.

⁴⁸ Table 2 also reports marginal effects taking all other variables at their survey re-weighted means with the exception of gender (kept at male) and “felt safer” set at “about the same.”

mechanisms of collective action may be at work in different ways for different groups within a conflict. This finding is consistent with qualitative accounts of the war in Sierra Leone—while isolation may have facilitated organization for the CDF, it played no positive role for the RUF which tended not to be based in communities. Instead, isolation may have disconnected individuals from national level political issues which motivated some early RUF volunteers.

In evaluating these results, it is critical to keep in mind that voluntary joiners constituted only 12% of total RUF recruits and 98% of CDF recruits. The vast majority of RUF combatants were abducted, with grievances, selective incentives, and social sanctions rendered irrelevant in the individual decision about whether to join. Selective incentives play no role for abductees; community ties, as measured by the presence of friends and relatives in fighting groups, although unrelated to voluntary decisions to join, does appear to protect people from abduction. Interestingly, proxies for grievances do help us to understand which individuals were *abducted* into the RUF, but not those who joined the RUF voluntarily. Such grievances, especially measured by the lack of educational opportunities and political alienation, account for the *vulnerability* of individuals to be conscripted into a group (like the RUF) but not their desire to be so recruited.

VII Conclusion

This article has three main findings. First, statistical evidence from patterns of participation in Sierra Leone's civil war offer support to three major theories that account for revolutionary mobilization. Individuals appear to be motivated by grievances, weigh the costs and benefits of joining military factions, and are influenced in their decision-making by social pressures emanating from friends and community members. Multiple logics of participation can and do coexist within the same conflict, although the relative importance of different factors for a given individual may vary as a function of personal and community characteristics.

Second, while individuals may be motivated to participate for a wide range of reasons, distinct patterns of recruitment are apparent across different fighting factions. No single logic offers a complete explanation for revolutionary mobilization; indeed, factions in the Sierra Leone civil war were populated by voluntary recruits with different profiles. This empirical observation suggests a need to shift the debate from battles over the supremacy of various theories to a concerted analysis of the conditions under which distinct strategies are

pursued and the implications of a group's mobilization strategies for its on the battlefield performance.

The third finding is that involuntary participation is a fundamental part of political violence. Although this fact is already well appreciated by scholars of the Sierra Leone conflict, traditional theories of mobilization within political science make little mention of coerced participation. Understanding why groups abduct recruits and the implications of such a strategy for the dynamics of the war is a wide open research agenda, but one that can no longer be ignored in traditional debates about why people join.

Collectively, the analysis offered here highlights the value of bringing tools of survey research into the study of conflict. Ethnographic and qualitative work have usefully identified a wide range of theories to account for participation, yet data limitations have impeded scholars' progress in systematically assessing their hypotheses in light of competing explanations and with reference to data on a comparison group of non-participants. Cross-national quantitative work on the onset of civil war has made significant advances in identifying a country's risk factors for violence, yet the assumptions that are made about why individuals engage in violence have not been put to the test. By going directly to participants and non-participants in violence, survey research puts scholars in a better position to subject their theories to rigorous empirical analysis and to explore the underlying assumptions that motivate an ever-growing literature on voluntary participation in violence.

Table 1: General Determinants of Voluntary Participation

| <i>Dependent Variable: Joined Any Group</i> | Logit Regression Coefficients (t-stats) | Hypothetical Change | Marginal Effect of Change |
|---|---|---------------------|---------------------------|
| GRIEVANCES | | | |
| H ₁ Mud Walls | 1.91 [3.03]*** | 0 → 1 | 4.24% |
| H ₁ Infant Mortality (District level) | 73.03 [2.80]*** | .17 → .19 | 2.33% |
| H ₁ Education: None, Primary or More | -1.03 [3.56]*** | 0 → 2 | -7.95% |
| H ₂ Ethnic Group Excluded from Politics (“Mende”) | -0.28 [0.34] | 0 → 1 | -0.54% |
| H ₂ : Supports the SLPP | 0.02 [0.05] | 0 → 1 | 0.05% |
| H ₃ Does Not Support Any Political Party | 3.43 [5.09]*** | 0 → 1 | 16.75% |
| SELECTIVE INCENTIVES | | | |
| H ₄ Offered Money to Join | 2.29 [2.80]*** | 0 → 1 | 10.76% |
| H ₅ Felt Safer Inside Group | 1.93 [7.36]*** | 1 → 3 | 12.25% |
| COMMUNITY COHESION | | | |
| H ₆ Friends as Members of Group | 0.72 [1.74]* | 0 → 1 | 1.77% |
| H ₇ Villages Accessible by Foot or Boat Only | 0.01 [0.91] | 27 → 33 | 0.18% |
| H ₇ Rurality (District level) | 0.05 [3.19]*** | 68 → 75 | 0.65% |
| CONTROLS | | | |
| Farmer | 0.51 [1.03] | 0 → 1 | 1.24% |
| Student | -0.0228 [0.03] | 0 → 1 | -0.05% |
| Male | 5.08 [3.06]*** | 0 → 1 | 2.04% |
| Age (in 2003) | 6.41 [4.98]*** | 2.5 → 3.5 | 2.04% |
| Age (squared) | -0.83 [5.31]*** | | |
| Freetown | 3.56 [2.95]*** | 0 → 1 | 20.76% |
| Constant | -44.09 [5.86]*** | | |
| Observations | 794 | | |
| Absolute value of t statistics in brackets * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1% | | | |

Table 2: Group-Specific Patterns of Recruitment

| <i>Multinomial Model</i> | ABDUCTED | Joined RUF Voluntarily | Joined CDF Voluntarily |
|--|--------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| GRIEVANCES | | | |
| H ₁ Mud Walls | 0.62 [1.65] | 0.13 [0.15] | 2.11 [3.68]*** |
| H ₁ Infant Mortality (District level) | 18.50 [1.08] | 55.60 [2.06]** | 55.74 [2.06]** |
| H ₁ Education: None, Primary or More | -1.13 [3.40]*** | -0.04 [0.06] | -1.18 [4.51]*** |
| H ₂ Ethnic Group Excluded from Politics (“Mende”) | -0.12 [0.14] | -1.01 [0.86] | 0.08 [0.09] |
| H ₂ Supports the SLPP | -0.10 [0.19] | -1.45 [1.72]* | 0.32 [0.57] |
| H ₃ Does Not Support Any Political Party | 1.02 [2.08]** | 2.63 [3.29]*** | 3.34 [5.77]*** |
| SELECTIVE INCENTIVES | | | |
| H ₄ Offered Money to Join | -0.42 [0.41] | 2.59 [1.83]* | 1.61 [1.64] |
| H ₅ Felt Safer Inside Group | -0.32 [1.34] | 2.26 [3.61]*** | 1.80 [6.92]*** |
| COMMUNITY COHESION | | | |
| H ₆ Friends as Members of Group | -4.35 [3.41]*** | 1.30 [1.49] | 0.52 [1.26] |
| H ₇ Villages Accessible by Foot or Boat Only | -0.02 [1.45] | -0.02 [0.58] | 0.03 [1.86]* |
| H ₇ Rurality (District level) | 0.00 [0.27] | 0.05 [1.70]* | 0.05 [3.10]*** |
| CONTROLS | | | |
| Farmer | -0.11 [0.17] | -0.01 [0.01] | 0.47 [0.95] |
| Student | 0.17 [0.29] | 0.54 [0.66] | 0.15 [0.21] |
| Male | 1.12 [1.50] | 0.12 [0.10] | 6.03 [3.70]*** |
| Age | -2.76 [2.23]** | 6.15 [3.39]*** | 6.29 [4.76]*** |
| Age (squared) | 0.27 [1.84]* | -0.75 [3.63]*** | -0.81 [5.20]*** |
| Freetown | -1.64 [1.04] | 0.91 [0.66] | 2.92 [2.96]*** |
| Constant | -1.06 [0.24] | -38.07 [4.68]*** | -42.39 [5.61]*** |
| Observations | 1065 | | |

Absolute value of t statistics in brackets

* significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Table 3: Summary Statistics

| Variable | Description | Source | Mean | SD | Min | Max |
|----------------------------|---|----------------|-------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Mud Walls | Dummy=1 if Subject lived in house with Mud walls before war | HW | 0.51 | 0.04 | 0 | 1 |
| Infant Mortality | Infant Mortality | 1985 Census | 0.18 | 0.01 | 0.14 | 0.516 |
| Education | Education | HW | 1.54 | 0.07 | 0 | 2 |
| Mende | Mende | HW | 0.40 | 0.06 | 0 | 1 |
| Supports the SLPP | Supports the SLPP | HW | 0.37 | 0.05 | 0 | 1 |
| Does Not Support Any Party | Supports no Party | HW | 0.32 | 0.07 | 0 | 1 |
| Offered Money | Individual was offered money to join the group | HW | 0.17 | 0.07 | 1 | 3 |
| Felt Safer in Group | Individual felt that it was safer inside than outside the group | HW | 1.51 | 0.08 | 0 | 1 |
| Friends | Individuals first contact with group was through friends or relatives | HW | 0.23 | 0.03 | 0 | 1 |
| Accessibility | Share of localities in chiefdom accessible only by foot or boat | FAO | 30.09 | 3.07 | 4 | 100 |
| Rurality | Share of localities in district with <5000 inhabitants | 1985 Census | 71.59 | 3.51 | 0 | 100 |
| Farmer | Farmer | HW | 0.11 | 0.04 | 0 | 1 |
| Student | Student | HW | 0.37 | 0.06 | 0 | 1 |
| Gender | Gender | HW | 0.70 | 0.04 | 0 | 1 |
| Age in 2003 | Age in 2003 (in decades) | HW | 3.50 | 0.11 | 1.5 | 7.9 |
| Freetown | Dummy =1 if subject lived in Freetown before war | HW | 0.28 | 0.85 | 0 | 1 |

Note: Means and standard deviations reported here are adjusted for differential weights between combatant and non-combatant respondents.