



Sex, War, and Peace: Rank, and Winter on Rank

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Is there a relationship between how men think of women, and how male-dominated collectives treat other human collectives? In the last several years, new empirical findings have emerged to buttress the proposition that such a relationship obtains. Marshall and Ramsey (1999) find a relationship between gender empowerment and state willingness to use force. Caprioli (2000) finds that greater domestic gender equality is correlated with less emphasis by the state on using military force to resolve international disputes. Caprioli and Boyer (2001) find that severity of violence used in an international conflict decreases with greater levels of domestic gender equality. Regan and Paskeviciute (2003) find that the degree of women's access to political power in a society is predictive of the likelihood of that state engaging in interstate disputes and war. Caprioli and Trumbore (2006) find that states with lower levels of gender equality are more likely to be the aggressors and to initiate the use of force in interstate disputes (confirmed by Sobek, Abouharb, & Ingram, 2006). Caprioli and Trumbore (2003) and Melander (2005) find that states with lower levels of domestic gender equality are more likely to be involved in intrastate conflict. Hudson, Caprioli, Ballif-Spanvill, McDermott, and Emmett (2009) find that states with higher levels of violence against women are also less peaceful internationally, less compliant with international norms, and less likely to have good relations with neighboring states and that violence against women is a better predictor of these outcomes than level of democracy, level of wealth, or presence of Islamic civilization. Betzig (1986) and Fish (2002) find authoritarian rule more likely in those states where levels of gender inequality are high.

What remains to be understood is why male treatment of women should have effects on state behavior in the realm of conflict and war. It is true that most human collectives are still governed almost exclusively by men, so we feel justified in believing there is some linkage between male mental constructs and state behavior based on males' greater level of power in the political system vis-à-vis women. Nevertheless, why should attitudes towards women become templates for attitudes

towards other states? There seems, *prima facie*, no obvious equation of women and states to make such a linkage appear intuitive.

In a social scientific sense, ultimate causation for human behavior probably lies with the insights of evolutionary biology and psychology. Indeed, several recent books linking evolutionary insights, sex, and state war have been penned by notable biologists and anthropologists (Potts and Hayden, 2008; Thayer, 2005; Wrangham and Peterson, 1996, to name but a few). Nevertheless, between the Paleolithic and the twenty-first century lie enough societal and technological changes to demand an intermediary level of theorizing relating the mental constructs and attitudes of modern man to the persistence of intercollective, including interstate, conflict.

Thus it proved very interesting to read David Winter's translation and edit of Otto Rank's 1914 essay, "Conquering Cities and 'Conquering' Women." Because I am neither a psychologist nor a psychiatrist, but an International Relations scholar, I was unfamiliar with Rank and his work; however, I was quite familiar through my doctoral training with the work of David Winter as it relates to elite foreign policy decision making. However, it was not until years later that I discovered Winter's work on sex and violence. It seems appropriate, then, that Winter was the translator and editor of this Rank essay, for several of Winter's works (especially 2000) profoundly affected me at the time that I began to slowly move into the subfield of Gender and International Relations. For example, Winter (2000) states: "I suggest that power, sex, and violence are deeply linked, that they form parts of a single complex—a complex that characterizes our century and may, in the next century, threaten our very existence as an organized species if we do not come to understand it. For this reason, I go on to suggest that elucidating and deconstructing the power-sex-violence complex is an urgent intellectual task for political psychology" (p. 385). This was a call that I personally felt inspired to answer (Hudson & Den Boer, 2004; Hudson et al., 2009).

Rank's essay is a reflection upon European poetry and songs from earlier centuries that depict besieged cities as maidens or wives, with the besiegers as their rapists. Conversely, he also ruminates on how women may be referred to as cities, with their suitor or bridegroom as a successful adversary who breaks the defenses of the city in sexual intercourse. Sex, in this worldview, is not an expression of affection, respect, and fidelity, but rather "the mastery of man over woman." Sex is not a mutual giving, but a taking by one and a losing by the other, with the taking gendered male and the losing gendered female. Marriage and courtship are not partnerings, but fundamentally adversarial in nature. For a woman to have a husband or lover is to be "mastered," not "partnered." For a woman to have any heterosexual sex at all is to have lost a battle to a man; women are the prey of men.

Rank takes no second step in his essay, but that is where we have Winter to guide us further. In fleshing out the power-sex-violence nexus, Winter asserts, "sexual coercion is motivated by male power motives. That is, men who want power, especially if they feel that power is 'sexy', treat women as objects of their

power. To use the terminology of an important contemporary conceptual distinction, they convert sexuality or sex into gender—that is, sex becomes a hierarchy of power relationships built on a set of anatomical differences. . . . Their practice suggests that for these men, ‘gender’ may be a prototype for all other power hierarchies, such as those based on race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and age” (2000, p. 389).

This is a profound insight, and one also expressed by virtually all of the foremost feminist philosophers. For example, Sylviane Agacinski, the eminent French philosopher, expresses it this way, “[I]t is always the difference of the sexes that serves as a model for all other differences, and the male/female hierarchy that is taken as a metaphor for all inter-ethnic hierarchies” (2001, p. 14). With traditional modes of sexual reproduction, the very first “Other” that any child experiences is the parent that is not anatomically like them. In rich families, poor families, in families of different races and different religions, this First Difference is there for every human being born. It is what we make of that First Difference that will determine the foundation of our culture, and whether it will be bent toward violence or its absence.

Consider the arena of family law as just one example: those with physical power also dominate political power, so when law developed in human societies, men created legal systems that, generally speaking, favored male reproductive success and interests—with adultery as a crime for women but not for men; with female infanticide, male-on-female domestic violence, and marital rape not recognized as crimes; with polygyny legal but polyandry proscribed; with divorce easy for men and almost impossible for women. This “evolution-derived” family law, with its attendant high levels of male-on-female violence, has only been mitigated in certain regions in the last 200 years of human existence: before that it was truly universal.

The primal character of violent patriarchy, then, ensures that it becomes a template for broad classes of social behavior—specifically, those that concern social difference. Because human males, generally speaking, code the primal difference between male and female as a hierarchy in which the naturally selected goal is control and domination of the subordinate female, all “others” will receive that same template of response: outgroup males, outgroup females, and even in certain circumstances ingroup subordinate males. Thus, the ultimate causes posited by evolutionary theory are supplemented by more proximate causal mechanisms in the diffusion of these templates of domination and control—in, as Rank’s essay shows, popular poetry and songs, among other things.

Political scientist Johan Galtung posits that structural violence arises from this type of cultural violence; the day-to-day use of overt or implicit force to obtain one’s ends in social relations. Thus, while structural violence may obviate the need for open violence in the public sphere, it is based upon open or implicit violence in the private sphere of the home. Norms of cultural violence diffuse within religion, ideology, language, and art, among other aspects of culture, as noted by

Rank. “Cultural violence makes direct and structural violence look, even feel, right—or at least not wrong” (Galtung, 1990, p. 291). These lenses become so “natural” that we can no longer recognize we are wearing them.

The relationship between this structural violence—based as it is upon the view of the First Difference as justifying subordination of women—and state violence, follows. The hierarchized difference between men and women that is at the root of structural inequality and normed violence is an integral aspect of nationalism, which is predicated on identity—and in the evolutionary landscape, males define who is a member of the ingroup, and who belongs to outgroups, based on the reproductive concerns of male dominance hierarchies. As nationalism is integrally linked to violent patriarchy, then any reforms of the cultural distribution of power between men and women will be viewed as a threat to nationalist efforts to protect or unify the community (Caprioli, 2005; Papanek, 1990; Tessler & Warriner, 1997; Tickner, 1992, 2001). In other words, nationalism is legitimized by gendered structural and cultural violence. In turn, these norms, rooted in and justified by the primary inequality of gender hierarchy, create an echoing justification for advancing state interests through the use of force. In that light, we would expect that neither a meaningful decrease in societal violence nor a sustainable peace among nations is possible in human society without a decrease in gender inequality (Hunt & Posa, 2001; Tickner, 1992). As Winter puts it, “[w]ar is the outcome of a gendering process, and war has the effect of reinforcing and extending the gendering process. Power creates gender, and gender creates power” (2000, p. 392). We now begin to see why the empirical results discussed at the beginning of this essay obtain.

Is it possible “to live beyond power and difference,” as Winter puts it (2000, p. 394)? Can the First Difference be conceptualized differently, and in so doing, can a healthier, less violent foundation for human society be constructed? Absolutely. And this is not wishful thinking—we already have robust empirical results showing that societies that have insisted on greater gender equality exhibit a significantly lower profile of interstate violence, as detailed earlier. Furthermore, the benefits that accrue to societies determined to change gender relations from hierarchical to egalitarian may find their society changed in more ways than those related to violence. Human collectives that have undermined the evolutionary legacy of male dominance—defined here as minimally the prohibition of polygyny, and the elimination of early marriage for girls with its attendant patrilocality—are simply different entities than collectives that embrace the evolutionary heritage. In addition to anthropological work showing greater levels of cooperation and lower levels of violence in nonpolygynous cultures (Alexander, 1981), the most significant theory in this regard is the Hajnal-Hartman thesis.

The work of John Hajnal, a demographer, and Mary Hartman, an historian, identifies a remarkable “global anomaly” that has heretofore gone overlooked by scholars in their quest for understanding the immense changes that originated in northwestern Europe from the 1500s to the 1800s (Hartman, 2004, p. 8). The

anomaly was that, starting around the 1200s, families in northwestern Europe began to marry their daughters “late,” meaning on average around age 24, to grooms that were on average age 27. Hajnal notes that this late marriage system “presumably arose only once in human history” (Hajnal, 1982, p. 476; italics added). What Hajnal means is that never before in human history prior to the 1200s in one corner of Europe were women married in their mid-20s to men of approximately the same age.

Late marriage for women created a completely new form of marriage from “evolutionary” marriage, or marriage as “mastery of man over woman.” And it is important to note that this late marriage system began first among the masses, and not among the elite. Consider the many differences involved: first, men and women chose their own spouses, for by their mid-20s, young people of both sexes were usually employed in households or occupations that necessitated their removal from their natal household. Not only were the young men economic actors, but the young women also had experience in negotiating their employment and maintaining control over their wages, and thus were on much more equal footing as they approached marriage. Furthermore, in most cases, marriage did not involve patrilocality, but rather the establishment of a household independent from the parents or siblings of either party. This household arrangement had a significant impact on the family power structure, and a profound effect on the personality formation of the children born within such homes. As Hajnal notes, “The emotional content of marriage, the relation between the couple and other relatives, the methods of choosing or allocating marriage partners—all this and many other things cannot be the same in a society where a bride is usually a girl of 16 and one in which she is typically a woman of 24” (Hajnal, 1965, p. 132).

The late marriage relationship, then, becomes one of significantly mitigated male dominance in this historically unusual context. Hartman feels that the development of democracy (also capitalism, not discussed here) is directly traceable to the anomalous late marriage pattern of northwestern Europe, for state power structures are grounded in household power structures: when the latter changes, the former will, too:

Long before the contingent nature of the marital contract was recognized in law, marriages were conducted in northwestern Europe as joint enterprises by the two adult members, each of whom had recognized and reciprocal duties and obligations. In circumstances that required both members of an alliance to work and postpone marriage until there was a sufficient economic base to establish a household, individual self-reliance was a requirement long before individualism itself became an abstract social and political ideal. A sense of equality of rights was further promoted by such arrangements long before notions of egalitarianism became the popular coin of political movements. These later marriages,

forged now through consent by the adult principals, offered themselves as implicit models to the sensibilities of political and religious reformers grappling with questions of authority. Experience in families, which were miniature contract societies unique to northwestern Europe, offers a plausible explanation for popular receptivity to the suggestion that the state itself rests upon a prior and breakable contract with all its members. And if this is so, the influence of family organization on the ways people were coming to conceive and shape the world at large can hardly be exaggerated. The lingering mystery about the origins of a movement of equal rights and individual freedom can be explained. Contrary to notions that these were imported items, it appears that they, along with charity, began at home. (2004, p. 229)

In a sense, then the companionate marriages of the late marriage system were a training ground for participatory democracy. To live domestic parity day in and day out, year after year, allowed the majority of individuals in society to appreciate the virtues of voluntary association in larger collectives, including the state. As Hartman puts it, “More important than [class and religious divisions] for the appearance of equality as a popular political ideal was the shared domestic governance most people had experienced from the Middle Ages” (p. 221).

When how we conceive the First Difference changes, the world changes. With Winter, we view this reconceptualization as one of the most—if not the most—important tasks facing the human family in the twenty-first century. Democracy, peace, sustainability . . . the great key has been before our eyes all along.

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