

Explaining Wartime Rape

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In the years since the first reports of mass rapes in the Yugoslavian wars of secession and the genocidal massacres in Rwanda, feminist activists and scholars, human rights organizations, journalists, and social scientists have dedicated unprecedented efforts to document, explain, and seek solutions for the phenomenon of wartime rape. While contributors to this literature agree on much, there is no consensus on causal factors. This paper provides a brief overview of the literature on wartime rape in historical and ethnographical societies and a critical analysis of the four leading explanations for its root causes: the feminist theory, the cultural pathology theory, the strategic rape theory, and the biosocial theory. The paper concludes that the biosocial theory is the only one capable of bringing all the phenomena associated with wartime rape into a single explanatory context.

In the years since the first reports of mass rapes in the Yugoslavian wars of secession and the genocidal massacres in Rwanda, feminist activists and scholars, human rights organizations, journalists, and social scientists have dedicated unprecedented efforts to document, explain, and seek solutions for the phenomenon of wartime rape. While some researchers argue that the frequency, savagery, and systematic organization of wartime rape increased in late 20th-century conflicts (Barstow, 2000, p. 8; Brownmiller, 1993; Mackinnon, 1994b, p. 75; Sajor, 1998, p. 3), most emphasize the phenomenon's timeless ubiquity, tracing it back to early accounts in the Torah, in Homer, in the Anglo-Saxon chronicles, and in mythological events like the rape of the Sabine women. Researchers are also unified in their belief that the lack of attention to wartime rape by scholars and international courts represents a serious dereliction of moral and intellectual duty (e.g., Sajor, 1998, p. 2; Thomas & Regan, 1994). Most importantly, these writers agree that the only way to attack the problem of wartime rape is to identify and understand the factors and conditions that promote it (for representative samples of this literature see contributors to Barstow, 2000; contributors to Dombrowski, 1999; contributors to Sajor, 1998; contributors to Stiglmeier, 1994).

On this most critical issue, however, the consensus in the literature wavers. While there is significant agreement on some of the causal factors for wartime rape, there is no unified theory that can bring coherence to all the information associated with it. There are presently four leading theories for the prevalence of wartime rape. I will refer to these hereafter as the feminist theory, the cultural pathology theory, the strategic rape theory, and the biosocial theory. While the first three theories emphasize different causal factors for wartime rape, they are firmly unified in their ability to decisively rule out sexual desire as a major

causal factor. Moreover, proponents of the first three theories generally contend that rape in war is the result of social and cultural influences particular to given types of societies, and argue against explanations based upon "human nature." These theories differ only in the identification of which sociocultural factors are most responsible. On the other hand, the biosocial theory suggests that researchers must consider not only sociocultural factors but also the evolved sexual psychology of human males, and it emphasizes that sexual desire is likely to be a primary influence on a soldier's decision to rape.

The fundamental test of any theory is its ability to explain and bring coherence to information. A favored theory accounts for more information more economically than its rivals. Theories also generate expectations about how phenomena should be organized if the theory is valid; a favored theory is one whose logically derived expectations are satisfied more fully than those generated by its rivals. This paper evaluates each of the four major theories of wartime rape according to the following criteria: first, descriptive power (is there good "theory/data fit?") and second, parsimony (does the theory account for information with the fewest numbers of assumptions and posits?)

Before evaluating the four theories of wartime rape, however, it is necessary to establish the information base against which these theories will be judged. The following section provides a short overview of consensus knowledge about wartime rape.

BACKGROUND ON WARTIME RAPE

First, the term *wartime rape*, as it is employed in the literature, never indicates isolated examples of rape by individual fighters. Rather, the term is used interchangeably with *mass wartime rape* to indicate distinct patterns of rape by soldiers at rates that are much increased over rates of rape that prevail in peacetime. While there are no reliable statistics on wartime rape due to the reporting biases of the opposing sides and the reluctance of victims to come forward, these increases can range from the calculated

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300% to 400% increases over American civilian rape rates that accompanied American breakouts in France and Germany toward the end of World War II (Morris, 2000, p. 170) to rates of increase that likely reached into the thousands in the weeks after the Red Army first swept into Berlin and committed between 20,000 and 100,000 rapes (Brownmiller, 1975; Ryan, 1966; Siefert, 1994). Incidentally, these figures represent good examples of the mushiness of wartime rape statistics: The American figures are almost certainly underestimated because they are based solely on rapes reported to authorities, and estimates of the number of Red Army rapes in Berlin climb as high as 1,000,000 (Grossman, 1999, p. 164). A partial list of countries that have been identified as loci of mass rapes conducted by military or paramilitary forces just in the 20th century includes Belgium and Russia during World War I; Russia, Japan, Italy, Korea, China, the Philippines, and Germany during World War II; and in one or more conflicts, Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Burma, Bosnia, Cambodia, Congo, Croatia, Cyprus, East Timor, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Kuwait, Kosovo, Liberia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Peru, Pakistan, Rwanda, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Turkey, Uganda, Vietnam, Zaire, and Zimbabwe.¹

There is no reason to believe that mass wartime rape was less common prior to the 20th century. Perhaps most well documented historical wars include examples of widespread military rape. For instance, mass rape is well documented in the wars between Jews and their enemies described in the Bible (e.g., Deuteronomy, 21; Isaiah, 13:16; Lamentations, 5:11; Zechariah, 14:2), in Anglo-Saxon and Chinese chronicles (Littlewood, 1997), in Medieval European warfare (Meron, 1993), during the crusades (Brownmiller, 1975, p. 35), in Alexander's conquest of Persia (Hansen, 1999, p. 188), in Viking marauding (Karras, 1990), in the conquest of Rome by Alaric (Ghiglieri, 2000, p. 90), in the petty wars of Ancient Greeks (Finley, 1954), and so on. It is important to note that the level and extent of mass rape in many conflicts—for instance, the German “rape of Belgium” in World War I—has been hotly contested by scholars (Gullace, 1997). Yet, a review of the historical evidence conveys the distinct impression that whenever and wherever men have gone to war, many of them have reasoned like old Nestor in the *Iliad*, who concludes his pep talk to war-weary Greek troops by reminding them of the spoils of victory: “So don't anyone hurry to return homeward until after he has lain down alongside a wife of some Trojan” (Homer, 1999, Book 2, 354-355).

Moreover, strong evidence indicates that the roots of mass rape stretch back into human prehistory. The myth of

the noble savage has been irreparably damaged by the finding that the abduction and rape of outgroup women has been common, if not ubiquitous, in conflicts between band and tribal societies (for overviews see Boehm, 1999; Chagnon, 1997; Divale & Harris, 1976; Gat, 2000). The words of Ongka, a big man of the Kawelka people of Papua New Guinea, are not exceptional in ethnographical accounts of primitive wars:

When we fought in earnest, with lethal weapons, we went to the help of our friends also. We burnt houses, slashed banana trees, tore the aprons off women and raped them, axed big pigs, broke down fences; we did everything. We carried on until the place was empty of resources. ...When we left our women behind and went out to fight, they were in danger. Men came to find them, chasing them down to the edges of streams until they seized hold of them, especially if their bodies were good to look at. Twenty men might lay hold of the same woman, pulling her around for a day and night and then letting her go. (Strathern & Stewart, 2000, p. 41)

In fact, the promise of sexual access to outgroup women has often been identified by anthropologists, ethnographers, and native informants (see Ritchie, 1996; Strathern & Stewart, 2000; Valero, 1970) as a primary instigator of conflict in prestate societies.

In short, historical and anthropological evidence suggests that rape in the context of war is an ancient human practice, and that this practice has stubbornly prevailed across a stunningly diverse concatenation of societies and historical epochs.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THEORIES FOR MASS WARTIME RAPE

Feminist Theory

Feminist scholars and activists deserve credit for being the first to systematically investigate, document, and “raise consciousness” about the problem of mass wartime rape. The classic feminist orientation is to extend the so-called power hypothesis of rape into the wartime milieu (see Brownmiller, 1975). That is, rape in war, like rape in peace, is identified not as a crime of sexual passion but as a crime motivated by the desire of a man to exert dominance over a woman (see contributors to Barstow, 2000; contributors to Sajor, 1998; contributors to Stiglmayer, 1994). Feminist theorists set this theory up in opposition to what they call the “pressure cooker” theory of wartime rape (Siefert, 1994, p. 55). The pressure cooker theory, as feminists describe it, suggests that war rapists are the victims of irresistible biological imperatives and that the chaos of the wartime milieu encourages men to vent their urges to terrible effect.

However, the feminist theory of wartime rape is also a pressure cooker theory; in this case, however, the pressure that builds is not libidinal in nature but misogynistic. Under this theory, men in patriarchal societies are conditioned to distrust, despise, and dominate women. Warrior rapists “vent their contempt for women” (Brownmiller, 1975, p. 32; see also Siefert, 1994) while enforcing and perpetuating patriarchal gender arrangements from which

¹ This list is drawn from the following sources: Amnesty International (1997, 1998, 2000); Barstow (2000, p. 3); Brownmiller (1975); Chelela (1998); Ghiglieri (2000, p. 90); Littlewood (1997); Menon (1998); Neier (1998, pp. 172-191); Oosterveld (1998, pp. 64-67); Swiss and Giller (1993); Tanaka (1999, pp. 174-176); Thomas and Regan (1994).

all men benefit. Therefore, rape in war is deemed a result of a conspiracy, not necessarily conscious but still systematic, of men to dominate and oppress women. While men may fight on different sides and for different reasons, in one sense they are all warriors on behalf of their gender—and the enemy is woman.

Since rape is seen as the result of specific types of socialization practices particular to specific types of societies, feminist rape theory generates the expectation that rape in the context of war (and peace) should only prevail in a limited subset of societies. Specifically, rape in war is expected to occur largely in Western and staunchly patriarchal societies and in societies that are somehow distant from or out of harmony with nature (Siefert, 1996, p. 36). In this aspect, the feminist theory has poor theory-data fit. Not only does evidence indicate that peacetime rape (and its proscription) is a cultural universal (Palmer, 1989), but it also shows that large-scale rape is a common outcome of conflicts among bands, tribes, chiefdoms, and state societies spread across continents and centuries. Thus, despite the invaluable contributions of feminists to documenting and analyzing mass wartime rape, the classic feminist theory cannot itself account for all of the data.

Cultural Pathology Theory

The cultural pathology theory has the character of cultural psychoanalysis. The goal is to peer back into a nation's history and see what developmental factors conspired to cause its men to descend to the vilest barbarism. Iris Chang's well-known study of the rape of Nanking represents a case in point. One scholar describes Chang's work as follows:

Her research points to the high level of militarization in Japanese education and culture at that time, the brutality of military training, and the new attitude toward the Chinese, previously admired but now looked down upon. She also describes the deeply ingrained contempt for women within Japanese military culture. (Barstow, 2000, p. 47)

Another scholar argues that the sexual crimes perpetrated by the Japanese military in Asia during World War II were the result of "the sado-masochistic tendencies in Japanese child-rearing brought on by collective trauma having to do with natural disasters and subjugation by other countries" (Rosenman, 2000, p. 15; for a different psychoanalytic approach see Parin, 1994). Other writers indict military culture generally for fostering hostile attitudes toward women that, too often, culminate in feelings of entitlement to rape (e.g., Morris, 2000; Chang, 1997). MacKinnon (1994b) explained Serb rapes of Muslim and Croat women as a direct result of the widespread availability of explicit pornography prior to the war: "When pornography is this normal, a whole population of men is primed to dehumanize women and to enjoy inflicting assault sexually.... Pornography was the perfect preparation—motivator and instructional manual in one for the sexual atrocities in this genocide" (p. 77).

For the cultural pathology theory, the fit between theory and data can be quite suggestive. Writers paint plausible portraits of sociocultural factors that may have contributed to the frequency or ferocity of wartime rape. However, while cultural pathology theory may help us do a better job of understanding the dynamics of wartime rape in given cases, it provides little help in understanding the phenomenon as a whole. Why is it that wartime rape occurs not only in individual, pathological cultures but prevails across eras and all types of cultures? Why is it evident not only in mechanized modern states that are "distant from nature" but in band and tribal contexts? How is it that wartime rape is regularly perpetrated by men who have massively different socialization experiences: imperial Japanese troops, Mongol raiders, Maori, Yanomamo, Jivaro, and New Guinean tribesmen, and American soldiers in Vietnam?

Strategic Rape Theory

Strategic rape theory is currently the most influential theory of mass wartime rape. It is widely credited by activists and scholars and largely taken for granted by international commissions and journalists. Therefore it will be examined at somewhat greater length than the preceding alternatives. Starting with Susan Brownmiller's important book, *Against Our Will* (1975; see also Brownmiller, 1993), and increasingly since the Yugoslavian and Rwandan mass rapes, a consensus has been building that wholesale rape represents just another ordinance—like bombs, bullets, or propaganda—that a military can use to accomplish its strategic objectives; rape is a tactic executed by soldiers in the service of larger strategic objectives. While supporters of this position do not always claim that military planners explicitly instruct soldiers to rape, the implication is clear: Wartime rape is a coherent, coordinated, logical, and brutally effective means of prosecuting warfare (see Allen, 1996; Kamal, 1998; Littlewood, 1997; Thomas & Regan, 1994).

Variations on the theory that wartime rape is strategic rape are predicated on the deleterious effects that mass rape has on enemy populations. It is credited with spreading debilitating terror, diminishing the resistance of civilians, and demoralizing, humiliating, and emasculating enemy soldiers who are thereby shown to have failed in their most elemental protective duties. Further, mass rape is said to cast blight on the very roots of the afflicted culture, affecting its capacity to remain coherent and to reproduce itself. By raping women, soldiers split the familial atoms of which every society is composed. Raped women may become pregnant by the enemy, they may suffer grievous physical and psychological injuries, they may die, they may be abandoned or disavowed by shamed families and husbands, all of which degrade the ability of a culture to replenish itself through sexual reproduction. For these reasons, advocates of strategic rape theory often refer to it as "genocidal rape"—rape designed, whether with full consciousness or not, to anni-

hilate a people and a culture (see Allen, 1996; Barstow, 2000; Hyun-Kyung, 2000, p. 20; MacKinnon, 1994a, 1994b; Salzman, 2000).

While mass wartime rape can surely result in the damage discussed above, it remains possible that the supporters of strategic rape theory may be confusing the consequences of wartime rape with the motives for it. Just because these consequences may include demoralized populaces or fractured families does not mean that these were the goals for which the rapes were perpetrated in the first place. All of these results may be unintended (which is not to say unwelcome) consequences of wartime rape.

In just nine months spanning 1971 to 1972, Pakistani soldiers raped as many as 200,000 Bengali women (Habiba, 1998; Kamal, 1998). An Indian novelist commented, "The rapes were so systematic and pervasive that they had to be conscious army policy" (as cited in Siefert, 1996, p. 35). However, there is virtually no evidence cited in the literature to support the notion of conscious planning aside from this appearance. While some documentary evidence does exist suggesting that some modern militaries have considered rape strategically valuable, this evidence is sparse and of dubious authenticity (see Salzman, 2000). On the other hand, we do possess concrete evidence that many military planners have recognized that rape committed by soldiers can represent a serious threat to their larger strategic interests and have therefore sought to proscribe it. As different commentators on the subject have indicated, one of the most effective ways of galvanizing resistance in an embattled population is by exposing it to propaganda forecasting orgies of rape when and if the enemy triumphs (e.g., Brownmiller, 1975, p. 128; Thomas & Regan, 1994, p. 93). In short, there is at least as much reason to suspect wartime rape can be strategically counterproductive, resulting not in cowed and crushed populations but in galvanized and vengeful populations of civilians and soldiers.

A well-documented example of a situation where wartime rape ran counter to strategic interests is represented by the experience of the Japanese military in Korea and China throughout the 1930s and until the end of World War II. In their Asian conquests, Japanese commanders found that the frequent rapes of civilian women created serious strategic problems. Far from cowing or breaking populations, it served to antagonize, even to enrage them. The Japanese inaugurated their massive system of forced military prostitution, the so-called "comfort women" system, in large part because rape was considered detrimental to military goals. The first comfort station was inaugurated in 1932 in Shanghai, using not local women but imported Japanese prostitutes for the pleasure of the Japanese navy. The station was set up in direct response to an official request for comfort women who could prevent the sailors from raping local women (Chung, 1995, p. 13). Tanaka's (1999) historical study of the comfort women issue concludes the following:

[Japanese] Military leaders were deeply concerned that such serious crimes [i.e., rapes] would arouse the antagonism of civilians toward their conquerors in the occupied territories and believed that a ready supply of women for the troops would reduce the incidence of rape. In other words, *the system was introduced for strategic reasons* [italics added], not out of concern for the civilians. (p. xi)

Chung's (1995) overview of the Korean comfort women system reaches the same conclusion:

The most direct reason for expanding military comfort stations during the war was the frequent rape of women carried out by Japanese soldiers. Soldiers plundered towns, raped women, started fires and brutally killed any captives. Rape, in particular, tended to provoke strong anti-Japanese local feeling. This made it difficult to rule the occupied territories, hence the military ordered: Each soldier's behavior must be tightly controlled and sexual comfort facilities should soon be set up. (p. 14)

There were other reasons for the inauguration of the comfort women system—like controlling venereal disease and providing sexual release, which was considered healthy—but decreasing the incidence of rape was a primary goal.

While this represents only one example, it is relatively uncontroversial, and similar examples could be adduced. For instance, to cite a more recent example, consider the following 1997 report of rapes during civil conflict in Zaire:

On December 5 or 6, according to several local sources, soldiers brutally raped school girls at the Lycee Likovi secondary school in Bunia [Zaire]...The population of the town turned against the soldiers—there were protest marches and a soldier was reportedly killed. A witness said, "these people have been pushed beyond their limits—now they are going to kill soldiers." This was not the only girl's secondary school to be attacked by soldiers bent upon violating young girls. At Idohu ... a witness reporting that the soldiers who went to Bunia raped and kidnapped the young girls in late November, said: "This has turned disgust with the FAZ [Forces Armes Zairoises] to bitter hatred." (Amnesty International, 1997)

Thus, as with Japanese rapes in the World War II era, there is much reason to believe that rapes committed by members of Zaire's security forces were strategically counterproductive, stirring up resentment and resistance in victimized populations rather than cowing them into submission.

Furthermore, the strategic rape hypothesis makes a poor fit with evidence from band and tribal populations. Far from helping aggressors realize their strategic objectives, rape in the context of primitive wars seems to have exactly the opposite effect. The common rapes of outgroup women in the context of non-state wars inspire feelings of hatred and vengefulness, and often result in long and exhausting cycles of retributive raids and counter-rapes (see accounts in Chagnon, 1997; Gat, 2000; Ritchie, 1996, Strathern & Stewart, 2000). In summary, it seems that the strategic rape hypothesis, while perhaps accounting for some instances of mass rape, does not succeed in bringing wartime rape within a single explanatory context.

Summary Assessment of Sociocultural Theories

While each of the above theories is distinct from the others, clearly they share major factors in common. First, all of the theories agree that rape in war is not incidental but functional. That is, rape in war serves a purpose larger than itself. More specifically, wartime rape functions to serve the interests of the collective over the interests of the individual soldier. For instance, Thomas and Regan (1994) write: "Documenting where and how rape functions as a tool of military strategy is essential to counteract the long-standing view of rape in war as private or incidental" (p. 85). Second, most writers either explicitly deny that sexual desire is a factor in a soldier's decision to rape or define it as a minor contributing factor — rape in war is mainly about power, sadistic violence, and strategy, not sex. For example, Siefert (1996) is representative in writing that rape "...has nothing to do with sexuality but with the exertion of sexual violence directed against women" (p. 36). Stigmayer's (1994) formulation is more emphatic, but still representative:

A rape is an aggressive and humiliating act, as even a soldier knows, or at least suspects. He rapes because he wants to engage in violence. He rapes because he wants to demonstrate his power. He rapes because he is the victor. He rapes because the woman is the enemy's woman, and he wants to humiliate and annihilate the enemy. He rapes because the woman is herself the enemy whom he wishes to humiliate and annihilate. He rapes because he despises women. He rapes to prove his virility. He rapes because the acquisition of the female body means a piece of territory conquered. He rapes to take out on someone else the humiliation he has suffered in the war. He rapes to work off his fears. He rapes because it's really only some "fun" with the guys. He rapes because war, a man's business, has awakened his aggressiveness, and he directs it at those who play a subordinate role in the world of war. (p. 84)

Third, and finally, all three theories assume that the roots of the phenomenon are sunk not in biological soil but in strictly sociocultural factors that are separate and distinct from biology. Most writers follow Brownmiller's (1975) argument that rape is biological only in the sense that an "accident of biology" (male size and strength and the nature of human sex organs) gave males the "structural capacity" to rape and females the "structural vulnerability" to be raped (pp. 13-15). Finally, for all of their valuable contributions, each of the three sociocultural theories have been found wanting in theory-data fit and/or parsimony and therefore fail as generalizable theories of wartime rape.

It must be acknowledged that this failure would come as no great surprise to many proponents of sociocultural theories who often claim that a phenomenon as complex as wartime rape is unlikely to distill to a single cause, and that a pluralistic approach is therefore most likely to yield results. Thus, at different times in her 1975 book, Brownmiller advocates for all three of the above sociocultural theories. This pluralistic approach is well represented in the excerpt from Stigmayer above and in Swiss and Giller (1993), who write: "In war, rape is an assault on both

the individual and her family and her community. As well as an attempt to dominate, humiliate, and control behavior, rape in war can also be intended to disable an enemy by destroying the bonds of family and society...Rape can be both a military strategy and a nationalist policy" (p. 612). For sociocultural theorists, military rape is often the result of a complex combination of causal factors. However, as stressed above, the sexual impulses of individual soldiers are almost never allowed a significant place in the causal mix. This stands in stark contrast to the biosocial theory, which I move to consider now.

The Biosocial Theory

Biology-based theories of wartime rape are often described by critics as indicating that sociocultural factors are insignificant variables in soldiers' decisions to rape and that the activity is wholly under genetic control. In this view, rape in war is an inevitable, genetically determined reflex. This view is sometimes identified with the above mentioned "pressure cooker" theory of wartime rape: the idea that men possess instincts for sexual aggression that are restrained under normal conditions but that, in the chaotic wartime milieu, spew forth like the vented gas of a pressure cooker.

The pressure cooker metaphor is based on hydraulic models of aggression championed by Freud and 20th-century ethologists like Konrad Lorenz and Robert Ardrey, and critics are right to treat it dismissively. However, human behavioral biology has changed radically over the last 3 to 4 decades, and the current generation of evolutionary and biological researchers stridently oppose the older view that rape and other aggressive behaviors result from blind biological drives; rather they emphasize that all behavior (including aggressive behavior) is acutely sensitive to and influenced by environmental cues (e.g., Daly & Wilson, 1988; Tooby & Cosmides, 1992; Thornhill & Palmer, 2000, p. 167-178). However, because the hydraulic model is still commonly identified with biology-based theories, it is important to point out its shortcomings before discussing the biosocial theory proper. The key aspect of the hydraulic model of wartime rape is its context-insensitive determinacy. Therefore, to distinguish it from the biosocial theory, I will refer to it as the biological determinism theory of wartime rape.

Since it hinges on the assumption of biological adaptations functioning to promote rape in war that are all but insensitive to environmental conditions, a biological determinist theory generates the expectation that virtually everywhere we find hostile soldiers in the midst of civilians identified with the enemy there will be high rates of rape. On this measure, the biological determinist theory enjoys strong theory-data fit. Of all the theories so far discussed, it comes closest to accounting for the pervasiveness of rape in armed conflict situations.

A biological determinism theory of wartime rape also accounts well for the demographic characteristics of its victims. If wartime rape is primarily motivated by sexual

desire (as opposed to, for instance, strategic concerns or misogyny) then soldier rapists would be expected to predominantly target women at the ages of peak physical attractiveness. Since redundant research demonstrates that, across societies, men (and women) consider young women to be most attractive (see Buss 1989; for an overview see Symons, 1995), the theory predicts that young women will be overrepresented as the victims of rape. And the evidence is indeed clear that, as in peacetime rape (Ghiglieri, 2000; Jones, 1999; Thornhill & Palmer, 2000), young, reproductive-aged women are vastly overrepresented as wartime rape's victims. While this conclusion cannot be statistically demonstrated, anecdotal accounts leave little doubt as to its accuracy (see accounts in Brownmiller, 1975, pp. 45, 52, 55, 58; Chagnon, 1997; Chung, 1995, p. 17; Gutman, 1992; Stiglmayer, 1994; Strathern & Stewart, 2000; Tanaka, 1999, p. xvi; Valero, 1970).

However, the theory is limited in its ability to account for other phenomena associated with wartime rape. For instance, a biological determinist theory generates the expectation that, since wartime rape is under tight genetic control, the character, intensity, savagery, and prevalence of wartime rape should fluctuate within exceedingly narrow bounds as we cross from conflict to conflict. Yet, clearly, these characteristics do vary widely from conflict to conflict. Moreover, the theory does a poor job of accounting for the fact that in many conflicts, many soldiers apparently do not rape. If the tendency to rape in war is biologically determined, then why do some soldiers rape freely while others abstain? In sum, while the biological determinism theory accounts well for the prevalence of wartime rape around the world it does not account well for variation from conflict to conflict and variation in the motivation and willingness of individual soldiers to rape.

Finally, the biological determinism theory, with its insistence on rigid biological adaptations ultimately functioning to perpetuate the genes of the rapist, does not anticipate the common reports of wanton and perversely sexualized violence committed against women in war zones, up to and including post-rape murder. These are accounts in which warriors implement degrees of force far in excess of that required to perpetrate the rape and, in the process, greatly diminish their likelihood of passing on genes.

In point of fact, however, the biological determinist theory, so described, is a straw man with no scholarly adherents; the theory exists in its fullest form in the critiques of sociocultural theorists who identify it with the opinions of sociobiologists and evolutionary psychologists (e.g., H. Rose, 2000; S. Rose, 2000). Modern biology-based theories of wartime rape are not theories of genetic determinism; they are, in fact, biosocial theories that place fully coequal emphasis on genetic and sociocultural factors. This pluralism is typical of biology-based theories of human behavior and psychology generally, which are founded on the premise, here voiced by Tooby and Cosmides (1992), that "Every feature of every phenotype

is fully and equally codetermined by the interaction of the organism's genes...and its environments" (p. 83).

The biosocial theory is premised on a significant genetic substrate to the phenomenon of wartime rape. Wartime rape occurs in societies of all different races, religions, ethnicities, and political and economic systems. Since this behavior is well documented in societies spaced widely in dimensions of space, time, and cultural complexity, the simplest assumption is, as recognized by the anthropologist Roland Littlewood (1997), that wartime rape is in some sense "natural" to human males. Given its cross-cultural and cross-historical prevalence, and given the age ranges of its primary victims, biosocial theorists conclude that a prominent motive for wartime rape is the simple sexual desire of individual fighters (e.g., Ghiglieri, 2000; Thornhill & Palmer, 2000).

However, the variability of wartime rape across conflicts and the fact that many soldiers with the option to rape apparently choose not to decisively rules out the view of wartime rape as a blind genetic drive that is, and ever will be, expressed when men meet to fight and kill. This variation is best explained as a result of sociocultural influences. In short, genetic and sociocultural explanations cannot be profitably viewed as antagonistic or as mutually exclusive alternatives. Rather, each approach complements and completes the other. Without a genetic perspective, the ubiquity of wartime rape makes no sense nor does its disproportionate focus on victims at the ages of peak physical attractiveness. On the other hand, without sociocultural consideration, the variability of wartime rape makes no sense. Integrating the perspectives into a single biosocial theory allows a view of wartime rape in which all the data are, finally, brought within a single explanatory context.

The biosocial theory of rape is most often identified with the work of biologist Randy Thornhill and anthropologist Craig Palmer. In *A Natural History of Rape*, Thornhill and Palmer (2000) argue that strictly sociocultural explanations for rape, including wartime rape, are incomplete (see also contributors to Buss & Malamuth, 1996; Jones, 1999; Shields & Shields, 1983; Thornhill & Thornhill, 1983). Moreover, they lay out a case—based on rape statistics, evolutionary theory, and comparison with other species where sexual coercion is common (including nonhuman apes and other primates)—that sexual desire is a common motivation for human rape and that this desire ultimately traces back to men's evolved sexual psychology. Thornhill and Palmer's argument is *not* that men are necessarily adapted to commit rape in certain contexts. While they do tentatively advance the theory that men—like scorpion flies, orangutans, and certain species of ducks—may possess condition-dependent biological adaptations that are specifically designed to promote rape in appropriate cost-benefit environments, they stress the fact that an equally plausible theory is that rape is a nonadaptive by-product or "spandrel" (see Gould & Lewontin, 1979) of adaptations for consensual sexual activity. Therefore, the main value of Thornhill and Palmer's work is not to provide a final answer to the vexed question

of whether or not rape and other forms of sexual coercion are biologically adaptive for human beings but to present a formidable case against "not sex" theories of human rape in both peace and war contexts.

CONCLUSION

Contributors to the literature on wartime rape do not see themselves as debating a merely academic question. Rather, the goal is both to bring attention to the crime so that international lawmakers will get serious about punishing it and to "carve it at the joints" so that we can begin to take practical and efficient steps toward diminishing its incidence. Contributors to the literature do their research and report their findings in the ancient conviction that we must understand our problems before we can hope to solve them. This characterization applies just as truly to biosocial theorists, many of the most important of whom are women (these include Barbara Smuts, Nancy Thornhill, and Leah Shields), as it does to strictly sociocultural theorists. Yet, while any support for biological pressure cooker theories has vanished, an equally inadequate theory continues to enjoy near universal moral and intellectual dominance, not only among mainstream contributors to the literature on wartime rape but also among the wider educated public. This is the notion that mass wartime rape is a purely sociocultural phenomenon, and that, for however varied the motives that culminate in mass rape, sexual desire can play no significant role. This insistence on the deterministic power of culture and the reliance on the mantra that rape is not "about sex" (except in the most trivial and literal sense) represents a significant obstacle to expanding our understanding of mass wartime rape and thus to devising practical strategies for limiting its occurrence.

There are many and complex reasons for the continued resistance to plausible, empirically supported, and theoretically satisfying biosocial theories of wartime (and peacetime) rape. Part of this doubtlessly owes to disciplinary inertia and the tendency of researchers to defend theories on which they have staked their careers, their reputations, and their worldviews. However, other factors are operative, which come into play whenever biology is invoked as a significant player in human behavior and psychology. There is the legacy of social Darwinism that, for many, has forever stigmatized the application of biology to human social affairs. There is the lingering sense that the invocation of any but the most limited biological role in human behavior is insidiously deterministic, suggesting that human misbehaviors are inevitable and immune to social remediation. There is the impression that invoking a sexual or biological component to rape mitigates the rapist's culpability, making him a helpless victim of innate and ineradicable impulses. Most important, there is the sense that if human nature truly does underpin wartime rape, then we are powerless to fight it. After all, while you can conceivably change sociocultural factors, you cannot hope to change human nature. Therefore, allowing biology a beachhead in the explana-

tion of mass wartime rape seems, to those passionately committed to seeking solutions, like the first step toward the surrender to inevitability.

However, this would be true only if mass wartime rape were to be considered wholly under genetic control and if sociocultural factors were denied a major role in meliorating or enhancing men's undeniably increased propensity to commit rape in the context of war. This, as stressed above, is not the case. The biosocial theory is founded on the premise that sociocultural factors play an integral part in influencing the incidence, prevalence, and savagery of wartime rape from conflict to conflict and from man to man. Moreover, the logical conclusion of the biosocial hypothesis is not that we can only stop men from raping when we gain the capacity to change human nature. On the contrary, the biosocial perspective actually leads logically to a practical approach of exactly the same kind as those logically reached by sociocultural theorists: While it is unlikely that the scourge of wartime rape can ever be eradicated, we can effect changes in the sociocultural factors that make men far more likely to rape in war than in peacetime milieus. Where the biosocial theory might differ from its strictly sociocultural rivals is in the identification of changes that are most likely to be effective. While it is beyond the scope of this article and the present author's expertise to suggest practical measures, it is clear that a theory that accounts for genetic as well as sociocultural factors and allows sexual desire an important causal role may lead to different and more effective strategies for limiting the occurrence of wartime rape.

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