

# How Does Hegemonic Masculinity Influence Wartime Sexual Violence?

Written by Emer Campbell

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EMER CAMPBELL, SEP 2 2018

Sexual violence has long been considered a by-product of war. Women are presented as the sole victims, with men being allocated the role of perpetrator. To explain the perpetration of wartime sexual violence, scholars traditionally draw upon men's presumed biological need for sexual release, resulting in their victims acting as substitutes for their partners at home (Wood, 2009:398). To an extent, this essay shall acknowledge that this is in fact true. However, instead of approaching male perpetration as biologically deterministic I aim to argue that perpetration is socially determined. In that society has created a masculine identity that is based upon socially agreed discourses that militarise men partake in to construct and maintain hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is presented as the most idealised version of being a man, therefore the destruction of hegemony can offer strategic gains during wartime. I aim not to denounce individual agency or responsibility but to highlight how a societal construction has become a structural factor contributing to male sexual victimisation. This essay, therefore, aims to illustrate how hegemony is constructed, maintained and legitimated through the practice of sexual violence. Strategically utilised as a tactic to decimate the masculine identities of male enemy combatants and civilians.

I address this essay through a gendered lens of hegemonic masculinity, aimed with illustrating how hegemony is constructed through discourses. I shall draw upon the notion of doing gender as posited by West and Zimmerman, whereby "gender is the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions and appropriate activities" (1987:127). I shall, therefore, conduct an analysis of these activities to illustrate how they contribute to the construction/deconstruction of hegemony. More specifically a discourse analysis of existing literature, including legal statutes and trial judgements on male perpetration and the limited information regarding male victimisation of wartime sexual violence. I use the term sexual violence as it is broader than rape which depends upon penetration for characterisation. Sexual violence does not depend exclusively on the perpetration of the violation upon a victim but can encompass the threat of attack. This essay is therefore rooted in a definition of sexual violence that understands the act to include "any violence, whether physical and/or mental, carried out through sexual means or by targeting sexuality" (McDougal, 1998:par:21).

### Construction

International and social practices are characterised to reflect the dominance of male actors and masculine ideals. Institutions, therefore, reflect and prioritise those that display "muscular strength, height and body hair" (Meysman, 2016:368). Raewyn Connell argues that these predominantly male features assisted in the construction and institutionalisation of a hierarchical gender system (2005:77). Leading to the construction of hegemonic masculinity that "embodies the most honoured way of being a man, requiring all other men to position themselves in relation to it" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005:83). To be maintained the hegemonic masculine partakes in discourses that assert and affirm his dominance within society. Discourses that effectively juxtapose them with the weak and passive feminine identity; "risk-taking, self-discipline, physical toughness, aggression, violence and overtly sexual" (Hinjosa, 2010:179).

Jefferson claims that hegemonic masculinity scholars homogenise men, denying their agency, thus expecting men to partake or if unable idealise hegemonic masculinity. Individuals are presumed to conform to the standards and

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practices demanded by hegemony, without consideration for “how men with their unique biographies and particular psychic formations relate” (2002:73). However, Jefferson fails to recognise how hegemonic discourses have become the bedrock of society, contributing towards the formation of nationalism. Hegemony becomes more than the identity of a singular male when the discourses constructing hegemony become illustrative of those practiced by militaries. For essentially military training is based upon the deconstruction of the very unique biographies from which Jefferson basis his argument; because individuals “undergo a form of indoctrination which includes breaking down the civilian identity” (Baaz and Stern, 2013:20). Failure to adapt to such practices means exclusion from hegemony and thus the military as such practices are aimed to create units based upon “conformity, cohesion and loyalty” (Baaz and Stern, 2008:493). Cynthia Enloe argues that insecurity in the state of nature alongside the overtly dominant hegemonic identities in militaries contributes to the instigation of conflict, “masculinised memory, masculinised humiliation and masculinised hope” (2004:44). Idealised hegemonic males within society are the most powerful and dominant, therefore the international realm presents them with an opportunity to exert and display their hegemony to a much wider audience. By exerting or participating in acts of strength and power, hegemonic masculine males are able to translate this into the international realm through war. Ultimately serving to exert their power and dominance over other nations, ethnicities, racial or religious groups. Subsequently presenting states the opportunity to have control over how they are characterised within international relations; preferring as such to encapsulate traits of the hegemonic masculine over the femme fatal or in other words “guns not butter” (Negal, 1998:247).

Perpetrating violence upon enemy combatants or civilians assists in dehumanising an enemy. Violence assists in ensuring an enemy knows that the perpetrator is the one with the power, the victim is, therefore, the perpetrators subordinate. Whilst violence works in creating distance between the perpetrator and their victim, it achieves the opposite for military units. Committing acts of violence upon an enemy works to create unit cohesion and loyalty with one’s comrades. Committing acts of extreme violence, particularly sexual in nature assists in reinforcing an individual’s hegemonic masculine identity, as individuals partake in acts that are socially agreed identifiable of hegemony. Collective participation in extreme violence during war assists in integrating and socialising new recruits within units as it is “proof of commitment to the unit’s fierceness – sealing allegiance in atrocity” (Diken and Lausten, 2005:112). Creating group cohesion and a collective identity is an argument presented by Dara Cohen to explain female perpetration of sexual violence. Whereby female recruits aim to illustrate that they too can exert power and dominance as they “compete for status and recognition in a traditionally patriarchal context” (Cohen, 2013:398). I contend however that because of the hierarchical masculine structures of militaries women cannot presume themselves to have achieved hegemony. For ultimately the perpetration of the act is for the benefit of the group and to subordinate the enemy. The female perpetrator is, therefore, serving the needs of her fellow male combatants and her male superiors through participating, ultimately serving the hegemonic establishment. Perpetrating sexual violence for the benefit of a group is an argument denying individual agency and responsibility for one’s action.

Baaz and Stern draw upon female perpetration to posit upon the unsexing of hegemonic masculinity (2009:499). In doing so, they disregard how dependent hegemony is upon the symbolism of the physical male form, not just for characterisation but sustainment of the identity. For ultimately, it is through the repetitive participation in discourses that ensures inclusion within the identity, “the body is a participant in the social practice” (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005:851). Hegemonies dependence on biological reproductive organs combined with distinguishable physical attributes ensures that the penis is more than just a signifier of one’s sex but a symbol of heteronormative masculine power. For the penis permits, an individual through heterosexual penetrative sex to position himself as the “assertor, insertor and predator” (Plummer, 2005:178). The penis, therefore, reinforces the notion of the always powerful hegemonic man as the penetrator not penetrated, dominator not dominated. Heterosexuality, therefore, is the ideal norm insofar as contributing to the construction of myths based around male victims of sexual violence.

The naturalisation of myths surrounding the incompatibility of masculinity and victimhood is rooted in gendered expectations of the hegemonic identity. Existence evidenced by a lack of policy focusing solely on male victims of wartime sexual violence, despite empirical evidence documenting victimisation in twenty-five conflicts over the past thirty years (Sivakumaran, 2013:80). Aliraza Javaid’s study on how societal ideals regarding hegemony have constructed two myths around male sexual victimisation; “men cannot be raped” and “‘real’ men can defend themselves” (2017:9-11). These myths essentially affirm masculine power and dominance within society, with men

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primarily internalising their existence through disbelief of the occurrence of male sexual victimisation (Chapleau et al., 2008:600). Combined, the existence of myths alongside women's role of sole victim ensures that men cannot be viewed as "authentic victim subjects" (Kapur, 2002:2). Subsequently, scholars, health and legal practitioners fail to conceptualise men as victims, much to the success of the hegemonic masculine perpetrator.

## Deconstruction

Society's construction and naturalisation of the mythological hegemonic man has resulted in a vacuum of knowledge regarding male victims of wartime sexual violence, and the strategic rewards gained from such victimisation. Impenetrable masculinity creates a reality that assists in obscuring and denying male recognition as victims. Society, therefore, assists in creating a cycle ensuring men remain targets of sexual violence. Reality denying male recognition means we deny men the ability to vocalise and recount their lived experience of sexual violence, as "we can only see what we have language to describe" (Ungar, 2003:26). Men are therefore deprived of the means by which they can vocalise their experience and society assists in entrenching the myth that men cannot be sexually victimised. Considering that wartime sexual violence is predominately dependent upon anecdotal evidence this is inherently problematic in addressing the causes conducive to male victimisation. It therefore cannot be surprising that men verbalise their experience through "nondescript words like 'abuse' or torture" (Gorris, 2015:415). Consequently as noted in Croatia, health care practitioners failed to recognise male victims, dismissing them from care because of "internalised stereotypical gender roles" (Oosterhoof et al., 2004:256).

Academics and legal practitioners illustrate further failure as they base male victimisation upon what is empirically documented about female victims. Men are thus recognised as victims upon the basis of forced or coerced anal penetration (Graham, 2006:191). Acknowledging men as victims of wartime rape and not sexual violence illustrates how rape is a more common violation victimising women. Considering that women are raped anally and that an anus is a feature shared with men, conceptual development cannot be considered of notable success. Especially when one considers that during wartime anal penetration is not the most common form of sexual violation men (Sivakumaran, 2013:85). Recognising victims upon a comparative basis with women disregards gender specific harms that have detrimental implications for the victim. Provided that policy change and conceptual development is required, researchers must transcend gender bias to find truth; as "we live in a hyper-numeric world – if something is not measured it does not exist" (Andreas and Greenhill, 2010:1).

Policies relating to victims of sexual violence should be developed with gender-sensitive terminology in order to recognise male victims, as the "law has the power to silence alternative meanings – to suppress other stories" (Finlay, 1989:888). Additional Protocol II of the 1959 Geneva Convention was the first international legal statute prohibiting victimisation of a sexual nature, "outrages upon personal dignity, humiliating and degrading treatment, rape, enforced prostitution and any form of indecent assault" (Protocol II, 1977:art:2). Considering that such acts could be perpetrated against men, one would presume that this would lead to the recognition of men as victims. However, Additional Protocol I essentially undermines such an assertion as it underpins the above gender-neutral terminology utilised above as it stipulates "women shall be the object of special request and shall be protected against rape, forced prostitution and any other form of indecent assault" (Protocol I, 1977:art 76). Additional Protocol I subsequently denies male recognition of victimhood in spite of applicability to the acts prohibited in Additional Protocol II. Furthermore, the prohibition on sexually connoted acts is integrated into the Convention as an additional framework, effectively illustrating the lack of severity considered of wartime sexual violence, especially given the hierarchical nature of breaches within the Convention (Women, 2000:2.4).

A recognisable attitudinal change occurred with the creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the implementation of the Rome Statute, acknowledging the severity of wartime sexual violence. Seeking to prosecute sexually violent crimes the ICC aimed to bring an end to the culture of impunity that naturalised sexual violence as a by-product of war, "to punish offenders and deter others" (Hennessey and Gerry, 2012:11). The Rome Statute informed post-conflict tribunals held within the ICC of what acts were constitutive of a war crime, crime against humanity or both. Bringing to focus acts that if committed, irrespective of the victim's sex would be considered a war crime: "rape, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilisation or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity" (1998:art.7). By determining that these acts were war crimes immediately heightened the level of

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recognition and jurisprudence of the ICC. However, there is an apparent disconnect between this legal framework and individual legal practitioners' conceptualisations of the victim. The key point is that in spite of gender-neutral terminology, individual gender bias persists in ways that ensure that such acts cannot be deemed applicable to men.

The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) was the first international war crimes tribunal seeking to prosecute charges of sexual violence. Moreover, the ICTY recognised that women were not the sole victims of sexual violence. However, throughout individual prosecutions, there were notable differences in how male victimisation was coined in comparison to female. Whilst female victimisation was recognised as "rape", "torture" was the term utilised to conceptualise male victimisation (Hennessey and Gerry, 2012:11). A notable example of this comes from the first ever trial whereby it was recognised that both male and females were sexually victimised by Dusko Tadić. In spite of such recognition, male victimisation was categorised as torture and women as rape (see Prosecutor v Tadić, 1995: par: 2.6/4.3). What is more, gendered expectations regarding the categorisation of male victimhood became even more apparent in Prosecutor v Mucić. Insofar as the Trial Chamber noting that they believed that forcing two brothers to perform fellatio on one another could constitute an act of rape, for which liability would have been found. The prosecutor illustrating subconscious gendered bias noted that the act was "a fundamental attack on human dignity" (Prosecutor v Mucić, 1998:par:1066). By not categorising male sexual victimisation exactly and explicitly as acts constitutive of sexual violence legal practitioners assist in obscuring a reality of how and why sexual violence is used strategically against men during war. Furthered by ensuring that it fails to end impunity for specific acts sexually victimising men. To date, sexual violence prosecutions have focused solely on civilian men to the detriment of captured male combatants or rebel fighters (Sivakumaran, 2013:91). A point worth noting considering that throughout the Liberian civil wars male combatants experienced higher rates of sexual violence than civilians. With 32.6% male combatants admitting victimisation by sexual violence and 16.5% recounting sexual slavery versus 7.4% of civilian men (Johnson et al., 2008:676). As such, it must be noted that the victimisation of militaries enemy men is of much more strategic value than civilians due to their identifiable hegemonic masculinity. Sexual violence, therefore, becomes the method by which such an identity is deconstructed.

The perpetration of sexual violence strikes at the very heart of a male's masculine identity. An act that directly challenges the incompatibility of hegemonic masculinity and victimhood. Sexual violence, therefore, decimates an individual's masculine identity resulting in their emasculation and feminisation, "the phallus is master-signifier and femininity is symbolically defined by lack" (Connell, 2005:70). Feminisation does not require the castration of male sex organs to implicate femininity. For it is the sheer fact of physical violation or threat thereof upon male sexual features or sexuality that is so distinctly masculine, and hegemonic that denies them of their identity. Charlotte Hopper determines feminization serves a dual purpose; whereby the perpetration assists in the maintenance of the hegemonic identity, whilst simultaneously subordinating victims (2012:71). Ultimately the victim of sexual violence has failed to adhere to societal standards and beliefs regarding men, insofar as embodying the socially agreed female subordinate sexual role. The hegemonic masculine perpetrator, however, maintains his identity as his position reinforces his sexually dominating role. What is more, the perpetration of sexual violence targeting a masculine identity is ultimately aimed at the destruction of an enemy's society. Victimised by sexual violence ensures societies cannot illustrate power and strength, due to the loss of masculine identities, "the territory is feminised and the imagined ideals of the nation" (Fiske, 2014:128).

Victimised by sexual violence leads to further breakdown of heteronormative standards of which men are measured by, as male victims become "tainted with homosexuality" (Sivakumaran, 2005). Gendered notions surrounding the wanton sexual needs of masculinity clouds the possibility of men who do not 'want it': "men who admit that they do not want sex or were forced to have sex violates codes of male (hetero)sexuality" (Weiss, 2008:277). Combining this notion with the two myths within this essay, victimisation is denounced in favour of presumed consent. The implications of this are that throughout the world there remains over seventy documented states that criminalise homosexuality (Lewis, 2009:18). Considering the difficulties men have in vocalising their experience this is particularly worrisome. Strategically tainting a victim with homosexuality assists further in the breakdown of their masculinity as "in men, gender appears to lean on sexuality" (Person, 1993:43). Homosexuality juxtaposed with hegemonic masculinity creates disorder as it denies male victims their established role within society as the dominant and powerful, in addition to "violating universal norms relating to the family" (MacKenzie, 2015:100). Furthermore, victims become conflicted within themselves if they experienced an erection or ejaculated during the assault. A

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reaction which Sivakumaran posits as common for male victims, but one that places doubt on their sexuality as they question whether they resisted or enjoyed the assault (2007:272). Knowing the societal implications of the taint of homosexuality, combined with the detriment caused to the victims' own psyche motivates perpetrators to such acts insofar as they may strategically plan for the victim to ejaculate, which victims themselves may confuse with orgasm (Rumney, 2008:76). To do so the perpetrator ultimately assures that they have complete power and control over their victim's body. For the victim to experience an erection or ejaculate is one of the most detrimental implications for a victim's psyche and morality. For in tandem, whilst the victim has no control over their own body; their body is simultaneously an active participant in their own moral and psychological destruction as an erection or ejaculation suggests that the male victim felt pleasure through sexual violence victimisation.

Based upon idealistic notions regarding what it means to be a man, society assists in the construction and maintenance of hegemonic masculinity. Insofar as naturalising the perpetration of sexual violence as a legitimate practice to build unit cohesion and loyalty within militaries. The perpetrator of sexual violence exudes power and dominance over their victims, therefore reinforcing their hegemonic identity. For the male victim however, the same method that establishes hegemony in the perpetrator is the very one that decimates the victim's identity. Sexually victimising enemy male combatants and civilians cannot be viewed as aimed solely at the deconstruction of an individual's identity, but of society as a whole. Striking at the very identity of those posited as being societies controllers and protectors, contributes to the deconstruction of societal cohesion. It is through the wider societal decimation that makes sexual victimisation of men so appealing and guarantees its recurrence during war. Throughout this essay, I have sought to highlight the detrimental implications of a gender hierarchy and how it becomes utilised as a strategy during warfare. By conceptualising our identity on what society deems acceptable of our biological makeup and socially associated gender, we continue to retrench and give importance to discourses that have dire consequences for people during war: "I am only to the extent that you are not. Your absence marks and verifies my presence and your pain becomes my power" (Price, 2001:213).

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*Written by: Emer Campbell*  
*Written at: Queens University Belfast*

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*Written for: Professor Yvonne Galligan*

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