

Colloquia Treverensia

Fachbereich I - Psychologie

David G. Winter

Professor Emeritus of Psychology, University of Michigan



David G. Winter was educated at Harvard University and the University of Oxford. He is a personality and social psychologist with a special interest in political psychology and psychological aspects of war and peace. He is the author of *Roots of War: Wanting Power, Seeing Threat, Justifying Force*, published in 2018 by Oxford University Press. Previous publications include *The Power Motive*, an English translation and introduction to Otto Rank's *Die Don Juan-Gestalt*, *A New Case for the Liberal Arts*,

Personality: Analysis and Interpretation of Lives, and numerous papers in academic journals. He is a past president of the International Society of Political Psychology.

“Why War?” Four Answers from Psychology to Einstein's and Freud's 1932 question

In the years since Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud exchanged letters on the question of “Why war?” (published in 1933 under League of Nations auspices), psychologists and other social scientists have proposed a wide variety of answers, ranging from political structures, religious and secular ideologies, and psychological processes in the minds of political leaders and their followers. My talk focuses on three psychological aspects of power - as a motive, as a perception, and as justifiable action - as causes of war. The research uses content analysis of archived documents and speeches, media accounts of government communications, and experiments with university students. Many previous research studies in psychology and anthropology have demonstrated that gender (specifically, low status of women) is related to violence and war. Building on these findings, analysis of cross-national data on power motivation and war suggests that gender and status of women moderate the expression of power motivation. The results of these studies, taken together with the work of feminist theorists Mary Hartman and Joan Scott, suggest several policies and actions that can “tame” power, reduce misperception, and restrain the justification of violence - thereby increasing the chances of avoiding war and securing peace.

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Kontakt und Anmeldung

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