

Galtung's Violence Triangle: We Need to Be Thinking Upside Down

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Abstract : Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS), despite being a new pedagogical discipline, is a growing interdisciplinary academic field that has expanded its presence from the traditional lens of war, conflict, and violence to addressing various social issues impacting society. Family and domestic violence (FDV) has seldom been explored through the PACS lens despite some studies showing that "on average, nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States. Over one year, this equates to more than 10 million women and men." In the Pacific, FDV rates are some of the highest in the world. The friction caused by cultural practices reinforcing patriarchy and male impunity, compounded by historical colonial experiences, as well as the impact of Christianity on the Pacific region, creates a complex social landscape when thinking about and addressing FDV in the Pacific. This paper seeks to re-examine Johan Galtung's violence triangle (GVT) theory and its application to understanding FDV in the Pacific. Galtung argues that there are three forms of violence - direct, structural, and cultural. Direct violence (DV) is behaviors that threaten life itself or diminishes the ability of a person to meet his or her basic needs. This form of violence is visible because it is manifested in behaviors such as killing, maiming, sexual assault, etc. Structural violence (SV) exists when people do not get equal access to goods and services (health, education, justice) that enable them to reach their full potential. When ideologies embedded in cultural norms and practices are used to justify and advocate acts of violence by shifting the moral parameters from being wrong to right or acceptable, this, according to Galtung, is referred to as Cultural violence (CV).

Keywords : direct violence, cultural violence, structural violence, indigenous peacebuilding, samoa

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