

Direct/Cultural/Structural Violence



Direct Violence

the most obvious, and generally the most visible type of the three. Most often we think of physical violence, like killing or torture, rape and sexual assault, and beatings. Verbal and emotional violence, like humiliation and put downs, threats are also becoming more widely recognised as direct violence.

Think of any type of direct violence. How does your example also express itself culturally and structurally in society or groups? What relationships can you see between direct, cultural and structural violence?

Cultural Violence

often expressed as stereotypes or prejudices. Cultural violence is the prevailing attitudes and beliefs that we have been taught since childhood and that surround us in daily life about the power and necessity of violence. Consider the telling of history which glorifies, records and reports wars and military victories rather than people's nonviolent rebellions or the triumphs of connections and collaboration. Nearly all cultures recognise that killing a person is murder, but killing tens, hundreds or thousands during a declared conflict is called 'war'.

Structural Violence

exists when some groups, classes, genders, nationalities, castes are assumed to have, and in fact do have, more access to goods, resources, and opportunities than other groups and this unequal advantage is built into the social, political and economic systems that govern societies, states and the world. These tendencies may be overt such as Apartheid or more subtle such as traditions or tendency to award some groups privileges over another. Structural violence may be expressed through some mainstream dominant cultural norms

Violence in sum

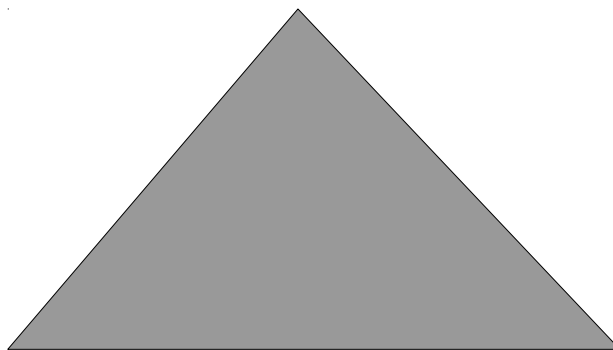
is any physical, emotional, verbal, institutional, structural or spiritual behaviour/attitude/policy/condition that diminishes, dominates or destroys ourselves, other people and other living organisms (eg, animals and the Earth). Direct violence, whether its physical, verbal, invisible or visible, is connected in a mutually destructive relationship with some cultural traditions, social structures and institutions which govern society.

Nonviolent Actions, Empathy & Creativity

Nonviolent actions, along with empathy and creativity are the three crucial elements of a 'peace culture' – a culture that fundamentally promotes harmony and respect over destruction and oppression.

Nonviolent actions

are done with respect and care, based on a belief that everyone can change and no-one has a monopoly on the truth. NV actions challenge and address *direct violence*.



Empathy

~ a sense of connection
challenges *cultural violence*

Creativity

~ the ability to 'think outside the box'
challenges *structural violence*



Nonviolent actions challenge violent ones by responding *some how* and responding without violence. Doing nothing, not speaking up, looking away can collude with violence.

Empathy, the ability to identify with all parties involved in a conflict/situation, counters the self-centred monomania of cultural violence.

Creativity, the ability to conceive of and do things in a new way, transcends structural violence by helping us to think outside the box and come up with new ways of relating to each other. Creativity helps break destructive patterns and develop nonviolent ones.

Our nonviolent actions, empathy and creativity can help us to develop new ways of thinking and behaving in hopes of conceiving alternatives and lead us to challenge the violence we encounter in the world.

See *The Art of War and Peace: Theories of creativity and conflict resolution* by Rebecca Blocksome for more on this.