# Critical approaches

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# Outline

- critical theory: assumptions
- security as derivative concept
- security as emancipation
- triangle of violence

# Critical theory: assumptions

- Social actors are **rational and capable to transform** their environment (Kantian moment).

- The social world primarily consists of **socioeconomic structures** which are legitimized by **dominant ideology** (Marxian moment).

- These **structures are objective** (researcher-independent).

- **Critical theory:** what are these structures? How can these be removed?

# Traditional vs. critical theory

- Max Horkheimer: **Traditional vs. Critical Theory** (1937).

- **Traditional theories:** explain and control certain phenomena (naturalism and value-neutrality).

- **Critical theories:** (1) explain certain phenomena from systemic perspective, (2) state a clear social goal, and (3) propose a practical solution.

- Critical theory in IR: **problem-solving vs. critical theories** (Robert Cox 1981).

# Critical theory

- **General formula** (Spegele 2002): *I study international relations to emancipate [X] from structure or condition [Y] in order to achieve [Z].*

- **E.g.:** I study IR to emancipate workers in sweatshops [X] from exploitative work conditions [Y] in order to achieve more just society [Z].

- Link (Deadly fashion): https://vimeo.com/143868534

- Link (Source): http://www.cultureunplugged.com/documentary/watch-online/festival/play/6866/Zdroj--Source-

**Galtung's Triangle of Violence**

**Direct Violence**
Extermination/ Abortion/ Euthanasia
Ridicule

Visible
Violence

Invisible/ Less
Visible Violence

**Cultural Violence**
- Fear
- Hatred
- Dismissiveness
- Negative Perceptions regarding abilities
- Pity

**Structural Violence**
- Unequal access to opportunities/ services (Education, Health, Employment)
- Inaccessible built environment
- Poverty
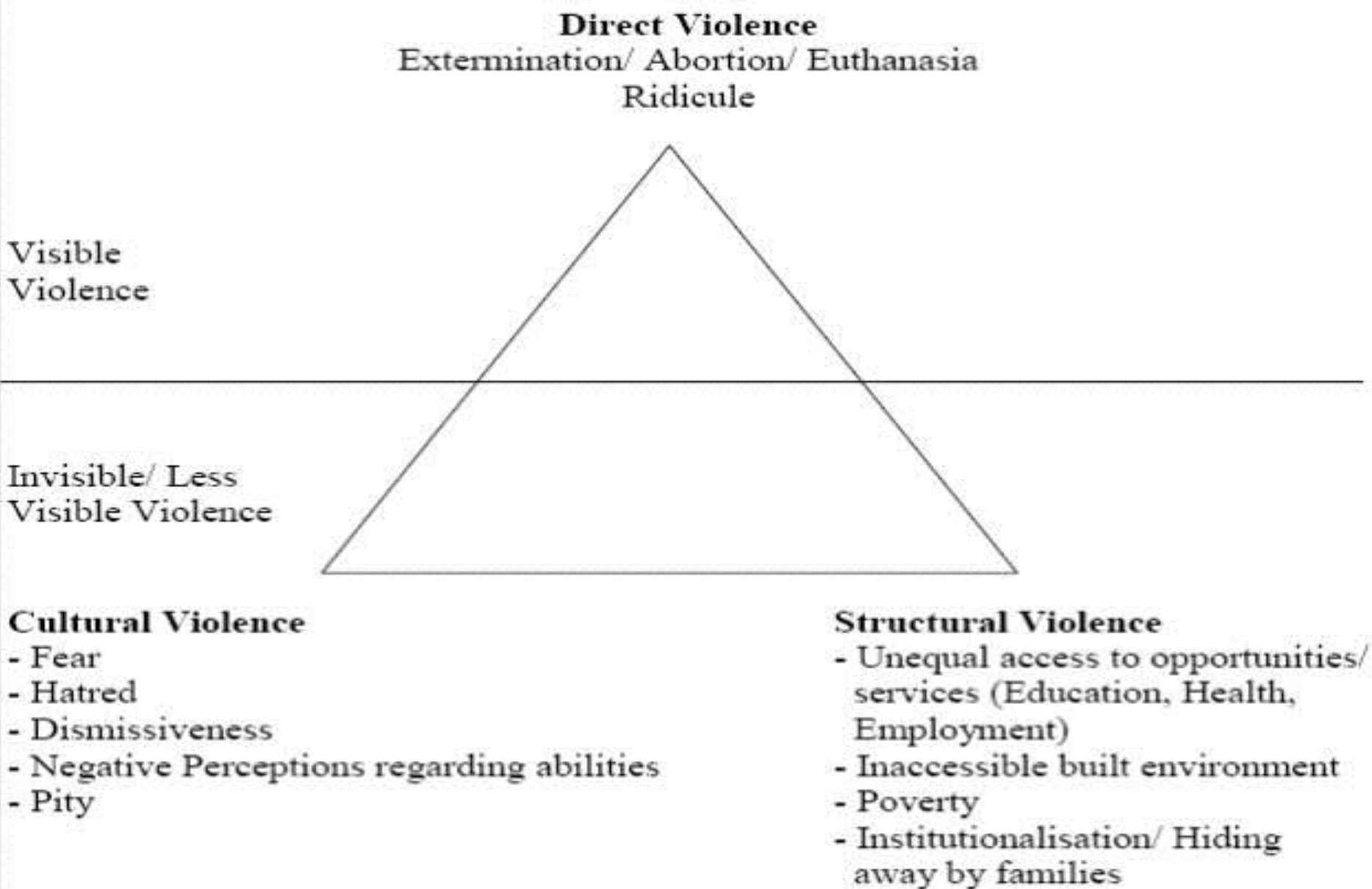- Institutionalisation/ Hiding away by families

Figure 1. Disability and the triangle of violence (adapted from Johan Galtung, 1990)

# Critical security studies (CSS)

- CSS established at the University of Aberystwyth around authors such as Ken Booth, Richard W. Jones, and Andrew Linklater.

- Four dimensions of CSS (Jones 1999: 5):

    - **Broadening:** inclusion of **non-military issues.**
    - **Deepening:** philosophical and political **assumptions are reflected**.
    - **Extending:** non-state actors are included (esp. **human beings**).
    - **Focusing:** a clear normative objective (**emancipation**).

# Security as derivative concept (deepening)

- *Questions about security cannot be separated from the most basic questions of political theory* (Walker 1997).

- *Theory is always for someone and for some purpose* (Cox 1981: 129).

- Security is **an epiphenomenon of political theory** (Booth 2007).

- There is no common substantive definition of security → it should be seen and used **instrumentally** → as an **emancipatory tool**.

# Security as emancipation

- The "**real security**" is provided by **emancipation**.

- **Emancipation** (Booth 1991: 319): *the freeing of people from those physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do*.

- The Critical theory is needed to (Booth 2007):
  - Respond empirical curiosity.
  - Pursue moral politics.
  - Rise to the challenges of the time.

- It calls for action (Booth's **emancipatory realism**).

# Emancipatory realism

*We can begin or continue pursuing emancipation in what we research, in how we teach, in what we put on conference agendas, in how much we support Greenpeace, Amnesty International, Oxfam and other groups identifying with a global community, and in how we deal with each other and with students. And in pursuing emancipation, the bases of real security are being established.* (Booth 1991: 326)

# Summary

- **Assumption:** there are oppressive structures that produce power inequalities that endanger particular social groups.

- **The objective:** politicization of the debate / transformation (removal of oppressive structures) through emancipation.

- **Security = emancipation**.

- **Active/activist role of the research:** researcher should give a voice to marginalized social groups.