

Critical Theory and Welsh School of Security Studies

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Traditional vs. Critical Theory

Max
Horkheimer
1937

Traditional Theory

Explain and control
certain phenomena

Value-neutral

In IR: Problem-Solving vs. Critical Theories
(Robert Cox, 1981)

Critical Theory

Explain certain
phenomena from
systemic perspective

State a clear social goal

Propose a practical
solution

Critical Theory: Assumptions

Social actors are rational and capable to transform their environment

The social world primarily consists of socioeconomic structures, which are legitimized by dominant ideology

These structures are objective (researcher-independent)

Key questions What are these structures? How can these be removed?

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]

Let's watch something =)

Deadly fashion: <https://vimeo.com/143868534>

Niger delta: <http://veroniquedeviguerie.com/project/the-oil-war-niger-delta/#gallery/1940/441>

Galtung's Triangle of Violence

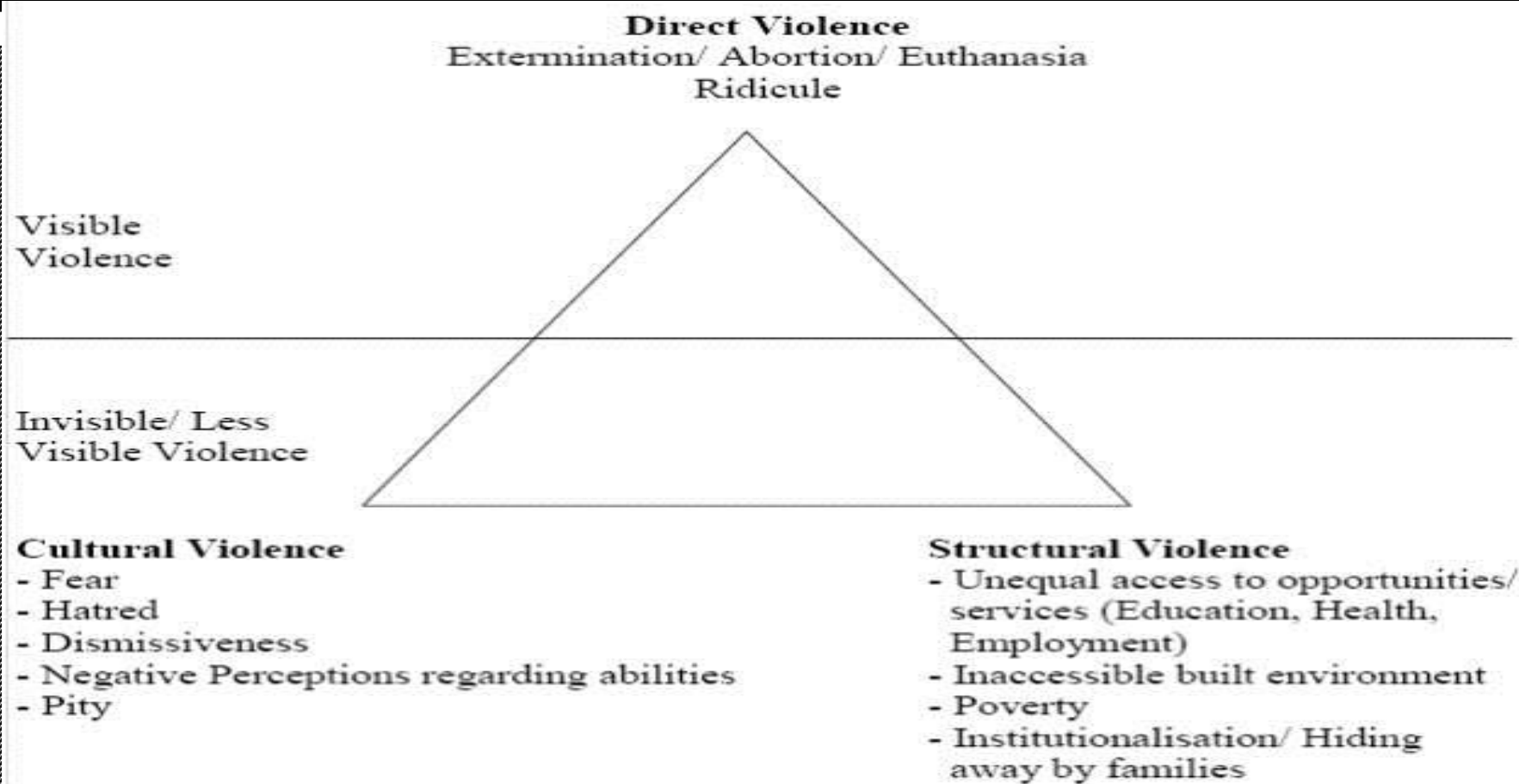


Figure 1. Disability and the triangle of violence (adapted from Johan Galtung, 1990)

Critical Security Studies (CSS) Welsh School

K. Booth
R. Jones
A. Linklater

Broadening
Inclusion of non-military issues

Deepening
Both philosophical and political
assumptions → Instrumental use of security
(no substantive definition)

4 dimensions of CSS
(Jones, 1990)

Extending
Inclusion of non-state actors (especially
human beings)

Focusing
A clear normative objective (which one?)

Dimensions of CSS

Interregnum: The old is dying, and the new cannot be born (Gramsci)

Broadening

“Military questions will obviously continue to have an important part in the concerns of all students of international politics. However, it is doubtful whether they will be as central a preoccupation, except for some obvious regional conflicts. This is because the institution of inter-state war is in historic decline” (Booth, 1991:316).

Extending

“Those entities called ‘states’ are obviously important features of world politics, but they are unreliable, illogical and too diverse in their character to use as the primary referent objects for a comprehensive theory of security” (Booth, 1991: 320).

Methodological Individualism

Security vs. Emancipation

In a group of 2-3 people based on your own understanding discuss the following questions:

What is security?

What is emancipation?

Are these concepts somehow related?

Focusing: Security as Emancipation

The real security is provided by emancipation: holistic and non-statist approach



Security (Booth 1991: 319): *"the absence of threats"*

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."*



It calls for action => transformational potential

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 ... and in how we deal with each other and with students.

in pursuing emancipation, the bases of real security are being established.”
(Booth 1991: 326)