

THE SEVEN P's OF MEN'S VIOLENCE

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For a moment my eyes turned away from the workshop participants and out through the windows of the small conference room and towards the Himalayas, north of Kathmandu. I was there, leading a workshop, largely the outgrowth of remarkable work of UNICEF and UNIFEM which, a year earlier, had brought together women *and* men from throughout South Asia to discuss the problem of violence against women and girls and, most importantly, to work together to find solutions. (1)

As I turned back to the women and men in the group, it felt more familiar than different: women taking enormous chances – in some cases risking their lives – to fight the tide of violence against women and girls. Men who were just beginning to find their anti-patriarchal voices and to discover ways to work alongside women. And what pleasantly surprised me was the positive response to a series of ideas I presented about men's violence: until then, I wasn't entirely sure if they were mainly about the realities in North and South America and Europe – that is largely-Europeanized cultures – or whether they had a larger resonance.

Here, then, is the kernel of this analysis:

Patriarchal Power: The First "P"

Individual acts of violence by men occurs within what I have described as "the triad of men's violence." Men's violence against women does not occur in isolation but is linked to men's violence against other men and to the internalization of violence, that is, a man's violence against himself. (2)

Indeed male-dominated societies are not only based on a hierarchy of men over women but some men over other men. Violence or the threat

of violence among men is a mechanism used from childhood to establish that pecking order. One result of this is that men "internalize" violence – or perhaps, the demands of patriarchal society encourage biological instincts that otherwise might be more relatively dormant or benign. The result is not only that boys and men learn to selectively use violence, but also, as we shall later see, redirect a range of emotions into rage, which sometimes takes the form of self-directed violence, as seen, for example in substance abuse or self-destructive behaviour.

This triad of men's violence – each form of violence helping create the others – occurs within a nurturing environment of violence: the organization and demands of patriarchal or male dominant societies.

What gives violence its hold as a way of doing business, what has naturalized it as the *de facto* standard of human relations, is the way it has been articulated into our ideologies and social structures. Simply put, human groups create self-perpetuating forms of social organization and ideologies that explain, give meaning to, justify, and replenish these created realities.

Violence is also built into these ideologies and structures for the simpler reason that it has brought enormous benefits to particular groups: first and foremost, violence (or at least the threat of violence), has helped confer on men (as a group) a rich set of privileges and forms of power. If indeed the original forms of social hierarchy and power are those based on sex, then this long ago formed a template for all the structured forms of power and privilege enjoyed by others as a result of social class or skin color, age, religion, sexual orientation, or physical abilities. In such a context, violence or its threat become a means to

