

PROMOTING A CULTURE OF PEACE

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Summary

This work, "Promoting a Culture of Peace" provides a historical context for considering peace. It poses a question, "What is peace as more than the absence of war?" and briefly considers the works of peace scholars and others who define peace in terms of what it is not, instead of what it is. It suggests that the tendency of some peace scholars to equate peace with the absence of war and violence limits the ability to conceptualize peace as more than an absence. Promoting a Culture of Peace promotes an understanding, a language, and a model for conceptualizing and speaking about peace, and reveals the importance of education for peace and nonviolence spurred on by the United Nations declaration for a year and a decade dedicated to education for a culture of peace and nonviolence. The article develops the premise that peace can be considered as presence and not merely as absence; that peace can be considered as integral to people's lives; and that peace can be considered as either actualized, or as in the process of being actualized in all dimensions of people's personal, professional, and public life. It also reveals the importance of working -- alone and together -- to actualize peace through a commitment to both education and just actions in the family, as well as in people's places of work, play, study, service, and worship, and does so by drawing from multiple disciplines and perspectives within disciplines.

1. Introduction

One of the most significant challenges facing citizens of the world in the early years of the Twenty-first Century is the challenge to live and work together peacefully with others in all arenas of personal and public life. This requires that citizens learn about, value, promote, protect, preserve, and sustain a culture of peace in their families, their communities, and in the broader society of nation and world. Emphasizing the importance of this goal, the United Nations General Assembly declared that the first decade of the Twenty-first Century -- 2000 - 2010 -- be dedicated to education for a culture of peace and nonviolence. They did so in response to a petition initiated by Nobel Peace Prize Laureates who share a common concern for reducing threats from war and the personal, community, and institutional violence that so marked and marred

the Twentieth Century and threatens to scar and shape peoples and nations in these early years of a new millennium.

1.1 Seeking Peace

The purpose of the Decade for Peace and Nonviolence is to promote a culture of peace in all arenas of the global society -- the family; the neighborhood communities where people live, work, play, study, serve, and worship; and between and among people in states and nations in the larger global society.

1.1.1 Recognizing the Urgency

The urgency of this call was made more dramatic in the early years of this new century following terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in the United States. Three thousand people from more than 50 countries died in those attacks in New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C. These dramatic deaths -- seen repeatedly in newscasts worldwide -- have aroused the passions of people from cultures and continents around the world. During that same day, in far less dramatic but no less deadly ways, thousands upon thousands of people -- mostly children, women, and those who were elderly or infirm -- died from preventable hunger, exposure, disease, or abuse, often with little public notice or outcry.

In the years following those attacks on September 11, 2001, hundreds of people in other lands have also experienced terror, and many have been maimed or killed in attacks -- on trains in Spain, in a theatre and a school in Russia, in tourist areas in Bali, in suicide bombings in the Middle East, by acts of genocide in the Sudan, and by continuing acts of warfare in Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, Palestine, Kashmir, the Sudan, and other countries and regions of the world. Hundreds of thousands more have died from the effects of poverty, disease, and acts of war in refugee camps, rural villages, and the urban areas of the world.

The reasons for all these deaths, debated in government, corporate, religious, agency, and family rooms in communities throughout the world, need people with clear heads, a passion for true justice, and a vision for genuine global peace working cooperatively both to put an end to violence, terrorism, and warfare, and to bring about and sustain a culture of peace.

1.1.2 Responding to the Urgency

The declaration by Nobel Peace Laureates poses special challenges to all who seek to promote values, attitudes, skills, and behaviors conducive to creating a culture of peace and nonviolence in the personal and public places of people's lives. It also poses challenges to those who claim that peace is more than the absence of war, but who then limit their definitions and descriptions of peace to the absence of war, armed conflict, or violence -- either personal or institutional. Creating and sustaining a culture of peace depends upon first considering what it is that constitutes peace and then determining what is essential for creating and sustaining a culture of peace and nonviolence for all peoples across the generations. But to do so, it is important to give thought to the

question, if peace is more than the absence of war, what then, is peace?

1.2 Highlighting Historical Perspectives about Peace

How is peace defined? Described? Conceptualized? Imagined? How do people know when peace is present? Do they experience it within themselves as inner peace? In their families as harmony, care, and joy? In their communities, when there is safety and nurturance for young and old? And in their world, when the goods, resources, and services of this planet are available to all? These important questions require answers.

Much of the research undertaken by peace scholars during the past fifty years has focused on the histories of war, their causes, and their resolution. This follows the pattern set earlier, during the eras of the First World War and World War II, when the focus of academic programs was on war, conflict, and international relations. During and immediately following the Vietnam era the focus changed to a study of causes and prevention of regional and low-intensity warfare. In the early 1980's, researchers focused on understanding and eliminating the threat of nuclear war. More recently, Peace Studies scholars expanded research to include community, racial, ethnic, tribal, and religious conflicts, and intra-and inter-regional violence and terrorism, along with already existing research into international violence, which has dominated the field of Peace Studies.

Peace activists, joined by others from diverse walks of life, have long chanted a popular slogan proclaiming that 'peace is more than the absence of war!' Many also feel compelled to speak out against violence, terrorism, war, and the arms race, and have also called for a renewed respect for the sacredness of all life. It is they who have promoted the concept that peace is more than the absence of war and violence.

The concept of peace as absence of war and violence continues to dominate the thinking of government leaders, peace scholars, peace educators, peace activists, and ordinary citizens throughout the world.

For example, more than ten thousand participants, including Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, world leaders, peace and world order scholars, and citizens of all ages from countries throughout the world attended the May 1999 Hague Appeal for Peace Congress. On the last day of this international gathering participants issued directives calling upon the leaders of the United Nations and of the nations of the world to educate their citizens to work individually and collectively for peace throughout the world. Specifically, however, the directive petitioned government leaders to stop the use of child soldiers; abolish the development, threats and/or use of land mines; cease testing or use of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons; and end economic, political, and social injustices and religious, racial, ethnic, and gender persecution. A similar plea expressed by the Nobel Peace Prize Laureates during their December 2001 meeting in Oslo, Norway called for a commitment to end poverty and the unequal distribution of wealth and resources, seen by them as the primary reason for acts of violence, terrorism, and warfare in the contemporary world. The January 2002 issue of the World Council of Churches revealed this same common theme: work together with others to overcome personal and structural violence and injustice. Current fundraising materials from local,

national, and international peace organizations state that they are promoting peace, even as their literature focuses on efforts people are encouraged to take to end violence, militarism, terrorism, and oppression.

While all these suggestions include actions essential for stopping violence, injustice, and warfare, something is missing in these statements: language stating what peace is as more than an absence. In most cases, even the language is on overcoming violence or injustice, not on promoting peace. These statements focus on actions oriented toward ending something. Putting an end to violence, genocide, terrorism, and warfare says little about peace as more than an absence. What is needed are statements calling for visioning, promoting, protecting, preserving, and sustaining something -- and that something is a culture of peace understood as much more than just an absence of violence or war. What, though, is this more?

1.3 Conceptualizing Peace

This article draws upon the thinking and writing of Nobel Peace Laureates, peace scholars and educators, religious and community leaders, ordinary citizens, and children worldwide to present diverse insights into the concept of peace. It provides opportunity to examine the meaning behind the words, peace is more than the absence of war, question perspectives and paradigms that consider peace as absence, and challenge the assumption that defining peace as absence is a sufficient definition or description for understanding what peace is as more than the absence of war or violence. It also provides opportunity to define, describe, and conceptualize peace as presence, and to identify challenges important for considering a more comprehensive understanding of peace, an effective language for speaking about peace, and an holistic model for creating and sustaining a culture of peace.

This article presents the theory that peace can be conceptualized as the presence of just and faithful relationships with one's self, with each other, among all people within and between nations, with all of creation, and with a Spiritual Being/Higher Power who both gives life and gives life meaning. Moreover, it suggests that peace as presence needs to be manifested in all the daily activities of each person's personal, professional, and political life.

Peacemaking is a term that has been used to express the values, attitudes, decisions, and behaviors that shape the personal, professional, and political dimensions of people's lives -- at home, in the community, and in the world -- with reverence for one's self, others, and all of creation.

Peacemaking as a concept of peace as more than the absence of war can provide insight into how one might create a culture of peace, for peace, ultimately, is reflected in and experienced through people's decisions and behaviors in their every day life. The purpose of peacemaking is oriented toward the integration of peace values and actions in all dimensions of human life. The act of peacemaking evokes a sense of positive, engaged human activity in three areas of life: the family, the community, and the broader communities of nation and world, and is directed toward both the individual and the common good.

Peacemaking is a feminist term, one associated with the acts of making that are common to the care of members of one's family and household. When done with love and care, such acts include making dinner, cookies, bread, clothing, quilts, and simple toys; making repairs to the home, car, bikes, appliances, and equipment; making space for oneself and each other; and making peace between squabbling children or with a testy spouse, partner, or neighbor. Peacemaking also relates to one's professional activities, as when those who provide medical care for an ill or injured person, teach a class of children, find shelter for the homeless, build a machine, engage in scientific research, or service a home or a car act with care and an attitude of respect for one's self and others. These acts of peacemaking, expressed in the way that people live and work with and for others in caring and responsible ways in their homes and local communities, are as vital to the creation of a culture of peace with justice as are acts of negotiation and compromise at the highest corporate, religious, political, and government levels.

Peacemaking is also a community-building activity. Individuals and families in communities world-wide gather to make and share a community meal, raise a roof, bring in a harvest, celebrate a birth, a marriage, or a death, commemorate important community events, or clean up after fires, floods, earthquakes, tornados, monsoons, tsunamis, or other natural or human-made disasters, such as acts of terrorism or warfare. These acts of peacemaking express care for each other in the common global household.

Peacemaking also holds a place of importance in the work of the United Nations. As leaders and participants of tribal, religious, ethnic, cultural, social, or political groups who have been in conflict with each other within or between nations come to recognize the importance of working together for the common good, they put aside their differences, and direct their energies to meet both group and common goals. When people act without threat of force or outside intervention, they are engaged in acts of peacemaking.

While the focus of this article is on peace as presence, the ability to conceptualize or consider peace as more than the absence of war presents challenges, as will be noted in Section Two.

2. Defining Peace as Absence

The answer to the question, what is peace, poses dilemmas for both peace scholars and ordinary citizens who consider peace in terms of what is absent -- peace as absence of war and peace as absence of conflict and violence. Peace researchers in academic institutions have examined this theme for more than a half a century. In these same years, religious and government leaders have joined their voices with those of peace educators and activists to proclaim that peace is more than the absence of war. However, describing this more appears elusive.

This section provides background and insight into how some peace researchers have addressed the question, what is peace, during the period 1964-2004 and examines some of the confusion, controversy, impediments, and challenges that exist within the area of peace research when peace is considered as absence.

2.1 Examining Concepts of Negative and Positive Peace

Peace as more than the absence of war has been described either as negative peace or as positive peace. Researchers credit Johan Galtung with defining negative peace as simply the absence of war or armed conflict as early as 1964. Researchers also credit Johan Galtung with defining positive peace as the absence of structural violence that occurs when institutions and policies are established that restrict access to the necessities of life, such as food, shelter, or medical care.

Whereas Johan Galtung distinguishes between two categories, negative peace and positive peace, other peace researchers, such as Andrew Mack, Hikam Wiberg, Peter Wallensteen, and Samuel S. Kim, make additional distinctions between concepts of negative and positive peace. These include distinctions between direct and indirect acts of violence, and distinctions between organized and unorganized acts of violence. Birgit Brock Utne adds to the conversation by distinguishing between macro levels and micro levels of violence when referring to an absence of either negative peace or positive peace.

2.1.1 Conceptualizing Negative Peace

Negative peace has been described as the absence of armed conflict and warfare. Other terms used by peace scholars to define or describe negative peace include nonwar, mutual deterrence, one-sided dominance, a truce, or a ceasefire. Negative peace has also been defined or described as a state of readiness within and between countries not currently engaged in armed conflict but perpetually armed for battle, and as the elimination of war and other forms of armed conflict.

An absence of negative peace at the macro level results from acts of direct violence that include both state-sponsored and group-initiated acts of armed conflict and warfare that are both organized and collective. An absence of negative peace at the micro level results from acts of direct violence that include rape, street killings, and other acts of physical violence that are unorganized and that are committed by either an individual or an unorganized group of people. Examples of direct, unorganized personal or group violence would be a case of one, one thousand, or even one-hundred thousand individual or group acts that include random personal attacks or acts of rape, spouse, child, or elder abuse. An absence of negative peace, whether organized or unorganized, and at either the macro or micro levels, often results in serious personal injury and/or swift death.

2.1.2 Conceptualizing Positive Peace

The manner in which peace researchers describe and define positive peace is more complex than the manner in which they describe and define negative peace. Positive peace has been defined as an absence of structural violence. Positive peace has also been defined or described as the elimination of armed conflict, the elimination of economic inequities, and as the presence of social justice. Positive peace includes the absence of indirect violence that is either organized or unorganized at both the macro and micro levels, resulting in four forms of structural violence.

An absence of positive peace at the macro level results in two forms of indirect, collective, and organized acts of structural violence. First, indirect, collective, organized acts of structural violence at the macro level include the establishment of corporate or state-sponsored social, political, and economic systems, structures, policies, and practices within and between countries that result in an inequitable distribution of resources, or cause damage to the environment because of pollution and other forms of ecological destruction. Such policies and practices lead to increases in poverty, hunger, homelessness, a lack of health care, or environmental pollution, among others.

These are the indirect, unintended consequences of structural inequities that either threaten life or shorten the life span through a slow and sometimes even tortuous death as a result of disease. Secondly, indirect, collective, organized acts of structural violence at the macro level includes corporate or state-condoned discriminatory policies and practices that limit people's freedom to organize, practice religious freedom, access education or employment, engage in free speech, or travel freely. Such policies and practices threaten or reduce the quality of life for those affected by these practices.

An absence of positive peace at the micro level results in two forms of indirect, individual, and unorganized acts of structural violence. First, indirect, unorganized, individual or group acts of violence at the micro level reveal discriminatory practices that result in unequal life chances. Examples include individual or group acts of discrimination that limit access to necessities of life, such as food, shelter, or health care, and thus threaten or shorten the life span. Secondly, indirect, unorganized, individual or group acts of violence at the micro level result from cultural expectations and practices that lessen freedom of choice, or that oppress or repress others, thus lessening the quality of life for both individuals and groups.

These concepts and the debate over the meaning of these phrases continues to influence the work of many peace researchers even as they question what these terms really mean and whether they really express a concept of peace as more than the absence of war.

Samuel S. Kim, who has examined issues of war and peace from a world health perspective, expands even further upon the concepts of the absence of negative and positive peace. He believes that peace researchers have tended to consider the effects of war on people without at the same time considering the relationship between indirect violence and death.

To summarize these views, there has been an evolution in thinking regarding the concepts of both negative peace and positive peace. These views reveal not only the evolution of thinking on this important topic; they also reveal disagreement about the concepts. Some consider gang rape, but not spouse abuse, as a form of direct, unorganized violence, while others consider the elimination of child, spouse, or elder abuse important to the concept of negative peace. Some put their focus on efforts that can lead to an absence of war, while others put their focus on efforts that can lead to an absence of structural violence. Another difference is the distinction peace scholars make regarding the absence of either organized and unorganized acts of violence, and regarding either macro or micro levels of negative and positive peace.

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Biographical Sketch

Jacqueline Haessly, Ph. D., a peace education specialist, is founder and president of Peacemaking Associates, and serves as adjunct professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She also lectures and offers Peacemaking presentations nationally and internationally. She is the author of *Peacemaking: Family Activities for Justice and Peace* (Paulist Press, 1980); *Learning to Live Together* (Resource Publications, 1989); and *Weaving a Culture of Peace* (in press). She has contributed essays to a number of scholarly works: "A Hero for the Twenty-first Century", in *EOLSS* (2004); "Imaging Peace: A Pedagogical Challenge for Peace Educators", in *Holistic Education Review* (December 1997); "From Violence to Wholeness: Families Confront Challenges and Embrace Possibilities", in *Mothering Teens* (Gynergy Press, 1997); "Mothering Sons with Special Needs: One Peacemaker's Challenge", in *Mothers and Sons* (Rutledge, 2001); and "Spirituality and Peacemaking", with Judith Myers Walls in *Families as Educators for Global Citizenship* (2001). Other works include "Values for the Global Marketplace", in *When the Canary Stops Singing: Women's Perspectives for Transforming Business* (Barrett-Koehler, 1993); "Soul Work: A Corporate Challenge", in *Rediscovering the Soul of Business* (New Leaders Press, 1995); and "Journey Toward Inclusion", in *Working Together: Promoting Synergy by Honoring Diversity* (New Leaders Press, 1997). She also produced, directed, and edited *Peacemaking for Families*, a four-part video based on the Catholic Bishop's Peace Pastoral (Peace Talks Publications, 1983). Jacqueline and her husband, Daniel Di Domizio, co-facilitate workshops and retreats on the theme of Spirituality and Social Justice, and share in the love, tears, joy, and laughter of busy family life with their children and grandchildren.