CHAPTER 12

Teaching Social Justice Amidst Violence: Youth and Enacted Curricula in Canada, Bangladesh, and México

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This chapter articulates, and applies to education, a theoretical perspective on the dimensions of social conflict, violence, and just peace. Violence is a key indicator and form of injustice. Education may (but often does not) address the dimensions and causes of destructive conflict, to contribute to building just peace. Drawing from a five-year research project with youth and teacher participants in three or four urban public schools in each of Mexico, Bangladesh, and Canada, the chapter highlights the direct (physical) and systemic (injustice-based) violence that these young people routinely endured. This lived experience of violence was linked to participants' marginalized social-economic class, ethnocultural and gender identities. These countries differ widely in their cultures and levels of violence, yet none are divided or war-torn societies: The study focuses on the "ordinary" social conflict and violence that may be obscured or ignored in some research on education in war zones. The chapter also illustrates and discusses, based on examples of participating teachers' work, how schooling might contribute to disrupting ordinary violence—informing young people's agency to mitigate or transform those problems. The chapter argues that education for justice requires

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confronting violence and facilitating students' development of peacebuilding agency. However, education that addresses only symptoms (not causes) of violence or that only holds individual students responsible—without introducing them to mediating institutions, civil society actors, social movements, and governance processes to transform the causes of that violence—is inadequate. Learning about collective democratic factors and actors is key to building potential bridges across difference and remedies for the justice conflicts that underlie customary violence.

Theoretical Framework: Dimensions of Systemic Violence and Just Peace (in) Education

Social conflicts refer to competing interests and disagreements among groups that may be expressed in constructive (resolution or transformation) and/or destructive (violent) ways. Violence, on the other hand, is direct (intentional physical hurt) and/or indirect (systemic injustice) harm (Galtung, 1969, 1990). Indirect conflict and violence have cultural (systems of belief legitimizing inequity, fractured social ties, and violence) and/or social-structural (systemically inequitable distribution of power and resources) dimensions: each reinforces the other (also Ross, 2007). In contexts of systemically unequal power, some forms of direct physical violence, such as gendered or criminal "gang" aggression, are so normalized as to seem "invisible" and inevitable (Bourgois, 2009).

The opposite of violence is justice-building transformation to build systemic peace. Political theorist Nancy Fraser's (2004, 2005) articulation of the "content" of justice—(social-structural) redistribution of economic resources plus (cultural) recognition of plural identities—is parallel to Galtung and Ross' theories of sustainable peace. Fraser also articulates a third dimension of justice, (political) representation, referring to the "processes" by which diverse people are enabled to participate and to get heard in nonviolent confrontation to transform social conflicts, in the globalized context of multilevel institutions and rules for decision-making. Together, these three interacting dimensions of justice constitute a strong foundation for building sustainable (just) peace: participation in dialogic processes transforming social conflicts, cultural expression of identity-based inclusion and rejection of bias, and political-economic redistribution of resources for social-structural equity.

Putting together these intersecting factors enables us to discern the potentially transformable *conflicts underlying* patterns of *harm*, and thereby to shed light on the ways education might contribute to building toward just peace in the context of globalized systemic violence (also Bellino et al., 2017; Lopes Cardozo et al., 2016). Alternative ways of handling social conflicts (and their sometimes-violent symptoms) range from narrow control-based interventions aimed at securitization (peace*keeping*), through participatory democratic processes of mutual dialogue, negotiation, and problem-solving to resolve evident disputes and their causes (peace*making*), toward multidimensional

systemic approaches (peace*building*, also called transitional justice and conflict transformation) that (re-)create inclusive processes in order to collectively address and redress cultural and social-structural injustice and other social conflicts (Galtung, 1976; Lederach, 2003). People and communities develop (narrow or wider) repertoires of options for addressing social conflicts:

> Violence, clearly, is resourcelessness; it is the brutal response of those who see force as their only approach to conflict. Nonviolence, in contrast, is resourcefulness; it is the cultivation of and the reliance on a broad range of approaches to conflict resolution. (Franklin, 2006, p. 261)

Globalized systemic causes of resourcelessness may have heartbreaking consequences in very particular local neighborhoods (and their schools). Examples include ecological disasters caused by transnational business out-sourcing such as factories or chemical plants, shipping, or pipelines (Nixon, 2011). Citing urban activist Butterfly GoPaul and sociologist Julius Haag, a recent news analysis shows a concentration of mutually reinforcing systemic and physical violence in particular unfortunate neighborhoods:

> So many Toronto locations where gun violence has been historically rampant have also been 'hot zones' for the COVID-19 pandemic. The same long-standing systemic and structural symptoms of poverty and inequities that have led to worse outcomes with the virus are the major root causes of gun violence. … Violence is concentrated in places that [Haag concurs], 'have also faced other forms of systemic structural disadvantage, a lack of sustained investment in community programs and initiatives, and these also tend to be the neighborhoods that suffer the most from aggressive policing.' (Ngabo, 2021, p. IN4)

In the conceptual diagram below, the triangle's points refer to the three intersecting dimensions of conflict underlying (just) peace and (unjust) violence. Participation, at the top, refers to direct or representative engagement in social conflict-handling processes. Inclusion and equity, at the bottom, are the indirect dimensions of (in)justice conflicts that would be redressed and transformed in a comprehensive systemic peacebuilding process. The outer (yellow) triangle represents the violence that surrounds many human societies. The inner (blue) triangle represents systemic democratic (just) peace—the processes by which conflicts and dimensions of injustice (identity-based exclusion and/or resource and status inequity) are collectively transformed into dynamic, just relations.

Extending Galtung's notions of peacekeeping (securitization) and peacemaking (negotiation) to make visible the actions for addressing indirect (as well as direct) dimensions of conflict, the middle (green) triangle represents a range of options and strategies to handle conflicts, in order to resist and replace violence. Closest to the yellow (violent) edge of the green zone, imposed regulatory interventions (comparable to peacekeeping) aim to stop particular outbreaks of violence such as military attacks or child abuse, while

not probing causes or challenging injustices at the roots of violence. These approaches "affirm" existing social-cultural hierarchies (Fraser, 2008), yet can temporarily mitigate or stop episodes of un-peace. Examples include worker protection regulations (that do not challenge the wage structure) or policing to control criminal violence (that disproportionately repress certain types of people rather than addressing systemic incentives). Closer to the blue (systemic peace) edge of the green zone (comparable to peacemaking and other problem-solving processes), conflict mediating actions represent restorative and transitional justice efforts to reverse and "transform" historic and contemporary systemic harm at the roots of destructive conflict. This green zone is the crucial arena of democratic citizenship—where people act with local and distant others, through multidimensional social-institutional processes, to handle and transform injustices and other social conflicts.

This chapter applies the above theories to education, to make sense of the dimensions of making, building, and teaching peace in schools (also Bickmore, 2017; Carbajal & Fierro, 2019; Cremin & Guilherme, 2016). Of course, young people learn "feet first" as well as "head first" (McCauley, 2002). That is, models, practices, and discursive understandings for handling conflicts are embedded in daily social learning in each lived context (Bandura, 1986), and explicit school curriculum may ignore, contradict, inform, or supplement what diverse young people learn from their experiences. Schools may contribute (or not) to peacebuilding, by creating opportunities for young citizens to develop repertoires of capabilities, motivations, and understandings for democratic peacebuilding citizenship agency that recognize, challenge, and build upon their lived understandings and concerns about conflicts.

The provision, structure, and curriculum of school education—such as legitimating (or challenging) chauvinism or inequality, or (ir)relevance to communities' histories of relative deprivation—may reinforce *or* resist direct and indirect violence. Many educational responses to conflict are relatively passive, working within the status quo (Davies, 2011). For instance, educative forms of peacekeeping (Bickmore, 2005) teach students to internalize self-regulation and "governmentality" (Foucault, 2003), to supplement direct coercion. Such lessons emphasize individual values, morals, and compliant behavior, without facilitating inclusive peace*making* (problem-solving) that would examine each participant's point of view on their own needs or causes of the conflicts. In contrast, comprehensive "justice-sensitive" peacebuilding education (Davies, 2017) would both mitigate direct violence by addressing dimensions, causes, and consequences of conflicts in a participatory manner and creating preconditions for democratic transformation to redress societal fracture and injustice. For instance, pedagogical inquiry about particular institutions' contributions to injustices, or encounters with multiple perspectives about difficult histories, would actively seek to disrupt enmity or abuse of power.

On one hand, when school experiences create opportunities for students to acquire and practice language, concepts, and skills for recognizing, communicating, and deliberating about the causes and consequences of destructive conflicts, it may facilitate their development of agency applicable to transformative peacebuilding. On the other hand, school curriculum may overemphasize the responsibilities of (even victimized) individuals for handling conflicts properly, at the expense of enabling and inspiring them to probe and resist social-structural, cultural, and political factors that constrain their agency and reinforce un-peace. Discourses over-emphasizing individual responsibility let the powerful off the hook and divert attention from how socially structured interactions actually work:

> The discourse of personal responsibility fails to acknowledge the many ways that some middle-class and rich people behave irresponsibly. It assumes a misleading ideal that each person can be independent of others and internalize the costs of their own actions. It ignores how the institutional relations in which we act render us deeply interdependent. (Young, 2011, p. 4)

In contrast to prevailing personal responsibility approaches, transformative agency for peacebuilding requires critical recognition of the indirect social-economic, cultural (including gender), and political dimensions of social conflicts—awareness of how people may make demands for state and transnational policy change, in order to alleviate the systemic causes of direct violence and other harm.

This chapter illustrates this framework in relation to students' understandings and capabilities, and the implicit and explicit curriculum-in-use reported by themselves and their teachers in focus groups in México, Bangladesh, and Canada.

Research Design and Methodology

This chapter is drawn from a multiyear international research project that involved youth and teacher participants in 3–4 schools in each of Mexico, Bangladesh, and Canada—countries that are not war zones or divided societies, but located very differently on the Global Peace Index (IEP, 2016, 2017). Out of 163 countries: Canada was 8 (peaceful), Bangladesh 83 (medium), Mexico 140 (violent). The sites were ordinary curriculum practices in ordinary public schools in economically marginalized areas experiencing too much violence—not special justice ed programming, but rather the potential spaces for just peace transformative learning within these ordinary settings.

The research methodology is inspired by culturally "elicitive" conflict transformation education (Lederach, 1995): Its focus was not on any explicit or self-contained program of peace or citizenship education (prescription), but on the understandings and concerns selected young people narrated based on their life experiences, compared with the ordinary curriculum-in-use described

by the youth and by participating teachers in the same classrooms. The study was designed to facilitate participants' articulation and participatory dialogue about the lived social conflicts experienced by marginalized youth in each context, and upon the ways their daily schooling did and did not show potential to develop their citizen agency for transforming those conflicts.

The *cases* are purposively selected urban public schools in economically marginalized neighborhoods suffering from direct violence—in one Ontario, Canada city (3 schools, grades 5–8), two Bangladesh cities (2 boys' and 2 girls' schools, grades 6–9), and one Guanajuato, Mexico city (2 elementary schools grades 5–6, and 2 lower secondary schools grades 7–9), in 2014–2017. *Participants* included 81 Mexican, 36 Bangladeshi and 81 Canadian youth (age 10–15), and 21 Mexican, 16 Bangladeshi, and 17 Canadian teachers who taught those young people. Beyond location in violent communities, the criterion for including schools, teacher, and student participants was just that they needed to be interested enough in violence-reduction education to choose to participate, during compensated school hours, in the focus group workshops.

Within each case, multiple *student focus group* workshops per school each elicited 4–6 students' understandings and concerns about various social conflict and violence problems they experienced, and what they believed citizens could do about these problems. After briefly describing their understandings of the conflicts represented or elicited by a set of 10–12 image prompts (locally relevant cartoons and photos), the young people selected two problems they considered to be of particular concern, and worked like reporters, discussing the "who-what-where-why-how and now what" of each of those conflicts—the stakeholders affected, what they thought had caused or exacerbated the problems, and what they thought authorities or ordinary citizens could do about those problems. Students also mentioned how their experienced school curricula had (and had not) addressed those concerns and offered suggestions for teachers.

A series of *teacher focus group* discussions in each school, a few months apart, began with their examples of what and how they had been teaching, that they viewed as relevant to peace and/or citizenship. One school in Mexico, GTO4, was able to hold only two teacher focus group sessions. One school in Canada (ON2A) was similarly cut off by staffing changes after two teacher focus group sessions, but we were able to start over there with new groups of teachers and students (ON2B, not reported separately in this paper). The data collection process in Bangladesh, conducted by Ahmed Salehin Kaderi (2018) under the first author's supervision, was shorter, including just two student focus groups and (pre and post) two meetings with the teacher focus group in each school.

Teachers helped to recruit sets of student volunteers in their schools to represent the diversity of each school's population in relevant grades. Teachers previewed the image prompts to be used with students to improve local comprehensibility and relevance. After completing student focus groups in

each school, the research team presented to teacher focus groups (draft, anonymized summary) results of their students' focus groups, to invite teachers' reflections on how their teaching responded to students' understandings and concerns and to elicit further teaching examples. Later teacher focus group sessions were animated by the research team's summary analyses of official curriculum guideline documents in each jurisdiction, prompting further joint reflection about potential intersections or (mis-)fit between peacebuilding goals and the curricular spaces available within teachers' work contexts. In keeping with a commitment to democratic research process, student and teacher focus group processes were flexibly semi-structured, designed to be educative and to invite participants to voice and pursue their own concerns (Mason & Delandshere, 2010).

Contexts: Living with Violence

In the communities where we conducted this research, all the foregoing dimensions of violence were pervasive and apparent. There was wide economic inequality between wealthy and poor neighborhoods and schools; the school research sites were situated in poor and working-class areas suffering from high levels of criminal and intimate violence. To a significant degree in the Canadian schools, and to an even higher degree in Mexico and Bangladesh, students and some teachers expressed considerable concern and discouragement about pervasive physical violence in communities and homes and (especially in Mexico and Canada) inside schools. Gender-based violence and harassment were very pervasive and a major concern in all three settings, especially Bangladesh and Mexico. Bangladeshi students described sexual harassment as "an everyday normal experience." Only in the Bangladesh schools, (male) students also reported that teachers frequently hit them (although corporal punishment had become illegal).

In the Canadian schools, many students were aware of help lines, domestic violence shelters, and welfare options. In the Mexican and some Bangladeshi schools, some students knew about the government child protection agency and welfare programs, but did not show awareness of other violence mitigation institutions (such as those available to the Canadian students). Most teachers in all participating schools showed evident compassion and offered extra support to students. So, severe violence and fear were omnipresent (to varying degrees) in these contexts. Especially in Bangladesh and Mexico, young people knew of very few ways to get assistance. Schools were sometimes safer than outside and sometimes offered protection.

Young People's Perspectives and Peacebuilding-Relevant Education in Their Schools

Student focus group participants from all three **Canadian** schools, in especially violent marginalized neighborhoods in an otherwise fairly peaceful big city, described direct experience with physical violence. Inside the school, a girl described being choked by a peer; a boy spoke of a friend sexually abused at school; students described a lot of bullying. Teachers confirmed frequent violence, especially during recess. In ON3, students in all focus groups described pervasive ongoing peer aggression: a girl (East Asian heritage) sobbed about it during one focus group session. A boy (African heritage) in another focus group also showed tears about being bullied, saying bitterly, "There is no peace in the classroom whatsoever." Students told of a memorial for a murdered girl in front of the school, a teacher at their school accused of child abuse, a lock-down when they hid from a building invader. ON3, in an especially high-poverty community, distributed food supplies to needy students' families—confidentially, due to stigma against those facing economic scarcity.

Students in all three schools, especially ON2 and ON3, described their neighborhoods as unsafe, with pervasive abuse and violence, as well as frequent surveillance and stops by police; a few mentioned racist treatment by police. Their relatives had been shot or brutalized—two by police, another by a community member, a recent stabbing at the library. Several students also had been targeted by indirect (bias-based) violence, such as Muslims called terrorists, homophobic slurs, and racist "jokes." Most students frequently encountered poor and homelessness people on the street, some of their parents/guardians were out of work. Several students' families had immigrated to Canada to escape war, finding that they had not left all insecurities behind. In sum, these Canadian participants witnessed and suffered from substantial direct and indirect violence, including some by government representatives (police)—often targeting female gender, ethnocultural or religious minoritized identities, and/or lower social-economic class locations—inside and beyond their schools.

The most common school staff response to overt conflict (sensitive issues, escalating disputes, bias-based slurs, or aggression) was avoidance. Teacher participants were aware of violence in their students' lives, for example telling of students who were being abused at home, but shared that they did not know how to respond. All teacher focus groups named conflict issues in which they did intervene, also types of conflict (such as gender-based and homophobic bias and aggression) in which they did *not* intervene and that they chose not to speak about with students in class. Some said they felt unqualified to address sensitive justice issues or escalated conflicts, or (in one school) to effectively work with a particular ethnocultural minority population they

blamed for much aggression. Other teachers named time-constraining curricular mandates or unsupportive administrations as impediments to addressing differences and conflicts as learning opportunities.

Some participating educators occasionally addressed aggression incidents among students, class disruption, or discriminatory language incidents, afterward through facilitated classroom “conversation.” Two teachers created student conflict scenarios, based on past episodes, for class discussion. An administrator held a weekly meeting with students to discuss violent incident experiences. Several teachers also facilitated occasional culture-of-peace activities on social relations and community belonging, such as: community circle sharing, lessons on self-esteem and forgiveness, mindfulness meditation, and making beaded bracelets symbolizing values students wanted to carry into adulthood. Students in all the schools’ focus groups said they needed more in-depth and extended educational help, to become able to handle peer conflicts and bias-based aggression. School and system policy officially disallowed physical violence and identity-based slurs, but did not always support teachers’ peacekeeping, nor encourage pro-active, planned peacemaking and peacebuilding education.

At the same time, participating teachers did teach several capability elements of peacemaking and just peacebuilding, embedded in subject area lessons. All participating teachers led some class discussions. However, two teachers said they had stopped holding most discussions because they didn’t know how to keep some students from getting loud or hostile to peers. Similarly, some focus group students lamented that their class discussion experiences involved aggression and exclusion. All participating teachers in the three Canadian schools taught oral and written (first and second) language lessons that included elements of conflict analysis and resolution, such as discerning alternate points of view—applied to conflicts in fiction stories, news articles, or NGO and UN-related websites. Classes practiced creative and communicative expression through arts, graphic representation, mapping, media literacy, and multimedia productions. These building-block lessons for peacemaking participation often did not explicitly address social difference or cultural (bias and inclusion) dimensions of conflicts.

Teachers and students, in focus groups, described a few learning activities examining complex and justice-oriented social conflicts. Typically, teachers created space for such inquiry without directly “teaching” conflicts, by asking each student or small group to choose an issue for an independent project presentation. One class set of “social justice” project issues included diverse topics of indigenous land, pollution, education of girls in the developing world, and bullying. In another class, students each selected a “conflict” on which to collect information and write a report. Students’ choices were apparently limited by their pre-existing knowledge (including awareness of alternate information search resources), which could tend to reinforce mainstream discourses (Vibert & Shields, 2003). In their focus group, some of

those students lamented not having studied issues closer to their own lives—they previously had assumed that "conflict" mostly meant wars. In all three schools, participating teachers' enacted curriculum emphasized that individuals could "make a difference"—lessons on exemplary leaders such as Malala Yousafzai, Nelson Mandela, and Terry Fox, who had confronted problems far away in time or place.

Very few participating Canadian teachers or students articulated a sense of confidence to learn or implement peacemaking dialogue processes with which they might autonomously co-create resolutions to their own disputes or to take tangible action regarding problems of injustice. Although virtually all student participants *demonstrated* excellent discussion skills *in the (research) focus groups*—listening attentively, participating readily, responding constructively to peers' alternate viewpoints, articulating emotions and perspectives on justice issues—many said that they wanted more opportunity to learn and practice conflict dialogue, resolution, and justice-building processes in school lessons.

Students in both **Bangladesh** communities, especially girls, suffered considerable direct aggression and insecurity. They described peer exclusion, bullying, and especially gender-based harassment as "an everyday normal experience," mentioning girls who had stopped attending school because of gender-based aggression. Beyond pervasive gender-based and domestic violence, in the B2 city, the most challenging direct violence threats occurred during periodic polarized election campaigns. During election polarization, strikes, blockades, and street violence, boys and girls sometimes could not even get to school. Poverty was an extreme challenge, experienced close up, especially in the B1 schools' community. Peer aggression seemed more prevalent in the neighborhoods than inside the controlled environments of participating schools. Unlike other jurisdictions, Bangladesh students also reported direct violence perpetrated by adults in their schools (although caning was officially illegal). Many students also complained of a corrupt power structure—for instance, asserting that relatives had found it impossible to get a decent job without bribing somebody.

Students expressed discouragement that, even if they complained of abuse, "the police will not help us." Girls confirmed: "Our teachers teach us … to just be mindful and careful of ourselves. They also teach us … never to say anything angrily even if somebody verbally harasses you. They also teach us to go straight home from school…" A student at another school (B2F) reiterated this narrative, adding that wrong attitudes were "influenced by foreign cultures in the media." Thus, teachers, and often students themselves, supported curtailing female students' mobility (thus their access to economic, social, and political participation) in exchange for insecure partial peace. To address conflicts which they understood as misbehavior, teachers said, "We threaten them with punishment." However, students mentioned that teachers and a headmaster in the same school (B1F) took action to protect girls who were harassed or exploited. So, physical violence was exacerbated by cultural

violence (especially sexism and sometimes corruption in institutional hierarchies), which together in turn exacerbated political-economic exclusion by constraining females' mobility. Some educators in participating schools had tried to protect girls from exploitation, yet they also taught self-regulation in which girls were denied freedom and assigned primary responsibility for protecting themselves.

Teachers did teach some elements of peacebuilding, in lessons across the official curriculum, apparently because of (more than despite) the Bangladeshi requirement to follow the textbooks. At the same time, these lessons tended to be univocal—presentation of the government's preferred narrative, acknowledging social conflicts but usually without opening space for alternative voices or perspectives. A frequent pedagogical approach to building inclusive community identity, described by teachers and students, was to present stories and poetry about exemplary individuals, especially in Bangla language and Moral Education classes. These personified various moral qualities, such as taking individual responsibility to help fellow citizens, support for human rights (at least tolerance), economic development initiative, and patriotism. A social studies teacher (B1F) described a lesson "about qualities of great women who made differences in Bangladesh." In an English lesson, students were to, "Find a person in your locality who has succeeded in the face of difficulties and write about her/him." Focus group students recalled such arts and stories as positive ways to "help us to change the mentality against this discrimination" (B1F). Participants suggested that individual attitude change was a prerequisite to social justice.

Bangladeshi curriculum-in-use acknowledged a range of social conflicts—including systemic problems of injustice, social exclusion, and discrimination—and offered a few opportunities for student perspective-taking (giving ideas and opinions). However, high-stakes examinations as well as social hierarchies limited the time available, the breadth of viewpoints recognized, and the depth of analysis. A teacher reflected: "I do not think we are well prepared to our approach our students with discussions around our various social and political problems. … I teach my students only about passing the exams" (B1F). A student described a one-correct-answer approach: "Our teachers teach us what we should and should not do in various situations" (B2F). Another student critiqued the irrelevance of textbook approaches to conflicts: "There are problems and solutions [in our textbook] and there is a description of the problems. Everything is given correctly there. But we read these only to write in the exams. But these are never utilized in real life" (B2M).

There was no indication that peacemaking or dialogue capabilities (such as active listening, dialogue, negotiation, reflexivity, problem-solving) were taught explicitly in participating Bangladesh schools. However, a few teachers in multiple schools (and a student in one focus group) did describe lessons in which students took and juxtaposed perspectives, playing the roles of characters with different viewpoints in skits. Further, English textbook tasks required students to explain and take stands on issues such as overpopulation,

healthcare funding, and the claim that "massive burning of the world's coal reserves may lead to worldwide ecological disaster." Similarly, a social studies textbook: "Initiate a debate regarding the dependent economic relationship of Bangladesh with developed and developing countries." Also, the Moral Education text: "Discuss the negative impacts of Eve-teasing and snatching [gender-based harassment and kidnapping], and consider preventive measures from the Islamic perspective;" and "Give your opinion regarding distribution of income in the capitalist economy." Teachers and exams evidently expected "correct" answers to such questions, affirming current government policy, whether or not applied in practice. Thus, the Bangladesh curriculum-in-use offered fairly numerous, albeit constrained, opportunities for students to analyze some individual, social-structural and cultural dimensions of several social conflicts—potentially complementing the more diverse lived understandings and capabilities that students demonstrated in focus group discussions.

As in other jurisdictions, nearly all students in all Bangladesh focus groups demonstrated conflict communication capability: articulating and explaining points of view, listening respectfully, engaging in responsive exchange (including disagreement and building upon ideas) with peers. Their analyses of various social conflicts were not comprehensive, but included direct participants (wants and needs motivating parties' actions) and some indirect (cultural recognition and social-structural equity) dimensions.

Similarly, many Bangladeshi students showed comprehension, and some hope as well as passion for contributing to social change. They showed outrage that (B1M),

> There is one class of people in Bangladesh who are hugely rich, and there is another class of people who are extremely poor. These poor people are constantly deprived of their basic rights. And, even the government is not playing any leading roles to solve this problem... Common people should create organizations and protests to make... various parts of the government aware of the real scenario.

Students in one city had participated in school-sanctioned symbolic protest actions—a rally against *hartal* strikes and a human chain to protest political violence. Yet, peers acknowledged, "Some people who want to do something [about political economy conflicts] are scared, and many of them are corrupt themselves" (B2M). Several student focus group participants expressed distrust of their government. "They will arrest us whenever we say anything against the government." Presumably, this fear (as well as the selection of participants by adults in the school) influenced some students to not voice some critiques in their focus groups. Yet, other voices in the same focus groups did describe electoral corruption, repression, and hopelessness about potential dissent: "I cannot raise my voice, staying in Bangladesh. The government has killed many."

Over all, the prevailing curriculum-in-use we encountered in the participating Bangladesh school focus groups—implicitly in patterns of post-incident conflict management and explicitly in classroom lessons—reflected steep hierarchies in which those with less power (including students inside school) were often punished or harmed without significant opportunity to present their points of view or to participate in repairing or solving problems. Educative peacekeeping lessons emphasized compliance and self-regulation within a dominant moral-political code.

At the same time, the research surfaced some apparent opportunities for learning and practicing several elements of justice-sensitive peacebuilding. There were lessons about cultural and social-economic inclusion, especially the immorality of gender-based aggression and the value of sharing material aids with the poor. Not least, there were rare opportunities for students to voice, even rarely to debate, their own or others' perspectives on a few issues. As in the other jurisdictions, the least common curricular opportunities were in the realm of democratic participation representation: to encounter or hear from specific civil society or governance institutions or other policy actors, and to autonomously generate or deliberate about options for actually taking democratic action to transform social conflicts. In sum, participating Bangladesh students showed capability and commitment to democratic peacebuilding citizenship, and their curriculum-in-use offered several infrequent and constrained, but tangible, opportunities for students to expand their horizons of social analysis and capabilities for some forms of peacebuilding engagement.

Although **México** is not in the usual sense a war zone, young people participating in this research lived in a culture of normalized severe direct and indirect violence, pervasive securitization including unreliable and corrupt armed police, and little awareness of or access to public infrastructure institutions that could mitigate these difficulties. Many teachers and students voiced high hopes for public education as the primary—or only—avenue for achieving social success and building peace.

Young people in all the participating Mexican schools reported substantial experience with direct physical violence—especially gender-based domestic violence in their own and relatives' homes, gender-based harassment, fighting and bullying inside and outside of school, armed violence among competing gangs in the community, and two named episodes of teacher violence toward students in school (GTO1). For instance, a girl lamented that, "In my neighborhood there are gangs that are always fighting;" a boy in another group shared, "Sometimes my father hits my mother" (GTO3). Many students told of beatings, gunfire, killings, and insecurity in or near their homes, in environments they had to traverse to get to school. They also recognized indirect harms: "amid more delinquency, there's less opportunity to work because of the insecurity." Girls' opportunities to go anywhere were severely constrained by community violence (GTO1). An intermediate teacher said, "I have had students who know a lot about weapons, including I have had students who want to become drug dealers" (GTO4). An elementary teacher elaborated:

"At present the children are living through constant situations of relatives dead or injured in their families or neighborhoods. Sometimes there is helplessness among them. They can't go out because of stray bullets … they don't see a future" (GTO2).

Participating Mexican youth also described living with pervasive systemic (indirect) violence—especially, enormous social-economic inequality, poverty, and hunger; abandonment by parents migrating northward for work; illegal drug trafficking; discrimination especially against women, people from indigenous and rural communities, and their own poor neighborhood; systemic inequality between the global north and south; pollution; and the corruption and ineffectiveness of various governing authorities to mitigate the causes or consequences of such problems. Some students missed school when they had nothing to eat (GTO4). Pedagogical equipment was scarce in school, because "the neighborhood is an insecure context and things get stolen easily" (GTO2). The youth reported heavy police and even military presence in their communities: few considered this be contributing to their insecurity. An intermediate teacher's students had told her, in a lesson about authority, about frequent police abuse: "[police] mooch bribes, they search them, they rob them; they found a marker and scratched it across the face of one student" (GTO4). Students were unable to name any neighbors, social movements, institutions, or leaders that took action to mitigate or resolve such conflicts (e.g. GTO3).

Teachers were required to keep records of student indiscipline including violent behavior, and to refer students for strict punishment including school exclusion, without school-provided opportunities for conflict resolution dialogue. Students and teachers in all schools described how teachers counseled students to refrain from aggressive and destructive behavior—after incidents of fighting, bullying, or local gang activity, and sometimes as planned self-regulation lessons, "so that they will understand that acting rudely is not acceptable" (GTO2). In these educative peacekeeping instances, students were being taught compliant citizenship for passive peace. The repertoires of potential responses to aggression students voiced in focus groups were often limited to avoidance (staying home, hiding, not getting involved) and force (reporting to police, despite their explicit distrust).

A few teachers facilitated peacemaking dialogue between individuals or in class groups, to facilitate problem-solving after episodes of interpersonal conflict escalation. Sometimes, teachers invited students to suggest solutions to a problem a peer was experiencing (also GTO4). An elementary teacher led a class discussion after a boy had been excluded from peers' soccer team (GTO3). An intermediate teacher confronted students who had laughed at a girl who cried after they had hit her: "Even so, this girl had taunted a peer in recent days. I prohibited the group from laughing at her. They did a reflection to not mock the girl, and the girl did a reflection to not mock anybody" (GTO1). Such peacemaking interventions addressed multiple points of view

and facilitated a measure of active citizenship engagement in handling some conflicts, perhaps occasionally provoking reflexivity or deliberation.

The elementary Civics-Ethics textbook—a course created through a recent policy change—guided teachers to elicit self-expression: sharing, reflective class discussion, creative (drawing, interpreting images, brainstorming) and critical thinking (analyzing information, explaining opinions), about aspects of their local social environment. A teacher illustrated how other enacted curriculum also could touch students' lives: after her history lesson about Mexican leader Francisco (Pancho) Villa becoming engaged in the Revolution after his sister had been raped, one student disclosed that her father was in prison for raping her sisters (GTO1). In another teacher's lesson on "responsibility," students used a values education questionnaire to conduct interviews with family members regarding problems in the neighborhood.

All the participating Mexican teachers emphasized explicit *values education*. Participating teachers' most vocalized teaching priority in all four schools was "respect," followed by responsibility (fulfilling obligations). Other values articulated included: honesty, self-control, cooperation, *convivencia* (peaceful coexistence), tolerance of difference, caring for the environment, reciprocity, solidarity, peer dialogue, non-discrimination, and equality. Teachers often blamed students' disrespectfulness and aggression on their inadequate home lives. Elementary science lessons on caring for self and others included nourishment (nutrition, bulimia, anorexia), hygiene, and living things. Participating teachers showed evident awareness and care in relation to their students' serious life challenges—sometimes confidentially helping individuals to access shoes, uniforms, scholarship assistance or dental care, or encouraging students to share snacks and learning materials with needy peers.

Teachers in all four schools described lessons on recognizing gender, ability, and cultural differences. Intermediate teachers had student teams collect information about diverse languages and dialects, especially indigenous languages, within and beyond México. Teachers taught about valuing Mexico's indigenous heritage—telling the focus group they hoped this would reduce students' stigma and mistreatment of indigenous peers. Rarer intermediate lessons linked diversity with globalization, such as examining a community's adaptations to Japanese residents working for Japanese companies there. Similarly, elementary Civics lessons taught about gender equity and that gender-based violence was illegal. One elementary teacher organized a class "debate," allowing three boys to argue their view that women who were beaten at home had done something to deserve it—while voicing, and encouraging the other students to present, their view opposing gender-based violence. Thus, many lessons advocated passive tolerance, but students had some opportunities to consider their own experiences and viewpoints in relation to cultural bias dimensions of conflict and violence.

All participating Mexican teachers frequently implemented teamwork pedagogies in various subject areas, sometimes guiding heterogeneous groups to recognize one another's strengths and the value of working together

cooperatively. In conjunction with a science lesson on human body systems (circulatory, digestive, etc.), a teacher constructed a game about valuing peers' diverse appearances and abilities: She concluded with the analogy that students in a group were like systems of the body, each one different but working together for the good of the whole (GTO3). In other science units about health and the environment, students worked together on projects designed to benefit their community, such as developing a public display about reusing water for plants and bathing. Students described getting together to clean-up abandoned (brownfield) land and collecting money to pay people for clean-up work (GTO4). These are examples of schoolwork practicing small, non-disruptive episodes of participatory citizenship—little analysis of underlying social conflicts, nor dissent linked to governance or social movements, but opportunities to experience inclusion and taking some action together to improve their communities' lives.

In a typical conflict analysis pedagogy described, teachers presented "cases" of conflict (from textbooks, poetry, news, videos, comic strips, or images) to build students' capabilities and inclinations for peacemaking and citizenship. The class would read a story or view a film clip, asking students to identify the motives, feelings, and concerns of each character about a problem, then to express their own opinions about the characters' action choices. Often, teachers invited students to express themselves through the arts—such as acting out characters' points of view, and then showing, "what would you have done in this situation?" Orally or in letter-writing assignments, students were invited to justify their opinions about problems experienced in the community. In Civics-Ethics, students prepared and held class debates on topics such as the pros and cons of transgenic foods and the merits of urban vs. rural areas. In a history and Spanish project, students created a play about Plutarco Elias, a Mexican politician who opposed Catholicism (leading to the Cristero War), to investigate, "why he acted without considering the people" (GTO3). Many teachers guided students to analyze some causes and consequences of individual decisions to migrate—emphasizing empathy for children whose parents and relatives had left home to work in North America (GTO3). A history unit examined the roles of various people (including displaced indigenous people and workers) in founding this city, examining how they handled problems and disagreements (GTO2). Another teacher engaged students in comparing an historical case (Porfirio Diaz) to a contemporary Mexican Zapatista revolutionary leader, Comandante Marcos (GTO2). In these activities, students would have had experiences encountering conflicting perspectives, thinking for themselves, and engaging dialogically with others with whom they agreed and disagreed.

A few classes talked about poverty, hunger, and deprivation (lived by many of the students) rooted in social conflict over scarce resources and employment. In one school, a teacher mentioned in the focus group a local heritage of peacebuilding citizenship—the community had formerly mobilized to support the poor through public cafeterias (GTO2)—but none mentioned presenting

such information to students. A teacher shared a lesson alluding to stigma against Mesoamerican indigenous peoples living in poverty: She had told her class that, as Mexicans, they should be proud to be "descendants of brave people" (GTO3). Focus groups with teachers and students elicited almost no examples in which students would encounter actors in their own civil society, social institutions, or system of governance (especially beyond the local).

A predominant narrative reiterated by several teachers and students in all the schools was that access to schooling, staying in school, working, and studying hard would help individuals to overcome adversity and violence including poverty. Some asserted directly that those who prospered had worked harder than those who did not. This suggests an implicit curriculum that evades institutional and political causes and tends to blame those victimized by resource-based conflicts like poverty or migration.

As in the other jurisdictions, virtually all students in all Mexican focus groups demonstrated to research team facilitators their clear and enthusiastic conflict communication capability: articulating and explaining points of view, listening and engaging respectfully with peers' contrasting ideas. Similarly, they capably identified direct and some indirect participants (desires, needs, and context factors motivating parties' actions) in various conflicts, and recognized cultural diversity and bias including gender and indigeneity dynamics, and social-structural equity factors. Like participating students elsewhere, they felt that their understandings of intertwined difference and conflict matters were shallow, and that they wanted more in-depth opportunities in school to develop further their conflict understandings and capabilities for peacebuilding participation.

Cross-Case Discussion

Severe direct and systemic violence was a prominent feature of student research participants' lived citizenship, in all three cases (significantly in the Canadian city communities, more in the Bangladeshi city communities, and even more in the Mexican city communities). These young citizens demonstrated remarkable resourcefulness in navigating and comprehending some multidimensional social conflicts—economic, cultural, and political/participatory—that underlay the violence surrounding them. Collectively in focus groups, they were always able to articulate the contrasting perspectives and desires of multiple direct actors in and contributing to the escalation of those problems. In describing the conflicts they selected as especially important in their experience, participating young people, and many of their teachers, also capably identified indirect factors—economic distribution and access to tangible resources, and cultural reinforcement of narratives, biases, and beliefs—shaping and escalating the conflicts. Thus, these young people and teachers understood that patterns of social conflict underlay and exacerbated patterns of direct as well as systemic harm suffered in their daily lives. In a vicious cycle, through such mechanisms as repressive securitization, stigma, and constrained mobility, those

daily patterns of direct violence in turn further exacerbated systemic harm, including discrimination and severely limited access to resources for well-being. In sum, confirming Galtung's diagnosis, violence—even outside war zones—is a crucial and underappreciated instance of injustice, as well as a risk factor that intensifies injustice.

So, participating young people in all three jurisdictions understood, largely based on lived experience, a great deal about many of the direct and systemic social conflicts around them, including some of their cultural (identity, learning beliefs) and economic (resource control) causes. That's important: a necessary, although not sufficient, ingredient for peacebuilding citizenship action. Some decades ago, Merelman (1990) theorized why this might be so: through social learning embedded in their lives in local escalated conflict zones, these non-affluent young people developed and practices sophisticated repertoires for recognizing, navigating, and talking about such social conflicts. Merelman illustrated, on a small scale, how some children from conflictual contexts were better able, compared to some children from peaceful contexts, to do things like put conflict escalation events in order and to identify contrasting viewpoints. Some of the school lessons that participants talked about had apparently expanded these horizons of knowledge—describing and discussing some of these problems, although rarely probing multiple perspectives about their causes or anatomy (actors, factors) as social conflicts.

However, as Fraser (2004) and Lederach (2003) explain, in addition to understanding the "what" of injustices (systemic roots of violence), people need to understand the "how"—the official and unofficial *processes* of direct participation and (government and transnational) political representation through which people participate in creating, reproducing, and—crucially—transforming social injustice conflicts. Although not designed as free-standing peace education programming, the enacted mainstream public school curricula participants described in focus groups also merited Ross' (2010) critique: They paid very scant attention to questions or mechanisms of power or political process. The young people in these Mexican, Bangladeshi, and Canadian schools demonstrated understanding of problems, but not of the actors, actions, mechanisms, or processes (that is, the politics) by which people did or might engage collectively in trying to transform or solve them. Presumably as a result of this close-up understanding of problems but not of any actors inventing or deliberating solutions, many of these young people expressed discouragement and distrust of governing authorities.

The understanding most absent from the peacebuilding-relevant capabilities that most participating students showed us—*and*, not incidentally, from the enacted *school lessons* that they and their teachers described—is represented by the green zone in the triangle diagram (Fig. 12.1). This middle zone, between violence (depicted in yellow) and perfect peace (blue), is the space for citizenship—action in the context of collective community—in the imperfect real world. Conflict regulation actions in the yellow-green area include regulatory interventions to mitigate the harms of violence through peacekeeping, coercive

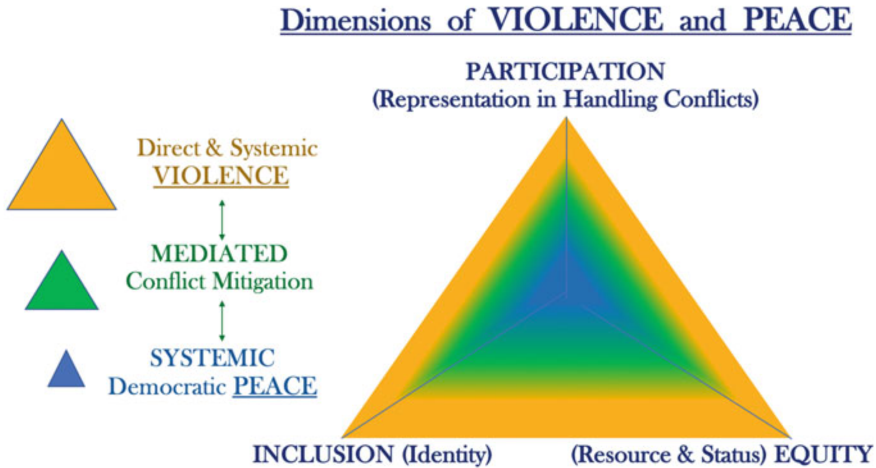

Fig. 12.1 Dimensions of Violence and Peace

rules and punishment, cultural sanction, or self-regulation, while assuming or actively reinforcing existing social-political hierarchies. Further along toward systemic peacebuilding in the blue-green area, conflict mediation and transformation involve a wider range of democratic actors and actions such as civil society, dissenting social movements, mediating institutions, and deliberated transitional justice remedies for injustices at the roots of enduring systemic and direct violence. Although none of the three systems was a perfect democracy, all three societies surely would have had, to some extent, such collective democratic actors and actions. Unfortunately, virtually none of the participating youth had really encountered these actors, inside school or in their marginalized communities. Students in all focus groups were aware of surface symptoms of democratic actions such as "protest" demonstrations, and of historical actors who had fomented revolutionary change, but not of who had organized these actions, how, with whom, nor toward whom (that is, what particular policy actors/actions those protests were intended to influence). It was impossible for them to feel confident in their own capacities to contribute to building just peace without such encounter with citizenship actors. Did these school curricula contribute to primary ignorance? Few of the young people, nor equally their teachers, showed awareness that their education was missing this active democratic citizenship dimension.

Of course, there were interesting differences as well as similarities among the cases. Bangladeshi and Mexican participants showed clear awareness of how physical violence in interpersonal life and broad society, such as gender-based abuse and harassment, was exacerbated by cultural violence such as sexism. The participant-described examples of Bangladeshi curriculum-in-use that participants communicated a moral justice perspective, by describing as normative problems many examples and kinds of destructive cultural and

social-structural conflict practices, such as gender-based harassment and dowry exchange, poverty, and transnational colonial exploitation. As remedies, the curriculum encouraged individual desistance from bad behavior, compliance with moral strictures, and patriotic support for the nation in the face of external enemies. Mexican curriculum-in-use that was shared also denounced cultural bias, such as discrimination against indigenous people and people with different (dis)abilities, and economic mal-distribution such as poverty and lack of clean water. As remedies, the curriculum communicated the neoliberal values of respecting and complying with authority, self-regulation, working hard, and staying in school. Participating Canadian youth and teachers, in contrast, tended to describe cultural biases and social-structural harms as primarily occurring to others at a distance in time or space: for instance, colonial oppression of Indigenous First Nation Canadians by earlier European settlers, gender oppression impeding girls' schooling in Afghanistan, or racist apartheid in South Africa. As remedies, the reported curriculum communicated a curious mix of nationalism (aren't we fortunate to be Canadians today, where we have rights and these problems are largely solved) and a more self-confident version of neoliberalism, in which "one person can make a difference" to help others. Lessons in all the jurisdictions mentioned pollution, with anti-pollution remedies largely limited to self-regulation and occasional clean-up campaigns. Although they taught some (univocal, rarely multi-perspective) analysis of some injustice, apparently none of these sets of curriculum taught much about community or larger-scale mediating institutions, civil society actors, or democratic political processes for building just peace. This constitutes a gap that public schooling ought to be able to fill.

All participating teachers evidently implemented some pedagogies in which students practiced interpersonal-scale communication, critical reflection, and cooperation. Especially in the Canadian sample, substantially in the Mexican sample, and somewhat in the Bangladeshi sample, focus group evidence indicates that participating teachers' students had opportunities to consider, listen, express, and occasionally even debate their viewpoints about various conflictual (and less often, controversial) questions, orally and in writing. Only one or two participating teachers in each of Canada and Mexico said they had explicitly taught any particular process or principles for communicating constructively and persuasively about conflict, in small-scale peer disputes or in larger-group dialogue or decision-making deliberation, although a number of students in each focus group context advised that they would like to have such learning opportunities. Participating Mexican teachers implemented the most (semi-) autonomous student groupwork pedagogy, Canadian teachers some, and Bangladeshi teachers little. Only in Mexico did a few teachers explain how they explicitly prepared and guided students to cooperate in an equitable and inclusive manner, taking diversities into account. Only in Bangladesh did all (mandated) teaching texts in social studies, moral education, and language include creative expression such as poetry. A few Bangladeshi and many Canadian and Mexican teachers also engaged their students in creative

self-expression through drama skits, visual arts, or (in Mexico) music. These are democracy-relevant capabilities, that could be extended and strengthened to facilitate encounters with democratic actors and application to larger-scale participation and representation dimensions of building just peace.

In every focus group in all three cases, the young people selected to participate showed enthusiastic interest in probing and discussing various locally relevant conflicts, and many of them said that they would like more such opportunities in school. They also demonstrated clear communicative capabilities in the focus group workshops—in the ways they spoke, listened, agreed and disagreed, and built upon one another's ideas to develop collective understanding—even though they told us that they felt they needed far more in-depth opportunities to practice such in-depth inquiry, thoughtful dialogue, and deliberation in school. Many of the youth showed passion and commitment to participate in learning difficult knowledge about injustice and violence, and in acting to make their worlds better, even though they showed little awareness of other people (much less groups) who had participated in such democratizing citizenship. Clearly, these young people were resourceful in the face of daunting violence. From the shining exceptional lessons shared by teachers in their focus groups, it is clear that ordinary public schooling could do considerably more to equip and support youth for more effective democratic peacebuilding citizenship participation.

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