

# Peacebuilding Citizenship Education in a Muslim Majority Context: Challenges and Opportunities in Bangladeshi Public Schools

by

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## Abstract

Globally, many young citizens are disengaged from constructively transforming conflicts and affirming just peace (Kassimir & Flanagan, 2010). In Bangladesh, lived experience of polarized political affiliates' and others' violent engagement in conflicts often contributes to many citizens' avoidance of formal politics (Riaz & Raji, 2011). Schools can help to reduce—or to reproduce—those patterns of violence and citizen disengagement (Davies, 2011). Dialogue, in educational settings, about lived social and political conflicts and potential solutions—in relation to their own identities and contexts—may help citizens to develop peace-building capacities (Lederach, 1995; McCauley, 2002). This doctoral thesis studies opportunities and challenges for peacebuilding citizenship education embedded in the existing curriculum of Bangladesh, juxtaposed with selected students' and teachers' concerns and understandings about selected social conflicts and what people can do about them in their own contexts. Research methods involved document analysis and focus groups with young adolescents and with teachers, in girls' and boys' public schools in two cities.

Bangladeshi curriculum mandates analyzed in this research do offer opportunities for studying various social conflicts. However, participating teachers' implemented curriculum tended to ignore multiple viewpoints about human rights and governance conflicts. Participating students and teachers had difficulty identifying social-structural dimensions of the conflicts that

they or their families had not directly experienced. All participants were familiar with patterns of direct harm, and sometimes also identified some cultural dimensions, as they described parties and their viewpoints in conflicts that mattered to them. Religious moral factors were prominent in how they described causes and escalators of these conflicts. Beyond suggesting individuals' religious moral correction, very few participants showed familiarity with democratic problem-solving options that could reduce violence and transform these social conflicts. Thus, in this Muslim-majority context, participants understood the dimensions and solutions of social conflicts in religious-moral terms: Islam provided the vocabulary with which participants talked about mutual responsibility, justice, and the possibilities of peace. The thesis argues that classroom opportunities for critical analysis of multiple viewpoints and of available options to solve social and political conflicts—including their religious dimensions—would increase participants' opportunities for citizenship learning and peacebuilding engagement.

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## List of Abbreviations

B1:	Smaller, less affluent, and less violent city (than B2)
B2:	Bigger, more affluent, and more violent city (than B1)
BAL:	Bangladesh Awami League
BGS:	Bangladesh and Global Studies
BJI:	Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami
BL:	Bangla
BNP:	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
EL:	English
IME:	Islam and Moral Education
JP:	Jatiya Party
SFG:	Student Focus Group
TFG:	Teacher Focus Group



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## Chapter 1

# Peacebuilding Citizenship Education in Bangladesh

Globally, citizenship education is faced with two particular challenges. *First:* In many contexts in the global North and South, citizens are increasingly disengaged from formal politics, whereas democratic citizenship requires more than mere compliance or voting (Hildreth, 2012; Kassimir & Flanagan, 2010; Reimers & Cardenas, 2010). Citizens in the North, such as in Canada, do seem to understand voting as an important means of influencing government decision making (Chareka & Sears, 2006). Yet, citizens' participation even in voting is declining in Canada and other countries (*ibid*; Blais & Loewen, 2011; Pammett & LeDuc, 2003; Voter Turnout, 2018). In such contexts, to develop citizens' inclinations for (and critical understandings of issues related to) active engagement in political processes for social change, including and beyond voting, is a major educational challenge (Davies & Issitt, 2005; Sears & Hughes, 2006). *Second:* In some countries—such as Bangladesh, Colombia, Mexico, Myanmar, and Pakistan—many citizens are engaged in mobilizing for social and political change through violent activities (A. Dube, O. Dube, & García-Ponce, 2013; Cheesman, 2017; Dean, 2005; Dube & Naidu, 2015; Riaz, 2016a; Waldmann, 2007). In such contexts, the challenge for school education includes building citizens' capacities and inclinations to act non-violently. Bangladesh exemplifies both of these challenges—schools are faced with developing not only citizens' inclinations to engage in social and political reform processes, but also their capacities to act non-violently.

All human societies are conflict zones, although not necessarily violence zones, because conflicting desires, needs and viewpoints are inevitable (Ury, 2000). The challenge for affirming justice and peace lies in *how* citizens respond to such conflicts (*ibid*). Citizens' violent response to conflicts, to varying degrees, is a global challenge (e.g., Ahmed, 2016; Weissinger & Brown, 2017; WHO, 2010). Bangladesh stands out in this picture especially because of a puzzle: as a Muslim majority context, Bangladesh's politics and culture could manifest Islam, whose ideals mean liveable peace (Gandhi, 1927; Köylü, 2004). Yet, violence related to local and national political conflicts has been high in Bangladesh, compared to other Asian countries, for decades (The Asian Foundation, 2017). Afghanistan and Pakistan are also affected by escalated social and political conflicts including violence; but international actors are also more prominent in these countries than in Bangladesh (e.g., Khan, 2016; World Report, 2017a). Bangladesh does

have a history of non-violent citizen response to large-scale social and political conflicts, including language movement and parliamentary election issues, for instance when it was part of Pakistan (Akanda, 2013; Hossain, 2010). Nevertheless, in relation to major historical events of successful political change, many Bangladeshis (as well as people in other places) follow traditions of violent response to conflicts (Murshid, 2016; Riaz, 2016b; Shehabuddin, 2016). Further, many Bangladeshi citizens avoid such violence by remaining disengaged from socio-political reform processes (Riaz & Raji, 2011). Thus, although there is virtually no perfect peace in this world, the conjunction of violence and disengagement poses a unique challenge to citizenship education for peacebuilding in Bangladesh.

As briefly mentioned above, the Muslim majority character, as it currently prevails in the society, is one important dimension of the peacebuilding citizenship education challenges in Bangladesh. Citizens' religious identities are an important factor that shapes their participation in sociopolitical processes (Ahmad, 2006; Waghid, 2014). Nearly ninety percent of the people of Bangladesh are Muslims (CIA, 2018). However, there is no evidence that citizens' Islamic identities in Bangladesh have helped, or hindered, them to function cooperatively and non-violently in relation to conflicts rooted in local and global inequalities of wealth and power (Islam, 2011). This context, which some may understand as a 'failure' of Muslim religious culture, may contribute to explaining to some extent contemporary young citizens' political polarization and disengagement (Siddiqi, 2011). Curriculum in public schools usually reflects the viewpoints of those in power; it may (or may not) teach about historical and contemporary conflicts in ways that could help students to comprehend and speak to these challenges (Apple, 2004). Lived experiences of unjust and violent activities in relation to conflict do represent available options/models of citizen participation for these Muslims. How can schools in such a context help to change the patterns of (violent or disengaged) participation by developing citizens' inclinations and capacities for reducing existing violence and non-violently affirming democratic justice and peace?

Comparative education helps to understand how education in various (comparable and contrasting) contexts can be improved (Hayhoe, Manion & Mundy, 2017). However, there is little existing research on peacebuilding and/or citizenship education in Bangladesh. Therefore, Bangladesh represents an important and under-studied case of citizen disengagement and violent political activism in a south Asian Muslim majority context. Studying the possibilities and challenges for peacebuilding citizenship education in Bangladesh—including the voices and

concerns of particular youth and educators in local public schools—can help to map out what formal education can do to increase (or, conversely, to impede) the possibilities of affirming just peace in such contexts.

I have personal motivations behind this thesis research. I was born and raised in a Muslim family in Bangladesh. I try to practice Islam based on my own in-depth understandings of the Qur'an and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). As a practicing Muslim, I have developed certain understandings about Islam, peace(-building), and citizenship. From experience in Bangladesh, in Canada, and elsewhere in the world, I have learned that many social conflicts in Bangladesh are as intense as those in many peaceful countries. Bangladesh *is* a moderately peaceful country (IEP, 2017a). However, violence in this country is also undeniable; and most of this bloodshed is linked to conflicts among dominant political groups (The Asian Foundation, 2017). I have had lived experience of democracy and peace, and I have witnessed some small-scale peacebuilding activities happening in various parts of Bangladesh. Nevertheless, I strongly believe that justice and peace could be extended, in part through education, to dominate all social and political experiences in this Muslim majority context.

In this contemporary world, where the solidity of truths, ideals, and moral frames (previously seen as settled) are blurring, constructing a stable self-identity has become increasingly difficult for many people (Bauman, 2001, 2007). Life has become fragmented: the fluidity of morality and social relationships over time and space demand the fluidity and mobility of self-identity as well (*ibid*). Hence, achieving justice and peace is more complicated now than ever, especially because humans in such contexts of 'liquid modernity' may tend to create belief systems based on cultural knowledge acquired from families and sociocultural traditions, including religion. Muslims are forbidden to create such sectarian groups (The Qur'an, 6:159, 30:30–32). They are asked to firmly follow one straight path, mandated by God and modelled by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)—*Sirāt al-mustaqīm* (The Qur'an, 1:6, 3:103, 4:59, 4:80). If all Muslims followed *Sirāt al-mustaqīm*, active engagement in small- and large-scale peacebuilding citizenship would be a prominent experience in Muslim majority contexts (e.g., The Qur'an, 3:104). In such an ideal context, non-Muslims would have equal freedom to live and practice their religious, social, and political rights (The Qur'an, 2:256, 109:6). Clearly, such citizenship requires in-depth understandings of the Qur'an and the Hadiths. Lack of such nuanced understanding of Islam is dangerous enough to destroy democracy and peace in a Muslim majority context, such as Bangladesh.

### Overview of the Inquiry

There is no explicit ‘peace education’ program in Bangladeshi schools. Citizens in any context may be educated for peace in diverse ways and through diverse means, such as through ‘international’, ‘human rights’, ‘development’, ‘environmental’, and ‘conflict resolution’ education (Harris, 2004). These elements and forms of peacebuilding citizenship education express, to some extent, educators’ goals of educating citizens to cooperatively solve sociopolitical conflicts and to take actions that challenge structures of injustice and enhance just peace. Whereas tolerance, mutual respect and human rights are seminal to such education (*ibid*; Mahrouse, 2006), some peace education in practice has been reduced to individual conflict management skills, or adopted into isolated disciplines of study (Cook, 2008; Lopes-Cardozo et al 2015). In addition to non-violence, peacebuilding and citizenship educators’ primary concerns are to develop students’ understandings and skills that can enhance sociopolitical practices and embody democratic values (Bickmore, 2017; Galtung, 1983; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) such as human rights (Cook, 2008), active participation in processes of social change (Gibson, 2012; Hildreth, 2012), social justice (Kumashiro, 2004; Arnot, 2009; North, 2009), and so forth. Some of these crucial options for peacebuilding citizenship education are available in Bangladesh’s existing public school social studies, history, religion, language and literature curriculum guidelines (Bickmore, Kaderi & Guerra-Sua, 2017; Kaderi, 2014b).

Educational practices that exclude attention to the above options for peacebuilding citizenship, linked to lived social conflicts, may contribute to (re)producing citizens’ compliance and/or disengagement, thereby blocking citizenship for democracy (Davies, 2005; Vanner, Akseer, Kovinthan, 2017), and maintaining the *status quo* by normalizing existing governance and citizen participation patterns. Conversely, school-based participation in developing understanding of contrasting viewpoints on social conflicts and on (nonviolent) democratic options for solving them can contribute to building citizens’ moral judgements and usable skills to affirm just, sustainable peace (*ibid*; Bajaj, 2016; Bickmore, 2017).

Furthermore, adolescent citizens’ development of understanding of history and national identity can influence their decisions about political engagement (Selman & Kwok, 2010), as can their understanding of concepts such as democracy, social justice, conflict, peace (Bickmore, 2011a) and of citizens’ repertoires of roles in enhancing democracy, justice and peace. Thus, the ways national identity is presented, for instance in secondary school curriculum, can inform

Bangladeshi citizens' (expected) understanding of democracy, citizenship and peace in general. Citizens' developing understanding of various dimensions of conflict (including solutions and citizenship roles) from lived experience is particularly risky in contexts like Bangladesh, because disengagement and/or violent activities often tend to dominate such experiences. Thus, research is needed to understand schools' potential to (re-)shape—and to be (re-)shaped by—citizens' learning from various dimensions of lived conflict experience.

Thus, Bangladesh is a case of escalated political conflicts and citizen disengagement in a Muslim majority context. This thesis research examines the ways curriculum may reinforce or challenge dominant paradigms of injustice, in relation to the lived social experiences, understandings, and concerns of young (predominantly Muslim) citizens. In particular, I investigate selected young people's concerns and understandings about the social and political conflicts surrounding their lives, and the (mis-)match and (dis)connections between that experience-based knowledge and the curriculum experiences implemented by their teachers, in four schools in two Bangladeshi cities. I assume that, despite various challenging factors, such students' lived-experience-based knowledge and values about conflicts represent pedagogical opportunities for interested teachers to connect and give meaning to official curriculum. I also assume that by building on, and at times by disrupting, understandings rooted in their lived experiences, school-based implemented curricula may help young citizens to develop peacebuilding citizenship inclinations and capacities in relation to social and political conflicts that concern them.

### **Overview of Thesis Organization**

Findings of this study will be useful to understand peacebuilding citizenship education opportunities and challenges in Bangladesh and similar contexts. For instance, insights gleaned through this study can inform educational theory and practice in other Muslim majority and/or escalated sociopolitical conflict contexts, in south Asia and beyond. Below, I present key concepts and the design of this inquiry, followed by the results and discussion, in the following order.

In Chapter 2, I review south Asian and international comparative theory and research on school-based educational opportunities and challenges for teaching and learning about conflicts and for developing citizen action capacities for peacebuilding. I define peacebuilding citizenship by linking the concepts of citizenship (roles and actions) with conflict resolution (nonviolent response to direct conflict episodes—peacemaking) and affirmation of justice (nonviolent action

to transform and redress the indirect causes of social conflict—peacebuilding). In this literature review, I show that these concepts have been largely understudied in south Asian and Muslim majority contexts, particularly in Bangladesh. Last, I distill key ideas from the theories reviewed into a conceptual framework for my empirical study.

In Chapter 3, I explain why and how I used qualitative research methods—viz., document analysis and focus group workshops—in this thesis study. Explaining the rationale behind each dimension of my research activity, I discuss each method used to collect and analyze data in this research. For example, since young citizens' concerns and understandings about their lived social and political conflicts constitute a major portion of this research, it has been important to discern participating citizens' own interpretations of their experiences, through direct communication with participating students and teachers in their respective schools. In this chapter, I also describe the cities, official federal curriculum expectations, schools, teachers, and students that I have selected for this study, and justify these choices.

In Chapter 4, I provide a critical analysis of the social, political, and educational context of Bangladesh, the context for this study. Given the dearth of relevant published scholarly work available to review, I also use newspaper and government document sources to understand the context of Bangladesh. In this chapter, I also present some findings from my analysis of official curriculum documents, in addition to some relevant research, to outline the educational context. Briefly, lived social experiences and official curriculum learning goals represent various opportunities to practice inquiry into conflict issues and to learn about cooperation, dialogue, relationship building, and other non-violent processes for participating in government decision making processes, and in building just peace. However, I will show how these sources also represent blame narratives regarding conflicts, silencing of alternative viewpoints, and undemocratic and violent responses to conflict.

In Chapter 5, I present and analyze data in relation to one particular social conflict theme emerging from my findings: questions of human rights, in particular conflicts over gender, resource, and religious inequities. I present an analysis of students' understandings, compared across genders and cities and with official and implemented (teachers) curriculum on these dimensions of conflict and citizenship. In Chapter 6, I present and analyze data in relation to another social conflict theme that also emerged as especially important in Bangladesh: conflicts around politics and governance, both in general and within the school system. Distinguishing human rights conflicts from political/governance issues helped me to focus my comparison of



participating students' lived experiences with their curriculum experiences (teachers' implementation of the curriculum), in light of my conceptual framework regarding the dimensions of conflict, violence, citizenship and education.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I summarize the findings, comparing and contrasting students' understandings with the opportunities or barriers presented by curriculum practices, in relation to the two conflict themes and the official curriculum of Bangladesh. I conclude the thesis by discussing the scholarly and practical implications, methodological limitations, and significance of this study.

### **Conclusion**

Although official curriculum mandates may include various opportunities relevant to building democracy and peace, intended educational goals alone do not ensure that citizens learn to prevent violence or to reproduce conditions for sustainable peace. This doctoral thesis examines the significance of young people's lived experience of social and political conflicts in helping them to critically understand these conflicts and their peacebuilding citizenship options. Examining the local religious contexts and participants' own descriptions of their understandings (located in time and place) will contribute the case of Bangladesh to help comparative scholars and educators to understand their own educational challenges and opportunities. Also, these Bangladesh-based findings will shed comparative light on other Muslim majority (and non-Muslim majority) contexts in the global North and South.

## Chapter 2

# Literature Review: Conflict and Violence Mitigating and Reproducing Factors in Education

This thesis research is about peacebuilding citizenship education challenges and opportunities in a Muslim majority context, Bangladesh. Peacebuilding citizenship means citizen action for reducing existing violence, non-violently transforming conflicts, and democratically affirming just peace (Bickmore, Kaderi & Guerra-Sua, 2017; Kaderi, 2014b). Islam includes Muslims' social and political functioning to affirm non-violence, justice, equity, and peace for all members of the society (Ahmed, 2016; Safi, 2003). Throughout Bangladesh's history of social and political change, youths have engaged in action for justice (Riaz, 2016a); but their actions were often violent (Datta, 2005; Siddiqi, 2011). Those who disapproved such activities remained formally disengaged from movements for social and political change (Riaz & Raji, 2011). To varying degrees and in varying ways, such patterns of violent action and disengagement exist globally (Kassimir & Flanagan, 2010), including other south Asian Muslim majority contexts (e.g., Dean, 2005; Novelli & Lopes-Cardozo, 2008; Lall, 2008). The contemporary Bangladesh environment exemplifies the dilemmas of violent citizen engagement in a south Asian Muslim majority context.

Schools represent a public place where something to alter such patterns of citizen (dis-)engagement may be implemented (Lopes Cardozo et al., 2015). This thesis examines this challenge at the level of local schools: how do young citizens in Bangladesh understand the social and political conflicts around them, and how could school-based education help to build their peacebuilding citizenship inclinations and capacities? I studied this particular problem by examining some 12 to 15-year-old (secondary) students' understandings about their lived social and political conflicts, and both these students' and their teachers' insights on how selected implemented curricula addressed and/or ignored these students' understandings and lived concerns. Participating teachers taught, and students studied, grade 6–10 compulsory history, social studies, language, and Islam curricula. As government mandates, these public-school curricula include official learning expectations, pedagogical guides, and textbooks.

For my investigation, I begin by reviewing theory and existing research literature, to understand the ingredients of peacebuilding citizenship, including what constitutes critical understandings about conflicts and their solutions, and how schools could address—or ignore, or

exacerbate—these elements. I found these areas of education to have been understudied in Bangladesh. Hence, I reviewed research from south Asian Muslim majority and other international contexts to understand how schools might facilitate—or not—peacebuilding citizenship learning opportunities.

In this chapter, I first outline the elements of peacebuilding citizenship (education) in three sections: (1) understandings of conflict and its various dimensions; (2) understandings of conflict transformation—including the role of citizen action for change; and (3) factors in the lived and planned curriculum. In each section, I also discuss the educational implications of each element—i.e. how schools might or might not help young citizens to develop peacebuilding citizenship inclinations, moral judgements, and capacities for responding to conflicts.

Next, I summarize the concepts derived from the above three sections as a conceptual framework that informs this thesis research project. One key assumption is that, by providing models of citizen action, young citizens' lived experiences with conflicts shape—and may be reshaped by—their inclinations and capacities for responding to conflicts (including affirming justice). Another foundational assumption is that schools can facilitate—or not—peacebuilding citizenship education, by democratically addressing—or ignoring—students' lived experience based understandings of conflict and their solutions.

### **Understanding Conflict**

Conflicts do not always cause harm or imply violence: conflict refers to any form of struggle or disagreement between or among stakeholders about beliefs or tangible interests, which can arise and be addressed in a range of violent or nonviolent ways (Bickmore, 2005; Kaderi, 2014b). Thus, analyzing the anatomy of conflict includes discerning contrasting and conflicting viewpoints (beliefs, interests), violent and nonviolent actions and consequences, affected parties, and the causes of disagreement and harm.

### **Conflict**

The term 'conflict' is often used to refer only to escalated, intractable clashes between individuals or ethnic or political identity groups, especially in contexts labelled as (post-)war or (post-)conflict zones (e.g., Bekerman, Zembylas, & McGlynn, 2009; K. Jenkins & B. Jenkins, 2010; Ross, 2001). Such understandings, implying that conflicts are inevitably harmful and virtually unmanageable, mask the potentially solvable problems underlying their symptoms, and leave little space for hope. On the contrary, no context is a 'post-conflict' zone in the sense that it has overcome all disagreements or conflicting perspectives, interests and needs. In every human

community, conflicting viewpoints are inevitable, and people's responses to conflicts are the key determinants of violence and peace (Ury, 2000). This understanding of conflict as distinct from violence could open up spaces for education and democratic action to facilitate constructive transformation of conflicts and building of peace (Lederach, 2006). Building peace requires democratically addressing multiple viewpoints and the factors that cause and escalate conflicts, reduce violence, and affirm just peace (Curle, Freire & Galtung, 1974; Galtung, 1996; Harris, 2004). A lack of critical education around these dimensions of conflict, in contrast, could fuel politically charged stigmatization of places and peoples suffering escalated conflicts (Abu-Nimer, 2013; Galtung, 1971). Hence, a key to peacebuilding is understanding conflicts as solvable problems, distinct from violence.

**Direct dimensions of conflict.** As indicated above, escalated conflicts may (or may not) include violent symptoms or responses. Conflicting identity groups, having certain perceptions of friendship and enmity, often engage in defending their values, beliefs, and viewpoints from 'others', instead of mutually solving problems (Ross, 2001, 2007). People's sense of how to defend their lives and values may, or may not, include gory battles. The symptoms of such escalated conflicts include various forms of harm and multiple dimensions. Violence is mainly understood as physical, perhaps linked to historical views that no human society has ever developed without war (e.g., Keeley, 1996). However, war and other kinds of physical violence are just one form of violence, which Galtung (1969, 1990) calls direct violence. In direct confrontation, enemies/ identity groups may use weapons or other forms of physical force to inflict physical damage—e.g. killing, harming, destroying infrastructure. In such confrontations, identity groups involved in direct violence may perceive violent action as the only resistance option available to them (Fanon, 2004). In contrast, peacebuilding in the context of such violence requires alternative, non-violent means to effectively respond to and transform underlying social conflicts (Bickmore, 2017), as well as security to reduce existing direct violence. School-based programs toward such peacebuilding alternatives would teach cooperation, dialogue, respect, collaboration, and democratic problem solving, instead of reproducing violence by ignoring or preventing such educational opportunities (Bickmore, Kaderi & Guerra-Sua, 2017).

**Indirect dimensions of conflict.** Conflict and violence are not only direct and physical. Violence can be indirect also — what Galtung (1969) calls structural and cultural violence. Structural violence refers to harm systemically inflicted by powerful/privileged social groups on less powerful/underprivileged groups (*ibid*). Such harm manifests the social and economic

interest dimensions of conflict (Ross, 2001, 2007). Examples of such harm include the denial of basic human needs, rights, and justice, and the resultant poverty, inequality, and other harm rooted in the social hierarchies of power and privilege. Such denial of tangible social interests can compel the underprivileged to respond to conflicts through directly violent action (*ibid*). The social structural dimensions of conflict and their causal relationship with direct harm can be rethought. In particular, such damage may have incremental, long-term effects such as diseases linked to environmental pollution and poverty (which may be linked to economic infrastructure damages from war or other causes): Nixon (2011) calls this phenomenon “slow violence.” In sum, the social structural dimensions of conflict constitute indirect harm, as well as factors that escalate conflicts and cause direct harm.

What Galtung calls cultural violence consists of the beliefs, biases, and attitudes that legitimize and normalize direct and social-structural harm against the ‘other’ in conflict. Thus, direct and indirect forms of violence and other conflicts are interconnected: structural and cultural dimensions can escalate conflicts and cause direct and indirect harm, and *vice versa* (Galtung, 1990; Ross, 2007).

Education to build peace would help citizens to critically understand the (cultural) beliefs and fears underlying these multiple dimensions of conflict. Ignoring or silencing this potential in education would mean rejecting schools’ capacity to challenge dominant biases and attitudes. In particular, historical narratives can powerfully influence citizens’ identities and encourage their participation in either violence or peacebuilding (Bellino, 2015; Funk & Said, 2004; Ross, 2007). Despite its potential for peacebuilding, history education often encourages violence in multiple ways: it reinforces enmity by perpetuating such binaries as heroes/friends and demons/enemies; it glorifies military narratives of violence, and thus reinforces cultural violence; and it often lacks criticality in interpreting the process and content of history writing (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000).

***Structural Factors.*** Schools’ structural factors may both indicate and cause the (re)production of violent and undemocratic sociopolitical situations (e.g., Davies 2004, 2005). In Bangladesh, these factors include unequal distribution of education and other resources (Sheppard, 2013; World Report, 2017b), including ‘merit’-based, unequal streaming within schools. Large-scale equity in a society often begins with equitable access to education for all: equitable distribution of education means equitable access and sustenance in school and equitable educational input and output (Farrell, 2003). Such equity factors in the social structure require reform in relation to who gets into what kinds of school, how long they can stay in

school, who can learn what, and who can do what with the education they get (*ibid*). Lack of such equality in education constitutes structural violence against ‘have-not’ groups, and can also reproduce physical violence when the deprived communities seek alternatives (Galtung, 1969). Affirming justice against such structural violence requires ensuring equal access, sustenance, input, and output of education for all.

As in other parts of the world (e.g., Apple, 2004; McCarthy, 1988), in my experience Bangladeshi schools reflect and reinforce social stratification. Age and assessed intellectual ability determine the school class students may belong to, while socioeconomic status usually determines which schools they attend and offers unequal resources for school success. Systemically in Bangladesh, private schools are open to rich students, cadet schools to those who are intellectually the ‘best’ and physically healthier than their competitors. Aiming to test citizens’ ability (with results complicated by privilege), exams define young people’s access to class, school, and academic stream, and shape their job prospects (Egan, 2003a). A major obstacle for peacebuilding in such competition-based unfair social structure is that underprivileged citizens have unequal resources to succeed. Also, such competitions legitimize social and economic privileges of the ‘have’ groups over the ‘have-not’ groups. In contrast to today’s educational structure of social stratification, in some traditional Islamic schools—available to a few—students from all age, ability and social groups were schooled together (Badawi, 1990). Teachers and students used to reflect and co-assess learning based on students’ curiosity and their advancement in knowledge and skills (*ibid*). Such education can motivate students to develop democratic skills (Chappuis & Stiggins, 2002). A peacebuilding citizenship opportunity, therefore, lies in the possibility of schools’ becoming classless, inclusive, and cooperative.’

Global educational transition involves political/structural agendas, in which the transfer is usually top down; resourceful countries lend educational policies and practices to the poorer countries (Spring, 2008). World culture, post-colonial, and culturalist theories of such transition explain how a central political power controls education in local contexts as well (*ibid*). This control of education may help to explain Muslim world’s deviation from classless and cooperative schooling, as the complicit locals have borrowed ‘Western’ ideals and gradually altered Islamic schooling. Dividing students into so-called ability groups reflects the structural violence of social stratification: schools become training centers for students to accept their so-called ‘deserving’ social, economic, political, and cultural class outcomes. In particular, through

such schooling young citizens are taught to function in the society in expected ways (Shor, 1993). In a stratified society, such education helps to reproduce poverty, unemployment, gender inequality, and other human rights violation issues. In contrast, when the oppressed rise to claim their human rights, such structural violence can be reduced (Freire, 1970). For instance, reverting to a class-inclusive approach, as in the Islamic educational tradition, could challenge some of these structural oppressions.

The structure of Bangladesh's educational also may contribute to reproducing violent action by segregating students into religious identity groups. Madrassa-schools are exclusively for Muslims, and public schools segregate religious identity groups into different classes within the same school (Bangladesh, 2010). In contexts of religious identity-based conflicts, non-pluralistic religious education could escalate the likelihood of violence by re-anchoring religious right/superiority–wrong/inferiority narratives (Fontana, 2016), and by entrenching othering especially when certain religious identity groups are politically privileged over others. Such ethnic divisions have often fueled violent conflicts in places like Germany, Israel, South Africa and Northern Ireland (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000), and so it may in Bangladesh. Religion textbooks in Bangladesh (e.g., Akhtaruzzaman, 2012) represent one group's interpretations of Islam as unquestionable truth. Ignoring diverse interpretations of religion means forceful religious education (Dawkins, 2006) or religious indoctrination (Wilson, 1964), a systemic pressure on Bangladeshi young citizens to uncritically accept Hanafi-Sunni Islam as 'the actual' Islam. Also, shutting off expression of diversities in this way can normalize the superiority of one identity group over others (Davies, 2005). Similar curriculum practices have contributed to Shia-Sunni and Hindu-Muslim conflict and violence in Pakistan (Dean, 2005). Such education can make democratic co-existence challenging for some Muslim and socialist political parties in Bangladesh.

Pluralistic (inclusive) education, in contrast, may have the power to maximize peacebuilding effects by creating opportunities for (1) knowledge based inclusive understandings of religions and (2) inter(religious)-group dialogue. In Israel, Cyprus, and Northern Ireland, learning together in mixed-community schools about diverse religions and cultures has been associated with some students' developing respect for religious differences (Bekerman, Zembylas, & McGlynn, 2009; Donnelly & Hughes, 2006). Although research has yet to confirm how (much) such school-based learning may transform out-of-school behaviors of these young citizens in such extended contexts, these schools show promise. Opportunities for interreligious-

cultural dialogue in schools/classrooms also have helped some students in England to develop democratic understandings about religious plurality (Ipgrave & McKenna, 2008). Dialogue toward mutual understanding can contribute to interreligious peacebuilding (Abu-Nimer, 2001), especially by engaging young citizens in ‘sensitive handling’ of religion-related controversies (Haw, 1995). Such curriculum opportunities could be useful in Bangladesh to create democratic/pluralist views about religious diversities. This crucial element of peacebuilding among diverse faith groups has waned among Muslims in general, especially in the past century (Walbridge, 2002). Integrated religious education of various identity groups in the same classroom could help to restore such peacebuilding opportunities.

***Cultural Factors.*** Schools’ cultures may also indicate and cause the (re)production of undemocratic actions and violence. In Bangladeshi schools, such school culture factors include biased disciplinary practices, history education, hidden curriculum, and so on. These constitute cultural violence, because they manifest and reinforce an attitude that violence is a legitimate response to conflict (Galtung, 1969).

School-based discipline measures, intended to produce ‘well-behaved’ citizens, may reproduce violence. Treating student violence as criminal offense, discipline rules assume that a get-tough approach can control/correct such students (Noguera, 1995; Salmi, 2004; Skiba, Michael, Nardo & Peterson, 2002). In Bangladesh, students who do not study ‘well,’ who do things that teachers dislike, and those who bully or behave disrespectfully are often punished by corporal punishment: caning, beating, and making individuals pull their own ears, kneel down in the school field, stare at the bright sun, stand (often on one foot) in the classroom, get fingers squeezed with pens, etc. (Mohiuddin, Khatun & Al-Kamal, 2012). Banning such punishments from school did not democratize school environments in South Korea (Kang, 2002). Similarly, despite an official ban on corporal punishments in 2011 in Bangladesh, teachers did not completely give up the tradition of physically hurting their students (GIECPC, 2016). Albeit with a goal to build respectful, just, and ‘good’ citizens (Bangladesh, 2010), teachers ‘combat’ students’ ‘crimes’ with tough sanctions. Such military-style control through direct violence teaches that physical violence is a legitimate response to conflicts.

Harsh discipline measures may not reduce school violence. The underlying perception that some (groups of) students are inherently prone to violence is dehumanizing and ignores violence among and by adults (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Noguera, 1995; Tafa, 2002). Harsh punishments run the risk of institutionalizing bias: students from certain sociopolitical, economic



and/or ethnic groups may be excluded, vulnerable, or made to feel inferior (Skiba, Michael, Nardo & Peterson, 2002). This would impede students' learning of democracy and justice (Kang, 2002). Rigid and punitive rules have not reduced school violence in many U.S. schools, and a humanizing school climate could be more effective (*ibid*; Gladden, 2002; Salmi, 2004). These scholars argue that building strong and positive teacher-student and student-student relationships has the potential to cultivate collective responsibility and humane school climates, thus reducing violence. Re-humanizing schools may have long-term sociopolitical impacts, such as reducing violent action in Bangladesh.

In Bangladeshi schools, in my experience, history textbooks have changed when governments have changed. Textbooks can never communicate neutral truths: textbooks often privilege the narrative perspectives of certain dominant groups (Apple, 2004). History is an often-manipulated human construct, which can escalate hatred/conflicts and encourage violent political actions through glorified narratives of such actions of the 'heroes' to defeat the 'demons' or 'enemies' (Davies, 2005). In Pakistan, manipulated history curriculum may have contributed to escalating Hindu-Muslim and Indian-Pakistani conflicts—that partitioned India through war more than sixty years ago (Dean, 2005; Naseem & Ghosh, 2010). Pakistani curriculum described India with contempt, whereas it described China as an ally of Pakistan despite disputes (*ibid*). Similarly, Indian curriculum represented Pakistanis/Muslims as utter enemies of Indians/Hindus, describing why true Indians would hate Pakistanis/Muslims (Lall, 2008). Similarly, in Sri Lanka, history curriculum taught Tamil students that the Sinhalese were evil (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). Similarly, in China, Japan and Korea, schools used narratives of six-decade-old enmity to teach why citizens would hate their 'enemies' (Wang, 2009). History curriculum in Bangladesh taught narratives about the 'spirit of nationalism and independence'—i.e., Bengali nation's quest for democracy, justice, and peace in Bangladesh (Harun-or-Rashid, 2012). Such lessons may have contributed to political conflicts by dividing identity groups into 'friends' and 'enemies' of Pakistan and Bangladesh (Islam, 2011). Such 'hate curriculum' is a major impediment to peacebuilding (Davies, 2005). An alternative is for history textbooks to represent mutually constructed, pluralistic 'truths' and to invite critical reasoning.

History education can legitimize violence, for instance as a way of promoting justice, or as a natural consequence of other factors. Galtung (1990) calls this cultural violence: reinforcing beliefs that harming 'enemies' through direct or indirect (rights violation) violence is legitimate. History curricula may especially contribute to such cultural violence where they reinforce—as in

India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan—the idea that war is an effect—not a cause—of suffering (Davies, 2005). Similarly, Bangladeshi history curricula has legitimized violence in politics by representing the 1971 war of independence as a consequence of decades-long suffering (Harun-or-Rashid, 2012). Bangladeshi curriculum also glorifies the student activists who acted violently to protect the Bengali people’s language and other social and political rights in pre- and post-independence periods (Kaderi, 2014b). Whereas history education is capable of actively responding to the global challenges of violence and citizen disengagement from politics, it may instead encourage violent citizen actions.

In addition to encouraging nonviolent forms of citizen participation, transformed history education in Bangladeshi schools could help citizens to develop peacebuilding capacities. For instance, the Council of Europe’s approach to history teaching free of overt political and ideological manipulation could reduce violence in Lebanon (Minkina-Milko, 2012). Reform of history curriculum for peacebuilding and democratic citizenship does not imply teaching bias-free history or avoiding controversies (Barton & Levstik, 2008; Shuayb, 2102). Whereas politically controlled narratives of the past could (re-)produce violence (*ibid*), focusing historical narratives on mere harmony also would mean denial or erasure of historical moments of struggle, thereby reinforcing another hegemonic narrative. Oppressions, conflicts, and violence have occurred in human histories: education to encourage multiple perspectives about these events and their consequences for various stakeholders opens space for democratic learning (Fine-Meyer, 2013). In contrast, historical narratives blaming purported enemies for direct and indirect violence against ostensibly innocent people blocks democratic understandings of complex pasts and encourages compliance (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2012; Vaneer, Akseer & Kovinthan, 2017). Bangladeshi history curriculum has ignored such democratic perspectives and taught a particular narrative of enmity as the only ‘truth’ (Ghosh, 2012). Instead, teaching critical, multiple perspectives on historical and current conflict issues and their causes and consequences would help citizens to build democratic skills (Paulson, 2015). Constructively building curricular and pedagogical influences upon citizens’ identities, such education would focus on non-violent solutions of conflict and solidarity for the future, rather than merely teaching memories of past wounds.

Discussion of historical and contemporary conflict issues in classrooms is rare in Bangladesh, as in many other contexts (e.g., Barton & McCully, 2007; Bickmore, 2014; King, 2009). Teachers may give lip-service to the value of discussing conflictual issues, partly because

many misunderstand discussion as meaning any verbal teacher-student interaction (Richardson, 2006) and partly because many lack administrative support for risky curriculum practices (Hess & Avery, 2008). Some teachers in Northern Ireland have carefully avoided discussions of conflictual issues (Bekerman, Zembylas, & McGlynn, 2009), as did many teachers in African, Asian and Arab countries (e.g., Quaynor, 2011; Shuayb, 2012). In secondary schools in Lebanon, teachers in one study used rote-learning strategies to avoid historical conflicts and current controversies, following curricular and administrative guidelines toward building social cohesion (*ibid*). In Pakistan, teachers often chose to avoid discussions of controversial issues, because they, as well as their students and the students' parents, feared the consequences of talking about controversial issues (Niyozov, 1995). Thus, controversial issues may represent risks for teachers as humans living in normative societies.

A related challenge is that avoiding education about contemporary social and political conflicts officially represents human rights as an achieved goal (Kennelly & Llewellyn, 2011), thereby helping to reproduce the *status quo* by avoiding challenges to undemocratic structures (Lecamwasam, 2015). Such avoidance of conflictual issues and multiple viewpoints contributes to reproducing hatred, and closes potential pedagogical spaces for peacebuilding citizenship education (Davies, 2005; North, 2009). I argue that co-existence of diverse identity groups could be achieved by implementing laws to control citizens' behaviours to show respect for multiple viewpoints (Kaderi, 2014b). However, such controlled respect does not democratically address the underlying hatred, and thus means passive tolerance of differences. Instead, school-based critical education about controversies and differences (based on the idea that citizens are born with rights to differ in terms of faith, culture, and everything else), and practice of fair accommodation for all could help young citizens to build positive attitudes (such as acceptance) toward differences—I call this *liberality* as opposed to passive tolerance (*ibid*).

Issues discussion does involve risks, especially in contexts of social mistrust: for instance, in Northern Ireland, identity-related understandings and emotions shaped citizens' responses to Catholic-Protestant conflicts (King, 2009; Ross, 2007). Some students and teachers in one study in an Indonesian school felt that issues discussion had harmed the classroom climate of trust (Mapiasse, 2007). However, avoiding controversies may mean marginalizing minority perspectives, thereby reinforcing ignorance or stereotypes and, hence, impeding opportunities for democracy and peacebuilding (Quaynor, 2011).

Those teachers who have strong commitments to affirming justice may not be scared away from issues discussion (North, 2009). For example, some teachers in Singapore, despite curriculum barriers, have helped their students to engage in discussion of controversial politics and governance issues (Chua & Sim, 2015). Negative impacts of issues discussion can be avoided if teachers do not impose ‘correct’ solutions to historical or contemporary conflicts (Mapiasse, 2007). Experts in issues discussion do not agree that teachers should never take a stand; but most agree that if teachers do disclose their viewpoints, they must affirm that theirs are just one among multiple legitimate viewpoints (Hess & Avery, 2008). Humanizing classroom relationships toward a climate of trust, openness and respect can increase the peacebuilding effects of such discussion (Barton & McCully, 2007). Teachers’ attempts to artificially ‘balance’ curriculum about controversies by presenting ‘both sides’ may not work; it may ignore opportunities for deeper understanding of conflictual issues (Barton & McCully, 2012). One option is for educators to begin implemented curricula with conflicts and controversies that connect only indirectly, or not at all, to students’ own sociopolitical contexts, and then gradually move to address controversies that are raging in their own lives (Bar-Tal & Rosen, 2009; King, 2009). Thus, with sensitivities to conflict and violence, issues discussion could help citizens to develop critical understandings of historical and current conflict issues, studied in school or lived outside, from multiple perspectives—an integral element of peacebuilding citizenship.

Analyzing multiple viewpoints about conflict and the effects of violence can be a step toward achieving peacebuilding goals. Challenging the victor’s (dominant group) version of military narratives about conflict can challenge the political and social dynamics—such as hatred—that curriculum would otherwise reinforce by indoctrinating citizens (Davies, 2005). In such curriculum, indoctrination would mean accepting taught truth (e.g. about the legacies of the past) as unquestionable (Sears & Hughes, 2006). In contrast, critically investigating relevant evidence in historical narratives surrounding war, from multiple perspectives—e.g. those of children, women, civilians, and defeated parties—would attend in a fair and open fashion to war’s consequences (Fine-Meyer, 2013; McCully, 2012). Such education would actively challenge dominant views on violence, heroism, enmity, victory and so on (Levy, 2014). The purpose of teaching multiple perspectives is to give students opportunities to develop critical understanding of past and current events, to help them to make their own decisions about the conflicts they live (Barton & Levstik, 2008; Barton & McCully, 2012). Presumably, most history textbooks present particular social groups’ dominant (somewhat manipulated) narratives; as an

alternative, including attention in textbooks to political differences and contradictions can democratize the knowledge represented in school (Apple, 2000). Of course, it is not unique to Bangladesh that schools tend to create citizens with knowledge, skills and values ‘desired’ by political elites, by explicitly or implicitly disseminating their political views, creeds and agendas (Kennelly & Llewellyn, 2011; St. Denis, 2011). Teaching critical analyses of conflicts could enhance Bangladeshi citizens’ capacities to make democratic decisions about the social and political conflicts they live.

Teaching narratives of solidarity (more than of war) is a peacebuilding approach to history education: such narratives, among other cultural patterns and symbols, can potentially influence the behavior of citizens in conflictual social contexts (Ross, 2002). Narratives highlighting complementarity, instead of enmity, among diverse groups may be a crucial element for reducing violence (Funk & Said, 2004). Together, students and teachers from different political/religious groups may create stories of complementarity, by writing their own history collectively and inclusively (*ibid*). Such collaborative work among people of different groups on a regular basis, if equitable and cooperative, can increase inter-group respect and trust (Allport, 1954; Tal-Or, Boninger & Gleicher, 2002), and thus the probability of peacebuilding, for instance among Catholics and Protestant in Northern Ireland, and Arabs and Jews in Israel (Bekerman, Zembylas, & McGlynn, 2009). As students research their groups’ complementary co-existence, in the process of history writing, this may open their critical minds to recognize and question the perspectives and methods of historians, as well as the content of the narratives they previously had been taught (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). These results and possibilities presumably apply to Bangladesh.

Bangladeshi curriculum materials, which tend to avoid critical discussion of controversial issues and extensively focus on past and current enmity, reflect political mandates and can be expected to impede peacebuilding citizenship learning. These practices extend structural (political) violence by blocking young citizens’ access to critical conflict education; and also legitimize killing and/or systemically harming purported enemies. As suggested above, exclusion of diverse perspectives may encourage disengagement from formal politics against oppressions (Bickmore, Kaderi & Guerra-Sua, 2017; Galtung, 1971; Kaderi, 2014b). Thus, implicit (hidden curriculum) and explicit political control of curriculum materials can influence citizens’ national and civic identity and engagement (Apple 2004; Youniss, Bales, Christmas-Best, Diversi, McLaughlin, & Silbereisen, 2002). Conversely, pedagogical practices of cooperative learning,

dialogue and discussion, could reduce the conflict-escalating impacts of such curriculum materials, especially in contexts like Bangladesh, where political influences sustain a school culture of violence.

### **Potential Responses to Conflict**

There is virtually no research on how Bangladeshi or south Asian citizens respond to social and political conflicts that matter to them. From my experience, the historical models of citizen action seem to continue to shape Bangladeshi citizens' response to current conflicts. Non-violent ways of problem-solving—e.g. dialogue, negotiation—are disused in general, but especially underused in the bottom social-economic strata of the society. Official curriculum includes some expectation to develop capacities for dialogic and cooperative problem-solving (National Curriculum, 2012). Nevertheless, fight or flight strategies dominate citizens' responses to injustice in Bangladesh (e.g. Rape Accused Killed, 2017) and other south Asian Muslim majority contexts such as Pakistan and Afghanistan (e.g. Bus Driver, 2017). Hence, direct violence remains a main concern in Bangladesh's social life today. Peacebuilding requires citizenship inclinations and capacities to non-violently address both direct and indirect dimensions of conflict; some such capacities may be developed or reinforced in schools (Bickmore, Kaderi & Guerra-Sua, 2017).

### **Violence**

Despite the majority's Islamic identities, a culture of direct harm prevails as a response to human rights and governance conflicts in Bangladesh (Gossman, 2017; Knox, 2009; Macdonald, 2016; Zafarullah & Siddiquee, 2001). Blame narratives are prevalent: this involves uncritically turning the responsibility onto others (not on selves) and labelling them as bad or enemies in conflict (Kotler, 1994). According to the Qur'an, such blaming represents an active refusal of Islam: "*What comes to you as good is from Allah, but what comes to you as evil, [O man], is from yourself*" (4:79, Shahih international translation). Rather, Islam teaches Muslims to accept the consequences of their actions, both good and bad, with an emphasis that good consequences are blessings that God adds to human actions (e.g., The Qur'an, 2:286, 6:160, 7:147, 27:89-90). Further, uncritically blaming others as bad and at fault for the outbreak and escalation of conflict blocks understandings of its underlying causes (Slettebak, 2012), and thus impedes democratic solutions to conflict. In the process of decolonization, when citizens do not see democratic options, perhaps overwhelmed by the blame narratives, they may respond to conflicts in violent ways (Fanon, 2004), based on the belief that violence can be legitimately used to affirm justice.

Violent response to conflict reproduces injustice, whereas school-based training for non-violent conflict resolution/transformation could increase the likelihood of just peace in the society (Bickmore, 2011b).

Some physical violence is considered legitimate in Islamic traditions. Punitive physical violence is regarded as a way of preventing further crime from happening and of helping the guilty to repent and be forgiven (e.g., Al-Bukhari, 8:806, 23:413). Such physical violence in Islam is way of protecting just peace, related to the notion of peacekeeping introduced below. Physical violence is also linked with the concept of *jihad*, which is adopted—as one out of its multiple meanings—in Islam to protect just peace (as defined by God and modelled by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)) from violent oppressors. In general, the term *jihad* means “*intense effort to achieve a positive goal*” (Ahmad, 2006, p. 184), and includes several kinds of citizens action. War and other forms of “*physical jihad*” are considered “*lesser jihad*” (*ibid*), and approved only conditionally in Islam: Islamic fighting or war has to be only against those who declare enmity and initiate violence, and it must not harm those, including women and children, who do not actively join the war (Aziz, 2007). Hence, Islam legitimizes certain kinds of physical violence.

### **Peacekeeping**

Peacekeeping refers to avoiding or stopping violence through forcible adherence to laws and social norms (Galtung, 1996). Mere avoidance or reduction of violence may not help to affirm justice. Through surveillance and punishment imposed by governments’ authorized agents like the army and the police, citizens could be forced to be obedient or to refrain from themselves using violence. Such peacekeeping could increase security in the face of escalated conflicts; but it may silence diverse viewpoints that are key to affirming just peace (Bickmore, Kaderi & Guerra-Sua, 2017). Alternatively, educating citizens about laws, norms, and non-violence could also control their behaviours indirectly, through what Foucault (2011) called ‘governmentality,’ meaning internalizing norms of self-control and obedience to the laws and norms of the powerful. Such individually responsible citizenship means to self-regulate one’s own obedience to laws and norms (Sherrod, 2003; Walzer, 1989; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), instead of being regulated through overt force. None of such controls would allow citizens to participate in self-governance and affirmation of just peace for diversely positioned members of society. Peacebuilding requires citizens to engage in such democratic social reform processes.

Citizens are expected to individually function as ‘good’ citizens in three domains: civil, political, and social (Marshall, 2006). Such concepts—somewhat consistent with a gentle form

of peacekeeping—suggest compliance with social and institutional norms and rules as ideal citizenship, and thus may include space for force/punishment in response to non-compliance. Fear of punishments and thus control—forced or otherwise—represents an active challenge to the quality of citizenship whereby individual citizens ideally have freedom and rights to earn a living, practice their faith, and express their views (civil rights), to elect and be elected as public representatives in governance institutions (political rights), and to be protected by the state from harm (social rights) (*ibid*). ‘Good’ citizens may have some autonomy, in that they are expected to participate in non-resistant ways by volunteering and practicing some rights as interacting members of communities and/or institutions (Flanagan, 2004). North American youths have been found to value such social functioning, including electing the ‘right’ government representatives, despite contradictions about government’s actual representations of citizens’ rights, in their own notions of ‘good’ citizenship (Sherrod, 2003; Tupper & Capello, 2008). However, in Bangladesh, where citizens have often participated in movements against government, forced peacekeeping has particularly failed.

Gentle forms of peacekeeping define one key to Islam. Etymologically, *Islam* is an infinitive verb that comes from the root *S-L-M*, which means ‘*submission to the wills of Allah*’ and ‘*peace*’ among other things (Islam, n.d.). Derived from the same root, the word *Muslim* is an active participle verb that refers to, among other things, the actions of one who ‘*submitted to Allah’s wills*’ and ‘*continues to build peace*’ by actively affirming His system of justice and equity in and through day-to-day individual and collective actions (Muslim, n. d.). Thus, at the root of Islam is compliance with God’s will, meaning submission to God’s justice, rules, and peace as defined in the Qur’an and modelled by Muhammad (pbuh). Many scholars have recognized the Qur’an and Muhammad’s (pbuh) traditions as a quintessential image of just peace for all humankind (e.g., Al-Attas, 1979; Gandhi, 1927; Hart, 1978; Köylü, 2004; Pal, 2011; Watt, 1953, 1989). Personal struggle—fighting one’s own whims and desires within one’s self—to achieve complete submission to such laws and norms is defined as a superior level of *jihad* in the Qur’an and Muhammadan (pbuh) traditions (Afsaruddin, 2013; Ahmad, 2006; Aziz, 2007; Kalin, 2005). In this form of *jihad*, by submitting to God’s will and thus accepting Islam—i.e., ‘*īmān*’ or faith/belief—governments and public are equally accountable to God, because they are all subject to proving their *īmān* or submission to God’s rules and laws (e.g., The Qur’an, 11:111).

## **Peacemaking**



Peacemaking refers to a more pro-active citizenship role, solving conflict problems after they culminate in violent responses (Harber & Sakade, 2009). This is closely linked with participatory citizenship, in which problem-solving and group collaboration are important skills for functioning within an existing social and political system (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

One fundamental element of building peace is peacemaking—i.e. using dialogue and negotiation processes to non-violently solve conflicts (Bickmore, 2005; Bickmore, 2011b). Such processes are particularly useful to respectfully address each party's tangible and intangible interests in social conflicts, after particular episodes or disputes have erupted (*ibid*; Ury, 2000). For instance, peacemaking circles could be used to resolve disagreements and repair relationships among family members and in larger-scale social settings (Pranis, 2005). For instance, in Ocean Beach in San Diego California, peacemaking circles were used to address issues of poverty and homelessness in the community (Hamlin & Darling, 2012). Canada is sometimes seen as a birthplace of peace circles, based upon indigenous peacemaking traditions that go back thousands of years (Circles, 2013). Restorative circles have been used in cases referred to Canada's courts as well (e.g., Pranis, Stuart & Wedge, 2003; Stuart, 1996).

Close to the hearts of most Bangladeshis, Muslims also have over-1400-year-old traditions of negotiating interests (e.g. Al Bukhari, 2699 & 2706), repairing harm (e.g. Al Bukhari, 2699 & 2703), and restoring or re-affirming justice (e.g. Al Bukhari, 2690–2694, 2707 & 2709–2710; The Qur'an, 4:128, 4:135 & 49:9). These traditions, although currently mostly disused in Bangladesh, outline processes for respectfully addressing diverse viewpoints in social conflicts. Therefore, in today's Bangladeshi social contexts, peacemaking processes could be fundamental tools to reduce violence in resolving and healing from conflicts and restoring peace for all.

### **Peacebuilding citizenship**

Peacebuilding includes peacemaking, but refers to even more pro-active citizenship roles than post-incident dialogue toward non-violent resolution of particular (escalated) disputes. Peacebuilding refers to affirming just peace *in* and *through* day-to-day social, cultural and political structures, and associated citizen actions, to prevent, mitigate or sustainably resolve the cultural and structural roots of conflicts (Bickmore, 2011b; Kaderi, 2014b). In this sense, peacebuilding action requires justice-oriented citizenship (Westheimer & Kahne, 2008). Both aim to build and engage citizens' capacities for democratizing unjust and violent societies, in order to create sustainable and just contexts of peace. Schools may implement peacebuilding

citizenship education by connecting young citizens' (students') understandings, feelings, and lived experiences of conflict with opportunities for multiple-perspective thinking and learning in the implemented curriculum.

Beyond smaller-scale contexts such as families and social groups, peacebuilding also requires citizenship action and institutional structures/spaces to affirm just peace by addressing social-structural (including political) and cultural injustices (Galtung, 1983). Such citizenship would require adequate knowledge of injustice/conflict problems and the factors at their roots, capacities to non-violently address these roots and to make sense of multiple viewpoints regarding their causes and alternative solutions, and moral inclinations to non-violently affirm human rights for all through governance, social movements, and transforming cultural beliefs and social institutions (Bickmore, Kaderi & Guerra-Sua, 2017).

In south Asian contexts such as Bangladesh, citizenship often has included collective actions, e.g. protests, to protect rights in the context of government decision making (Kabeer, 2011; Mahmud, 2002). Such citizenship would define individuals as members of communities both altruistically and politically, whose primary concern centers on reforming social policies, practices and institutions in order to maximize justice (Frazer, 2008; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Such citizen engagement is alarmingly rare in many communities in the world (Sherrod, Torney-Purta & Flanagan, 2010; Youniss & Levine, 2009). In Bangladesh, some citizens may participate in movements for social and political change, but it is not clear how much their actions support just peace, such as encouraging and engaging with the actions and proposals of others in the context of disagreement.

Equal rights, justice, accommodation of differences, cooperation, non-violence, and peace—these are all fundamental values embedded in Bangladesh's explicit constitutional policies. For example, articles 26 to 41 of Bangladesh's constitution affirms the primacy of just peace by voiding any existing laws that are inconsistent with all citizens' equity before law, by banning any discrimination based on "*religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth,*" by prohibiting "*all forms of forced labour,*" and by mandating every citizen "*the right to assemble and to participate in public meetings and processions peacefully and without arms*" (Bangladesh, 1972/2011, pp. 15–18, translation original). However, in contrast to these values, political actors in Bangladesh often demonstrate un-democratic and violent actions in response to perceived injustice (Datta, 2005; Riaz & Raji, 2011). This suggests that Bangladeshi citizens have largely failed to adopt the constitutional values of just peace, and that Bangladeshi social institutions

have largely failed to incorporate the identities and concerns of many Bangladeshi citizens: Banks (2017) called this failed citizenship.

Globally, there are significant mismatches between citizenship identities, knowledges and skills taught in school and the models of citizen response to social and political conflicts available in students' lives outside school (Davies, 2011). Violent actions of some Bangladeshi citizens may not be rooted in the majority religion, Islam, particularly because it is unknown whether these citizens religiously follow Islam. Further, citizens' assumptions and lack of critical understandings about Islam could potentially contribute to their disinclination toward non-violence, justice, critical reasoning, and cooperation, and to the prevalence of undemocratic violent action (Waghid & Davids, 2014). For instance, the term *jihad* is widely misconstrued in Muslim communities and beyond, based on the faulty assumption that *jihad* requires violence (Waghid, 2014). Therefore, developing Bangladeshi citizens' inclinations and capacities to non-violently affirm just peace for all would require school-based opportunities for these citizens' to develop in-depth and proper understandings about Islam, peacebuilding, and citizenship.

Nuanced, thoughtful understandings of Islam could help Bangladesh's Muslim majority citizens to reduce violence and maximize justice. Denial of equitable social, cultural and economic rights is at the root of much destructive conflict in south Asia (Bajaj, 2016). Bangladeshi citizens' violent action in response to such conflicts contrast with the goals of sustainable peacebuilding (Ahsan & Banavar, 2011; Suykens & Islam, 2013). The goals of peacebuilding citizenship center on engaging citizens in the politics of positively transforming conflicts, by addressing the root causes of injustice and conflict embedded in social structures that are unjust and antagonistic to peace (Bickmore, Kaderi & Guerra-Sua, 2017; Danesh, 2006; Davies, 2005; Galtung, 1996, 1983). Islamic citizenship, as defined in the Qur'an and modelled by Muhammad (pbuh), could meet these goals. Every Muslim is required to practice and positively manifest the God-defined justice and peaceful relationship individually and collectively: this is the most superior form of *jihad* for Muslims (Ahmad, 2006; Aziz, 2007; Kalin, 2005). In this *jihad*, Muslims will represent God (The Qur'an, 2:30), by practicing God's democracy, justice and peace, by asking others to do the same, and by actively preventing themselves and reminding others to prevent themselves from what God has defined as undemocratic, unjust, and un-peaceful (The Qur'an, 3:104). In this form of *jihad*, governments and public are equally accountable to God and to each other, because all individuals—as public

or part of government—are supposed to represent God’s rules and laws that are equal for all (e.g., The Qur’an, 4:58, 6:152, 16:90, & 49:9).

Curriculum can (re)shape citizenship roles by democratically addressing the above alternatives and issues—or, in contrast, by uncritically ignoring them—in relation to lived social conflicts. Educational practices that exclude attention to lived social and political conflicts, violence, and their democratic alternatives may contribute to (re)producing compliant citizenship by silencing diverse viewpoints (Davies, 2005; Vanner, Akseer, Kovinthan, 2017), and maintaining un-democratic *status quo*. In contrast, school-based participation in understanding contrasting viewpoints on social conflicts and on democratic options for solving them can contribute to building citizens’ capacities—i.e. knowledge, skills and moral judgements—to affirm just peace (*ibid*; Bajaj, 2016; Bickmore, Kaderi & Guerra-Sua, 2017). School may—or may not—provide opportunities for building such capacities. Either way, young citizens’ lived experiences and concerns can be expected to help shape their understandings of social and political conflicts (including violence) and how to respond. Hence, if schools do not help to develop in-depth understandings of the Qur’an and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), young Bangladeshi citizens may develop wrong understandings about Islam, peace, conflict, and citizenship by socially living experiences that include cultural knowledge about these issues.

### **Lived Curriculum**

Curriculum includes not only ‘what’ is taught, but also ‘how’ things are taught (and hidden or not taught): this means that any teaching material and teaching-learning practices (pedagogy), not only government mandates or guidelines, can be called curriculum (Aoki, 2012; Dewey, 1987; Egan, 2003b, 2003c). ‘Curriculum-as-lived,’ meaning implemented and experienced classroom activities and relationships, can be very different from ‘curriculum-as-planned,’ meaning the mandated curriculum (Aoki, 2012). Therefore, even when curriculum plans and materials reflect undemocratic and unjust mandates, educators may employ pedagogy to democratize the lived curriculum (Dewey, 1902; Pinar, 1999). Also, even when curriculum guidelines reflect democratic justice mandates, educators may in practice not implement effective education toward those goals. Hence, it is important to recognize the principles and characteristics of school cultures (in addition to classroom lessons) that would be conducive to peacebuilding citizenship learning. In particular, curriculum reform toward including education around multiple perspectives on lived social and political conflicts for peacebuilding citizenship underlines the political role of education in creating projected futures (Freire, 1998; Shor, 1993).

Since schools construct societies by implementing sociopolitical elites' agendas for the future (*ibid*; Eisner, 1970; Pinar, 1999), I assume that schools could *reconstruct* societies for peace as well: peacebuilding citizenship education can aim to reconstruct today's corrupt and politically violent Bangladesh, or any other violent society. This dissertation research examines how selected Bangladeshi teachers and students may view and engage pedagogically with such potential social reform.

Some assumptions and silences embedded in curriculum may contribute to political violence and disengagement in Bangladesh. Schools often aim to produce citizens who can compete with others for their own socioeconomic well-being (Kidd, 1894; Knoll, 2009). Such 'hidden curriculum' messages (Apple, 2004) may include neoliberal assumptions that impede peacebuilding citizenship education by producing overly compliant or politically disengaged citizens. Neoliberalism accepts the primacy of market competition, partly by avoiding critical thinking that might acknowledge or interrupt negative consequences such as sociopolitical inequalities (Giroux, 2004; Kumar & Hill, 2009). For example, hidden curriculum may emphasize shaping students' capacity to fit the needs of employers, assuming and reinforcing their unequal positions in the labor force (Apple, 1978). By emphasizing competition for economic success and ignoring cooperation, such neoliberal coloring of education may impede equitable democratic citizenship (Aldenmyr, Wigg & Olson, 2012). In contrast, sustainable democratic peace depends on citizens' worldviews being informed by cooperative human relationships and expressed in their day-to-day interactions (Danesh, 2006). Hence, peacebuilding education in Bangladesh may be enhanced by curricular and pedagogical practices that emphasize cooperative and collaborative—as opposed to competitive—citizen relations.

Schools also may contribute to Bangladesh's political violence by *not* teaching certain things. What is not taught in school, the 'null curriculum' (Eisner, 1970/2002; Flinders, Noddings & Thornton, 1986), can have an equally critical influence on citizens' identity and civic engagement as what is taught: the assumption behind curricular exclusion is that those things are wrong or unimportant in citizens' lives. Curriculum is inevitably a cultural practice (Kanu, 2003): for instance, culturally exclusionary curriculum privileges the voices and value of certain peoples and marginalizes others (St. Denis, 2011). Individuals' worldviews and identities may be manipulated to promote dominant cultures through excluding certain knowledge (e.g. acknowledgement of colonial domination and its costs). In contrast, including information and contrasting perspectives about inequality, corruption and oppression issues in curriculum can

educate young citizens for democratic and justice-oriented societies, by creating opportunities to acknowledge and transform oppression and violence (*ibid*; Kliebard, 2004).

Thus school-based education could be a tool for rebuilding a society, by challenging a social order based on inequality, corruption and oppression (Stanley, 1992). Schools are social institutions with tremendous potential for fostering democratic change, when they bring real-life complexities into classrooms and engage young citizens in considering how they may improve their societies (Dewey, 1897). Thus, reformed curriculum in Bangladesh could address real-life sociopolitical oppression and violence-related conflict issues, engage students in peacefully solving problems, and engage them in considering who might benefit, and how reforms could challenge the unequal and undemocratic sociopolitical *status quo* (Apple, 1978).

Nevertheless, curriculum's representation of identity, when it exacerbates political tensions, remains as a challenge to peacebuilding citizenship learning in Bangladesh. National, ethnic and religious identity divides are often at the root of sociopolitical violence: citizens may cluster within 'same' identity affinity groups (in-groups) to protect themselves from perceived threats/enemies (out-groups) (e.g., Bekerman, Zembylas & McGlynn, 2009; Ross, 2007). In my experience, politically active Bangladeshi citizens are usually divided based on ideological identity. Similar to identity conflicts in other divided (for instance, Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot) societies (Papadakis, 2008), identity among Bangladeshi citizens seems to be developed based on their understandings of political history. School can be such a safe place for recurrent constructive inter-group contacts. Based on the apparent success of integrated schools in Israel and Northern Ireland in facilitating such ongoing peaceful contact (Bekerman, Zembylas, & McGlynn, 2009), schools in Bangladesh could facilitate frequent close contacts among young citizens whose family members may be actively engaged in opposing political parties. Learning together about identity politics and how multiple identities evolve within one nation could increase these young citizens' inter-group respect and help them to retain but also go beyond group-identities toward democratic co-existence and collective interest (Niens & Chastenay, 2008). Since religious-cultural identity issues often collide with Bangladeshi nationalism, pluralistic identity-sensitive education could contribute to reducing Bangladesh's political violence.

Bangladeshi nationalism is politically formed, based on national identity but also on democratic principles of equality, freedom, and peace (Harun-or-Rashid, 2012). Representations of some Pakistani Islamic identity issues have often contradicted Bangladeshi national identity,

and continue to contribute to much political violence in Bangladesh (Ahsan & Banavar, 2011; Islam, 2011; Siddiqi, 2011). Some violent activists aim to make Bangladesh an Islamic state through *jihad* (Riaz & Raji, 2011). As in many contexts where religious identities are highlighted in political violence while paradoxically religion is separated from academic and political discourses (Abu-Nimer, 2013), Bangladesh's education ignores peacebuilding among people with diverse religious affiliations (Riaz, 2011). Islamic education has the potential to contribute to peacebuilding by examining multiple viewpoints on Quranic concepts of *jihad*, religious freedom, democracy, justice and peace (Köylü, 2004) and by aiming to build citizens who would sincerely follow such traditions (Badawi, 1990). Understanding these Quranic concepts could help Muslim citizens to be respectful and tolerant of identity differences. For example, the Quranic concept of *jihad* and contemporary Muslim terrorism could be juxtaposed, toward broadening Muslim citizens' narrow religious and national identity related perspectives that seem to be major contributors to much political violence globally (Abu-Nimer, 2001, 2013) and in Bangladesh. Thus, Bangladeshi curriculum could contribute to peacebuilding citizenship by educating young citizens in an open and inclusive manner about issues that shape their identities.

Citizens can be educated for peacebuilding in diverse ways, without necessarily using explicit programs labeled 'citizenship' or 'peace' education: international, human rights, development and environmental education usually share peacebuilding concerns about equity and justice (Harris, 2004). Similarly, much democratic citizenship education shares peacebuilding goals by aiming to educate citizens for collaboratively and democratically solving the roots of interpersonal, social and political problems (Cook, 2008). Hence, by addressing conflicts from multiple perspectives with a problem-solving stance, peacebuilding citizenship education could engage young citizens in transforming undemocratic, unjust and violent societies into democratic and justice-oriented societies (Bickmore, 2005, 2008a). The political environment for enabling such inevitably political education (Galtung, 1983, 1989) is a challenge in Bangladesh. However, peacebuilding citizenship education is *not* impossible in Bangladesh: whereas in favorable political climates, education for peace can directly focus on root historical and political causes of conflict and violence, in unfavorable political contexts such as Bangladesh, schools can educate citizens "indirectly" for peacebuilding by focusing on generally-applicable principles and skills such as communication, community, human rights, respect, tolerance, empathy, and conflict resolution (Bar-Tal & Rosen, 2009).

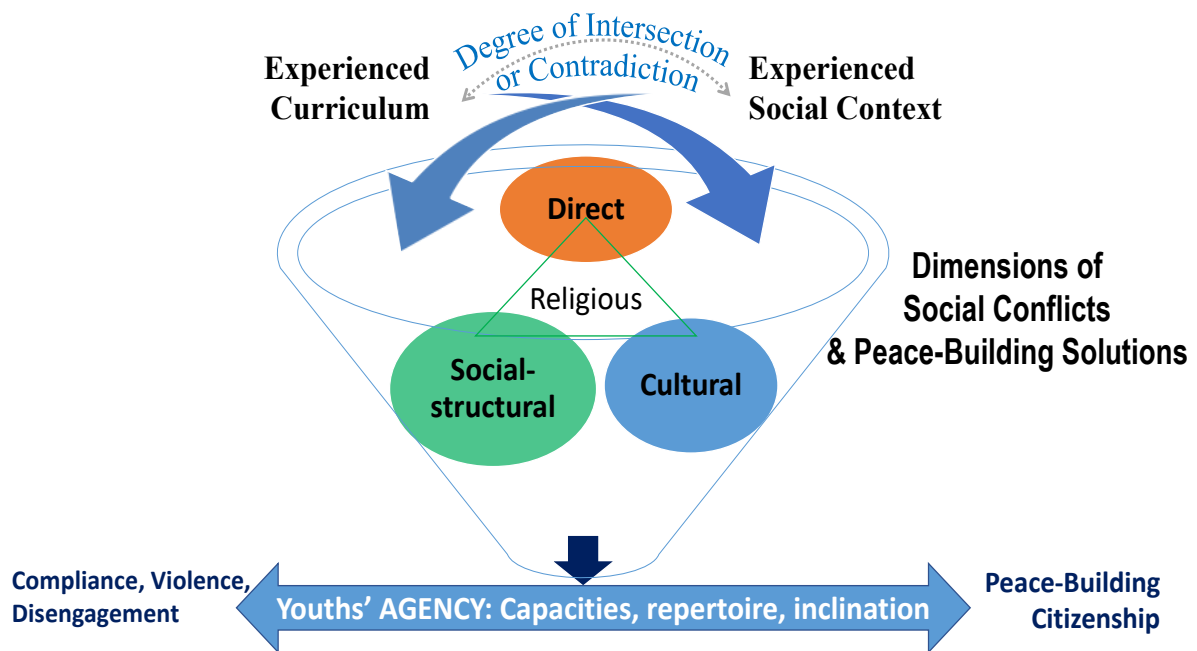
Teacher-centered pedagogies can contribute to reproducing destructive conflict and violence by keeping citizens ignorant of the ways social and political elites may oppress them and manipulate their identities, or by blocking opportunities for young citizens to practice constructive communication about conflict in the context of diversity. Pedagogies that require citizens to memorize standardized lessons disconnect them from critical thinking and from the shattered realities of their lives: Freire (1970) calls this a ‘banking’ model of education, and proposes instead an active-learning, student-centered approach called ‘problem-posing’ education to liberate oppressed minds. In problem-posing education, students and teachers engage in a dialogic learning process that starts by posing a problem in the content area and progresses through considering multiple sources of evidence and jointly seeking solutions. Such pedagogies could develop young citizens’ ability to delve critically into the roots of problems, to critically assess actions taken to reduce sociopolitical oppression, and to reflect on why some of those actions may have failed and what people like themselves could do to build democratic and justice-oriented societies: Freire calls this action-reflection-action process ‘praxis.’ In Bangladeshi schools, which typically lack dialogic practices (Thornton, 2006), such active-learning, problem-posing approaches could help citizens come to deeply understand injustices and to practice praxis to improve the democratic standards of their lives.

Dialogic, student-centered, active-learning pedagogies are not a new idea. Scholars like Confucius and Socrates advocated dialogic pedagogies around two-and-a-half millennia ago (Ginsburg & Megahed, 2008). Many educational thinkers continue to emphasize giving students opportunities for experiential learning (Dewey, 1938), problem-posing (Freire, 1970) and cooperative participation (e.g. K. Jenkins & B. Jenkins, 2010). Such pedagogical practices, if successfully implemented, can provoke behavioral and attitudinal changes, cognitive development (Degu, 2005; Ginsburg & AIR, 2009), and reduce violence by encouraging nonviolent democratic problem-solving (Bickmore, 2002). Such pedagogical innovation requires teachers and students to think critically and to take the risk to bring together people from contrasting groups to share perspectives and emotions (Davies, 2005). Approaches such as ‘constructive controversy’ (D. Johnson & R. Johnson, 2009) can be useful active-learning models, whereby people with incompatible perspectives on non-politicized issues work toward mutual understanding and agreement using cooperative communication and decision-making skills. Educators rarely use such peacebuilding pedagogies. For instance, very few students in urban Toronto schools have opportunities for engaging in dialogue (Bickmore, 2011a). In Egypt



and Kyrgyzstan, continuous professional development trainings have supported some teachers to embrace some active-learning pedagogies (Ginsburg & AIR, 2009). Changing Bangladeshi teachers' teaching practices remains a challenge, often due to lack of administrative supports and teachers' educational experiences (Thornton, 2006). Curricular and professional support may increase the possibility of teachers embracing active-learning pedagogies, and this may eventually have violence-reducing impacts.

### Summing Up: Thesis Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1: Schooling for Violence of Peace?**

As shown in figure 1 above, schooling intersects with, or may contradict, young citizens' experienced social and political conflicts, together shaping their understandings of how to respond to these conflicts. Lived experience of social and political phenomena has potential to develop citizens' grounded understandings about the phenomena and their roles therein (Manen, 2016). Within such experiential learning, citizens' understandings about conflict can shape—and can be reshaped by—their understandings about responses to conflict. Peacebuilding responses to conflict require willingness and capacity to examine, and to come to understand, multiple, contrasting viewpoints (Bickmore, 2017). Living in predominantly undemocratic and unjust

social and political contexts, citizens may not learn to democratically deal with differences and disagreements, especially when schools incorporate insufficient experiences for building these capacities (Bickmore, 2011b). In such contexts, absence of dialogue and lack of opportunities for examining multiple viewpoints within school contexts may be reflective of the broad sociopolitical culture within which citizens live their everyday lives. As discussed above, physical violence is a prevalent response to social conflicts globally, and especially to political conflicts in Bangladesh. Therefore, a key goal of this research is to examine some adolescents' understandings about conflict and their solutions, which will outline the potential challenges and opportunities for peacebuilding citizenship (education) in Bangladesh.

Based on this relationship between lived experience and understandings about conflict, a key theoretical assumption that informs this thesis research is that understandings, assumptions, values, and skills for peacebuilding citizenship are learned, and can be reinforced or challenged, through “feet first” approach (McCauley, 2002). That is, in school citizens would engage in learning activities that involve democratic solutions of daily-experienced social and political conflicts, and then (re-)enter the society with capabilities to democratically respond to these conflicts (*ibid*; Gawerc, 2006; Gino, Argote, Miron-Spekton & Todorova, 2010). Such school-based education can prepare democratic citizens in relation to socially experienced conflicts. Citizenship education can try to change learners' beliefs and attitudes about conflict, as happens in typical “hearts and minds” approach to peace education (e.g., Harris & Morrison, 2013). However, the assumption that such prescriptions would impact citizens' conflict behaviour may not be effective (McCauley, 2002), because such education would not necessarily address the social conflicts and relationships that shape people's real-world response to lived social conflicts. Lived experiences of conflict (in school and beyond), in contrast, represent models, practices, and relational supports or sanctions that presumably shape citizens' own responses to such conflicts. Therefore, I theorize that juxtaposing learners' existing beliefs and attitudes with a school-based alternative approach to problem solving—one that critically addresses various dimensions of social and political conflicts and their peacebuilding solutions—may change their conflict related beliefs and behaviours. By providing—or not—such education, schools can help—or not—to build young citizens' peacebuilding citizenship capabilities in relation to their lived social and political conflicts.

As discussed above, schools can escalate social and political conflicts by the ways they organize (e.g. segregate or rank) learners—social-structural aspects of education's relationship to

conflict—and the ways they teach the narratives of conflict, including biases, heroes, enemies, and legitimating or challenging war and other violence—cultural aspects. Instead, peacebuilding citizenship education requires teaching how various tangible social-structural factors—e.g., inequality, maldistribution of resources, denial of human rights and access to resources, etc.—and intangible cultural biases and attitudes—e.g., enmity, celebration and glorification of violence, etc.—may cause and escalate conflicts involving particular groups, and also how democratically addressing these indirect dimensions of conflicts in the classroom may reduce direct violence and affirm equity and just peace (Bickmore, Kaderi & Guerra-Sua, 2017). Education that helps to build young citizens' peacebuilding citizenship capabilities would help them to understand these dimensions of conflict and various democratic ways of achieving social-structural and cultural equity and inclusion.

Schools can help to repair social relationships by actively challenging narratives of enmity, status inequalities and divisions through dialogues and cooperation (Davies, 2005). Educational practices that exclude certain social groups or certain sociopolitical perspectives, and/or discipline students with traditional rules and restrictions, may contribute to (re)producing compliant, alienated or violent citizenship (Davies, 2005; Kennelly & Llewellyn, 2011; Skiba, Michael, Nardo & Peterson, 2002). Such practices would help to maintain the existing *status quo*. In contrast, school-based participation in equitable interaction, democratic problem solving, understanding conflicting viewpoints, and probing past and contemporary social and political conflicts can help citizens to build capacities to affirm just peace (Barton & Levstik, 2008; Bickmore, 2017; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). Schools may—or may not—provide opportunities for building such capacities, while citizens' daily experiences also shape their understandings and responses to conflicts (Bickmore, 2011a; Danesh, 2006). This core problem motivates this thesis research: schools may—or may not—build upon and connect to the implicit education that citizens' lived sociopolitical contexts may include. Cross-examining official and implemented curriculum learning opportunities, and young Bangladeshi citizens' concerns and understandings about their lived social and political conflicts, can inform how Bangladeshi education may facilitate—or not—these citizens' peacebuilding citizenship learning opportunities, especially by (dis)connecting school with real life.

In cross-national contexts, without well-informed studies of locally situated factors (associated with peacebuilding citizenship education), use of foreign theories to explain understudied local problems may result in failure of any educational programs that may travel

across borders (Kanu, 2005; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004). Western scholarship often assumes the superiority of the knowledge created in the global North, and tends to prescribe best practices for the South (Hoppers, 2000). Direct transfer of educational approaches to Bangladesh would ignore the usefulness of local, culturally-grounded knowledge for peacebuilding citizenship education. Such transfer would especially ignore context-specific local skills, knowledge, and citizenship concerns (Lederach, 1995). Ignoring the uniqueness of such factors in each context, neoliberal ideals have traveled in schools across borders and set identical parameters and principles in peacebuilding and citizenship education related curricula (*ibid*; Suárez, 2008). Democratization requires citizens to be locally empowered to function depending on their own culturally embedded skills and knowledge to respond to their local problems (Galtung, 1971). Hence, curriculum factors that do not respond to context-specific understandings and needs would tend to fail (Lederach, 1995). This thesis research encourages citizens to identify, reflect, and build upon their own lived concerns and understandings about conflicts and citizenship.

The religious dimension of conflict, as discussed above and shown in figure 1, is one such context-specific factor in Bangladesh. In particular, Islamic (and other religious) ways of understanding the direct and indirect dimensions of conflict and peacebuilding citizenship *are* individual and collective norms, beliefs and faith systems. However, Islam (in any social system where it is dominant) is also a particular structure that defines citizens' access to their social, economic, cultural, and political rights. Further, in Bangladesh, such structures and affirmation (or violation) of citizens' rights depend on how Muslim-majority political-identity groups represent citizens in the parliamentary government, and how citizens respond to issues of beliefs, norms, and access to political and economic resources.

A paradox in the discourse of peacebuilding citizenship education in some Muslim contexts is that extremist activists may aim to establish particular kinds of 'Islamic' laws through terrorizing violence, even when Islam is called a religion of peace. Extremist political activities in Bangladesh rarely include long-term sociopolitical interest of the activists who kill and/or die: political elites are the ones who benefit from what some violent citizens do on the street (Riaz & Raji, 2011; Siddiqi, 2011). Schools could be transformed and supported to encourage citizens to develop democratic understandings about nationalism and religious issues through respectful dialogues (Davies, 2014). The school context itself represents a challenge for peacebuilding citizenship education: the kinds of citizenship and responses to conflict modeled, practiced, and

learned in Bangladeshi schools may build upon—or may contradict—students’ experiential knowledge and human needs, rooted in their particular sociopolitical contexts.

Informed by such conceptual understandings, this thesis research studies peacebuilding citizenship learning challenges and opportunities in Bangladesh by exploring curriculum spaces and participants’ understandings of the anatomy of conflict and potential conflict transformation.

### **Conclusion**

The theories and research reviewed above explain a wide range of educational factors that may facilitate and/or impede peacebuilding citizenship. None of these factors have been sufficiently examined in Bangladesh or similar contexts. This thesis research will build theory from an empirical study about how Bangladeshi schools have—or have not—addressed some factors impeding democratic peace, and the values and concerns of diverse citizens, to reinforce peacebuilding citizenship learning opportunities. In other words, how may education in such contexts redirect social and political conflict and violence impulses toward peacebuilding citizenship? My personal standpoint is that Bangladeshi schools can and should aim to enhance citizens’ peacebuilding citizenship engagement in local (and global) sociopolitical conflicts, as opposed to reinforcing prevalent traditions of violence, by building their understandings and capacities around the social-structural, cultural, and religious dimensions of their lived social and political conflicts.

Peacebuilding citizenship education in Bangladesh is definitely an understudied context. None of the research cited above showed how some positive and negative faces of education may apply in Bangladesh and affect citizens’ understanding of peacebuilding and/or citizenship in relation to sociopolitical conflicts of concern to them. Such a gap in the literature justifies the need for this empirical research on peacebuilding citizenship education in Bangladesh. This research addresses the gap by comparatively studying teachers’ implemented curriculum and female and male students’ perspectives in some violent and less violent school contexts in Bangladesh.

## Chapter 3 Methodology

### Overview of the Methodological framework

This doctoral thesis research studied selected Bangladeshi students' feelings and understandings about social conflicts in their neighbourhoods and beyond, and how existing implicit and explicit curriculum learning opportunities helped them to develop peacebuilding citizenship inclinations and capacities, or not, by addressing their lived experiences of such conflicts. By adding the case of Bangladesh, this research complemented and extended my thesis supervisor Professor Kathy Bickmore's multi-year research project: "Peace-building Citizenship Learning in Comparative Contexts Affected by Violence: School Connections with Life Experience." Whereas comparing selected young people and teachers' curriculum in Bangladesh with those in a Canadian and a Mexican city enriched Dr. Bickmore's international findings, my own thesis focuses on collecting and analyzing the Bangladesh findings themselves, in the context of a broad review of existing theory and research relevant to this context. In particular, the Bangladesh opportunities and challenges for peacebuilding citizenship education constitute an under-studied Muslim majority context in south Asia. As a research assistant for Dr. Bickmore's current and a previous project, I have had guided experience in the qualitative research methods used in this dissertation, including analyzing curriculum documents, analyzing interview and field observation data, and collecting and analyzing data from focus group interviews with young citizens and with teachers.

This thesis research involved collection and analysis of several kinds of qualitative data. (1) Content analysis of official curriculum guidelines and textbooks in selected subject areas. (2) Two rounds of focus groups with teachers: (a) the first round was to explore what and how they taught in relation to social conflicts and citizenship, (2) and the second round, about twenty-one months later, was to discuss with them pedagogical options to address their students' concerns about conflict. (3) Also, two rounds of focus groups with young people: (a) the first round was regarding their understandings and concerns about social conflicts and what they thought citizens could do to handle them; and (b) the second round was to validate the first-round students' concerns with new students about twenty-one months later. Official curriculum sources were national documents, and focus groups involved sets of *four* teachers and, separately, *four to six* students in each of four schools (two for boys and two for girls) in two Bangladeshi cities.

In each school, teachers who were selected based on their interest in the inquiry topic both participated in their own focus groups and chose the student participants based on my guidelines to select diverse young people. In their focus groups, these students engaged in critical conversations about their lived experiences and school-based learning opportunities in relation to conflicts that were of primary concern to them. For these investigations, I used qualitative analysis of documents and transcripts of semi-structured focus group discussions. These methods were designed to shed light on Bangladesh's official learning expectations, particular teachers' implemented curricula, and their (mis-)matches with the selected young citizens' lived experiences. I then juxtaposed these results with theories about what could facilitate—or impede—peacebuilding citizenship learning in a Muslim majority context like Bangladesh.

Most of the research I reviewed in chapter 2 also used qualitative research methods, such as focus group discussions and interviews, to explore challenges and opportunities embedded in education about context-specific conflicts, citizenship, and peacebuilding. As will be demonstrated and discussed in later chapters, this thesis research adds two particular contributions to this body of literature: (1) It explores educational factors that are identified in earlier comparative international literature in an understudied context that is, unlike most of the contexts commonly studied, characterized by the Muslim religious identities of the majority of its people, embedded in a particular system of democratic politics and governance. (2) It explores young citizens' understandings of social conflicts (in their local contexts and beyond), and of their repertoire of options for peacebuilding citizenship action, in relation to both Islam and democracy.

The qualitative methods I used allowed me to understand the qualities of peacebuilding citizenship learning opportunities (and barriers) included in the official curriculum, and participants' context-based concerns (understandings and feelings) about the social conflicts and citizen actions that surrounded them. Focus group workshops offered the participants opportunities to reflect on their personal and collective social experiences and cultural attitudes in relation to various social and political conflicts, and on relevant curriculum factors. The level of energy and emotion that the participants expressed during the workshop would lose its value if I used quantitative methods. The qualitative methods I used were ideal for this doctoral research to explore how the student participants located themselves, and how the selected official curricula and the teacher participants in respective subject areas helped them to locate

themselves within the context of Muslim identities and beliefs, social and political conflicts, and citizen action in Bangladesh.

The following questions guided this thesis research:

1. How do selected adolescent students understand the social and political conflicts that matter to them, and their various dimensions including causes and options (available to people like themselves) to address these conflicts?
2. How do existing implicit and explicit learning opportunities (provided by selected teachers) address and/or ignore those conflicts (solutions included) and students' understandings and lived concerns about them?
3. How do Bangladesh's official curriculum learning expectations and textbooks facilitate (or not) these peacebuilding citizenship learning opportunities?

### **Qualitative Research Methods**

Quantitative studies, such as those based on surveys, assess educational inputs and outcomes (Torney-Purta, Amadeo & Andolina, 2010). However, being an under-studied context, variables for peacebuilding citizenship education in Bangladesh are not specified. Thus, I chose to use qualitative methods to study schooling as a sociocultural practice (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Freebody, 2003), in its authentic cultural setting and through interpretations of human interactions (Chang, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1998). My goal was to theorize about the 'qualities' of varied educational practices in schools in these particular Muslim majority contexts in south Asia.

Participants' understandings of selected conflicts constituted a major part of this thesis study. I used visual prompts to elicit and explore purposively selected participants' understandings and multiple interpretations of concepts and issues (learned through life experience and/or taught in school) (Åkerlind, 2005; Marton, 1986; Richardson, 1999). Evidence about citizens' understandings and lived concerns about violence and peace shed light on their conceptions of citizenship, based on their contexts of conflict and citizenship, and the way these conceptual and context factors seemed to shape (and be shaped by) their civic identities and engagement (Torney-Purta et al., 2010). Thus, I began with a conceptual framework about conflict and peacebuilding citizenship derived from the research literature (see chapter 2); and I also partially used principles of grounded theory, in particular iterative data analysis, to refine and sometimes challenge the theory with which I began my study (Charmaz, 2000). Data-driven theorizing about contextual factors allowed me to subjectively interpret the data and existing theories about peacebuilding citizenship (education) in Bangladesh and beyond. Theorizing via researchers' subjective constructs about realities through multiple interpretations of the empirical data is a particular strength of qualitative research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Litchman, 2013), and



very useful to understand the complexities for peacebuilding citizenship education embedded in Bangladesh's social, religious, and political contexts.

Citizenship education research should, from my standpoint, itself reflect democratic principles of dialogue, participation, and inclusion, by being sensitive to citizens' (qualitative) understanding of justice and democracy related concepts, and to the opportunities and challenges embedded in school and lived social contexts for developing peacebuilding citizenship inclinations and capacities (Bickmore, Kaderi & Guerra-Sua, 2017; Mason & Delandshere, 2010). For in-depth examination of a subjective, context-rich phenomenon such as peacebuilding—or violent—citizen action, qualitative research methods allow researchers to spend sufficient time with research subjects in their 'natural context' (Hatch, 2002): in-person qualitative (ethnographic) approaches make it possible to participate in each setting to collect information about curriculum expectations and lived curriculum practices that seem to facilitate or impede the development of peacebuilding and democratic values among young citizens, and the meanings these challenges and opportunities make in the lives of the citizens.

As evidence from written texts (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), content analysis of textbooks and mandated curriculum expectations can describe themes, skills and concepts that Bangladeshi students are officially expected—or not—to learn. As I argued in chapter 2, peacebuilding citizenship requires curriculum representation of conflict, inequality, injustice, oppression, and violence and their consequences, in order to build learners' capacities to participate in (re-)creating democracy and just peace. Textbook content analysis is essentially one-way: I make inferences about the messages in the content of permanent data sources that do not change (Krippendorff, 1969). In contrast, one cannot make reliable inferences about the values and beliefs learners might derive from those textbook contents, because analyzable texts cannot be assumed to represent, or even necessarily to shape, peoples' own understandings (Larson, 1988). Textbook analysis is likely to be most reliable (in understanding factors influencing implemented curriculum) when it focuses on messages that can be interpreted as learning expectations. High-quality content analyses present sufficient sample passages from texts to allow readers to re-interpret learning expectation messages (Northey, Tepperman & Albanese, 2012). Hence, analysis of citizenship education related curriculum expectations and textbooks—in social studies, history, religion, and language—can illuminate in concrete terms the learning opportunities and challenges embedded in Bangladeshi curriculum mandates, that in turn can be discussed with research participants.

As an alternate participatory ethnographic method (Wragg, 2012), classroom observations allow scholars to record evidence about the organic teacher-student engagement with one another through curriculum content (Delamont & Atkinson, 1995). Analyses of such interactions could provide direct experiential evidence of peacebuilding citizenship learning challenges and opportunities in the lived curriculum. One problem with classroom observation, however, is that teachers are often unwilling to be observed and may not facilitate their natural classroom interactions in the presence of a researcher (Gordon, Holland & Lahelma, 2001): classroom observations alone may provide an incomplete or biased picture of the natural teaching-learning experiences. In addition to analysis of teaching materials and expectations as discussed above, focus group data can fill in this gap and add reflexivity and criticality to qualitative studies by providing information about participants' lived concerns and experiences (in historicized contexts) in schools and society (Garcez, 1997; Gubrium & Holstein, 2002), and by providing their own interpretations of their experiences and concerns (Warren, 2002). Given the exploratory nature of this research and the challenges of classroom observation, I chose instead to design dialogue-focused instead of observational classroom research in Bangladesh.

Focus group discussions can provide data in participants' own voices about curricular and pedagogical influences on citizens' understanding of identity, conflict, and other peacebuilding citizenship-related concepts. In Northern Ireland, some student interviews showed how approaches to history education could negatively or positively influence young citizens' civic identity and peacebuilding (Barton & McCully, 2012). Related studies (e.g., Bickmore 2011; Bickmore, Awad & Radjenovic, 2017; Nieto & Bickmore, 2017) have used focus group workshops to explore how some educators understand peace and conflict related concepts, and how they attempt to influence the understandings of their students. Young citizens' decision making about their engagement in politics can be influenced by their civic orientations, which are often guided by their understandings of ethical and historical questions of peace, conflict and citizenship (Selman & Kwok, 2010). Dialogue-based (interview or focus group) qualitative research also has informed how young citizens' understandings of such concepts may have constructed their civic identity and engagement in Israel and Cyprus (Bekerman, Zembylus & McGlynn, 2009). In Bangladesh, such dialogue-based evidence will be crucial to capture young citizens' understanding of history, civic identity, conflict, violence and peace and the factors that may influence their engagement and/or disengagement in political violence.

Perhaps the most important reason for conducting international comparative studies in education is to understand key concepts, perspectives and factors better by comparing, within and across cultural/national contexts: comparisons including cross-grade, cross-gender and cross-school can inform understandings of where and how reforms may be needed and why (Hayhoe, Manion & Mundy, 2017). The purpose of comparison remains as, as broadly as possible, understanding and improving educational practices (Blake, 1982). Cross-national comparisons can facilitate in-depth understanding of particular educational phenomena by studying multiple educational settings and contexts (Tobin, 1999), in addition to comparisons within and among educational settings within the same national context (Reynolds, 1999). It is a risk that large-scale international comparisons may limit the scope of some citizenship studies by allowing only for fixed criteria to look for and compare (Mason & Delandshere, 2010), potentially promoting mono-centric hegemony (Radhakrishnan, 2009): in contrast, this study contributes to a relatively small-scale qualitative comparison in only a few purposively selected national contexts, leaving space for more open-ended analysis. Toward an in-depth understanding of peacebuilding citizenship education in Bangladesh, in this study, I compared curriculum expectations and practices across grade and subject areas, school-based lived citizenship learning opportunities reported by students and teachers, and students' conceptions and concerns in different schools in girls' and boys' schools two cities. I also compared empirical findings from Bangladesh with published evidence and theories from other south Asian Muslim majority contexts and beyond.

### **Research Design**

To maximize benefits from comparison within and between different educational and sociopolitical aspects, I selected schools from two cities in Bangladesh: one violent and affluent city (B2), and one less violent but poorer city (B1). I focused on curriculum and students in grades 6-10, for comparability with the larger Peace-Building Citizenship international research project, and because adolescence is particularly important for citizenship education since many citizens develop commitments about their sociopolitical engagement at this time (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). Major criteria for school selection included (1) violence level in each city and school neighborhood, (2) schools' populations (diverse, female and male) and funding source: they had to be public schools (most Bangladeshi public schools are gender segregated), and (3) teachers and students' interest in sharing their concerns and understandings about conflict, citizenship, and relevant education. I selected a total of 4 schools: 1 boys' (M) school and 1 girls' (F) school in each city (B1 and B2). In each school (B1F, B1M, B2F, and B2M), the focus

groups engaged 3-5 teachers who taught peacebuilding citizenship related courses: history and social studies course called ‘Bangladesh and Global Studies’ (BGS), Bengali language and literature course called ‘Bangla’ (BL), English language course called (EL), and religious education course called ‘Islam and Moral Education’ (IME). Participating teachers were willing to share their perspectives and pedagogical experiences. Student focus groups in each school engaged 8-10 students from participating teacher’ classes, and these students were willing to share their lived and educational experiences. Site selection took about 2 months, concurrent with curriculum and textbook document analysis. By the end of January 2015, I was ready to collect focus group workshop data.

The over-all research plan was to work with some teachers and their students to identify social and political conflicts that mattered to them, and to reflect on the potential solutions to these conflicts. This research elicited students’ experiential concern and understandings about social and political conflicts, what citizens like themselves and others including governments did and could do about them. Based on analyses of findings from one round of such workshops, on a later date I presented to the teachers their students’ understandings and concerns and provoked them to re-think pedagogies to build upon and respond to those concerns. The inquiry, based on the research questions mentioned above, was organized in three main phases:

*Content analysis: Official learning expectations.* I analyzed peacebuilding citizenship education related learning expectations embedded—or lacking—in the government mandated grade 6–10 history, language, social science, and religion curriculum documents — curriculum policy, guidelines, and textbooks. This analysis contributed to answering research question # 3, with an aim to understand how the curriculum connected—or not—with selected citizens’ concerns and lived experiences about social and political conflicts and potential actions to mitigate or resolve them. In other words, this phase of the research outlined peacebuilding citizenship learning opportunities and challenges in the officially mandated curriculum materials.

*Focus group round #1 with teachers and students.* Partially addressing research questions # 1 and 2 in this first round of workshops, in 2015, I conducted one focus group workshop with participating teachers and one focus group workshop with participating students in each school. My goal was to understand participating teachers’ and students’ concerns and understandings about selected types of locally-relevant social conflicts and their solutions, and the curriculum learning opportunities provided—or not—by the teachers to these students (based on teacher and student participants’ reports). This was the first round of focus group workshops that I

conducted: one workshop session with each group of 3-5 teachers; and one workshop session with two separate groups of 4-5 students. So, this phase involved a series of 12 focus group workshops: 1 session with teachers, and 2 sessions with students in each of the 4 schools.

The teacher focus group workshop combined the goals of two focus group sessions in the larger Peace-Building Citizenship project: #1 (TFG1) and #2 (TFG2), 60 minutes each, totalling approximately 120 minutes. TFG1 for this thesis research (see Appendix A) explored how participating teachers taught peacebuilding citizenship in relation to social and political conflicts they and/or the government identified as important for their students to know. It also elicited teachers' perspectives on the student focus group workshop #1 (SFG1) protocol (see Appendix B), and co-created with them a set of culturally relevant image prompts (see Appendix C). Prior to TFG1 workshop, I personally held information meetings with B1F and B1M teachers in their groups for 30 minutes, and engaged in one 30-minute telephone conversation with each B2F and B2M teacher. In these pre-workshop meetings, I previewed my expectations for the research in which they would participate, and discussed with them how I hoped they would prepare for the agenda of the workshop with them.

Specifically, I asked each teacher to bring to the focus group two examples of peacebuilding citizenship lessons they taught. In the session, they shared these examples among themselves and discussed how they taught them. Next, they chose from a collection of images about national and international social and political conflicts, which I had selected (aiming for variety in the degree, size, and breadth of conflict each image illustrated) for potential use in the student focus groups. Teachers then talked about the conflicts each image represented, often including what they knew about various dimensions of each conflict and their solutions (apparently drawing from social, religious, and school-based sources).

Student focus group #1 (SFG1) followed, on a different, TFG1. SFG1 included two groups (A and B) of 4-5 students in each school; and each discussion was approximately 80-90 minutes long. In each school, the student participants for these two groups—SFG1A and SFG1B—were chosen by their teachers: I requested that participating students be interested in the issues, diverse, and sufficiently friendly with one other that they would feel comfortable to speak in the sessions around concrete instances of social and political conflicts (based on visual prompts), especially those of primary concern to them. The goal was to discern how they understood causes of these conflicts and possible solutions, and to examine how they viewed various existing school practices as relevant—or not—to those concerns, as part of answering

research questions # 1 and 2. To answer RQ #3, I compared the findings from curriculum document analysis, teacher focus groups, and student focus groups, within and across the 4 schools.

In SFG1, each group of students overviewed the set of social and political conflict images I presented to them, talking about the problems represented and their possible solutions. These images often described violence, but all of them were clearly linked with particular conflicts in Bangladesh and beyond during the time of this workshop—2015. These images were mostly collected from newspaper and other social media. So, the students might already have seen some of these images and thought about the conflicts they represented; and providing them with spaces to think about conflicts that mattered to them was a great activity to begin the workshop with. After this activity, each group selected, from this set of images, one or two conflicts that concerned them most. Then, they discussed in more depth what they knew about these conflicts, their causes and possible solutions. They also discussed what they believed people like themselves, or their government, had done or could to solve or mitigate these problems. In the end, I asked each student to talk about one or two examples of citizenship lessons taught in school. They shared their examples among themselves and discussed how they had been taught, what they had learned, and what they wanted to learn further.

*Focus group round #2 with teachers and students: Validation and reflective responses to initial findings.* The second round of focus groups workshops was a follow-up visit in 2017 to the same schools as round #1. This round of workshops explored the remaining parts of research questions #2 and #3. In this round, I conducted focus group workshops with the same teachers as the first round, and with one group of 4–6 students (different individuals from those involved the first time) in each school, to share initial results and to invite their agreement or improvements (validation) and reflections on the same questions addressed in the main (initial) data collection. As mentioned, this phase took place around twenty-one months after the main data collection.

The follow-up teacher focus group (TFG2) was approximately 60–90 minutes long. In this workshop (see Appendix D), I shared with the teachers, as a gift back to them, my initial summary (anonymized) of their students' lived concerns and understandings regarding social and political conflicts and their solutions, including how these students had viewed various existing school practices as (ir)relevant to their concerns, derived from the initial focus group sessions. Next, I encouraged the teachers to discuss and then brainstorm pedagogical responses to the understandings and concern their students had expressed.

The second-round student focus group session in each school—SFG2—was also about 60–90 minutes long. This workshop (see Appendix E) verified and discussed, with a new group of students in each school, chosen by participating teachers, my summary analyses of the original student focus group participants’ concern and understandings about social and political conflicts and relevant citizen activism. SFG2 students were also asked to suggest revisions to teachers’ teaching relevant to peacebuilding citizenship, in relation to conflicts that mattered to them.

### **My Role as a Researcher**

Since adolescence, I have been engaged in non-violent, democratic activism for affirming just peace among people on various interpersonal and social scales. What I have experienced is that all peacekeeping and peacebuilding (peacemaking included) efforts include underlying moral inclinations and behavioural expectations. When I directly communicated such expectations, parties in conflict often replied, *“yeah, but these are written in books; or, these are taught in school.”* Such responses to messages about just peace suggested that books/schools were not meant to reflect and (re-)shape—and be (re-)shaped by—lived experiences of such phenomena. This implication was a major factor that motivated me to engage in this research, and explore school connections with lived social and political experiences in the context of Bangladesh, where I grew up.

The above methodology reflected my intentions and motivations behind this thesis research. Government mandates and textbooks represent officially expected knowledge and behaviours, intended by those in power to be implemented by citizens in life outside school (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2015). Qualitative analyses of the textual content of these documents help to explore their multiple meanings (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) and to contextualize the in-school data. Hence, analyzing particular curriculum texts and guidelines was useful to understand what official learning spaces were intended by educational leaders, and how these were (dis-)connected with the expressed lived experiences of selected students. Focus group discussions helped me to understand the participating students’ and teachers’ feelings and understandings about conflicts and relevant curriculum, through direct communication with them about these issues (Vaughan, Schum, & Sinagub, 1996). A particular strength of such qualitative methods is that, guided by prompts (see Appendix B), participants could reflect on both their school-based learning experiences and their lived experiences in relation to particular conflicts. In other words, the first round of focus group workshops with teachers and students helped me to understand how some teachers and their students understood curriculum learning opportunities

as (ir-)relevant to how they lived social and political conflicts in Bangladesh. The second round of focus group sessions, about twenty-one months later, helped me to validate my initial findings and to locate them in time as well as place. Further, comparison and contrast between curriculum learning spaces and the lived understandings and experiences of conflicts narrated by youth and teacher participants helped me to reflect on my original motivation behind this thesis study: how could peacebuilding citizenship learning, in the context of Bangladesh, connect to conflict situations in young people's lives inside and outside school?

My personal experiences and knowledge of the language and culture of Bangladesh helped me to construct meanings from the ways participants and curriculum documents narrated and reflected on particular conflicts. Researchers' personal interactions in particular contexts are often authentic sources informing the interpretation of social phenomena toward making conceptual meanings (Manning & Kunkel, 2014). Such experiences allow informed praxis on both conceptual matters and social phenomena, helping researchers such as myself to re-conceptualize societies and theories (Charmaz, 2011; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011). Being born and growing up in the smaller city site for this study (B1), I had contextual knowledge about social and political conflicts, in Bangladesh and in the two selected cities in particular, which helped me to conceptualize participants' learning opportunities and understandings in relation to these conflicts.

Further, as a Bangladeshi I was fortunately able to draw upon personal relationships to help me to access each school to conduct this research. When I first visited each school for this research, my personal connections had already spoken with school headmasters and had cleared the way for approvals based on my recruitment letters to them (see Appendix F). My connections went with me to each school to receive the letters of consent (see Appendix G) signed by each headmaster. In their presence, I provided a Bengali translation of this letter and explained the research project. The same day in each school, the headmasters themselves, based on my teacher recruitment letter (Appendix H), gave me a group of interested teachers. From then on, I conducted the focus group workshops with teachers and their selected students on my own (without headmasters or other staff present), on separate days. The teachers signed their consent forms (Appendix I) during their first workshop. In this workshop, I explained to teachers the student recruitment criteria, so that they could select their students for the student focus group. Also, I handed to these teachers 10 copies of the informed consent letter and form for students and their parents (in Bengali—for English translation, see Appendix J). I asked the teachers to



distribute these letters and forms among their selected students, who would bring the forms back to me, signed by themselves and their parents, on the day of their focus group session.

### **Overview of Schools and Neighbourhoods**

I chose B1F and B1M, because they were the only public schools (single sex) in the poorer city, B1. B2F and B2M, also single sex schools, were located at the center of the richer city, B2.

Although direct experience of escalated social and political violence was noticeably less common in B1 than in B2, symptoms of indirect violence were more visible in B1. For instance, poverty prevailed in the physical environment of these schools and in the neighbourhoods. B1F was situated in the middle of a residential area, and roads to the school were full of holes, and usually only men-pulled or small engine-driven rickshaws were available for travel. The B1M neighbourhood was a mix of commercial and residential areas, significantly less privileged than those of B2F and B2M. B2 schools were situated in a rich neighbourhood with high-rise commercial and residential buildings, and (although there were some non-affluent students as well) many students commuted in private cars. Further, B2F and B2M buildings were multistoried; the classrooms were clean and technologically well equipped, in the context of poor Bangladesh. These students had access to school resources such as computer labs and various clubs (e.g., cultural and science clubs). In contrast to such affluence, B1M's Victorian buildings and some B1F classrooms were falling down. The newly constructed classrooms of B1F and B1M were shabby, the benches were broken and dusty, and the doors and windows were either incomplete or broken. B1 students had no access to libraries, computer labs, and so on. All four of these public schools were securitized by boundary walls and metal gates; but only B2F and B2M included lounges for parents to wait to pick up their kids. This extra security further indicates that physical violence was a key concern in B2.

Each school had a field inside the campus; but I saw only the B2F and B1F fields being used by the students, whereas I saw outsiders using B1M playgrounds, and no one in the B2M field during my visits. The north side of the B1F field included a shaded platform for teachers, while the students would gather (in the heat) under the open sky for assembly or other cultural programs. B1M students also would line up in the field for assembly and oath, but there was no shaded facility for their teachers. During assembly, students in all schools sang the national anthem, and vowed to be good citizens by following the rules and discipline, always being active and ready to protect the sovereignty of Bangladesh from its enemies, and serving the country

unconditionally when needed. B2 boys and girls, however, did not have to line up in the field for this ceremony, because their classrooms were equipped with indoor sound systems, and they participated from their respective classrooms by singing the national anthem and repeating the oath in chorus with a student leader. In contrast, I saw B1F girls wait under the melting hot sun in the school-ground after assembly, and listened to the headmaster announce: (1) the yearly stipend for brilliant-but-poor girls would be paid two days later—those absent from school that day would miss the money for the term; and (2) there was a national essay writing competition about the life and ideals of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman—interested girls should see the headmaster soon. Thus, the level of indirect violence inside school campuses varied across genders and cities.

During multiple research visits to each school, I noticed an additional cultural dimension regarding gender issues in B1F. When school ended for the day, the residential neighbourhood of B1F became crowded; the crowd mainly consisted of rickshaws and young boys. The fact that some of these boys came to pick up their relatives suggested that B1 seemed as unsafe as B2 for girls. However, I did not see any parent outside the school, which suggests that the boys I saw might not all have been family members of these girls. This crowd might suggest social and cultural insecurity for these young girls (see Chapter 5). A simple comparison between B1F and B1M made visible this indirect dimension of gender issues: there was no such crowd around B1M, despite its being located in a much busier neighbourhood. Also, B2F girls usually commuted with guardians, often in private cars. Thus, B1F girls seemed to be more exposed to gender based physical insecurity than their male counterparts in the same city, and compared with their female peers in the larger city (also see Chapter 5).

Finally, I noticed a structural dimension of educational governance conflict in B1M. During my first research visit, all classes in B1M were suspended for board final exams—so, no student would come to school. However, on the days when there was no board exam, some grade 7 to 9 students were attending special classes between 2:00pm and 5:00pm. These students had paid extra fees to attend school during this break. In other words, education beyond regular classroom hours within B1M was a commodity: only the willing and able students could buy this expensive product. I saw classes going on between board exams in B1F, B2F, and B2M as well; but I did not collect information regarding whether any extra fees were involved. Therefore, students' access to sufficient education was hampered in all of these four schools; but some

poorer boys seemed more direct victims (compared with other students in their and other schools) of such structural violence (also see Chapter 6).

Commuting to B1F and B1M was easy for me. So, the political conflagrations in Bangladesh during March and April 2015, when I conducted the first round of focus group workshops, did not prevent my physical access to B1 schools. In contrast, escalated political conflicts between dominant identity groups (see Chapter 4), bombing in a public bus, political killings, kidnapping, arrests, and other direct violence made commuting between B1 (where I was staying) and B2 a life risk. Such violence worried my thesis supervisor so much that she asked me to rethink my research methodology by giving up B2 schools. Despite her reluctance, I decided to cope with this violent moment: I would rent a car and start driving at 3:00am from B1 for 9:00am focus group sessions in B2F and B2M. Using routes that were less risky in terms of political violence but risky in terms of traffic incidents, I would reach B2M and B2F at around 8:40am. Overall, my physical access to B2 schools was restricted by distance and time; but thanks to the Almighty Allah I was able to make research in these schools possible.

### **Overview of Data Sources and Research Participants**

#### **Curriculum Documents**

Curriculum documents, focus group workshops with participating teachers and students, and my personal research journal constituted my data sources for this thesis research. To prepare for conducting informed teacher focus groups round #1, and to be able to provide the teachers with a sample analysis of peacebuilding citizenship learning challenges and opportunities embedded in the curriculum they taught, I began with curriculum document analysis; during the same period, I carried out school site selection.

The curriculum documents analyzed were:

- National Education Policy 2010 (Bangladesh, 2010).
- Grade 6–10 National Curriculum 2012, including curriculum mandates (includes teacher guides) and textbooks, in the following subject areas:
  - Bangla (literature) (BL) (Bangladesh, 2012a)
  - Bangladesh and Global Studies (BGS) (Bangladesh, 2012b)
  - English (language) (EL) (Bangladesh, 2012c)
  - Islam and Moral Education (IME) (Bangladesh, 2012d).

#### **Teacher Participants**

Initial groups of teachers in B1M and B1F, arranged by the schools' headmasters, did not last beyond the 30-minute pre-workshop information-orientation sessions. Some of these teachers were busy (with their families and other things), some apparently participated

unwillingly just to obey the headmasters, and some taught curriculum subjects that I had not included in this thesis research. Purposive sampling helps to collect authentic data when participants' interests in research subject matter and their experiential knowledge and abilities inform the research variables/concepts (McMillan, 1996; Palinkas et al., 2015). Hence, I spoke with the headmasters in both B1 schools, and selected a new group of teachers in each of B1F and B1M based on what they taught and how much interest they showed in the research topic. In B2F and B2M, teachers recruited by the headmasters, were appropriate to my research guidelines. All these teachers participated in both rounds of teacher focus group workshops. After the first round of focus groups, one B1M teacher got transferred in a B2 school (other than my research sites); but he travelled to B1M only to participate in the second round. So, once selected, all teacher groups participated in TFG1 and TFG2, the entire research process with teachers. There were a total of 16 teacher participants; 9 male and 7 female teachers. School-wise, these participants were:

- Less violent city (B1) boys' school (M)—*B1M—four teachers*:
  - Participant #1 (T1), male (m) Muslim (M)—*T1mM*—taught BGS 6–10
  - Participant #2 (T2), male (m) Muslim (M)—*T2mM*—taught EL 6–10
  - Participant #3 (T3), male (m) Aboriginal (A)—*T3mA*—taught BGS 6–10
  - Participant #4 (T4), male (m) Muslim (M)—*T4mM*—taught IME 6–10
- Less violent city (B1) girls' school (F)—*B1F—four teachers*:
  - Participant #1 (T1), male (m) Muslim (M)—*T1mM*—taught IME 6–10
  - Participant #2 (T2), female (f) Muslim (M)—*T2fM*—taught BGS 6–10
  - Participant #3 (T3), male (m) Muslim (M)—*T3mM*—taught BL 6–10
  - Participant #4 (T4), male (m) Muslim (M)—*T4mM*—taught EL 6–10
- More violent city (B2) boys' school (M)—*B2M—four teachers*:
  - Participant #1 (T1), female (f) Muslim (M)—*T1fM*—taught BL 6–10
  - Participant #2 (T2), male (m) Muslim (M)—*T2mM*—taught EL 6–10
  - Participant #3 (T3), female (f) Muslim (M)—*T3fM*—taught BGS 6–10
  - Participant #4 (T4), male (m) Muslim (M)—*T4mM*—taught IME 6–10
- More violent city (B2) girls' school (F)—*B2F—four teachers*:
  - Participant #1 (T1), male (m) Muslim (M)—*T1mM*—taught IME 6–10
  - Participant #2 (T2), female (f) Muslim (M)—*T2fM*—taught EL 6–10
  - Participant #3 (T3), female (f) Muslim (M)—*T3fM*—taught BL 6–10
  - Participant #4 (T4), female (f) Muslim (M)—*T4fM*—taught BGS 6–10

I did ask the headmaster in each school to include diverse teachers; but somehow this did not work. Across the two cities, there was only one Aboriginal (A) teacher participant; all the rest were Muslims (M), and mostly males (m). B1M headmaster—a Muslim man in his 60s—recommended a Hindu (H) female (f) teacher, who initially showed interest in the research. But, during the pre-workshop information session, she quit saying that she was busy tutoring her son, who was attending the board final exams that year. As listed above, the only non-Muslim teacher

participant in this research was in B1M: B1M-T3mA, who taught Bangladesh and Global Studies (BGS). There could have been diverse teachers in subject areas that I did not include in the study design; but I decided to stick to my research design. B1F headmaster was a Hindu man in his 50s, and I gave him the same teacher selection criteria; but I ended up getting 3 male and 1 female Muslim teachers (see list above). In B2, participating teachers were more diverse gender wise, but less diverse religious identity wise: there were a total of 3 male and 5 female Muslims. Thus, despite my selection criteria, these teachers did represent the Muslim majority among B1 and B2 teachers.

Participating teachers in the various schools did represent structural diversities. B1M and B1F teachers reported to have come from lower middle-class families, whereas B2F and B2M teachers lived more privileged lives. For instance, B2F-T4fM and B2M-T4mM had travelled to London in England; B2F-T4fM was a member of the national curriculum writing committee; and B2M-T3fM's father was a current Member of Parliament. Other participating B2F and B2M teachers were wearing expensive clothes and talked about living in expensive apartments. In addition, some B2 teachers shared with me that they had been planning to send their children to Europe or North America for university education. Thus, B2 teachers mainly represented upper middle to middle class Muslims in Bangladesh, while B1F and B1M teachers represented marginalized communities.

### **Student Participants**

In each school, there were two groups of students in the first round of students focus group workshops. In this SFG1, there were a total of 36 students; 19 in B1 and 17 in B2 schools. Out of them, 19 were boys and 17 were girls: 10 boys from B1, and 9 from B2; and 9 girls from B1 and 8 from B2. Group-wise, SFG1 participants in each school were:

- *B1M-SFG1A—five male (m) students:*
  - Participant #1 (S1), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S1mM8*
  - Participant #2 (S2), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S2mM8*
  - Participant #3 (S3), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S3mM8*
  - Participant #4 (S4), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S4mM8*
  - Participant #5 (S5), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S5mM8*
- *B1M-SFG1B—five male (m) students:*
  - Participant #1 (S1), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S1mM8*
  - Participant #2 (S2), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S2mM8*
  - Participant #3 (S3), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S3mM8*
  - Participant #4 (S4), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S4mM8*
  - Participant #5 (S5), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S5mM8*
- *B1F-SFG1A—five female (f) students:*

- Participant #1 (S1), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S1fM8*
- Participant #2 (S2), Hindu (H), grade 8 (8)—*S2fH8*
- Participant #3 (S3), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S3fM8*
- Participant #4 (S4), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S4fM8*
- Participant #5 (S5), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S5fM8*
- *B1F-SFG1B—four female (f) students:*
  - Participant #1 (S1), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S1fM8*
  - Participant #2 (S2), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S2fM8*
  - Participant #3 (S3), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S3fM8*
  - Participant #4 (S4), Hindu (H), grade 8 (8)—*S4fH8*
- *B2M-SFG1A—five male (m) students:*
  - Participant #1 (S1), Muslim (M), grade 7 (7)—*S1mM7*
  - Participant #2 (S2), Muslim (M), grade 6 (6)—*S2mM6*
  - Participant #3 (S3), Muslim (M), grade 6 (6)—*S3mM6*
  - Participant #4 (S4), Muslim (M), grade 6 (6)—*S4mM6*
  - Participant #5 (S5), Muslim (M), grade 7 (7)—*S5mM7*
- *B2M-SFG1B—four male (m) students:*
  - Participant #1 (S1), Hindu (H), grade 9 (9)—*S1mH9*
  - Participant #2 (S2), Muslim (M), grade 9 (9)—*S2mM9*
  - Participant #3 (S3), Hindu (H), grade 9 (9)—*S3mH9*
  - Participant #4 (S4), Muslim (M), grade 9 (9)—*S4mM9*
- *B2F-SFG1A—four female (f) students:*
  - Participant #1 (S1), Muslim (M), grade 9 (9)—*S1fM9*
  - Participant #2 (S2), Muslim (M), grade 9 (9)—*S2fM9*
  - Participant #3 (S3), Muslim (M), grade 9 (9)—*S3fM9*
  - Participant #4 (S4), Muslim (M), grade 9 (9)—*S4fM9*
- *B2F-SFG1B—four female (f) students:*
  - Participant #1 (S1), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S1fM8*
  - Participant #2 (S2), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S2fM8*
  - Participant #3 (S3), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S3fM8*
  - Participant #4 (S4), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S4fM8*

In the second round of student focus group workshops, there was one group of student participants in each school. In SFG2, a total of 22 students across gender and cities participated; 12 from B1, and 10 from B2. Out of them, there were 11 boys and 11 girls: six boys from B1, and five from B2; and six girls from B1, and five from B2. School-wise, SFG2 participants were:

- *B1M-SFG2—six male (m) students:*
  - Participant #1 (S1), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S1mM8*
  - Participant #2 (S2), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S2mM8*
  - Participant #3 (S3), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S3mM8*
  - Participant #4 (S4), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S4mM8*
  - Participant #5 (S5), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S5mM8*
  - Participant #5 (S6), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S6mM8*
- *B1F-SFG2—six female (f) students:*
  - Participant #1 (S1), Muslim (M), grade 9 (9)—*S1fM9*
  - Participant #2 (S2), Hindu (H), grade 9 (9)—*S2fH9*

- Participant #3 (S3), Muslim (M), grade 10 (10)—*S3fM10*
- Participant #4 (S4), Muslim (M), grade 10 (10)—*S4fM10*
- Participant #5 (S5), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S5fM8*
- Participant #5 (S6), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S6fM8*
- *B2M-SFG2—five male (m) students:*
  - Participant #1 (S1), Muslim (M), grade 10 (10)—*S1mM10*
  - Participant #2 (S2), Muslim (M), grade 10 (10)—*S2mM10*
  - Participant #3 (S3), Muslim (M), grade 10 (10)—*S3mM10*
  - Participant #4 (S4), Muslim (M), grade 10 (10)—*S4mM10*
  - Participant #5 (S5), Muslim (M), grade 10 (10)—*S5mM10*
- *B2F-SFG2—five female (f) students:*
  - Participant #1 (S1), Muslim (M), grade 9 (9)—*S1fM9*
  - Participant #2 (S2), Muslim (M), grade 8 (8)—*S2fM8*
  - Participant #3 (S3), Muslim (M), grade 6 (6)—*S3fM6*
  - Participant #4 (S4), Muslim (M), grade 7 (7)—*S4fM7*
  - Participant #5 (S5), Muslim (M), grade 9 (9)—*S5fM9*

SFG1 and SFG2 combined, there were a total of 58 student participants in this research; 31 in B1 and 27 in B2 schools. Out of them, 30 were boys and 28 were girls: 16 boys from B1, and 14 from B2; and 15 girls from B1 and 13 from B2.

B2F and B2M students, like their teachers, also represented privileged communities. However, as the above list represents, B2M-SFG1B students' religious identities were more diverse than their teachers'. Out of 4 boys in this group, 2 were grade 9 Muslims and 2 were same grade Hindus, whereas B2M-SFG1A consisted of 3 grade-6 and 2 grade-7 Muslims. In contrast, all 8 B2F-SFG1 girls were Muslims: B2F-SFG1A consisted of 4 grade-9 Muslims, B2F-SFG1B consisted of 4 grade-8 Muslims. In direct contrast to this slight diversity, all SFG2 participants from B2F and B2M were Muslims, even though these groups represented more diverse grade levels than their other B2 peers: B2M-SFG2 consisted of 5 grade-10 boys, whereas B2F-SFG2 included 2 grade-9, 1 grade-8, 1 grade-7, and 1 grade-6 girls. B1 boys and girls represented similar religious identity-based diversities in both rounds of SFGs. In SFG1, 9 girls and 10 boys participated from B1 schools: the boys were all Muslims, whereas there were two Hindus and seven Muslims among the girls. In SFG2, 6 students participated from each of B1F and B1M; and all of them were Muslims. Compared to their B2 peers, B1 students represented less diverse grade levels in both rounds of SFGs. In SFG1, all B1 boys and girls were from grade 8; whereas in SFG2, all 6 boys were from grade 8, but among the girls 2 were from grade 8, 2 from grade 9, and 2 from grade 10. Thus, during both rounds of SFGs, selected students, too, represented Muslim majority in selected B1 and B2 schools.

As B1 was a poorer city than B2, participating B1F and B1M students in both rounds of SFGs were living with less economic privilege than B2 boys and girls. From what the B1 boys and girls said, they represented economically diverse communities within the city: there were students from high government officials' families, business class families, and most commonly low-wage earning and poor families. In B1, the poor girls were somewhat more privileged than their poor male peers. Girls would receive some government stipend money for attending school, which boys would not. However, perhaps linked to their experiences of living underprivileged lives, these boys and girls seemed very serious about the conflicts that concerned them, and very keen to see these problems solved. In contrast to these pupil, B2 boys and girls described themselves as coming from privileged families that own apartments, cars, and business, families that are educated and have big jobs, and families that practice equal gender rights, among other things. These students did not show the same interest and concern about conflicts as their B1 peers did. These differences suggest that my research was able to include and compare the wide social structural differences lived by participating B1 and B2 boys and girls to understand and contextualize their varied concerns and understandings about social and political conflicts.

### **Data Collection**

In each school, I started the first round of data collection with TFG1 protocol to get a sense of what the teachers taught, and to get inputs from these teachers about SFG1 protocol. I started the second round of focus group workshops, too, with teachers. I began TFG2 by following the protocol and presenting a gift to these teachers: I gave them a summary of their first-round student participants' understandings and concerns about social and political conflicts and school-based learning opportunities in relation to these conflicts. In this workshop, I helped the teachers to think about their students' concern and understandings and about their pedagogical options to teach such students what they needed to know. I ended data collection round #2 with one SFG2 per school to verify the first-round students' concern and understandings with this new set of students' concerns and understandings.

### **Curriculum Documents**

I downloaded the above listed curriculum documents from Bangladesh Ministry of Education website (<http://www.moedu.gov.bd>) and the National Curriculum and Textbook Board of Bangladesh website (<http://www.nctb.gov.bd>). When these documents were available in both English and Bengali, or in English only, I used the English versions as my data source. When these documents were available in Bengali language only, I used the original document as my



data source, and indicated where in the analysis I used my own translation of relevant excerpts from these documents.

I analyzed these curriculum documents primarily because they outlined peacebuilding- and/or citizenship-related official learning expectations and opportunities. By including learning spaces around social and political conflict issues and their past and contemporary models of solutions, social studies, history, religion, and language curricula represent core spaces for such learning (Bickmore, 2008b; Kaderi, 2014b; Waghid, 2014). These curriculum subjects represent official narratives about historical and contemporary conflicts that inform understandings of these conflict and citizen activism in relation to them, a key space for school-based peacebuilding citizenship education (Bickmore, Kaderi & Guerra-Sua, 2017).

### **Focus Group Workshops with Teachers (2015)**

TFG1 was a 2-hour session in each school. Focus groups allow participants to interpret their own concern and understandings about social phenomena (Warren, 2002). In TFG1, participating teachers engaged in such discussions about their experiences of teaching about social and political conflicts in Bangladesh. In other words, they described their curriculum/pedagogical practices—i.e., the school-based lived curriculum (Aoki, 2012)—in relation to the conflicts about which they wanted their students to learn something.

There was no icebreaking necessary in these workshops since I had already conducted pre-workshop preparatory sessions and teachers knew one another. Guided by the protocol (see Appendix A), I began TFG1 by thanking the teachers for participating in this research. Then, I collected their signed consent forms, requested them to speak in teacher voice so that the recording worked well, and revisited the purpose of the workshop. Next, I asked them to share their teaching examples: teacher took turns, one at a time, and shared how they taught particular peacebuilding citizenship lessons. After that, these teachers labelled their teaching examples and talked across to categorize their lessons based on conflict themes. This activity was followed by a discussion among the teachers about the teaching priorities represented in their teaching examples—their primary concern as teachers regarding what their students would learn about (which) social and political conflicts. This discussion ended by helping the teachers to map out their further peacebuilding citizenship teaching goals.

Next, I explained to these teachers what I planned to do in the student focus groups. After describing the details, I asked them to help me to decide which of the conflict images (from the set I brought in) would be appropriate, or not, for their students. While doing this, I often asked

the teachers, based on their interest in the conflict issues, to do what their students would do—to analyze the anatomy and possible solutions of some conflicts. At the end of the teacher focus group session, I shared with the teachers a summary analysis of part of their mandated curriculum, to show them some spaces available in the curriculum they taught relevant to peacebuilding citizenship.

### **Focus Group Workshops with Students (2015)**

Conducting SFG1 in B1 schools soon after TFG1 in March 2015 was convenient. In B2M, I could conduct TFG1 in late March. Due to the history of time, I was not able to conduct SFG1 in B2 until mid- and late-April 2015. This SFG was designed to understand participating students' lived concern and understandings about social and political conflicts around them, their solutions, and school-based opportunities to learn about these conflicts. Information provided by SFG1 students described the (mis-)matches between their concern and the teacher-implemented curricula—their personal and thus authentic interpretations (Vaughan, Schum, & Sinagub, 1996) of their own lived social and curriculum experiences about conflicts that mattered to them.

With each group in each school, I started by thanking the students for participating in this research. Then, following the protocol (see Appendix B), I introduced a talking piece to them and demonstrated how fairly equal air time could be shared among everybody. A talking piece could be any object that carries particular personal and or cultural meaning; and in conflict discussion circle, it symbolizes its possessor's floor (Umbreit, 2003). This means that only the person who holds the talking piece will speak and others will listen. Talking piece holders have rights to speak or pass. To practice equal airtime, they used the talking piece to introduce themselves and share what they each liked to do in their communities. Then, to understand how they recognized each conflict I showed them using image prompts, I asked them to describe how each conflict looked like in their lives and/or communities. I kept reminding the students to share equitable airtime, but without the talking piece at this point. Next, I asked them to work together to categorize the conflicts represented in the images, and choose 2–3 conflicts issues/themes of their primary concern to discuss. In most groups, the students had time to discuss only two issues.

When the students analyzed conflicts, they described how they saw and/or experienced each conflict in their lives and/or communities, who was/were involved and affected by each conflict, what caused these conflicts, what made them worse, who in government and among common people like themselves did what, and who could do what to make each conflict better. I

did not use the talking piece in this part of the workshop either, but I helped the students through prompts to share equal airtime. I used the talking piece in the end of SFG1 to give each student a turn to describe what and how they had learned in school regarding these conflicts, and what they wished to learn about. I ended SFG1 by asking each group to make anonymous suggestions for their teachers regarding peacebuilding citizenship education, and then by thanking them.

### **Follow-up Focus Group Workshops with Teachers (2017)**

I conducted TFG2 with B2 teachers in the first week of January 2017, and with B1 teachers in the second week. It involved quite a lot of travelling: from Toronto to B2, and then B2 to B1. Since political violence had reduced, travelling within Bangladesh was not as dangerous as it was in 2015. Traffic conditions were the only difficulty; but that did not hamper the way TFG2 was conducted in each school.

TFG2 was designed to inform the teachers (and to invite their critiques and reflections) about initial research results: the (mis-)matches between what they taught and what their SFG1 students understood and wished to learn, and to help them to find pedagogical options for bridging the gaps and thus building connections between school and lived experience. School-based education can (re-)shape lived/liveable social and political experiences (Shor, 1993); and thus, for just peace, what happens in the society also needs to (re-)shape what happens in school (Bickmore, Kaderi & Guerra-Sua, 2017; Kaderi, 2014b).

Following the protocol (see Appendix D), I began this workshop by presenting to the teachers a brief summary of my thematic analysis of data from the student focus group sessions in their own school. Then, I invited the teachers to use their own words to summarize these students' concerns and understandings about conflict and peacebuilding. Following this activity, I asked the teachers to use their own concern and understandings to interpret these findings, and to comment on how much these findings represented their SFG1 and current students' concern and understandings of conflicts and peacebuilding. Next, I prompted the teachers, in one subject area at a time, to analyze how their existing teaching practices matched with their students' concerns, lived experience, and understandings about conflict. I also prompted them to discover curriculum and pedagogical options in their respective subject areas to address the learning needs that SFG1 finding summary highlighted. I ended this follow-up workshop by asking if the teacher liked this discussion and would like to engage in such discussions in the future.

### **Follow-up Focus Group Workshops with Students (2017)**

SFG2 was mainly a triangulation process in the data to verify my analyses of SFG1 data. Such triangulation increases reliability and trustworthiness of qualitative analysis by providing perspectives from a source other than the analyzed subjects and the researcher (McMillan, 2016).

I conducted SFG2 following TFG2, both on the same day, in each school. Like TFG2, I used protocol (see Appendix E) began SFG2 by presenting to the students a summary of my analysis of SFG1 students' concern and understandings about social and political conflicts. The purpose was to verify findings from SFG1 with SFG2 students by discussing how much these findings reflected their own concern and understandings. Then, I prompted these students to choose one of the conflict issues from the summary reports and critically analyze them in the same way as the SFG1 students did. I also prompted them to discuss the most relevant extra-curricular and curriculum (BGS, BL, EL, and IME) learning experiences in school to inform their understandings. In each school, I completed SFG2 by asking the students to make anonymous suggestions for their teachers regarding peacebuilding citizenship education, and then by thanking the students.

### **Research Journal**

Reflective journals serve as ethnographic sources of qualitative data, and provides interim findings from initial analyses of human interactions (Chang, 2008). My research journal included notes about each sites' physical and non-physical contexts, journey to schools for each focus group session, my observation about schools' structure and culture, research question related initial findings based on my interactions with school administrators, teachers, and students, and any conceptual or analytical questions to answer using the data I had. During the data analysis process, this research journal helped me to understand the data conceptually, and also (re-)conceptualize the concepts based on data.

### **Data Analysis**

I analyzed data about participating students' citizenship experiences and reported learning opportunities in school using various approaches. Following a post-colonial approach, I could explore how curriculum and pedagogical challenges and opportunities may follow from elites' legitimization and de-legitimization of certain knowledge (Spring, 2008). From a culturalist perspective, I could examine how transnational neoliberal influences on Bangladeshi schools might have displaced local human rights, religious and cultural values that could enhance a democratic culture of peace (Benhabib, 2002; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004). Although they do not appear explicitly in my analytical framework, I paid attention to all five context dimensions—

autobiographical, historical, political, philosophical and postmodern—advised by Cooper and White (2012). These broadened and contextualized my analysis of participants’ simple narratives (McMillan, 2016) on conflict themes. In my analytical reports, I focused on how participants understood the anatomy and solutions of conflicts they experienced and cared about, and how teachers, documents, and students said the curriculum taught about these issues.

The autobiographical dimension allowed me to play the role of a research ‘instrument’ in data collection and analysis (Cooper & White, 2012). The historical dimension allowed me to analyze history as subject to re-interpretation, bring the missing voices of the marginalized and the oppressed into that history (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), which, as discussed above, was especially relevant in contexts like Bangladesh. The political dimension was especially useful for peacebuilding citizenship education research because school is examined as an influence on citizens’ sociopolitical context (Shor, 1993; Freire, 1998). This means that my research could also be a political act, as such research sheds light on the power of education to free citizens’ conscience from political manipulations (Giroux, 2003). The postmodern dimension was useful for questioning and critically understanding narratives about Bangladeshi nationalism and young citizens’ roles in enhancing democracy and secularism: we live within great liquidities of time and morality—continuing explorations and interpretations unsettle many of this world’s settled ‘truths’ (Bauman, 1995, 2000, 2007). Further, the narratives of young citizens’ contributions in protecting Bangladesh’s democracy could be analyzed as metanarratives, and challenged using peacebuilding citizenship perspectives: metanarratives are politically and socially dominant stories about real life phenomena (Rust, 1996). Finally, the philosophical dimensions of this research emphasized, as Greene (1995) suggests, marrying diverse interpretations of social and political complexities into visions of practical educational implications that can bring social and political changes. These five analytical dimensions together can facilitate in-depth understanding of peacebuilding citizenship learning opportunities and challenges and in deriving curricular and pedagogical recommendations.

The qualitative data analysis process followed coding and constant comparison strategies. Data analysis in order to answer the third research question began immediately after approval of this research project, in collecting and making sense of the learning expectations in the citizenship education-related textbooks and curriculum mandate documents listed above. Learning expectations across grades and subject areas were compared in order to build elaborate understanding of peacebuilding citizenship learning challenges and opportunities in Bangladeshi

schools (schools across Bangladesh are required to use the same government mandated curriculum materials).

I answered the first and the second research questions by analyzing and comparing students' and their teachers' focus group narrative discussions and responses regarding school-based educational opportunities and sociopolitical conflicts that they cared about, and regarding the possible peacebuilding actions they described as ways to solve or mitigate conflicts and to reduce violence. I used findings from each stage of the research to analyze the data from consecutive stages: for instance, data from the first round of focus group discussions with teachers informed data collection through student focus group workshops, and findings from the first round of student and teacher focus group workshops were used to inform the second round of data collection in respective schools.

In reporting the findings from this investigation, I comparatively drew on published findings from other Muslim majority contexts in south Asia and beyond, so that my findings could inform school-based peacebuilding citizenship learning in Bangladesh and beyond. Furthermore, comparative analysis of Bangladesh-based mandated learning expectations, lived curriculum experiences, and teachers' and students' understandings and concern about social and political conflicts and their solutions helped me to understand the most promising and the most challenging peacebuilding citizenship education factors in Bangladesh and similar contexts.

### **Limitations of Study and Method**

A limitation of this study was that the human data included responses only from a fairly small number of purposively sampled participants in just four schools. Whereas such purposively selected participants did represent the people whose voices I wanted to hear, it is possible that the headmasters and teachers selected student participants (contrary to my selection criteria) whom they viewed as most positively representing their school. Classroom observations could involve a larger number of students, not limited by school staffs' selection process, so they could possibly have reflected more diverse responses. On the other hand, this research design was thorough in that it included both students and teachers, and both male and female schools, in two contrasting urban contexts, each at two points in time. In the first round of data collection, I also included two focus groups of students in each school, resulting in more robust evidence than could have emerged from only one group of students per school. Thus, although participant focus groups certainly cannot be assumed to be completely representative of the entire

Bangladesh context and population, they did reflect some important diversities that together offer robust evidence.

Another limitation of the research method was that, although I engaged the participants in discussions about conflict and their solutions, I had neither enough time (in one session per group) nor clear enough prompts for discerning the students' and teachers' understandings about conflicting viewpoints—i.e., beliefs, needs and interests. I did ask them about various actors—involved and affected parties and other stakeholders—in each conflict, which partially represented viewpoints. However, clearer prompts, and/or more time to explore, about conflicting viewpoints could have helped the participants to analyze conflicts more critically.

The focus group methodology had some limitations, in the way the workshops tended to elicit consensus (presumably dominant) views among those participating. In all student groups (both cities and genders) to some extent—except one of the groups in B2M (1A)—when one student said something, others either expressed (verbally and/or non-verbally) their agreement or remained silent. Examples of expressed or visible disagreement among students in focus groups were rare. Such discourse patterns might have been influenced by the fact that most of these student groups were friendship groups, from the same class, who did not want to hurt friends by disagreeing. B2M-1A, in contrast, was a mixed group of grade 6 and 7 students, and they often disagreed with each other. Although the older boys tried to dominate the younger ones in this group, with skilful facilitation this challenge could be handled. However, the opposite could have been the case as well. B2F-SFG2 also was a mixed group of students from grades 6, 7, 8, and 9; yet in that context it was extremely difficult to prompt the participants to speak. Despite repeated prompts, these girls preferred to stay mostly silent. Whereas the reason for such reluctance to speak up was unknown (perhaps related to teachers' selection priorities and/or implicit pressure on particular students to participate), B2F-SFG1A and -SFG1B girls too—friendship groups from the same class—did not speak up about conflicts. Thus, despite highly engaged focus group sessions in most schools, students' discourse patterns often remained a challenge for collecting authentic dialogic data representative of diverse views.

Teachers' input regarding SFG1 was meant to help me to adapt the prompts for the student discussion to appropriately represent their lived concern and experience. However, sometimes it turned out to be opposite. Participating teachers across gender and cities resisted presenting school-based and broader politics and governance issues for discussion with students: they said that their students were not ready for such discussions. Ironically, in contrast, most

student groups across genders and cities expressed enthusiastic interest in these issues. For example, during SFG1 in B1M, I was hiding the ‘no caning in school’ image. When I became very friendly, B1M-1B boys grabbed the file of images that I was not using, and over-excitedly picked up the issue of caning. Similarly, they discussed other politics and governance issues out of their own interest. Therefore, participating teachers’ inputs for SFG1 misguided me to some extent. From then on, I aired on the side of including a wide range of image prompts, and often ignored teachers’ suggestions about what conflicts I should or should not discuss with their students. Thus, a limitation embedded in the teacher focus group workshop round #1 was that it represented inadequate key informants for cultural/local relevance of my SFG1 protocol. Yet, this experience informed an actual strength of this research design because it taught me to trust students’ own voices about their interests.

Participating teachers’ and/or school administrators’ overt curiosity and/or monitoring presented another challenge to collecting authentic data. Only in B1F was I freely left alone with the girls in a relatively secluded/quiet room upstairs. In B1M, T2mM came into the room during SFG1 workshops at least 3 times: he wanted to participate in the workshops, and I had to repeatedly remind him about my research ethics. I faced the same trouble in B2M: the newly transferred assistant headmaster would not trust my research intentions, and would not let me conduct SFG1 as independently as I wished. When B2M-T1fM became assertive and invited me to meet the students in groups, the assistant headmaster would periodically come to the room and check what I was discussing with his students. Somewhat similarly, the B2F assistant headmaster would not let me close the door with the girls and me in the room (although the windows were open): she sent an office assistant with a chair to hold the door open and sit there to observe what I was doing with the girls. These interruptions might explain why some students did not disagree, especially why the B2F girls did not speak as much. In any case, such intrusions negatively affected my collection of authentic data in three school. During the second round of focus group workshops with participating teachers and students, I did not have to face this problem, partly because the teachers had probably come to trust me based on prior experience with me, and partly because Professor Bickmore was with me in the workshop sessions. Therefore, school teachers’/authorities’ distrust created a barrier in the friendly environment I had planned for each focus group workshop session with the students in the first round.

Finally, although my familiarity and experience with the school contexts, including the curriculum and social and political contexts, was an asset in many ways, it might also have



skewed my awareness: I might have involuntarily missed some details. Inevitably, my own knowledge about the schools' and the overall country's culture reflect somewhat biased perspectives. Nevertheless, the five analytical dimensions described above and the overall research design—including the second round of data collection that served as validation—added particular strengths to this qualitative research; and I believe that I have used the most appropriate methods for conducting this research.

### **Conclusion**

This thesis research collected original data about peacebuilding citizenship understandings, concerns, and learning opportunities in a Muslim majority south Asian context — Bangladesh. This research aimed to increase the potential of school-based education to engage citizens in democratically solving sociopolitical problems and building peace in varying conflictual and violent contexts. Context-based evidence of citizens' understanding of responses to conflicts helped to improve such possibilities by adding local theories of peacebuilding to global educational research.

Overall, the design and methods used in this thesis research had many strengths that helped me to investigate the (mis-)matches and (dis-)connections between implemented curriculum and young citizens' concerns, understandings, and lived experiences regarding conflicts and related citizen action for potential peacebuilding. Nothing could be more appropriate than directly talking to young Bangladeshi citizens and teachers, of both genders in two cities experiencing varying levels of (escalated) conflicts, about their perspectives, at two different times. Whereas the participants in the first round of human data collection explicitly share their concerns and understandings about selected conflicts, participants in the second round do the same, plus they validate the previous participants' concerns and understandings. To contextualize these results, analysis of curriculum documents and texts appropriately outlines the challenges and opportunities embedded in official learning expectations. Not least, this research adequately describes the implemented curriculum by juxtaposing the teachers' and their students' responses about what learning opportunities were provided in their schools. This research method contributed to a reliable and substantial understanding of how participating young people and teachers locally understood and felt about social and political conflicts and their potential democratic solutions, emphasizing the possibilities embedded in existing school-based peacebuilding citizenship learning opportunities. This detailed information, well rooted in the context of Bangladesh, also sheds comparative light on potential peacebuilding citizenship

learning opportunities and challenges in other parts of the world — including the other countries in the Peace-Building Citizenship project (Mexico and Ontario Canada), in addition to broadening international awareness of education and conflict in a Muslim majority context. This research thus contributes to comparative international understanding curricular and pedagogical that may contribute to peacebuilding (and/or to reproducing and escalating) violent conflicts. Above all, this research brought to light the voices and contexts of students and teachers in an understudied area, and contributed to filling gaps in peacebuilding citizenship education theories that may apply to Muslim majority and other world contexts.

## Chapter 4

### Context: Bangladesh's Society, Politics, Schooling, and Curriculum Policy

#### Society and Politics

##### Demographics

Bangladesh is a densely populated country: in recent years (2010–2016), the population density has gone up to 1251.84 from 1168.85 per square kilometer (Statista, 2018). Although the number somewhat differs in various sources, with approximately 165,673,289 people in 147,570 square kilometres of land, population wise Bangladesh currently ranks as the world's 8<sup>th</sup> largest country (Population, 2018). These people have diverse origins, having developed as Bengals within the Indian subcontinent from a confluence of various Arab, Asian, Mediterranean, and European people for <sup>over</sup> 13 centuries (Britannica, 2017). Today Bangladesh represents a largely homogenous ethnicity: 98% of its people are Bengali, 1.1% indigenous, and 0.9% other people (*ibid*). From a Hindu majority context, in which the Muslims entered in early 13<sup>th</sup> century, the delta Island that is now called Bangladesh has steadily become a Muslim majority country (*ibid*). In this Muslim majority context, the indigenous, aboriginal people are small Bangladeshi ethnic groups (*e.g.*, *Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Santal, and Manipuri*), who practice Buddhist and tribal religions, and historically were victims of various political partitions of the Indian Subcontinent (Indigenous Peoples, 2018).

The Muslim population of Bangladesh has significantly increased—as a proportion of the national population as well as in absolute numbers—in the past 60 years or so: in 1951 East Bengal (pre-independence) there were 22.1% Hindus and 76.5% Muslims (Banglapedia, 2015). In 2013 there were 89.5% Muslims and only 9.6% Hindus (CIA, 2014). Today, with 89.1% Muslims, 10% Hindus, and 0.9% others including Buddhists, Christians, and indigenous people (CIA, 2018), Bangladesh is an imperfect democracy experiencing extensive injustice, violence, and citizen (dis)engagement (Gossman, 2017; Macdonald, 2016; Siddiqi, 2011). In terms of religious principles, Muslims are all supposed to be peacebuilding citizens, engaged in affirming non-violence, justice, equity, and peace as defined by God in the Qur'an and as modelled by Muhammad (pbuh) in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century (see chapter 2). In practice, however, many Muslim majority contexts are socially and politically similar to many non-Muslim majority contexts, violent and far from just peace (*ibid*). Further, many Muslim groups politically and theologically

interpret Islamic justice, equity and citizenship in diverse ways (e.g., *The World's Muslims*, 2012).

### **Religious Identity Dimensions**

As the change of religious majority suggests, religious identity issues have historically conflated economic and political factors in Bangladesh. In the Hindu majority Bangla, centuries ago, Muslims were socially and politically marginalized against Hindus (Moore, 2001; Partition of Bengal, 2009; Schendel, 2009). During Islamic periods of rule (e.g., *Sultans, Mughals, and Nawabs*) in India, some rulers practiced social, political, and cultural fairness among Hindus, Muslims, and other religious groups. For example, the Mughal emperor Akbar the Great initiated an accommodation policy in 1582: he combined some principles of Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and other Indian religions and invented a religious pluralism called *Din-i-Ilahi* [religion of God] as an effort to establish universal peace among diverse peoples (Bashir, 2009; Nizami, 1989; Roychoudhury, 1941). His goal was to reduce religious cultural clashes by uniting diverse people under a common cultural platform based on equal respect, acceptance, and accommodation (*ibid*).

The message of inter-religious harmony embedded in *Din-i-Ilahi* did not last forever. Especially, the British colonizers manipulated the Hindu-Muslim diversity in India, and diverse peoples' struggles for justice got the face of religious identity struggles under the British Raj; based on this manipulated conflict Lord Curzon divided the Bengals in 1905 into East (Muslim) Bengal and the West (Hindu) Bengal (Harun-or-Rashid, 2012; McLane, 1965). The struggles nevertheless continued, and the Bengals got re-united in 1911, suggesting to the British colonizers that religious diversity was not so much a problem in this struggle for justice. In 1947, the British Raj ended finally dividing India—the West Bengal became an Indian (Hindu majority) province and the East Bengal became a Pakistani (Muslim majority) province—but, the quest for justice continued (*ibid*).

The partition of India added a new phase in Bengali people's struggle for justice. This partition apparently solved the British manipulated Hindu-Muslim conflict. But the same kinds of injustice—e.g., Bengali people's access to education, jobs, and their political rights—continued in East Bengal under Pakistani rule. West Pakistani governance was oppressive and unjust to the East Pakistanis (the Bengalis); and Bengali political elites continually protested and demanded democracy and justice (Blood, 2002; Hossain, 2010). Such protests further escalated the West Pakistan government's denial of Bengali people's rights, which gradually provoked a

war, and a pluralist, democratic Bangladesh was born on December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1971 (Chatterjee, 1972; Parekh & Mulgaokar, 1972). This independence of Muslim majority East Pakistan from Muslim majority West Pakistan was not based on any explicit religious identity conflicts, which again suggests that religious diversity was not the biggest problem for the Bengali people (*ibid*). Behind the struggles that led to independence, Bengali political elites' primary concern, at least during the British and Pakistani rules, was justice for all social and religious groups.

Upholding justice and dignity for all human communities, the People's Republic of Bangladesh follows constitutional "democracy and socialism" (Bangladesh, 2011/1972): the Constitution is built on policies and principles of equal religious, cultural, social and political rights for all of its residents (articles 8, 11 & 23). All residents of Bangladesh can equally freely practice, preach, preserve and enhance any religious and cultural faith, values and norms anywhere in Bangladesh (*ibid*). Such full integration—irrespective of race, gender, religion or other identity aspects—is at the core of Bangladeshi nationalism (*ibid*). For instance, although Islam is the state religion, Bangladesh equally accommodates Hinduism, Christianity, and Buddhism by mandating national holidays for their rituals (Bangladesh, 2012b). All schools, colleges, universities and other public and private organizations in Bangladesh accommodate these holidays as national occasions.

However, political identity issues have newly shaped citizens' struggles for justice in post-liberation Bangladesh. In contemporary Bangladesh, Sunni majority Muslim citizens often engage in direct and indirect violence against 'other' Sunni majority Muslim groups to fulfill their political agendas (Siddiqi, 2011) in the name of protecting democracy (Datta, 2005). Beneath such violence, the major political divisions are based on narratives of Muslims oppressing Muslims during the Pakistani period (*ibid*; Rahman, 1971): Shia, Sunni, Hindu, Buddhist, and other religious identities may still be conflictual in Bangladesh; but political groups' ideological connections—or enmity—with the Pakistani politics about Bangladesh are an obvious conflict. Political leaders often abuse such ideologies against secular Bangladeshi nationalism (Islam, 2011), and promote violent activities that may look like religious militancy (e.g., Riaz, 2008). In any case, Bangladeshi political affiliates often promote violence as a means of defeating the political others and winning elections (Siddiqi, 2011). From my experience, many student activists believe that student citizens' contributions in establishing Bengali nationalism and liberating Bangladesh gave all students inherent ownership of political processes in the country. However, their violent response to conflicts thwarts the country's democratic

culture of peace and legitimizes violence as a way to fulfill political agendas (Ahsan & Banavar, 2011; Datta, 2005): for many young citizens; responding to sociopolitical crises through violent means may be perceived as continuing an historical patriotic tradition—actively engaging in politics, honouring the spirit of independence.

Citizens' patterns of political engagement in Bangladesh are rooted in history. Young citizens, especially students, have played a major role in bringing democratic changes in pre- and post-independence Bangladesh (1950s to present): student-groups have always participated, often as the largest activist group, in non-violent resistance against injustice and oppression (Harun-or-Rashid, 2012). When their non-violence rather invoked oppressors' more direct and indirect violence on them, these student-citizens engaged in violent activities to protect their rights (*ibid*). This trend of resistance is often referred to as the 'spirit of independence', which essentially means engaging in movements for establishing the Bengali national identity (also called Bengali nationalism) based on democratic principles of equal social, political, economic, and cultural rights irrespective of race, color, religious, and other socioeconomic differences (*ibid*). Thus, Bangladesh's independence is an outcome of people's widespread cravings for establishing democracy and peace out of more than a century of religious identity and human rights related political tensions: many freedom-longing student-citizens have violently responded to sociopolitical conflict problems that sparked such tensions (*ibid*).

As hinted above, religious identity-based conflicts may not have completely disappeared, but have certainly taken a political shape in Bangladesh. There are some conflicts that are directly linked with religious identities within Islam: Shia, Sunni, Ahmadi, etc. For instance, sporadic direct violence against the followers of Ahmadiyya and Shi'a versions of Islam (Guardian, 2015; Human Rights Watch, 2005; World Report, 2017b) demonstrates some hatred among the Sunnis towards 'other' Muslims, and denotes to a wider indirect violence against them. Some evidence suggest that such violent expressions might be politically plotted ethnic hatred and intolerance to defame the country's culture of full accommodation for diverse people, and to blame the political others for breaching the Constitution (Brahmanbarhia Correspondent, 2016; Editorial Board, 2016; Police Arrest Dozens, 2016). In any case, members of Sunni Muslim communities are supposedly involved in harming the religious others, including the Hindus, Buddhists, and other Sunnis and Muslims in Bangladesh (France-Presse, 2016; Kumar, 2014; State, 2015). Thus, presumably direct violence in the Sunni majority context of Bangladesh is linked with factors beyond just domestic politics.

Thus, Bangladesh seems to be a Muslim majority context only demographically. There seems to be huge social, cultural, political, and school-based emphases on the rituals that make one look like a Sunni Muslim. The fundamental elements that make believers Muslims—affirming Allah’s justice, equity and peace system in and through daily individual and collective actions—are absent or hidden from the politics and society currently dominated by Bangladeshi Sunnis.

### **Major Conflicts**

A main conflict in post-war/post-liberation Bangladesh is rivalries among political groups about the country’s governance. These groups are generally understood as different from each other based on their nationalist identities, especially linked with Bangladesh’s pre-independence political events (Riaz, 2016a, 2016b). People of Islamic nationalist ideologies—many of whom opposed Bangladesh’s independence from Pakistan—are on one side; and the people of secular, democratic nationalist ideologies—many of whom wanted the independence—are on the other side of this conflict (*ibid*; Harun-or-Rashid, 2012). Ideally, relationship between these conflicting groups is re-buildable in today’s independent Bangladesh, which places this country in Brahm’s (2003) post-conflict peacebuilding stage. However, Bangladesh is experiencing the two other stages of his conflict cycle as well: (1) Because many Bangladeshis are socially and politically struggling through their differing needs, beliefs and interests (Siddiqi, 2011), Bangladesh can be studied as in Brahm’s ‘latent conflict’ stage. (2) Also, considering many Bangladeshi citizens’ violent response to conflicts an escalated struggle for democracy and justice (*ibid*; Riaz, 2011), Bangladesh is also in his ‘hurting stalemate’ stage. So, Bangladesh cannot be understood as being in one specific stage in the conflict cycle. The sociopolitical conflict and violence problems in the post-independent Bangladesh suggest that Bangladesh is not a war zone, but the conflicts are not latent either. This complicated context of conflict represents both opportunities and challenges for peacebuilding citizenship learning.

Much of the violence in Bangladesh is linked with citizenship and governance conflicts involving polarization between major political (Muslim majority) party affiliates, and much conflict involves equity struggles among variously positioned members of the society (*ibid*). Bangladesh experiences moderate social and political injustice and direct violence, ranked 84<sup>th</sup> (mid-way between most and least peaceful) among 163 countries on the Global Peace Index (IEP, 2017a). In this social context, violent political confrontations have become a common post-independence experience (Datta, 2005). Citizens often remain disengaged from formal politics to

avoid such violence (Riaz & Raji, 2011). Political leaders have often mobilized identity-based nationalism, and encouraged militancy, presenting certain expressions of Islamic identity and Bangladeshi nationalism as contradictory (Gohel 2014; Islam 2011). Such nationalistic militarization of identity contributed to dividing diverse Muslim groups, legitimizing violence among them, and thus thwarted the culture of justice and peace in Bangladesh (Ahsan and Banavar 2011). Therefore, young Bangladeshi citizens, who do demonstrate concern about these conflicts, often respond through violent action. By locating itself in this under-studied, relatively violent context, this thesis research explores how education might contribute to improving opportunities and capacities for peacebuilding citizenship, by connecting schooling with citizens' lived experiences of multidimensional social and political conflicts.

In many human communities, religious identities are often politically manipulated to describe conflicts as religious (Abu-Nimer, 2013), whereas not all conflicts are about religious identities, nor is religious conflict a new reality of human civilization. In such contexts, however, the western notion that citizens must focus on a greater solidarity and thus not discuss religious issues in school is gradually disappearing (*ibid*). Instead, discussion of religious controversies is now considered a way of mitigating violence among conflicting identity groups (Davies, 2014; Iprgrave & McKenna, 2008). Social and political conflicts in Bangladesh may—or may not—reflect religious factors. However, as discussed above, Sunni Muslims dominate social, cultural, economic, political and academic policies and experiences in Bangladesh (Riaz, 2011); and the people of same faith traditions physically violently express their dissents and conflicting interests against each other when it comes to politics and governance issues like election (Riaz & Fair, 2011). Affiliates and allies of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami are commonly identified with the 1971 anti-liberation activists, while others claim direct—or in spirit—connections with those who fought for liberation (*ibid*). In this post-liberation conflict, Islamic values were apparently never applied to reduce the damage of lives and property done by some Sunnis to other Sunnis (*ibid*). In this Muslim majority context, violent response to political conflicts seems to have legitimately overridden religious ideals of submitting to the will of God and acting His just peace: Islam seems to have no place in Bangladesh' politics, governance, and the ways some Sunnis find themselves interested in these issues.

As indicated above, Bangladesh is a moderately peaceful country. It has a relatively low death-rate overall: it ranks 174<sup>th</sup> (1<sup>st</sup> = the highest) among 223 countries, considering all causes of death including war, disease, and aging in each country (CIA, 2014). However, a high



proportion of total deaths in Bangladesh stems from political violence. As of July 2014, the death rate in Bangladesh was 5.64 per 1000 people (*ibid*), slightly lower than death rates in 2012 and 2013 (Canty Media, 2014; Trading Economics, 2014). As these numbers suggest, about 929,100 people died in 2013, when Bangladesh's population was about 163 million (Bangladesh, 2014). Among these 929,100 deaths, at least 16 people were killed in March 2013 in clashes between some so-called Islamist activists and government party activists (BBC, 2013). Hundreds of people were killed, in May 2013 alone, in political violence between some members of Islamist extremist groups and a joint command of police, paramilitaries, and armed cadres of the government party (Political Violence in Bangladesh: In Hot Blood, 2013). In October 2013, at least 40 people were killed in political violence that involved tensions between the government party and Islamist political activists (Alam, 2013). In similar political violence, at least 507 people were killed in 2013 in Bangladesh (Over 500 Killed, 2013). These numbers may not be perfectly reliable; however, the bottom line is that at least 1 out of every 1832 deaths in 2013 in Bangladesh was caused by political violence (*ibid*). Political violence, therefore, is a very frequent cause of death in Bangladesh.

Political violence in Bangladesh is not limited to killings. Disappearance, kidnapping, psychological and physical torture—sometimes by various law enforcement forces and sometimes by political activists (some would call terrorists)—unequal distribution of wealth, abuse of power, looting, robbery, denial of justice, favoritism, arbitrary arrests, rapes, and many more forms of violence and corruption are backed by the society's powerful (Country Reports, 2012). Such pervasive corruption and violence can demotivate many citizens to take on political citizenship roles. Yet, peacebuilding is a socially political process that requires citizens to participate in politics.

In Bangladesh, as in some other contexts, young people's violent engagement has been prominent in political and cultural conflicts in Germany, Israel, South Africa, Northern Ireland, India, Pakistan, and elsewhere (Bekerman, Zembylas, & McGlynn, 2009; Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Davies, 2005; Donnelly & Hughes, 2006; Lall, 2008). Bangladesh includes two intersecting concurrent challenges: young Bangladeshi citizens are either violently engaged in politics (Datta, 2005) or disengaged from active (political) citizenship (Riaz & Raji, 2011).

The overall social experiences in Bangladesh also manifest direct and indirect violence. Injustice in Bangladesh often involves corruption, in which variously positioned powerful people misuse their power (often politically backed) to reap personal benefits by unfair means, including

ripping off the less powerful. According to Transparency International, Bangladesh used to be ranked as the most corrupt country in the world between 2001 and 2005 (Corruption, n.d.; Index, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005). More recently, Bangladesh was ranked as the 13<sup>th</sup> most corrupt country in the world (Correspondence, 2016). However, this change of ranking does not confirm that Bangladesh has progressed toward justice. Other forms of frequent direct and indirect violence in Bangladeshi society include poverty, environmental pollution, sexual violence, etc. Such social behaviors are completely against the Qur'an and the Prophet's (SAWS) traditions, actively challenging God's justice, equity, and peace in this context.

Further, the viewpoints of diverse society members about human rights inequities are largely marginalized in Bangladesh. People at the top of hierarchies define what resources (e.g. clean water, education) will be accessible to the less powerful people, especially women and children (e.g. Blunch & Das, 2015; Sultana, 2009). This frequently victimizes groups with low economic status by making resources unequally available, monopolized by the privileged groups (e.g. Banks, Roy & Hulme, 2011; Kabeer, 2011). Currently, about 24.3% of the entire population of Bangladesh live below the national poverty line (World Bank, 2017). The elites' cultural beliefs and attitudes, as well as economic structure positions, may legitimize marginalizing or ignoring the needs and interests of less privileged people.

Hence, Bangladesh is experiencing some human rights and escalated political conflicts. In the political conflicts, religious identity dimensions are often obvious. While religious groups are not explicitly engaged in escalated disputes about their faiths and religious practices in Bangladesh, citizens' Islamic identities have obviously failed to help to cooperate and non-violently negotiate conflicting viewpoints. Further, denial of various social groups' economic and other human rights is another indication that Bangladeshi Muslims largely ignore the Islamic tradition of respecting each other's democratic rights either. Thus, the claim that Islamic just peace represents the ultimate democracy for all human communities remains a mere rhetoric in Bangladesh, where social and political experiences are directly contrasting of such notions and hence constitute a basic challenge to peacebuilding.

### **Schooling**

As described in the National Education Policy 2010 (Bangladesh, 2010) which is yet to be fully implemented, formal education in Bangladesh starts with pre-primary education for children aged '4+', followed by primary (grades 1–8) education starting at age '6+', and then secondary (grades 9–10) education starting at 14. To accommodate the dropped-out students,

there is non-formal education, which is an educational stream/policy complementary to primary education. To make 100% of Bangladeshi people literate, there is also adult education for the people of any age, but primarily for citizens of 15–45 years of age. All government (fully funded by the state), non-government (partially funded by the state), and private (not funded by the state) schools need to follow this government mandated basic structure, whereas ‘O’ and ‘A’ level (English medium) schools represent foreign curriculum/educational policy that are equivalent to education in Bangladesh at respective grade levels.

Bangladesh government’s National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) supply, free of cost, textbooks and teacher guides at all government, non-government, and private schools (Bangladesh, 2010). From grades 1–8 students at all government, non-government, and private schools study a common curriculum; streaming starts at secondary schools, when students get divided based on subject interests and competencies: humanities, business, and science streams (*ibid*). Grade 9–10 students study some common subjects (e.g., Bangla, English, and General Mathematics) and some stream specific subjects (*ibid*). Within the same school, religious education at all grade levels is a segregated system based on students’ religious ethnic identities (*ibid*).

The national education policy does not explicitly rationalize gender segregated school systems for boys and girls. As a culturally pervasive knowledge, boys and girls in the government school system usually attend single-sex schools from grade 6–10 in order to grow up in school-based environments that are appreciate by religious institutions.

Madrasa is currently a separate, government-controlled school board in Bangladesh. Madrasa courses are currently like this: “5-year *Ibtedaye*, 5-year *Dhakil*, 2-year *Alim*, 2-year *Fazil* and 2-year *Kamil*” (Bangladesh, 2010, p. 27, translation original). The government has a plan to redesign this school system, to make it equivalent to the other school system, by introducing 8-year *Ibtedaye* (equivalent to primary) and 2-year *Dakhil* (equivalent to secondary) education: students will study the same subjects as other schools in addition to explicit studies of Qur’an and Muhammadan (pbu) traditions (*ibid*). The government also wants to reform the existing secondary education by changing the three streams into general, madrasa, and technical streams within several branches within each stream (*ibid*).

Government funded primary and secondary schools constitute the biggest educational institutes in Bangladesh. Although they are free of cost, and the enrolment rate in primary school is currently 97.9% (World Bank, 2016), dropout rates in are still very high: about 45.92% girls

and 33.72% boys drop out of school, mostly in grade 8 (Staff Correspondent, 2016). The causes of such dropout rates include students' poor health, social prejudice against girls (including early marriage), poverty (including child labour, child trafficking, and cost of education), and parents' educational backgrounds (Rozario, 2016). A huge number of students drop out of schools in Bangladesh due to poverty alone (Riaz, 2011; World Bank, 2008). Uneven and limited post-school work opportunities, as well as mismatch between education and professional ambitions, frustrated many students (Alam, Khalifa & Shahjamal, 2009). Thus, although much of the government school-based education in Bangladesh is free, there are other social and economic factors that impede education for all in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh's school structure has an Islam related political dimension as well. The post-independence government banned religion-based politics—what they termed 'Islamic' politics in particular—in Bangladesh (Riaz, 2011). This policy was perceived as a threat to religious identity for many Muslims. Consequently, some Islamic activists intervened in Bangladesh's education system, through incorporating 'Islamic Studies' in public schools and integrating madrasa education into mainstream public education. Some have described such political ban and educational intervention as contributors to Islamic militancy in Bangladesh (e.g., *ibid*; Ahsan & Banavar, 2011). At the same time, there is no evidence that 'Islamic Studies' or madrassas contribute to so-called Islamist terrorism. Although virtually no research exists on how Bangladeshi schools may (re)produce violent citizenship, research does demonstrate this negative face of education elsewhere in Muslim majority south Asian countries—Afghanistan and Pakistan (e.g., Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Novelli & Lopes-Cardozo, 2008). Thus, my inquiry proceeds from the assumption that education in Bangladesh has both positive and negative faces: it may promote peace by nurturing democracy and social justice, but it may also promote political violence in various ways.

### **Curriculum mandates/policies**

As presented in chapter 2, for the purposes of this dissertation I define curriculum as including explicitly taught content, pedagogy, and the implicit messages of school and classroom culture. In Bangladesh, the content that grades 6 through 10 teachers teach and the pedagogy they should use are mandated by the government both as required curriculum guidelines (e.g., Bangladesh, 2012a) and as textbooks. Such tools, coupled with the national curriculum policy (Bangladesh, 2010) and the school's physical context (neighbourhoods' demography, economics, and politics), shape the overall learning environment or culture of the school. Although there is

no intense monitoring/support in schools to help the teachers to implement the pedagogy, the textbooks do outline what teachers in each subject area should, and should not, teach.

The main goals of peacebuilding citizenship education include affirming just peace through citizen actions that resist or de-emphasize violent responses to conflicts (Bickmore, 2008a, 2011b). There is virtually no published research on such school-based learning programs or experiences in Bangladesh. An M.Phil. thesis (Islam, 2014) reports on some peacebuilding-relevant human rights, development, and civics content in some Bangladeshi textbooks. However, further inquiry is needed on what young citizens already understand, believe, and experience, as well as how actual implemented curricula might facilitate (or not) peacebuilding citizenship capacities. Bangladeshi curricula heavily include neoliberal ideals, and thus tend to limit ‘good’ citizenship to political compliance, character building, and competitive success (individualistic) in the global market economy (e.g., Alam, 2011, 2012). The culture of dialogic and cooperative problem-solving was imitated in some schools in Bangladesh; but such initiatives remained not-so-successful due to administrative and school-culture related challenges (e.g., Thornton, 2006). Hence, education for affirming justice, equity, and democracy in Bangladesh has both curricular and social opportunities and challenges. Below I will discuss some of such challenges and opportunities for peacebuilding citizenship education based on grade 6–10 social studies, history, Bangla, English, and Islamic education textbooks and official curriculum mandates (includes teaching guides). In each grade, these subjects are: Bangladesh and Global Studies (BGS), Bangla (BL), English (EL), and Islam and Moral Education (IME).

### **Opportunities for Peacebuilding Citizenship Education**

Bangladeshi official curriculum includes some elements of peacebuilding citizenship, often representing democracy and citizenship overtly around their religious moral dimension. For instance, compulsory Islam and Moral Education (IME) curriculum includes lessons about day-to-day individual and collective actions that manifest submission to Allah’s wills by manifesting, among other faith and worship factors, equity and just peace for all members of the society (e.g., Bangladesh, 2012d). Adopting the national policy, Bangladeshi schools have long been practicing equitable accommodation of diverse religious cultures, particularly by providing equitable spaces for nationally observing major religious occasions (Kaderi, 2014a). Such school-based learning experiences facilitate an element of peacebuilding called liberality—i.e., inherent psycho-cultural attitude of equitable accommodation toward diversities, as opposed to peacekeeping through law driven tolerance and passive respect (Kaderi, 2014b). This aspect of

IME curriculum explains an affirmation of equity (a dimension of peacebuilding) in religious moral terms. Such curriculum may be useful to build understanding and vision for democratic justice in Bangladesh's social and political context.

In the Bangladesh curriculum that I analyzed, citizenship for reducing violence and affirming justice are often represented as admirable human behaviours, further building on the religious dimension of conflict and peacebuilding citizenship in Bangladesh. For example, aiming to create good Muslims and thus good citizens, IME 6–10 curriculum presents *Akhlaq-e-Hamidah*—i.e., the practice of virtues and manners admired by God and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Some such practices included affirming respect and justice for women (e.g. grade 9-10, pp. 126–129), manifesting universal fraternity and brotherhood across religions (e.g. grade 9-10, pp. 122–123; 123–126), not doing injustice and not letting injustice happen (e.g. grade 9-10, pp. 138–140; 145–146; 148–151), practicing equal distribution of wealth to eliminate poverty (e.g. grade 9-10, chapter 5), and keeping environment pollution free (e.g. grade 9-10, pp. 134). These lessons did include understandings of some cultural (respect, fraternity, etc.) and social-structural (equity, redistribution, justice, etc.) dimensions of conflict. But, by overtly using religious moral terms to explain these dimensions, the curriculum seemed to imply that religious moral correction was the overarching factor that would generate peacebuilding citizenship capabilities. The curriculum draws on the Quran and Hadiths to explain how Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and the Caliphs addressed poverty, violence against women and the oppressed, and so on. The way these examples appear in the curriculum, seems capable of encouraging—although it does not fully explain—non-violent citizen activities to affirm just peace, by following the golden models of the greatest heroes in Islam.

Bangladesh and Global Studies (BGS) and Bangla (BL) curricula used a similar framework to explain some past and contemporary social and political conflicts of Bangladesh. They did explain, for example, that the creation of Bangladesh, and much of its contemporary political struggles, centered on affirming social-structural justice and inclusion of diversities. But, these social-structural and cultural dimensions of conflict somehow appeared within narratives that distinguished good people and bad people, evil and heroic actions. Such narratives emphasized the value of 'goodness'—an individual religious moral attribute rather than democratic social change—in relation to how social and political conflicts could be solved. I discuss below how gender issues, as an example of such social conflict problems, appeared across these curricula.

Grade 6–10 IME, BGS, and BL curricula that I analyzed for this research described competing interests between men and women, especially control and domination, as the main problem underlying physical violence, disrespect, dowry, Eve teasing (sexual harassment), and social discrimination against women. All these curricula taught that biases and cultural attitudes, such as the idea that women are inferior to and controllable by men, are disgraceful human qualities. Hence, the curricula acknowledged some cultural factors at the root of many forms of gender-based violence. They used language that described cultural and social-structural factors within the religious dimension of gender conflicts. In particular, they explained how such cultural factors contributed to some direct and indirect harm against women, including domestic and sexual violence and discriminatory access to women's rights to education and economic sectors. Textbooks narrated 'disrespect to women' as a main factor that escalated conflicts between men and women into direct and indirect harm of women. For instance, IME 9 taught that in the society which Muhammad (pbuh) reformed, women *"did not possess any honour and dignity...did not have any right...were considered as chattels...were sold and bought in the market as slaves...used to be branded as consumable product, pleasure partner, source of destruction, gateway to hell, necessary sin, etc."* (p. 126, translation original).

BGS curriculum emphasized on dowry and physical violence against women as a pressing issue in Bangladesh; but also taught that blocking education escalated some direct violence linked to dowry, and that direct dimensions like sexual harassment contributed to the denial of women's access to education (e.g. BGS 8, p. 85). BGS and BL curricula described such indirect and direct violence against women—rape in particular—as a violation of human rights allowed mainly by citizens' moral decadence. These curricula especially framed such violations of rights in relation to social-structural conflicts between East and West Pakistan: widespread desire to reduce such violence and affirm justice triggered the formation of Bengali nationalism and ultimately the war for liberating Bangladesh from Pakistan (BGS 9-10, ch. 15). Therefore, these mandated curricula did include some opportunities to develop in-depth understanding of various dimensions of gender as well as other cultural and political conflicts, but the curriculum did represent individual religious morality as an overarching dimension of the conflicts.

While curriculum documents represented gender equity as a social problem, their discourse regarding what people could do about this conflict reflected little or no critique of the contemporary *status quo*. Like curriculum in other countries that has presented problems of bias as already resolved (Kennelly & Llewellyn, 2011), BGS, BL, and IME textbooks said that

women's rights in contemporary Bangladesh were protected by strict laws against any sort of violence against women, and that breaching these laws would result in severe punishment (e.g., BGS 9-10, p. 36, 44, 107, 119). Such use of force (retribution or peacekeeping) by legal authorities frequently appeared in curricula as a way of reducing violence against women in Bangladesh. However, spaces for young citizens to contribute to solving the underlying (sexism) conflicts and thereby to affirm social-structural justice and gender inclusion were virtually absent in the curriculum.

The curriculum seemed to facilitate peacebuilding by educating and encouraging Bangladeshi citizens (men and women) to affirm women's rights, which "*has created awareness among the people*" and "*has motivated various social movements. So, in the establishment of women rights in Bangladesh, various social policies and laws have been formulated*" (BGS 9-10, p. 203, translation original). The textbooks described inter-governmental organizations like the United Nations also as actors who have played significant roles to improve women's education and social security in Bangladesh (e.g., BGS 9-10, p. 144, 146). Overall, these curriculum documents suggested that women have elevated roles in developing the nation by participating in education, workforce, industrialization, politics, and so on. Hence, these official textbooks taught Bangladeshi citizens to be good humans by "*following moralities and principles:*"

*"Humans without moralities are equal to beasts. A beast does not have any sense of moralities. It does whatever it wishes. It never cares about good or bad, bliss or misery. People without moralities are the same. They never follow any rules or laws. They never follow any moral behaviour. Rather they harm others for the sake of their own benefits. Their characters manifest lies, deceit, corruption, gossip/slandering, etc. They create various un-peace in the society"* (IME 6, p. 13, translation original).

Although the curriculum mainly narrated affirmation of just peace for women through the language of peacekeeping and religious moral regeneration (rather than questioning the political or cultural *status quo*), the official curriculum also taught some peacemaking dialogue and negotiation skills as useful for reducing harm and initiating non-violent citizen actions. The official curriculum frequently included dialogue and discussion activities (e.g., Harun-or-Rashid, 2012), group discussion and cooperation based student-centered active learning pedagogies (e.g., Bangladesh, 2012b). But these mandates did not elaborate how willing but unprepared educators may use these pedagogies. Thus, these spaces are not as explicit as peacekeeping lessons were.

Curriculum content also often implied some peacemaking skills. For example, IME 6 taught that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) established Hilf al-Fudul—an alliance—in Arab to end



war and solve conflicts through collective efforts and cooperation, and to establish brotherhood and cooperation among tribes. It also taught about cooperation and peacemaking by referring to how Muhammad (pbuh) democratically solved conflicts among the Quraysh people about placing al-Hajaru al-Aswad (the Black Stone) inside the Kaaba (IME 6, pp. 99–100). These lessons taught that being Muslims means worshipping God alone in the way Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) worshipped, and also manifesting brotherhood and harmony as well as God's justice and peace among people of all religious sects and socio-economic status following Muhammad (pbuh) models (e.g. IME 6, p. 40). Such curriculum thus centred on inculcating individual traits to maintain and rebuild interpersonal relationships, address social structures to achieve equity, and stay away from character traits that harm relationships and social justice: "*Woe to every scorner and backbiter/ Who piles up wealth and lays it by*" (The Qur'an, 104:1–2, as cited in IME 6, p. 64).

Policies shaping schools' overall culture also included some potential opportunities for peace-related citizenship. Assembly, oath-taking, election of class captain, organizing picnic, and cultural clubs represented opportunities for students to learn to cooperate and build inclinations for adopting democratic processes. Whereas oaths and assemblies could contribute to self-regulating government norms, class leader election was an opportunity to practice democracy and leadership, and the other extracurricular activities include opportunities to develop constructive communication (i.e. peacemaking) capacities. In addition, the government officially ensured some conditions for cooperation, dialogue, and discussion in school. Responding to Writ Petition 5684 submitted in August 2010, the High Court of Bangladesh ordered the government of Bangladesh to take steps to stop all kinds of verbal and physical abuse of students (Ethirajan, 2010). Accordingly, the Ministry of Education mandated, "*It has to be ensured that students, at any level of education, do not face any physical or mental tortures*" (Bangladesh, 2010, p. 78, translation original). In the matter of the Writ Petition, the Supreme Court delivered a judgement on January 13, 2011 that said, "*Corporal punishment is absolutely prohibited in all educational institutions*" (Division, 2011, p. 28). The National Curriculum (Bangladesh, 2012b) reminded the educators of this very law:

*"...teachers must believe that all of their students are able to learn. Their learning methods and speeds may be diverse, but everybody learns when they get suitable environment and support. Students have thin chances of learning from those teachers who have negative attitudes about their students. Hence, teachers must have highly positive attitudes about their students. No*

*teacher must ever say 'dung-headed', 'you are worthy of nothing', 'stupid', 'useless', and so on or anything such discouraging or negative to any student whatsoever. Using canes or giving any physical or mental punishment is an impediment to learning and punitive to the law of the state"* (p. 11, my translation).

Therefore, as officially mandated, school policies in Bangladesh did include potential (partial) opportunities to learn and practice the culture of non-violence and democracy. Nevertheless, as mentioned in the overview of Bangladesh's society and politics, the culture of just peace does not prevail in dominant social and political practices. While this thesis research does not explore why this may be the case, Bangladeshi school-based curriculum did also include some factors that could block or hinder the development of citizens' peacebuilding citizenship inclinations and capacities.

### **Challenges for Peacebuilding Citizenship Education**

The main challenges for peacebuilding citizenship education in Bangladeshi curriculum include the lack of opportunities to understand diverse viewpoints about various dimensions and structural causes of conflict, to challenge the culture of violence and enmity, and to practice democratic citizen activities in relation to conflicts. Also, curriculum guidelines did officially expect teachers to use some pedagogies that could support the development of peacebuilding citizenship capacities; but the guidelines were insufficient to inform teachers' practices (see chapters 5 and 6). In addition to these challenges, the discussion below centers on some school-based structural challenges for the development of young citizens' peacebuilding citizenship capacities. In Bangladesh, these factors included unequal distribution of education and a class system of unequal streaming within schooling.

Unequal distribution of education is a big challenge for achieving equity in Bangladesh. Before independence, as a part of Hindu majority India, Bengali Muslims had much less access to education and jobs compared to the Hindu elites (Moore, 2001; Partition of Bengal, 2009). As part of Pakistan after India's partition, West Pakistani Muslim elites denied the Hindu-mixed East Bengali/Pakistani people's equitable access to educational and economic resources (Harun-or-Rashid, 2012). Partition of Pakistan occurred in order to affirm justice and peace for all East Bengalis in a new country called Bangladesh (*ibid*). Unequal access to education and other resources continues as a major problem in many contemporary south Asian and global contexts (e.g. Bajaj, 2016), including post-independence Bangladesh (Riaz, 2011; World Bank, 2008; World Report, 2017b). In Bangladesh, education in public schools is ostensibly free, but costs to

families include books and other educational supplies beyond textbooks, uniforms, transports, exam fees, private tuition and so on (*ibid*; Sheppard, 2013). Such costs are much higher in non-government schools, and even higher in private schools, and many cannot attend school due to poverty (Bangladesh, 2015; *ibid*). Therefore, education as a right is not completely achieved in Bangladesh, and certain groups who are able to access higher and better-quality education than others are clearly privileged.

Further, in Bangladesh, high-quality education is limited to the so-called ‘best’ students. The finest educational facilities are often only available at private schools, where poor (meritorious) students have very little access. Thus, much education in Bangladesh benefits the privileged groups, and divides the less-privileged people into ‘somewhat-privileged’ and ‘the least-privileged’ groups by giving some of them educational access.

Access to the ‘Civics and Citizenship’ course is another example of unequal distribution of education in the post-independence Bangladesh: only the students of ‘Arts and Humanities’ stream, even there as an optional subject (Bangladesh, 2012b), could take this high school course. This means that only some students had access to explicit citizenship education. In Bangladesh, the so-called ‘best students’ would normally study science, the ‘mediocre’ ones would study business and commerce, and the so-called ‘bad students’ would study arts and humanities. Implying that explicit citizenship education is less important than science and math (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008), such unequal distribution of citizenship education is another form of structural violence. Thus, the national curriculum of Bangladesh itself represented much challenge; peacebuilding citizenship would require equitable educational distribution, including explicit citizenship education for all students.

By teaching citizens about democratic and social justice-oriented citizenship, religious education could help to build sincere, honest and liberal citizens of ‘good morals’ that are supportive of democracy, social justice and peace (Badawi, 1990; Haw, 1995; Kamaluddin, 2012). The segregated structure of Bangladesh’s Islamic education, however, represents further challenge to peacebuilding citizenship education. Madrasa is a separate school board for Muslim students, and public schools teach religions by isolating Bangladeshi citizens based on their identity. Such segregations can legitimize ‘us’ versus ‘them’ tensions by psycho-culturally rationalizing high self-esteem of all diverse groups as ‘the right’ groups, but politically privileging the dominant group only. Such education has historically fueled identity tensions in India (Lall, 2008) as well as in other places (e.g., Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). In addition, narratives

of religious cultural (e.g., faith, ritual, gender, etc.) and the over-all social-structural elements (e.g., economic and justice issues) represented in IME 6–10 curriculum e.g., (Akhtaruzzaman, 2012) describe Sunni, largely Hanafi, interpretations of Islam as the ‘unquestionable truth’. It ignores religious diversities by not acknowledging Shia or other interpretations of Islam, which politically shuts off religious-cultural controversies against Sunni Hanafi Islam: Davies (2005) calls this silencing of alternatives a normalizing practice. Furthermore, these textbooks do not connect religious values to the challenges facing Sunni Hanafi citizens in terms of democratic co-existence with ‘other’ Muslims and people of ‘other’ religions. Such education lacks capacities for applying religious values to peacefully co-exist with the people of diverse faiths, and thus limits religious education to religious indoctrination (Wilson, 1964).

In addition, beyond studies of how Sunni schools of thought have historically dominated madrasa education and Islamic education in public school system (e.g. Jaddon & Niyozov, 2008; Riaz, 2011), there is virtually no published research on Bangladeshi Islamic education for democracy, justice, and peace. From my own experience as a student in Bangladesh, as well as my analysis of the grade 6–10 Islam and Moral Education curriculum, Islamic education in Bangladesh seems to primarily aim to educate young citizens about some Sunni rituals and ‘good’ character. Political debates around Islam and its multiple versions, Islamic identities in Bangladesh’s politics, and moreover justice, democracy and peace in the Qur’an and the Prophet’s (SAWS) traditions are remarkably absent in this curriculum. In short, citizenship in this curriculum is framed as being good with others and being good Muslims by believing and following Sunni traditions. Diverse perspectives and controversies around justice and equity are ignored in this education, although part of being Muslims is to fundamentally affirm Allah’s justice and equity for all peoples irrespective of faith and culture.

Therefore, officially school policies in Bangladesh include potential challenges to the practice of justice and peace. However, these challenges may make peacebuilding citizenship education difficult in Bangladeshi schools, but not impossible.

### **Conclusion**

In sum, Bangladesh represents a complex context of escalated social and political conflicts, based on the way religious factors are involved in almost all political and social issues. Theologically, Islam represents just peace for all human communities. However, in practice, many Bangladeshi Muslims give lip service to Islam and behave unjustly and un-peacefully in relation to social and political conflicts that concern them. Helping citizens in this complex

context, as in many other similar contexts like Pakistan and Afghanistan, to develop peacebuilding citizenship inclinations and capacities seems particularly challenging.

Official curriculum policies offer some promising potential opportunities for peacebuilding citizenship education in Bangladesh, by addressing some contemporary and historical social and political conflicts and by promoting mutual accommodation in public spaces. However, the political context of Bangladesh and its educational system also represent a difficult challenge for the development of citizenship capacities and inclinations for non-violent activism for affirming justice for all. While Islam ideally represents just peace for all human communities, Bangladeshi Muslim citizens have not often demonstrated such Islamic citizen behavior in response to social or political conflicts. In addition to this context for young people's lived experience, Bangladeshi schools also represent some difficult challenges, in that they do not seem to practice just peace as defined by God and modelled by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Thus, Bangladesh represent a three-dimensional challenge to peacebuilding citizenship education—Islam offers an ideal conceptual frame for just peace, whereas the majority of the citizens who define themselves as Muslims manifest social and political practices that are contrary to Islam and to peace.

## Chapter 5

### Findings: Participants' Perspectives and Experienced Curriculum on Human Rights Conflicts and Peacebuilding Citizenship Possibilities

As in many south Asian and global contexts (e.g. Bajaj, 2011), human rights—from basic human needs to security and environmental safety—are often denied to diverse social groups including women and girls, children, labourers, those with low economic status, religious minorities and sexual identity minorities in Bangladesh (Kaderi, 2009; World Report, 2017b). Such rights violation conflicts are linked with political challenges such as patterns of corrupt governance (Gossman, 2017). However, human rights conflicts have cultural roots (i.e. identity, norm, belief and interpretation dynamics) and also involve economic disparities (tangible competing interests) affecting broad human communities, not merely competition between political elites. Hence, I organized findings of this thesis research in two—interconnected but different enough—conflict themes: (1) human rights conflicts and (2) governance conflicts. In this chapter, I examine participants' perspectives regarding these human rights conflicts.

Citizens in Bangladesh often ask government help to redress human rights conflicts of concern to them, in order to affirm justice and peace, amidst accumulated distrust of the government based on people's lived experiences (State, 2016). In Bangladesh, options for citizen participation to draw attention to violations of human rights include non-violent protests, rallies, newspaper reporting, and so forth (Bangladesh, 2012b). Despite some such activities, diversely positioned social groups continue to suffer injustice in Bangladesh (ibid).

This chapter first reports on how participating students lived and understood various examples of such conflicts, and the associated possibilities of peacebuilding to redress and transform them. The chapter then compares participating students' concerns and understandings with participating teachers' concern and understandings and with the implemented curriculum on related topics. Findings suggest that some students' lived experiences (in particular social-economic contexts) generated understanding of the less obvious dimensions of human rights conflicts, while the obvious aspects of such conflicts were general (culturally pervasive) knowledge to all participating students. For example, all teachers and students from both cities argued that religious moral degeneration was a root cause and escalator of all human rights conflicts—and therefore religious moral regeneration was a solution. On the other hand, only

boys and girls from the less affluent context went beyond this abstract discourse, to name particular cultural biases and tangible behaviours as causes of and solutions to rights violation conflicts. In the affluent city, a few students described such specific causes and potential solutions only in relation to the conflicts about which they had personal and/or family histories (of activism or as targets). A detailed discussion of these findings follows.

### **Human Rights Conflicts and Peacebuilding Citizenship Education**

Peacebuilding refers to affirming justice and peace *in* and *through* day-to-day citizen actions in response to conflicts (Bickmore, 2011b). In this sense, peacebuilding action requires justice-oriented citizenship (Westheimer & Kahne, 2008). Both aim to build citizens' capacities for democratizing undemocratic, unjust and violent situations and societies. Peacebuilding citizenship education would connect citizens' understandings, feelings, and experiences of conflict with the implemented curriculum.

As outlined in chapter 2, understanding conflict refers to critical comprehension of various direct and indirect elements of conflicts. In particular, distinguishing violence from conflict has potential for encouraging citizens' moral judgements and capacities to build peace by addressing conflicting viewpoints, reducing harm, addressing the root causes and escalators of conflict, mending relationships, and affirming justice (Bickmore, 2005; Kaderi, 2014b). Further, it could open up spaces for education to help facilitate constructive transformation of conflicts and building peace (Lederach, 2006) by democratically addressing human rights problems in Bangladesh.

Citizens' response to conflict represents peace and un-peace in a given context (Ury, 2000). The study of citizens' options for non-violent conflict-solving and affirming justice for all constitutes a major part of this thesis research. Citizenship is inseparable from peacebuilding. Non-violent conflict-solving often requires citizens to successfully implement dialogues and other negotiation processes to repair damaged relationships and restore justice by respectfully addressing conflicting viewpoints (Bickmore, 2011a; Circles, 2013; Pranis, 2005). Peacebuilding, in addition, requires citizenship to address politically and structurally manifested injustice, and affirm justice and peace for all members of the society (Galtung, 1983). Citizens engaged in such politics would have adequate knowledge about injustice and its roots, skills for non-violently addressing the roots and negotiating multiple viewpoints, moral judgements and motivations for affirming human rights for all, and participating in government decision making toward a just and peaceful society (Bickmore, Kaderi & Guerra-Sua, 2017). Such citizenship

capacities could include any form of non-violent communication or cooperation with the government to address the needs of all diversely positioned social groups.

Curriculum attention to lived social conflicts, their causes, and potential responses can contribute to students' understandings of contrasting viewpoints on conflicts and democratic options for solving them, and thus to building citizens' knowledge, skills and moral judgement capacities to affirm justice and peace (*ibid*; Bajaj, 2016). Conversely, educational practices that exclude critical attention to social conflicts may contribute to (re)producing those conflicts (Davies, 2005; Vanner, Akseer, Kovinthan, 2017), thus maintaining the *status quo*. Either way, young citizens' lived experiences and concern—affirmed or ignored in school—remain a prominent source of learning about conflicts and citizenship.

Any teaching material, government mandates and beyond, as well as teachers' beliefs about and engagement in teaching-learning activities (pedagogy) can be called curriculum (Aoki, 2012; Dewey, 1987; Egan, 2003b, 2003c). Understanding curriculum in such broad terms could help willing Bangladeshi peacebuilding citizenship educators to employ pedagogy to democratize the lived curriculum even if the government mandates seem to reproduce injustice (Dewey, 1902; Pinar, 1999). By including education around lived human rights conflicts, curriculum reform toward peacebuilding citizenship education underlines political roles of education in creating projected futures (Freire, 1998; Shor, 1993). Pedagogy can help Bangladeshi teachers to do such politics of social reform.

Despite enough information about what the teachers taught in relation to human rights conflicts—they explicitly taught textbook content—the teacher focus group workshops provided insufficient data about how they taught. Teachers reported heavy lecturing followed by students' affirmation about their understandings: *“I have to follow the textbook. So, I give lectures...until all students say they understand”* (T3, a Muslim female, from B2 girls' school). As mentioned in chapter 4, official curriculum suggested a variety of pedagogical options such as cooperative and group task, critical inquiry, role play, dialogue, negotiation, and so on (Bangladesh 2012b, pp. 22-26, 45-46). This study had no data suggesting that participating teachers used these pedagogical options or understood their potential to help students to build peacebuilding citizenship and inclinations.

The chapter below is organized around three types of human rights conflicts that were of key concern to participating students and teachers. These are: (1) gender conflicts, which include inequity or social discrimination against women, Eve teasing (sexual harassment), dowry, and



domestic violence; (2) resource conflicts, which include economic interest (inequity) conflicts around poverty, employment, environment, and other forms of access to resources/rights such as education; and (3) religious conflicts, which include frictions between the Muslim majority and other religious identity groups, locally and globally.

Student participants from the violent (B2) and the less violent (B1) cities were concerned about a variety of human rights conflicts. Boys (M) in both cities were worried about resource, gender, and religious conflicts. Among the girls (F) from both cities, only one group (*B1F-1A*) expressed concern about prejudice against Islam in certain societies; all groups discussed some gender and resource conflicts. In contrast, participating teachers from all schools showed particular concern only about the obvious dimensions (symptoms) of gender conflicts. Only B1F teachers mentioned concern about poverty and environment pollution issues—even so, merely blaming the society's moral decadence in vague generic terms.

As solutions to such human rights conflicts, all participating teachers (across gender and cities) prioritized teaching individual character values like forgiving people for wrong deeds, being fair and just to others as one would be so to their selves, and respectfully practicing rights and responsibilities of citizens. They argued that such education would save their students from moral decadence, which they described as the root of all social conflicts mentioned. Hence, my research shows critical mismatches between what participating teachers in each school believed and taught, and what their students had experienced (in their lives) and showed concern about.

This chapter is a detailed comparative analysis of participants' concern, understandings, implemented curriculum, and the gaps related to the above-mentioned 3 types of human rights conflict. Within each type of conflict, the chapter zeroes in on the key elements of peacebuilding citizenship, which I briefly discussed above (see chapter 2 for details): understandings of various elements of conflict, of potential solutions, and the connections (or disjunctures) between lived experiences and implemented curricula in relation to the conflict. Below, I present relevant data to explain how participating students demonstrated—or overlooked—such understandings about each type of conflict. Also, within each type of conflict, I juxtapose the students' understandings with teacher participants' implemented curriculum—how teachers taught about these three types of conflicts and how the students felt about such education. Finally, I conclude by discussing major (dis-)connections between students' understandings and the implemented curriculum across conflicts, highlighting potential challenges and opportunities, across gender and cities, for peacebuilding citizenship education in these four schools.

### Gender Conflicts

Half of the participating girls from the privileged city (*B2F-1B*) and all of their poorer female peers expressed worries about gender-based conflicts, especially about dowry and domestic violence. Only the *B1* girls showed direct dejection about their own lived experiences of Eve-teasing (sexual harassment) and as targets of social discrimination against girls/women. Three out of four groups of their male peers (*B1M-1A*, *B2M-1A* & *B2M-1B*), in both cities, also showed some awareness about gender-based conflicts as the girls, dowry and domestic violence in particular. However, unlike the *B1* girls, none of the *B1* boys spoke about Eve-teasing or gender-based discrimination. Only one group of boys in the more violent and affluent city (*B2M-1B*)—in direct contrast with the *B2* girls—expressed angsts about sexual harassment and social discrimination against girls and women. Below is a discussion of the various direct (physical) and indirect (structural and cultural) dimensions of conflict that participating students' analyses of gender conflicts, their causes, and their solutions highlighted.

In contrast to students' expressed concerns, only *B1F* and *B2F* teachers were most explicitly concerned about gender conflict issues. *B1F* teachers, in particular, explained how they used their students' and their own (in)direct experiences of gender-based conflicts, coupling them with the officially mandated textbooks, to teach about dowry, violence against women, social discrimination and sexual violence against women and young girls. Participating *B1M* and *B2M* teachers showed some concern about social-structural injustice such as dowry and physical violence against women based on the official texts they had to teach. Regardless, by teaching moral values in order to prevent youths from doing bad things in relation to gender, all teachers across schools taught the religious (individual choice) dimension as the main way to think about gender conflict and peacebuilding citizenship.

### Understandings of conflicts

Participating male and female students from both cities described gender conflicts as men physically hurting women: *"As a result of violence against women, a huge number of women die every year in Bangladesh—they either kill themselves or are murdered"* (*S4, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1A*); and *"Eve-teasing is an everyday experience in this school neighbourhood"* (*S2, a grade 8 Hindu girl, from B1F-1A*). When direct dimensions of gender conflict were prominent like this, participating boys and girls from both cities distinguished conflict from violence—beneath physical harm, men and women in the context of patriarchy live with conflicting cultural and social-structural interests: *"men want to control and dominate women"*

(*ibid*), “*prove their power over women*” (All B2F-1A girls). In this conflict, which involves social-structural power and cultural domination factors, all B1 and B2 boys and girls said that men/boys were interested in proving male superiority (cultural) by controlling women/girls’ access to their rights (social-structural). Dowry was an example of such social-structural inequity perpetrated by a patriarchal bias that women are less valuable than men and thus need to pay monetary compensation to live up to the status of their male partners. In relation to situations when these conflicting interests escalated, these students narrated women and girls as the victims of direct confrontations with men. Thus, direct dimensions of gender conflicts were intersected with indirect dimensions causing or exacerbating these conflicts, especially in relation to cultural norms and economic interests as escalators. Participating students’ (across gender and cities) unanimous descriptions of this intersection affirmed the prevalence of direct violence against women, thus the insufficiency of existing legal and moral controls, in the contexts in which they lived.

Not all students described the intersecting dimensions in the same way. Despite students’ (across gender and cities) unanimous recognition of male domination, only the B1 girls and half of the B2 boys (1B) described family members, social elites, and government personnel as actors who had tangible social-structural interests and intangible cultural biases toward patriarchy. Especially, the B1F girls said that they felt compelled to accept Eve-teasing (sexual or gender-based harassment) as normal because the perpetrators “*have money and powerful people in the family*” (S3, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B1F-1A). B2M-1B boys agreed with these girls that government officials, who would often gain personal benefits by abusing power and supporting the perpetrators of women, could not be trusted: “*The police will not even file complaints. They will either be bribed or ordered by higher authorities not to help the victims*” (S4, a grade 9 Muslim boy, from B2M-1B). However, these boys and girls described the roles of various actors within their families differently in gender conflicts. The B1 girls described their parents as scared and passive agents of patriarchy, who taught them to stay safe first by avoiding potential incidents of sexual harassment, and then by remaining silent if they were unfortunate victims. As such victims, these girls experienced another bias: “*Women are looked down upon in our society. In every Eve-teasing case, women are the guilty ones. Everybody believes that only the flawed girls get harassed*” (S2, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B1F-1B). Only these B1 girls seemed aware that such biases could have direct consequences: under continuous blame from family, such victims often “*become frustrated and do something unexpected, e.g. suicide*” (S5, a grade 8

*Muslim girl, from B1F-1A*). Whereas the *B1F* girls lived such experiences as targets and/or witnesses, the *B2M* boys described their families' positions and their own agency against gender-based violence. Therefore, lived experience with direct conflict and violence dimensions informed how participating students (across gender and cities) identified their locations in, and what they could do about, gender conflicts. Similarly, lived experiences of denial and bias informed students' diverse understandings of social-structural and cultural dimensions of gender conflicts.

As hinted above, boys and girls across cities located themselves diversely in relation to gender conflicts. When participating *B1* and *B2* boys talked about dowry, sexual harassment, or domestic (physical) violence against women, they positioned themselves at a distance from the problem—they were neither among the victims, nor among the perpetrators. Their *B2* female peers—somewhat correlated with the relative privilege they lived—were like these boys to some extent: they tended to describe Eve teasing and domestic violence from a distance, as other people's problems. The closest experience of gender-based violence, that only one *B2F* student described, was about her maternal aunt and uncle: "*Every few days, my aunty gets beaten up by her husband*" (*S2, a grade 9 Muslim girl, from B2F-1A*). In direct contrast with *B2* girls and their male peers across cities, the *B1* girls frequently talked about gender-based violence in the first person, identifying themselves with or as the victims: "*Our life has become a hell due to Eve-teasing on our ways to and from school*" (*S3, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B1F-1B*). None of their male and female peers across cities reported such direct victimhood in gender conflicts. Their *B2M-1B* peers (male) did locate themselves as actors who could help to reduce sexual harassment; but only to justify why they would choose to discuss gender conflicts during the workshop. Clearly, lived experiences informed how various boys and girls from *B1* and *B2* cities located themselves in relation to gender-based conflicts.

Lived experience also informed students' understandings of social-structural dimensions of gender conflicts. Only the *B1F* girls expressed worries about educational, economic and other human rights that were jeopardized for them but secured for boys in their patriarchal society. They described such structural factors as distinct from direct confrontation, but inseparable from (and contributed to feeding) the biases and violent consequences they lived. Particularly, *B1F* girls described themselves as victims of patriarchal gender expectations—cultural norms given to young girls by male and female elders of the family, especially grandmothers, dictating what girls/women should and should not do—that shaped girls' access to their educational and

economic rights. A *B1* girl described how her friend's grandmother supervised her friend's cultural and social roles: *"my friend's grandmother always scolds her for riding on a bicycle, swimming, playing male sports, and doing other things that boys can do without restrictions. Girls must strictly maintain veils and decency and prepare to stay home"* (S2, a grade 8 Hindu girl, from *B1F-1A*). Both groups of *B1* girls described such patriarchal biases, enacted by men and their female allies, to have legitimized the social-structural and physical harm they themselves and people like themselves lived. For instance, recently a *B1* girl's *"parents have stopped her education and given her marriage at an early age to save her from Eve-teasing. A boy would never have to face such consequence"* (S3, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from *B1F-1B*). Other *B1* girls also expressed dejection about such blockage of young girls' rights, often reporting newspaper stories about how such structural and cultural violence overwhelm the victims and cause further (physical) harm. *B2* girls apparently lived privilege compared to the *B1F* girls, framing gender inequity problems more indirectly than *B1* girls.

Participating *B2* boys did narrate some social-structural (rights, equity) dimensions of gender conflicts: *"many women want to continue their education after marriage, but their husbands, mothers-in-law, and other family members do not let them"* (S2, a grade 6 Muslim boy, from *B2M-1A*); and *"there are thousands and thousands of highly educated women in Bangladesh who are not allowed by their in-laws to pursue their professions"* (S3, a grade 9 Hindu boy, from *B2M-1B*). However, these boys did not analyze gender-conflicts the same way as the *B1F* girls did—they lived in privileged families practicing relatively equitable women's rights. Correlated with these experiences, they showed interest in the issue, but remained distant from the problem—they did not describe themselves as among the perpetrators. Thus, understanding the complexity of actors and interests against women's equitable rights was expressed only by those students who had directly experienced (especially as targets) its various dimensions.

Despite differences in lived experience and understandings about various actors, their interests, and the direct, social-structural, and cultural dimensions of gender conflict issues, participating male and female students across socio-economic contexts uniformly framed individual religious moral decadence (bad choices) as the cause of patriarchal oppressions and other harm against women. A typical explanation was that *"the main reason is that people do not respect women. But, they still call themselves Muslims. Islam has positioned women in a very respectable position, which these Muslims do not follow"* (S4, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from *B1M-*

1A). In this narrative of cause, participating boys and girls (across cities) articulated cultural belief, bias, and attitude factors as backgrounds, because none of them described any religious biases or rituals as thwarting equity and peace for women. Rather, they described religion, especially Islam, in ideal terms as the pinnacle of tangible equity, which individuals believed but did not practice: *“none of us is serious about following Islam in our lives. Islam has given women the most honour and respect the world history has ever witnessed. Neither men, nor women are accepting these standards of respecting and honouring women”* (S4, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B2F-1B). Thus, participating boys and girls across socio-economic contexts highlighted individuals’ failure to become good Muslims—who would affirm equitable rights and respect for women—as the main way to understand why social-structural inequality and harmful cultural biases existed against women, and why these factors generated direct violence against women in Bangladesh: *“We are a shame on Islam”* (All B2M-1A boys together, excited).

Such narratives of individualistic causes/escalators of gender conflicts resonate with a collective reality that both culturally and social-structurally harms women. When participating students described Islam as an example of equity and respect for women—and then mentioned the lack of Islamic practices as a cause for all patriarchal biases (e.g. disrespect), denial of educational and economic rights, and physical harm (e.g. sexual harassment) against women—they showed how conglomerations of individuals’ cultural beliefs explain collective social (cultural and social-structural) phenomena.

### **Repertoire of Potential Solutions and Citizen Responses**

Consistent with understandings of causes and escalators, participating boys and girls across cities narrated the idea that individuals’ sincere submission to religion was the main way to reduce violence and affirm justice and inclusion for women. They typically defined parents, religious leaders, and teachers as responsible for fixing people’s minds: e.g., *“our religious institutions, teachers, and parents should teach us how to implement religious moralities in real life”* (S3 & S1, two grade 9 Hindu boys, and S2, a grade 9 Muslim boy, from B2M-1B). B2 city group 1A boys even described the government as responsible for teaching citizens to practice Islam, wherein citizens would become perfect Muslims through praxis: *“There has to be government institutions to teach us Islam. We will practice and reflect to reach perfection”* (S1, a grade 7 Muslim boy, from B2M-1A). B1 and B2 boys and girls virtually never mentioned what such actors/actions would do to help individuals to manifest equity and respect for women. Nor did they ever examine their religious leaders’ practices that caused, escalated, or could solve

gender-based conflicts. Also, they never discussed if scriptures have treated women equitably, and, if so, how the above actors would help citizens to implement such scriptural values. Instead, they seemed to philosophize religion itself as the solution: *“no religion supports sexual harassment... If we follow our own religions properly, then there will be no violence against women”* (S3, a grade 9 Hindu boy, from B2M-1B). Hence, although participating students understood some social-structural and cultural dimensions of gender conflicts, they seemed to miss how these indirect dimensions related to the direct and individual dimensions of conflict behaviour they experienced. Nor did their understandings of the religious dimension seem to help them to see these causal connections. These students’ expressed understandings of solutions to gender conflicts mainly centered on correcting individuals’ religious morality, to (somehow) help them to internalize Islamic values and thus to self-regulate respect, non-violence, and equity for women and girls.

Very few boys and girls identified specific actors and actions to democratically solve gender conflicts. In direct contrast with the underprivileged B1 girls and the privileged younger boys (B2M-1A) boys who mentioned parents and grandparents as perpetrators, the older group of privileged boys (B2M-1B) described how their family members actively challenged social and cultural discriminations against women. Their sisters, mothers, and grandmothers—supported by their fathers and brothers—had long been practicing gender equity: *“All female members in my parents’ families are highly educated and work big government jobs”* (S2, a grade 9 Muslim boy, from B2M-1B). To these boys, citizenship for solving gender discriminations meant posing such challenges to biases and unfair social structures against women. B1 girls had somewhat similar models of citizenship, demonstrated by some of their teachers, against gender conflicts. These teachers often stood up against early marriage, dowry, Eve-teasing, and other social discriminations against women: *“Our Head-Sir [headmaster] goes to the house of the victim if he finds a student of this school getting early married. He makes sure her education would be covered and convinces her parents to stand beside her”* (S3, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B1F-1B). For the B1 girls, such actions for affirming human rights could constitute spaces for peacebuilding citizenship learning, especially because these students identified themselves with the victims of escalated gender conflicts, and because their lived experiences informed understanding the tangible social-structural and intangible cultural dimensions of gender conflicts. In particular, these girls experienced how people with some power could do something to build peace for women, whereas their 1B privileged male peers experienced how family

members—not necessarily powerful—also had roles to play to affirm respect and rights for women and young girls. But none of these students, nor their teachers, described any moment in which these lived experiences were acknowledged or considered in classrooms, as resources for learning about peacebuilding citizenship in relation to gender conflicts.

Directly correlated with such missed learning opportunities, none of the privileged boys and girls described themselves as non-violent peacebuilders for women's safety or rights. Although *B2M-1B* boys mentioned the importance of common peoples' (like their own) participation in social reform activities, they described how they had been peacekeeping by force and control to increase security for their female friends. In one incident, they engaged in physically beating the Eve-teasers without describing whether they paid any attention to the roots of Eve-teasing: *"S1 was grabbing him [the Eve-teaser] from the back and S4 was beating him. He was beaten up so bad that...before doing any Eve-teasing next time, he will think ten times"* (*S2, a grade 9 Muslim boy, and S3, a grade 9 Hindu boy, from B2M-1B together, excited*). These boys, like their male and female peers across cities, did not describe how non-violent communication and negotiation processes could help the victims and perpetrators to hear each-others' viewpoints and democratically solve any gender conflicts they had experienced. Their use of direct violence to respond to gender issues was perhaps linked with the socially prevailing models of citizen action in Bangladesh. Such responses would pose challenges to their proposed religious moral choice solution, and to what *B2M-1B* boys' families and some *B1F* teachers had modelled.

Boys and girls from both cities described forced peacekeeping as necessary to increase security for women and young girls. All other student participants except the privileged *1B* boys described government, and not themselves, as the actors: *"Government must implement laws strictly. The highest punishment for violence against women is capital punishment. It must be implemented"* (*S4, a grade 9 Muslim male, from B2F-1B*). *B2M-1B* boys did have some opportunities to learn how people close to their lives democratically responded to gender issues. Yet, like the understandings of those students who did not report any such learning spaces, these students' understandings of citizen response to gender-based conflicts represented the more dominant social context—they all articulated women's security as their primary concern.

In particular contrast with boys and girls from the richer city, some poorer boys and girls described how changing the society—in which women are sexually harassed, physically beaten, and socio-politically deprived of rights—required democratic citizenship of themselves and



people like themselves: *“We can make changes in our society by using the power of rallies to protest against discrimination and violence against women”* (S1, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B1F-1B). However, their main concern in such collective citizen actions, as they articulated, was to primarily address gender conflicts through religion, by correcting perpetrators’ minds, attitudes, and behaviour to affirm equitable rights for women: *“we can solve this by creating clubs or organizations, which would unite people to stand against such violence by conducting public rallies, meetings, and discussions”* (S1, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1A). While such citizenship would help to *“educate women with real education”* and *“stop pre-18 marriages”* (S3, a grade 8 Muslim boy, and S5, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1A), these students remained consistent in their descriptions of cause and solutions. They actually wanted to *“change people’s perspectives”* (S1, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B1F-1A), and turn them into perfect Muslims who *“never disrespect or oppress women”* (All B1F-1A girls excited, together). Through such collective citizen actions, these students also planned to influence the government to take actions to educate people about the religious moral factors that help to democratize the society for women: *“If the government takes steps to educate people, violence against women will reduce”* (S2, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B1F-1A). All boys and girls from the richer city also said, although without mentioning any citizenship, that fixing (done by government and powerful people) people’s religious moralities would solve all gender conflicts. Therefore, participating B1 and B2 boys and girls expressed the understanding that the religious dimension,—fixing peoples’ individual morality—was a main solution to gender conflicts.

Thus, while some B1 and B2 boys and girls did understand how the society they lived in was physically, culturally and sociopolitically unjust for women, they primarily discussed the role of religions (especially Islam) to affirm justice and peace for women and young girls in relation to all dimensions of gender conflicts. However, in these student narratives it was unclear how addressing the religious dimension would reduce physical and indirect violence and build peace for women at cultural and social-structural levels.

### **Implemented Curriculum**

Participating teachers across gender and cities referred to officially mandated textbook chapters as examples of what they taught in relation to gender conflicts. Using official textbooks, Islam and Moral Education (IME) teachers explicitly taught about equitable rights of women—a social-structural dimension—and respect for women—a cultural dimension—describing how crucial citizenship was for transforming the pre-Islamic Arab society toward just peace.

However, none of these teachers reported about teaching contemporary gender conflicts or violence in this way, which implies that the IME teachers taught about the glories of Islam more than past gender inequity when they referred to the pre-Islamic Arab society. The Bangladesh and Global Studies (BGS) teachers used textbooks to teach about the role of women in Bangladesh's liberation and current social and economic development. Some of the chapters they taught did also focus on contemporary social problems facing women in Bangladesh, their causes and solutions. Through poems, stories, and essays, Bangla (BL) teachers taught about similar gender-based issues as the BGS texts, linking these issues with transitions of pre/non-Muslim majority societies toward peaceful Bangladesh contexts: *"I teach about oppressions that we live within. Dowry, a recurring ancient problem, is an example of such oppressions on women in every social class: rich, poor, middle class"* (T1, a Muslim female, from B2M). In direct contrast, none of the English (EL) teachers reported any textbook content relevant to gender issues. Thus, typically, participating teachers taught about gender conflicts only as much as faithfully using respective textbooks allowed them to teach, and apparently without engaging students in inquiry or discussion on the issues.

The above-mentioned grade 6–10 textbooks taught direct confrontations between men and women as the main gender-based problem in Bangladesh. Participating teachers across contexts did mention patriarchal male domination as the main conflict: *"men want to keep women shaped by their wishes"* (T1, a Muslim female, from B2M). Yet, none of their teaching examples distinguished such conflicts from associated violence. Example lessons they shared during the focus group workshops explicitly taught about acid throwing, women trafficking, domestic violence, and sexual harassment. These lessons described women and young girls as victims of direct harm inflicted by male and female representatives of patriarchy: *"husband, mother-in-law, sister-in-law and other family members"* (BGS 9-10, p. 212). They also described these perpetrators as religious morally degraded individuals: *"Eve-teasing is a social plague. Harassing women, calling them bad names, and mocking them are all heinous acts. Allah says in the Qur'an..."* (IME 7, p. 92). Despite describing some tangible social-structural (economic interests) factors in these issues—e.g. perpetrators often wanted dowry, and victims wanted education and jobs—these lessons mainly addressed a religious dimension of gender conflicts—individual perpetrators' lack of religious sincerity as the main cause of their bad behaviour: *"sexual harassment is one of the big social problems in Bangladesh. It is the highest moral degradation"* (BGS 9-10, p. 212). As explained, these curriculum descriptions of the direct and

some indirect dimensions of gender conflicts are similar to participating students' expressed understandings.

Some social-structural dimensions of gender conflict were often explicit in IME, BGS and BL teaching examples. Participating teachers across contexts taught that the denial of women's "*education and property rights*" was harmful (BGS 9-10, p. 212), in which perpetrators wanted to affirm male superiority by keeping women inferior. Many of these lessons described direct violence as causing such social-structural harm: e.g., young girls were often withdrawn from school and succumbed to early marriage due to sexual harassment. They virtually never described how social-structural factors could cause or escalate direct violence. IME and BL lessons also often described gender-based conflicts as involving women's access to their rights issues: "*Islam is the only religion that stands against discrimination of women against men and women, and affirms equity* (IME 8, p. 86). Nevertheless, linking these social-structural dimensions as causes of underlying gender conflicts and/or escalators of associated direct violence remained as a matter of teachers' pedagogical choice, which none of the teachers reported to have made. Presumably correlated with such lack of learning experience around the tangible social-structural dimension of gender conflicts, barely about half of the students narrated social-structural violence, causes, and escalators as their lived concern in relation to gender conflicts. Similar to most B1 and B2 student participants' understandings, these texts only taught about the most obvious elements—i.e., the direct dimensions—of gender conflicts.

These teaching examples did teach how cultural biases and attitudes were harmful: e.g., young girls and women in the ancient and contemporary Bangladeshi societies—similar to some B1F girls' experiences—have been expected to do only certain things. In particular, "*women should only take care of the family from inside home. They are believed to be inferior and thus expected to behave the way men desire. I have many stories and poems that I use to teach this*" (T3, a Muslim female, from B2F). Whereas only a few B1 and B2 boys and girls were concerned about these factors, the teaching examples inadequately explained these cultural dimensions as causes and escalators of gender conflicts. Further, the B1 girls with direct experience of such issues and the B2 boys whose families had stood up against physical and structural violence against women did say that biases, injustice, and physical violence were equally harmful. Nevertheless, all participating male and female students and their teachers across cities mainly cared about the most obvious direct dimensions of gender conflicts in Bangladesh—e.g., beating and sexually harassing women and young girls. The implemented curriculum—as reported by

participating teachers and students—did not always help students to understand how the cultural and structural dimensions of gender conflicts affected diverse viewpoints.

Participating teachers across gender and cities primarily focused on teaching about religious dimensions when they taught about gender conflicts. In particular, and similar to how participating students in respective schools analyzed gender conflicts, teachers across schools taught individual (lack of) religious morality as the main cause in relation to gender conflicts. Implemented lessons, as described by participating teachers, narrated religious moral decadence as the primary reason for all gender-based conflicts to exist and escalate: “*practicing Islam is the key; a real Muslim would never disrespect women*” (T4, a Muslim male, from B1F). Such narratives centered on the psycho-cultural factor of how individuals engage with religions, and described restoring religious sincerity as the solution to all gender issues. In particular, students, teachers, and the curriculum texts similarly described good Muslims as respectful to women: “*Showing respect to woman is indicative of refined mentality in man. Showing respect merely outwardly is not enough; one has to prove it by one’s deeds and conduct*” (IME 9-10, p. 128). These lessons about fixing people’s minds avoided discussions of particular actors and their actions—i.e., who would do what to correct individuals’ religious moral practices. Often, people of authority seemed to be obvious actors: e.g. “*Adolescents must be kept away from all the bad deeds*” (BGS 8, p. 86). However, in most instances, these curricula, the teachers, and their students placed the responsibility on the perpetrators for self-correcting, knowing that there is punishment for failing to do so. Hence, reported lessons and students’ and their teachers’ understandings of religious dimensions of gender conflicts seemed confined within the self-regulation of respect for the rights of women, aided by government peacekeeping.

Participating teachers’ teaching examples often mentioned various actors who were doing something to solve gender conflicts. For instance, BGS texts frequently referred to the UN’s roles to affirm equitable rights for women in Bangladesh following the “*Universal Declaration of Human Rights*” (BGS 9-10, p. 147). Beside such peacebuilding education, BL curricula often used stories and poems to teach about citizenship—how common people could ideally stand up and solve discriminations, dowry, male domination, and other cultural biases against women in the family and the society (e.g., BL 9-10, pp. 6. 26. 37, 94). However, actors in these literary texts and NGO initiatives were too distant in time and power in encourage participating students. Thus, despite some lessons, none of the students mentioned these NGOs, government actions, or individual initiatives as effective for affirming equitable human rights and respect for women.

To sum up, direct violence aspects of gender conflict were much like culturally pervasive general knowledge across participating students' lived social and curriculum contexts. Across the curriculum and students' lived experience, some social-structural and cultural elements were also pervasive. However, students with direct and close (e.g. relatives') experiences of gender conflicts, compared with those who had relatively no such direct personal experience, understood these indirect dimensions, including actors and viewpoints, differently from each other. Despite understanding some indirect causes of gender conflicts, participating students, teachers, and the implemented curriculum (across contexts) uniformly narrated individual religious immorality as cause, escalator, and potential de-escalator of gender conflicts. Correlated with the implemented curriculum's emphasis on perpetrators' individual responsibility for doing bad things against women and girls, the most common solution to gender conflicts—as taught by participating teachers and narrated (understanding) by participating students—was peacekeeping through the use of punishment. Occasional student descriptions of peacebuilding citizenship in relation to these conflicts seemed sweepingly superficial.

### **Resource Conflicts**

Economic and related resource (tangible) interest conflicts that student participants (across gender and cities) analyzed included environmental pollution, poverty, unemployment, and child labour issues. Living in an underprivileged city and coming from the most underprivileged families of all participating boys and girls, both groups of *B1* boys described resource issues as conflicts of primary concern to them. Half of the participating *B1* girls (*B1F-1A*) also expressed similar lived concern, although they chose to talk about how they lived political issues and violence against women. In particular contrast, living in a privileged context, none of the *B2* boys showed concern about resource conflicts, either in response to image prompts or in the problem analysis round. Similarly, participating girls from the privileged city (*B2*) expressed angst around economic issues only by linking them with opinions about stakeholders' religious moral degradation. Therefore, participating *B1* and *B2* boys and girls described dimensions of resource conflicts based on their experiences. In other words, lived experience significantly shaped participating students' understandings about violence, actors, viewpoints, causes and solutions in relation to resource conflicts.

In contrast to the concerns expressed by these students, only *B1F* teachers expressed some concern about physical and structural harm in relation to economic/resource conflicts around poverty and environment. *B2F*, *B2M*, and *B1M* teachers were worried about human

rights, economic inequality and social injustice in general. However, none of them showed any interest in analyzing these problems as conflicts. They taught about these issues only as much as faithfully using the official curriculum textbooks allowed. All of these teachers prioritized teaching about the religious dimension of resource conflicts—i.e., that religious moral values would save their students from being bad by denying people’s access to their economic, environmental, and other tangible resource interest rights.

### **Understandings of Conflict**

*B1* boys and girls—who had some direct experiences—and *B2* boys and girls—who drew on other people’s experiences to describe issues—showed similar understandings of the direct dimensions of economic and related tangible resource interest conflicts. They all uniformly described competing economic interests between wealthy and powerful elites and the less wealthy and less powerful mass as the main conflict, in which people at the bottom of the society are directly harmed: *“poverty keeps people hungry”* (*S1, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1A; also S3, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B1F-1A; & S4, a grade 9 Muslim girl, from B2F-1A*). They all described any gender or age group among the mass, who suffered physically due to lacking resources, as victims in these conflicts: e.g., *“workplace adults force the poor children in every possible way to do whatever”* (*S1, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1B*), and *“traffickers kidnap children, and smuggle them or their organs abroad”* (*S1, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1A*). In these narratives, while the powerful elites wanted to be richer, the less powerful mass struggled to meet their basic needs: *“the poor cannot even eat 3 square meals every day; they lack food”* (*S5, a grade 7 Muslim boy, from B2M-1A*), while *“the big fishes are only usurping”* (*S1, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B1F-1A*). Hence, boys and girls from both cities similarly described two directly confronting positions and their economic interests in poverty and child abuse, describing these issues as conflicts *“between corrupt selfish people and the deprived people”* (*S2, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B2F-1A*).

Beyond some such understandings of direct dimensions as above, participating *B1* and *B2* boys’ and girls’ analyses of resource conflicts varied based on how they knew about the issues. Those who used direct experience to analyze conflicts—i.e., *B1* boys and girls—named specific elites, from *B1* city and beyond, who selfishly sought economic interests and thus directly and indirectly harmed the less privileged mass. The most common among such actors were *B1*’s Member of Parliament (MP) cum Whip, municipality and ward chairmen and commissioners, Superintendent of Police (SP) [the chief of police at district level], District Commissioner (DC)

[the highest government administrator at district level], and other national political elites and government officials: e.g., *“XXX and XXX [B1 municipality and sub-district chairmen] are usurping all the government money. They do whatever they wish. They violate the industrial and environmental laws”* (S2, a grade 8 Hindu girl, from B1F-1A; also S2, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1B); *“B1’s DC and SP know how these culprits are damaging our city. But they are also involved”* (S2, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1A; also S3, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B1F-1B). Further, B1F-1A-S1fM8 and B1F-1A-S3fM8 described how their family members had to bribe the B1 MP for job and monthly salary. All participating B1 and B2 students described some such viewpoints of the involved and affected people in general, but only the B1 boys and girls named particular perpetrators. Thus, lived experiences did matter in how participating students understood actors in these conflicts.

Lived experience as a source of knowledge about conflict seemed further obvious in how participating B1 and B2 boys and girls understood the indirect—cultural and social-structural—dimensions of economic and related resource conflicts. B1 boys and girls expressed deep concern about powerful elites’ actions (behaviours and practices) that provoked direct violence by slowly harming the environment. They called all humans victims of this slow violence eventually, but primarily those underprivileged people who lived in direct contact with polluted environment. B2 girls shared understandings of this dimension of environmental pollution with their B1 peers: *“by polluting the environment, these [powerful] people also damage human and animal lives”* (S2, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B2F-1B), and *“the affected people gradually dive towards death”* (S3, a grade 9 Muslim girl, from B2F-1A). Yet, only their B1 male and female peers named specific actors setting up brickfields *“close enough from the city to affect our lives directly”* (S1, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B1F-1A). Also, such social-structural dimensions did not seem to distress B2 city boys at all as they discussed resource conflicts. Hence, only those with direct experience saw certain social-structural dimensions of environmental pollution.

Further, only the B1 boys and girls described some social-structural dimensions of poverty, unemployment, and child labour issues. They were particularly worried about economic and social consequences of the lack of underprivileged people’s, especially children’s, access to resources such as education: *“among my neighbours, there are many poor children who cannot go to school at all. They work in brickfields, welding and other workshops”* (S4, a grade 8 Hindu girl, from B1F-1B). In such issues, participating B1 boys and girls mentioned some conflicting economic viewpoints of powerful elites and underprivileged mass, and identified their families

and selves as victims: *“those who have money get jobs; those who don’t, don’t”* (S5, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B1F-1A). While B2 girls did describe some unemployment issues similarly, they merely described news from other people’s lives: *“some people are not getting jobs despite being meritorious”* (S2, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B2F-1B), which *“continues to deprive people of their rights”* (S5, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B2F-1B). In direct contrast, no B2 boy spoke about any such dimensions of these conflicts. Only B1 boys and girls, who lived among and/or as underprivileged, understood particular viewpoints. Those without direct experience showed generic awareness of the problem as prevailing in the society, but did not deeply understand involved parties and their viewpoints.

Lived experience was also reflected in how B1 and B2 boys and girls understood cultural dimensions of resource conflicts. All B1 and B2 student participants mentioned acting and witnessing environment averse handling of household garbage. They all described beliefs and attitudes, rooted in individuals, to cause and legitimize such behaviour: *“the poor lack resources; but rich people also throw their garbage on water. They all lack awareness”* (S2, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from BIM-1A; also S1, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B1F-1B). In contrast, only some B1 boys described how they had seen rice mills and brickfields to pollute environment. These boys analyzed business elites’ neoliberal attitudes—investing less in business for maximizing profit—to further escalate environmental damage. As these boys described, owners handled industrial waste in environment averse ways only to save money: *“chemicals from garments and mill-industries are direct pollutants of water...They throw industrial chemicals and waste on open fields, greenery floors, and channel them to rivers”* (S4, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from BIM-1A). Boys and girls who did not report any lived experience did not described such less obvious dimensions of economic and related resource conflicts as causing or escalating the issues. Although all participating students across cities and schools described how cultural factors cause and escalate economic and related resource conflicts, they linked particular cultural aspects with specific conflicts based on their experience of the conflict.

Beyond just attitudes, all B1 and B2 student participants uniformly understood religious moral dimensions as causes and escalators of these conflicts. They did articulate bad governance to cause poverty, unemployment, child labour, and environmental pollution: government officers are *“opportunists,”* who abuse power and *“seek personal benefits at the cost of others’ rights”* (S4, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B2F-1B). They called it corruption: *“you have to bribe powerful people like the DC to get a job”* (S2, a grade 8 Hindu girl, from B1F-1A; and S2, a



grade 8 Muslim girl, from B2F-1B). Also, they did describe some structural factors, often linked with corrupt governance, to escalate such conflicts: *“people are poor because they are uneducated”* (S3, a grade 6 Muslim boy, from B2M-1A; also S2, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B1F-1B); uneducated people usually remain so by having to drop out of school *“because they are poor”* (T4, a Muslim male, from B1F); and often *“the educated poor do not get jobs because they cannot bribe the powerful elites who control government employment”* (S3, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B1F-1B). Nevertheless, they all described such tangible economic interest factors as a symptom of individuals’ religious moral decadence, collectively represented in governance and the overall social systems: *“Bangladesh is not resourceless. People are religious morally corrupt, which is why some people get more than they need while others get nothing—no food, clothes, medical care, education, etc.”* (S4, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1A). Thus, participating B1 and B2 students did understand some social-structural dimensions of resource related conflicts; but as causes and escalators of these conflicts, they described these dimensions under the umbrella of a single individualized factor—religious morality.

Participating B1 and B2 boys and girls defined corruption as such a factor: as individuals’ religious moral decadence driven lawless, bad, and selfish behaviour. In this sense, corruption is an operational symptom of religious moral depravity. Corruption does represent a cultural dimension of economic and related resource conflicts—it is a belief and attitude that helps perpetrators to rationalize harming the poor, unemployed, children, and environment for their personal benefits: *“The rich usurp everything in corrupt ways. This is how the rich are rich”* (S4, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1A). But, as indicated in this example, it also explains a social-structural dimension of these conflicts—e.g., who blocks whose access to what rights. Neither the cultural nor the social-structural dimension of individuals’ economic interest related behaviour alone explains corruption fully, whereas the religious dimension explains how corruption combines some of both cultural and social-structural aspects of resource conflicts. Thus, although participating B1 and B2 boys and girls described how some cultural and social-structural factors escalated some of these conflicts, they understood religious moral decadence as the root cause of all conflicting economic interests: *“I am surprised how people do all these nasty things and still call themselves Muslims”* (S1, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B2F-1B).

### **Repertoire of Potential Solutions and Citizen Responses**

Participating boys and girls from both cities showed despair about particular behaviour of perpetrators in conflicting economic and related resource interests: *“Corruption is very normal*

*in Bangladesh*” (S3, a grade 6 Muslim boy, from B2M-1A). This frustration did represent students’ indirect experience about how some of those who had recently raised voice against the powerful elites got kidnapped and/or killed: *“One cannot protest against these people”* (S3, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B1F-1B); *“standing up against them will only risk our lives”* (S2, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B1F-1B; also S4, a grade 8 Hindu girl, from B1F-1B). Although they seemed to agree that surviving in Bangladesh required certain compliance to corruption, they did express resistance: *“it is us who have to free this country from corruption”* (S3, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1A). Hence, participating B1 and B2 boys and girls described themselves in a quandary—they were scared about acting, but were also aware of the importance of their activism, against injustice and corruption.

Consistent with their understandings of cause, and linked to the above predicament, these students built hope that individuals’ practice of religion could correct some corrupt behaviour in relation to these conflicts. For example, all B1 and B2 girls and all B2 boys articulated zakat, one of the five basics of Islam, as useful to establish economic equity among all members of the society by recognizing diversely positioned peoples’ economic rights and redistributing wealth to affirm their rights. Participating Muslim boys and girls described zakat as different from charity and capable of completely eradicating poverty; the Hindu students voiced agreement or remained silent: *“Whatever wealth I have after meeting my basic needs includes other people’s share in it. Unlike charity, zakat is not a matter of choice. In zakat system, I have to return the money to whom it lawfully belongs”* (S1, a grade 7 Muslim boy, from B2M-1). Thus, they understood paying zakat, often comparing such participation with paying taxes, as citizenship action to solve some social patterns of poverty: *“Zakat is a must, like today one must pay taxes. Zakat is a more just equalizer of the society than taxes”* (S2, a grade 8, Muslim boy, from B2M-1A).

Despite such understandings of citizenship, no participating student reported themselves or their family members as implementing zakat. Most B1 and B2 Muslim girls and B2 Muslim boys described government as responsible for *“training and monitoring how to implement the Qur’an and its laws in real life”* (S1, a grade 7 Muslim boy, from B2M-1A), and citizens as responsible for complying with such governance. Their Hindu peers agreed with them about families’ and religious institutions’ additional roles in making the society better by teaching citizens religions: *“If religious moral values are strictly raised in the family plus taught in religious institutions, all our country’s problems will automatically reduce”* (B2M-1B-S3mH9). Particularly, *“there will be no poverty or corruption in our society if people follow the Qur’an*

*and the Hadiths*” (S4, a grade 9 Muslim girl, from B2F-1A). These students understood religion as more than just beliefs and rituals (culture). In their view, religion, mainly Islam, also meant an economic structure that solves the sources of hunger, child labour, and denial of economic rights. Nevertheless, only the B1 boys described themselves as actors to non-violently protest against denied human rights as a positive way to encourage people and the government to cooperate in peacebuilding: “*We will stand up against all these corrupt and unjust leaders*” (S2, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1A); “*we will make people aware about how they pollute the environment*” and “*we will protest so that the government does something to stop environment-averse industrialization*” (S5, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1B). Only the resource-deprived boys described the importance of such democratic citizenship. Their privileged male peers, and their female peers irrespective of the privileges they lived, were complacent assuming how other people than their selves could teach morality to mitigate economic conflicts.

Participating B1 and B2 girls and their B2 male peers explained internalizing religious values to improve morality—and thus religious self-regulation—as the key to solving economic and related resource conflicts. However, they also understood forced peacekeeping as necessary in this solution. Despite government regulated Islamic systems, there could be violators of laws, and “*government must exemplarily punish those who breach the laws*” (S1, a grade 8 Muslim girl, B1F-1A; also S3, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B2F-1B). None of these students described any particular peacemaking skills as useful for solving any economic interest conflicts. Rather, a few girls reported how they engaged in dialogues to help some perpetrators to understand multiple viewpoints in relation to poverty and unemployment (S4, a grade 9 Muslim girl, from B2F-1A) and environmental pollution (S4, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B2F-1B), which did not work: “*They stopped me by saying, “You go and be good. Everybody does it. What is your problem if I do it”*” (ibid). Only the B1M-1B boys expected dialogues to be effective to communicate and negotiate multiple viewpoints: “*we will get united and take the victims of brick fields to the owners. We will make them understand how their careless business is harming these people and all of us. I am sure they will understand*” (S4, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1B). Only such underprivileged B1 boys understood the role of peacemaking and the place of citizenship in it. To the privileged B2 boys and girls and their B1 female peers, peacekeeping by fixing people’s religious sincerity remained as the key to establishing economic equity and environmental safety in Bangladesh.

### **Implemented Curriculum**

Only the teacher participants from the poorer city girls' school expressed some concern about physical and social-structural harm in relation to resource/economic conflicts around poverty and environment. Teachers from the privileged city boys' and girls' schools and the poorer city boys' school were worried about human rights, economic inequality and social injustice in general. But, none of them showed any interest in explaining the sources of these problems and thus analyzing them as conflicts. They taught about such conflicts based on whatever was mandated in the official curricula, and prioritized teaching only one aspect of religious dimension—individual moral values—in order to save their students from being bad by denying people's rights. As in relation to gender issues, the teachers used BGS, BL, EL, and IME textbooks to teach about resource conflicts. *BIM* and *BIF* teachers additionally used their lived experiences to teach about some aspects of resource and related economic conflicts. Poverty was the most common issue among them, followed by environmental pollution. Textbooks that participating teachers taught included child labour and unemployment issues also; but teachers across schools were worried mostly about the overall resource gaps between the privileged and the less-privileged groups.

Participants' teaching examples highlighted some direct and indirect (especially social-structural) dimensions of resource conflict. These implemented curricula described hunger and child physical labour as direct harm associated with poverty. In such direct violence, powerful elites, who were inconsiderate about other people's rights, were perpetrators. These teachers also taught how such perpetrators social-structurally harmed the people lacking resource and power as well. For instance, 7 out of 16 *B1* and *B2* teachers used textbook excerpts and lived experience to teach how a society in which “*some have millions of taka [Bangladeshi currency], and some can't even feed and send their children to school*” is unjust and un-peaceful (*T1, Muslim male, from B2F*). Further, these teachers taught environmental pollution as incorporating slow violence, i.e. diseases and gradual death of human and other animal lives caused by polluted environment. Their teaching materials did describe some cultural dimensions like carelessness about environmental safety as factors to help perpetrators to continue to harm environment and people (e.g. BGS 6, p. 8–10). Yet, none of the teachers mentioned any such hidden factors as harmful. Thus, official curriculum in general, and some teachers' lived experience-based implementation of the curriculum, included similar teaching-learning spaces around some obvious and less obvious aspects of resource conflicts between the have and have-not groups.

Participating teachers across schools uniformly taught religious moral decadence and corruption as synonymous to each other, and as root causes and escalators of resource conflicts. Like their students, these teachers also described some intersections among poverty, child labour, environmental pollution and other resource conflicts—one as often causing or escalating the other. Despite such understandings about tangible structural factors, like their students, these teachers analyzed religious moral decadence as the overarching dimension: *“How can people collect and store wealth if they follow Islam? How can they pollute the environment? How can they abuse the poor children that work at their houses?”* (T4, Muslim female, from B2F). Understanding the lack of individuals’ religious integrity as causes/escalators in this way may implicitly include some understanding of conflicting tangible interests and cultural beliefs. But, by not explicitly discussing the specifics, the teachers, like many of their students, masked and trivialized the importance of understanding and addressing the social-structural and cultural dimensions. In particular, BGS 6–10 curricula extensively focused on analyzing *“the causes and effects of environmental problems (e.g. air, sound, water, and land pollution, soil erosion, slum problems),”* and *“the types, causes, and effects of child labour, “child abuse” and “child trafficking,”* and other tangible economic interest and social structural factors in Bangladesh (BGS 6, pp. 43–44). None of the teachers shared any examples around how they taught about the various dimensions of such conflicts. Good Muslim–bad Muslim dichotomy seemed to represent an easy explanation of most teachers’ lived experience, as their students’, regarding resource conflicts.

Linked to understandings about causes, participating B1 and B2 teachers, like their Muslim students, described restoring Islamic practices as the only solution. Teacher participants across schools were noticeably Muslims, and they all agreed that *zakat* was the best model of equitable resource distribution. IME 6–10 teachers across cities usually dominated such discussions, and they all defined *zakat* as an obligation (*fard*) and non-identical with charity (*sadaqh*), in the same way as the curriculum texts did: *“It is not mercy or favour of the rich to pay zakat to the poor. Zakat is their due right [haqq]”* (IME 9-10, p. 95, parenthesis added). Other teachers voiced agreement when the IME teachers narrated how *zakat* could eradicate rich-poor gaps and affirm equity for all: *“zakat is the only key to economic development. It is such an Islamic system that protects the balance between the rich and the poor—it makes and maintains an utterly complete balance”* (T1, a Muslim male, from B1F). For such development, the teachers argued that *zakat* must be implemented as a national practice enacted by people and

government together: *“if government collected my and other people’s zakat, then they could distribute the zakat in more organized and equitable ways” (ibid)*. Hence, the implemented curriculum and many young citizens across socio-economic and gender contexts similarly narrated how Islamic citizenship could solve some tangible economic or resource distribution related conflicts.

Regarding environmental pollution, participating teachers taught only tree plantation as a solution. In particular, the *B1F* IME teacher taught tree plantation as peacebuilding citizenship, based on a tradition of the Prophet (pbuh): *“one will be benefited in this life and hereafter if s/he plants even one tree and a human, bird or animal eats from that tree or uses it as shelter” (T1, a Muslim male, from B1F)*. Other teachers also taught tree plantation as citizenship participation, but without the same religious moral accent. For instance, participating English (EL) teachers across schools used the story of *“A Man Who Loves Trees” (EL 8, p. 58)* to teach about saving the environment by planting trees. In this true story, a poor Bangladeshi Hindu spent nearly all his income to make his village green with trees. Hence, within and beyond religious incentives, participating teachers taught individual citizenship as useful to make the environment better. None of them taught anything about the abuse of power and illegal mill-factory setup, about which participating *B1* boys and girls showed much concern. Hence, like participating students across gender and socio-economic contexts, the mandated and implemented curricula also simplified the analysis of resource conflicts by mainly analyzing the religious dimension and not explicitly explaining the social-structural and cultural dimensions.

In participating *B1* and *B2* teachers’ lessons, dialogue and negotiation skills for attending small- and large-scale economic/resource conflicts were the least popular solutions. Curriculum mandated collaborative and cooperative discussion and decision-making activities, but none of the teachers mentioned them as useful in relation to any resource conflicts. For example, EL 9-10 textbook started by teaching that ‘good’ citizens *“participate in discussions”* and *“listen and understand others” (p. 1)*, which no *B1* or *B2* teacher mentioned as useful. Participating *B2M* BL teacher did mention dialogue as a Prophet Muhammad’s (pbuh) peacemaking model, but without relating dialogic processes to any conflict. Rather, she only focused on regaining Islamic moralities. Similarly, all participating teachers described themselves and the government as responsible for teaching, monitoring and controlling citizens’ moralities as solutions to resource conflicts: *“There are laws. I teach my students to honestly follow the laws. When laws are*

*equitable, following them liberates people instead of putting shackles on their feet” (T4, a Muslim female, from B2F).*

To sum up, despite extensive curriculum spaces (as mandated) around some social-structural dimensions of resource conflicts, *B2* city boys and girls did not express understandings of poverty, environmental pollution, and unemployment issues in the same way as *B1* students. Lived experiences of harm associated with resource-related economic conflicts, and of religious morality of the involved and affected parties, represented participating *B1* and *B2* male and female students’ and their teachers’ understandings of causes and solutions. Hence, as in the case of gender conflicts, self-regulation of religious integrity was the most dominant solution suggested by participating students, teachers, and the implemented curriculum.

### **Religious Conflicts**

Half of the participating privileged boys (*B1M-1A*) and all of their underprivileged male peers expressed worries about two particular religious identity issues: (1) conflict about true faith between Muslims and non-Muslims globally (they called it anti-Islam bias), and (2) conflict between political identity groups about the place of religion in Bangladesh’s politics (discussed in chapter 6). Only *B2M-1A* boys chose to analyze the issue of anti-Islam bias, without reporting any direct or indirect lived experience of the issue. In contrast, *B1* boys (both groups) shared some indirect lived experience about anti-Islam bias in Bangladesh and the USA, without choosing to further analyze the issue. In further contrast, *B2* girls reported zero interest in religious identity related conflicts: e.g., *“I have no idea about this issue” (S1, a grade 9 Muslim girl, from B2F-1A)*. Comparatively, their *B1* female peers discussed religious identity issues in Bangladesh’s politics, boldly denying any impact of anti-Islam bias on their social and cultural lives: *“No one shows hatred to Muslims or Hindus in B1. We are all equal and happy to live like friends and brother” (All grade 8 Hindu and Muslim girls from B1F-1B together, excited)*. Thus, to *B2M-1A*, lived experiences did not seem to matter. Rather, by discussing the issue, these Muslim students seem to have defended their faith against what they understood as anti-Islam bias.

In contrast with the above concerns expressed by participating students, only *T4 (a Muslim male) from B2M* said that he taught about some issues involving religious conflicts: he was worried about conflict among people/groups regarding true faith in particular. Other participating teachers did bring religion in their discussions about human rights conflicts, but not religion or faith as a conflict issue.

## Understandings of Conflict

*B1M-1A* boys distinguished religious conflicts from the symptoms of their escalation, i.e., violence. They described disagreement between Muslims and people of other religions regarding the ‘true’ faith as the main conflict; and “*suppressing the Muslims, presenting them as terrorists, and destroying them on the pretext of terrorism*” (*S3, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1A*) as violence. Yet, like all other boys and girls who did not make such distinctions, these boys were mainly concerned with direct and indirect violence against Muslims.

Participating boys’ analyses of anti-Islam biases represented some direct dimensions as they described damages of life and property as part of the conflict: “*In India the Muslims who follow Allah are being...killed*” (*S1, a grade 7 Muslim boy, from B2M-1A*). Beyond Muslim minority contexts, *B1* and *B2* boys described Muslims in Muslim majority contexts also as victims of such physical harm: “*Muslims in Iraq, Iran and Syria are the most direct victims of the Jewish and Christian violence against them*” (*S3, a grade 6 Muslim boy, from B2M-1A*). They also described Bangladeshi Muslims as victims of Hindu and Buddhist haters of Islam, who “*smuggle in drugs and weapons to spread violence in the country*” (*S5, a grade 7 Muslim boy, from B2M-1A; also All grade B1M-1A boys, grade 8 Muslims*). In such narratives of harm, some morally degenerated local Muslims, who wanted to earn easy money, were complicit perpetrators: “*people with high social status and power are the biggest smugglers. They shelter local drug-dealers*” (*S2, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1A*). Participating *B1F* girls did mention minority Muslims as victims—e.g. “*in India, Muslims are a minority*” (*S3, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B1F-1A*)—but they contradicted with the idea that such conflicts could affect Muslims in Bangladesh as well: “*We hear about Islamophobia in the TV news or read about them in the newspaper. But we do not see it*” (*S4, a grade 8 Hindu girl, from B1F-1B*). Thus, participating *B1* and *B2* boys and girls did understand direct harm in anti-Islam biases similarly, but their understandings of the victims differed.

In contrast, *B2M-1B* boys, who did not show much interest in anti-Islam biases, showed awareness about world events in which non-Muslims in Muslim minority contexts were victims of direct violence. They defined morally (religious) decayed Muslims as perpetrators in such direct violence: “*some derailed Islamic groups spread around the globe, and are bombing and killing people*” (*S4, a grade 9 Muslim boy, from B2M-1B*). With this shared understanding of victims, *B2M-1B* and all other *B1* and *B2* Hindu and Muslim boys described a complex narrative about perpetrators: “*some people use the banners of Islam to bomb and kill people. But,*



terrorists like ISIS are never Muslims; they show no signs of following the Qur'an and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)" (ibid; also S3, a grade 9 Hindu boy, from -B2M-1B, & S4, a grade 6 Muslim boy, from B2M-1A). No B1 or B2 girl described victims and perpetrators in this way. Rather, B1F-1B girls directly contradicted their B1 and B2 male peers saying, "*The IS's are the biggest terrorist groups of the world now; and they are all Muslims*" (S1, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B1F-1B; others voiced agreement). Thus, participating B1 and B2 boys and girls shared their opinions and defended their beliefs about anti-Islam conflicts.

Participating B1 and B2 boys and girls were also worried about cultural violence in anti-Islam biases. Both groups of B1 girls and all B1 and B2 boys articulated Muslims as living in a world full of biases against them: "*in many countries, people treat Muslims as terrorists even if they are not*" (S1, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B1F-1B). In such contexts, Muslims often need to prove, "*I am a Muslim, but I am not a terrorist*" (S2, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1B; also S3, a grade 6 Muslim boy, from B2M-1A). All of these students understood such biases as harmful for Muslims in Muslim minority contexts.

However, only the participating B1 boys described how the media representation of Muslims escalated anti-Islam biases to such an extent. As these boys described, Indian/Hindu media representation of Islam as a bad religion had perpetuated hatred for Muslims in south Asia: "*Hindi films always portray Muslims as villains, terrorists, and all kinds of bad guys*" (S2, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1A). Globally, "*Christians, Jews and Hindus—I mean the non-Muslims—conspiringly present the Muslims as terrorists in the news and media*" (S5, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1B) by doing "*anti-Islamic deeds themselves and blaming these deeds on Muslims*" (S3, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1A). One B1 boy had had indirect experience about such cultural violence in the global context: "*In the USA, one of my brothers, who grew beard, was suspected as a terrorist and put in jail for one month*" (S2, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1A). Other B1 boys reported how the police had suspected and arrested their neighbours or relatives in B1 and B2 cities because of their Muslim look: "*Last night, the police arrested this guy from a student mess next to my house. He is not a terrorist. But the police suspected him as a Jamaat activist, because he has beard*" (S2, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1B). Compared to their B1 male and B1 and B2 female peers, these boys' indirect experience about anti-Islam conflicts seemed to have informed how they projected themselves as Muslims in Bangladesh and beyond.

In other words, participating male students' experience of anti-Islam bias, based on what happened to some people they knew, highlighted trust and distrust as obvious viewpoints of the victims and perpetrators. In particular, *B1* boys were aware of Muslim victims' psycho-cultural human needs when they described them as being globally distrusted and blamed for terrorism. Even the *B2* boys, who did not report any experience of the issue, described how they believed powerful non-Muslims to *"do bad things in the society and put the blame on Muslims,"* (*S4, a grade 6 Muslim boy, from B2M-1A*) in order to *"prove Muslims chaotic and terrorists"* (*S1, a grade 7 Muslim boy, from B2M-1A*). In such plots, as these *B1* and *B2* boys—and no girl—described, the perpetrators' interest was *"proving Islam wrong"* (*S3, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1B*) and *"obstructing Islam's growth and Muslims' success"* (*S2, a grade 6 Muslim boy, from B2M-1A*). While none of these boys backed up their beliefs with evidence from any direct lived experience of the conflict, their indirect experience—compared to their female peers—seemed to have helped them to understand these viewpoints.

*B1* and *B2* boys also described some socio-political factors to escalate this conflict about 'true' faith. For instance, participating boys linked Indian and Burmese hatred of Bangladeshi Muslims with their smuggling business, in which the economic interests were obvious: *"they smuggle all these inexpensive drugs, weapons, and substances in Bangladesh and sell them here for a very expensive price, so that they get* (*All B1M-1A boys, grade 8 Muslims together, excited*). Similarly, they said that *"the Jews want to conquer land"* (*S5, a grade 7 Muslim boy, from B2M-1A*) and *"the American Christians want oil out of the Middle East"* (*S1, a grade 9 Hindu boy, from B2M-1B*), which is why they waged wars in Syria, Iraq, Iran, and other Middle Eastern countries. Despite such understandings, participating *B1* and *B2* boys did not describe such social-structural dimensions of anti-Islam bias as any cause or escalator of the conflict.

Instead, participating *B1* and *B2* boys described religious moral decadence as the overarching cause and escalator of anti-Islam conflicts: *"people lack educated submission to the wills of God"* (*S1, a grade 7 Muslim boy, from B2M-1A*). While describing this factor, *B2M-1A* boys particularly defended their belief about the superiority of Islam: *"Religions other than Islam are incomplete and wrong. People of man-made religions like Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism and so on do not want to expose the mistakes in their religions—they want to insist that Islam is wrong instead"* (*S2, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1A*). Such notions explain the root conflict itself—e.g., *"people of one religion consider all other religions wrong"* (*S5, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1B*). In addition, these boys' idea, that people lack true

knowledge about their Holy Scriptures and religions, suggests how they understood the lack of religious knowledge as resulting into religious moral decadence. Hence, despite some understandings of cultural and social-structural factors, participating *B1* and *B2* boys—and no girls—understood individuals’ religious moral decadence as the root cause of all religious conflicts and their escalated direct and indirect symptoms.

### **Repertoire of Potential Solutions and Citizen Responses**

Participating *B1* and *B2* students’ understandings about the solutions to anti-Islam bias, like those of gender and resource issues, mainly centered on fixing people’s decayed religious morality. In addition, and consistent with their understandings of causes, all *B1* and half of the *B2* participating boys spoke about developing an individual and collective practice (culture) of critical studies of the Scriptures. They would do so to prevent people from socially constructing religions based on what they know about religions from families, friends, and institutions (i.e. cultural knowledge). In their view, critical Scriptural knowledge would help to unite people of all diverse faiths under the umbrella of one religion: *“there will be no other religion but one, which started with Prophet Adam (pbuh) and completed being revealed with Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)”* (*S3, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1B*). In other words, participating male students described all Scriptures as Islam and thus Islamization of the society as the solution to religious conflicts, without explaining who will teach which people to follow what Scriptures and how. *B2M-1A* boys did mention *Jihad* as an individual and collective effort to establish the rule of Qur’an; but they did so in relation to Bangladesh-based political rivalry about Islam related parties (discussed in chapter 6). In relation to Muslim versus non-Muslim conflicts about ‘true’ faiths and their various direct and indirect dimensions in the global context, none of the participating male students mentioned any peacemaking or citizenship capacities as useful.

### **Implemented Curriculum**

IME 6–10 curricula mandated lessons about inter-religious harmony and universal brotherhood above any religious differences: *“Fraternity and Communal Harmony”* (*Grade 9-10, pp. 123–126*). BGS 6–10, BL 6–10, and EL 6–10 curricula also required teachers to teach about affirming equal religious rights of the diverse identity groups as the fundament of Bengali nation. Most *B1* and *B2* BGS, BL, EL and IME teacher participants taught these lessons about equitable accommodations of all religious groups. However, none of these learning spaces were about religious conflicts between Muslims and non-Muslims about their faith.

On the contrary, some teachers described how their curricula represented some active challenges to peacebuilding. One B2M and two B1M male teachers, for instance, explained how some curriculum materials represented cultural bias against Muslims: *“the curriculum represents Muslims as scruffy and miserly while the non-Muslims as smart and broad minded”* (T2, a Muslim male, B1M). These teachers narrated an intersecting social-structural and cultural (enmity) dimension of the conflict to explain where such biases came from: they said that many powerful people in the National Curriculum and Textbook Board were Hindus, and blamed some Hindu viewpoints about Islam they said were embedded in the curriculum: *“the non-Muslims will never let the Muslims be strong, united, and powerful. They always want to prove their religions better than Islam by defaming and distorting Islam”* (T4, a Muslim male, from B2M). The B2F IME teacher was further worried about such non-Muslim conspiracy against Muslims, an instance of cultural violence: *“IME textbooks are distorting Islam by saying for example that animal slaughtered in the name of Hindu Gods and Goddesses are also Halal”* (T1, a Muslim male, from B2F). Beyond blaming such perpetrators for victimizing supposedly innocent Muslims, no teacher participant mentioned if they taught about faith-based conflicts in Bangladesh or globally.

In sum, participating male and female students’ experiences and understandings of anti-Islam bias conflicts were diverse. Whereas all participating male and female teachers and students across cities seemed to understand that the main conflict was between Muslims and non-Muslims about faith, there were disagreements among boys and girls across cities about victims and perpetrators, including their geographical locations. Implemented curriculum inadequately taught about these factors, including causes and solutions, in relation to anti-Islam conflicts; nor did the students describe anything beyond self-regulation of religious integrity and peacekeeping as solutions.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

In relation to the three types of conflict discussed above, implemented curriculum did not always intersect with the expressed concerns of participating boys and girls across cities. Only the B1 (the smaller city) girls reported that their teachers had taught about gender and resource related economic conflicts based on students’ lived experiences. Whereas, neither these girls nor their teachers were concerned about anti-Islam issues, such gaps between what participating students were concerned about and what their teachers had taught them were wider in other schools. In the underprivileged boys’ school (B1M), participating students were worried about

peacebuilding citizenship in relation to their lived experiences of all three human rights conflicts. Their teachers used official textbooks to teach them about these conflicts and their solutions, but in ways that remained distant from these boys' lived experiences. Such mismatch was a challenge for the participating boys and girls in the privileged city (*B2*) as well. Some *B2F* girls had experienced difficulties as they stood up against small-scale environmental pollution. The implemented curriculum was no help for these privileged girls. Similarly, *T4* (a Muslim male teacher) from *B2M* said that he had taught about religious conflicts regarding true faith; but the concerned boys (*B2M-1A*) did not report any explicit learning experience. What matched between participating students' concerns and implemented curriculum was the explicit lessons about religious dimensions of these conflicts. These lessons seemed inadequate for the students to understand their lived experiences of human rights conflicts beyond blaming bad Muslims and appreciating good Muslims.

Theories reviewed in chapter 2 describe how unbridged gaps between students' lived experience of un-democracy (and un-peace) and their school education can help to reproduce injustice and violence in the society. To minimize this risk, peacebuilding citizenship educators in the four Bangladeshi schools could explicitly help students to understand various dimensions of the above-discussed human rights conflicts, including potential nonviolent actions to remedy those dimensions, and to develop democratic capacities to reduce direct violence, recognize differences (change cultures of bias), and affirm social-structural conditions of just peace. For example, concerned *B2F* girls and *B1F* boys expressed the need to know how they could democratically confront the small- and large-scale polluters of environment. Similarly, *B1F* girls articulated that they needed to learn to make their neighbourhoods physically safer, culturally respectful, and socially just for women. Curriculum that teaches peacebuilding citizenship, as argued in chapter 2, would elicit and be informed by young citizens' inquiry and discussion about lived experience-based understandings of such conflict and help to build their peacebuilding capacities around all dimensions of these conflicts.

Implemented curriculum, based on government mandated textbooks, represented spaces for developing critical understandings about some direct and indirect dimensions of gender and resource related economic conflicts. Compared to these two human rights conflicts, such spaces were remarkably slim in relation to inter-religious (faith) conflicts. Despite challenges, the most promising area of peacebuilding citizenship education in these curricula included issues discussion. As discussed in chapter 4, official mandates (e.g., Bangladesh, 2012b) frequently

incorporated conflict issues and peacemaking skills as pedagogical opportunities; but these mandates never defined what discussing these issues meant: how educators would help students to understand multiple viewpoints, negotiate conflicting or contrasting interests/needs, rebuild relationships, affirm just peace, so on. Correlated with this gap, teacher and student participants (across gender and socio-economic contexts) narrated direct dimensions of human rights conflicts as issues of primary concern to them; yet outlined the problems in simple individual religious moral terms, blaming bad actors without probing systemic causes. They mentioned virtually no teaching-learning experiences using dialogue or other negotiation skills to probe conflicting interests or potential solutions without the use of direct violence. For willing educators, inclusion of opportunities for student expression and teaching about conflicting interests, viewpoints, causes, and solutions in relation to human rights conflicts would facilitate peacebuilding citizenship education. Such educators might need resources to help them to see those opportunities and to use the (already officially mandated, dialogic and student-centred) pedagogies to develop students' negotiation and other peacebuilding capacities.

Curriculum mandates', as well as participating teachers' and students', overt emphasis on individual religious belief dimensions of human rights conflicts represents a particular challenge to peacebuilding citizenship skill building. It describes bad individual *actors* (perpetrators) in conflict rather than the underlying social-structural and cultural *factors* causing and escalating the conflicting interests and beliefs. Participating teachers and their students also narrated human rights conflicts of their concern in ways that marginalized stakeholders' conflicting/contrasting needs and viewpoints by describing certain actors, and thus by ignoring specific factors, in conflict. Therefore, some intersections between lived experience and school education were also problematic. Especially, participating students and teachers had lived experience (models) of undemocratic understandings of the religious aspects of particular conflicts, which may have helped them to recognize cultural biases and attitudes and social-structural injustice as problems. However, correlated with the lack of explicit curriculum guidelines to inform or question one's lived experience, such expressed understandings showed very little to no recognition of specific systemic sources or solutions of the problems. Nor did they always specify democratic citizen activities to affirm cultural recognition and social-structural justice and resource redistribution as solutions to underlying human rights conflicts. Thus, by overtly focusing on simplified religious dimensions, implemented curriculum blocked participating students' development of democratic understandings of such dimensions of conflict and peacebuilding. Implemented peacebuilding

citizenship curriculum would help to develop citizens' in-depth, democratic understandings of all direct and indirect dimensions of conflict and peacebuilding, including but not limited to religion.

As discussed in the resource conflict section above, generalized—by official curriculum and the participating students and their teachers—religious moral framing of all human rights conflicts does suggest how religion includes social structural elements as well as cultural biases. However, without implemented curriculum support for relevant learning opportunities, the collective aspects of religion, which intersect with social-structural and cultural dimensions of conflict and peacebuilding, may remain un-probed and little understood. For instance, by describing corruption as synonymous with religious moral decadence, official curriculum (across the three conflict themes addressed above) does not invite teachers and students to analyze how individual and collective cultures and social structures could cause and (de-)escalate conflicts, or how citizens' religious morally informed behaviours in relation to tangible and intangible interests could shape their and other people's lived experience of these human rights conflicts. Whereas such religious dimensions of conflict are an unavoidably crucial element of peacebuilding citizenship education in the four Bangladeshi schools; participating teachers and students handled them in rather simple terms that may not have adequately facilitated peacebuilding citizenship.

Thus, the biggest challenge to peacebuilding citizenship education around the three human rights conflicts lies in how participating teachers actually implemented the curriculum. Most teachers avoided critical discussions of conflict, beyond lecturing about official textbook content. Whereas curriculum representation of actors and solutions regarding gender, resource, and religious conflicts already limited citizenship to mere character building, ignoring student-centered active learning pedagogies created additional gaps between students' lived experience and the implanted curriculum. Yet, by including spaces to teach about solutions, the curriculum does invite interested teachers to democratically engage with students and infuse their lived experiences to teach about citizenship for peacebuilding.

Pedagogical activities constitute a major (largely untapped) potential opportunity for developing students' peacebuilding citizenship inclinations and capacities around all direct and indirect dimensions of the three human rights conflict themes discussed above. As shown in this chapter, government curriculum mandates insufficiently guided the implementation of peacemaking skill-building opportunities. Mandating and supporting teachers' implementation of

active learning student centered pedagogies could invite teachers to invent pedagogical tools that could help to develop students' democratic skills to replace physical violence with dialogue and negotiation in direct confrontations between opposing parties in escalated conflict. For instance, participating teachers across schools described the affirmation of Islamic traditions as the affirmation of just peace for women, children, and diverse social, economic, and religious ethnic groups. In relation to gender and resource conflicts especially, such curriculum descriptions of how some tangible economic interests positioned stakeholders in escalated conflicts are spaces to analyze the links between direct and indirect dimensions of these conflicts. Linking lived experience of human rights conflicts with such pedagogical spaces, educators could teach both small-scale conflict resolution (peacemaking) skills and democratic citizenship for large-scale social reform. Such pedagogical infusions could help students to understand peacebuilding in terms of specific actors (citizens) and their actions (citizenship) for such reform.

As discussed within the three types of conflict, in contrast to how participating teachers implemented the curriculum, students often used vivid lived experience to analyze human rights conflicts; a particular strength that the students brought to the classroom. Especially, underprivileged *B1* boys and girls used direct and indirect lived experiences to describe how they understood gender, resource, and religious conflicts. Despite gender and resource conflicts being pervasive in the society (as reported by participating students across gender and cities), *B2* boys and girls lived more privileges and significantly less frequently such lived experiences to analyze these conflicts. Noticeably, those who had direct—or indirect but involving people with whom they could identify themselves—experience of such conflicts showed more nuanced understandings of conflicts than those who did not. Therefore, *B1* boys and girls wished that their teachers reduced the disjuncture between their lived experience and implemented curriculum in relation to human rights conflicts, especially gender and resource conflicts. A particular challenge for all *B2* girls and half of their privileged male peers (*B2M-1A*) lied in their lack of lived experience of conflict, which helped them to see only the direct dimensions of these conflicts.

Despite such differences, all participating *B1* and *B2* boys and girls, similar to the mandated and implemented curricula, generalized involved and affected people's religious morality as the sole factor to cause and escalate human right conflicts. Such over-generalizations further suggest how the implemented curricula ignored students' lived experience as learning opportunities across cities and types of conflict, perpetuating the understandings of conflicts in



blame terms. Lived experience remained as the participating young citizens', especially in the non-affluent city, key source of knowledge about conflict and citizenship for peacebuilding. Pedagogically building on such knowledge and experience about human rights conflicts could increase these students' school-based peacebuilding citizenship learning opportunities.

In particular, participating *B1* and *B2* city male and female students demonstrated some understandings of violent and non-violent solutions to human rights conflicts. Violent citizen actions helped to legitimize and reproduce an undemocratic response to conflicts, and thus represent an active challenge to peacebuilding citizenship. Ignoring such lived models of undemocratic citizen activism means officially ignoring opportunities for understanding diverse, conflicting viewpoints and their democratic solution. This mismatch between students' out-of-school and in-school learning spaces helps to reproduce injustice by blocking students' understandings beyond blaming others for being bad. Participating students did often describe non-violent approaches to conflict resolution and social reform. However, their descriptions rather represented an ideal world in which citizens interacted and cooperated with governments to affirm justice—i.e. democracy as lived experience as opposed to democracy just as a parliamentary tool. In this process, seeking help from powerful elites, peacefully protesting, holding governments and citizens jointly accountable for (un-)democratizing the society, and engaging in dialogue with government representatives to solve problems are all models of non-violent citizen activism. Irrespective of curriculum spaces and lived experience, participating underprivileged boys' and girls' such understandings are a breakthrough for willing educators to use formal education to teach peacebuilding citizenship capacities and inclinations.

## Chapter 6

### Findings: Participants' Perspectives and Experienced Curriculum on Governance Conflicts and Peacebuilding Citizenship Possibilities

Politics in Bangladesh reflects divisions among identity groups—e.g. Bangladesh Awami League (BAL), Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami (BJI), Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), and Jatiya Party (JP)—who hold conflicting viewpoints about who should govern Bangladesh and how. Historically, these groups have been typically treating each other as either allies or enemies (Siddiqi, 2011). In my experience as a Bangladeshi, elections usually manifest such polarization, in which officials in the government often abuse power and grant privilege to some over others (also Riaz, 2016a, 2016b). Such political or governance conflicts constitute a major challenge to peacebuilding citizenship in Bangladesh: some youth engage in politics and adopt or appreciate violent activism in response to conflicts, while others worry about being ‘good’ and safe and thus remain disengaged (Riaz & Raji, 2011). Hence, despite constitutional policies (e.g. Bangladesh, 1972/2011, articles 25 & 37), democratic non-violent citizen activism for affirming justice and peace is rare in Bangladesh. Based on this disparity, Bangladeshi citizens seem to have failed to adopt the constitutional values of justice and peace: Banks (2017) called this failed citizenship. Correlated to such failure, violent activism has never disappeared from the post liberation Bangladeshi politics (Datta, 2005), nor did it solve the conflicts. Yet, violent activism and disengagement from politics are the two most obvious lived models of political behaviour available to young citizens in Bangladesh.

How do selected young citizens in this context perceive peacebuilding citizenship in response to political conflicts? This chapter reports on how participating students understood various governance conflicts and the possibilities of peacebuilding in relation to those conflicts, in comparison with some of their teachers’ understandings and implemented curriculum on related topics. In other words, this chapter analyzes participating students’ understandings of some political conflicts and potential peacebuilding citizenship learning opportunities and challenges in those understandings and in the implemented curricula on related topics.

As discussed in chapter 4, participating teachers and students across gender and cities represented diverse social strata. The less violent city (*B1*) students were poorer compared to the violent city (*B2*) students. Also, within the context of *B1*, the lack of privilege was more visible

among boys than among girls. Further, in boys' and girls' schools in both cities, teachers seemed to live as socio-economically more marginalized than their students, even though *B2* teachers were clearly more privileged than *B1* teachers. Therefore, based on lived experiences, participating *B1* and *B2* boys' and girls' concerns and understandings about governance (school or education related and beyond) conflicts would vary, and so would their teachers' concerns and understandings.

Briefly, in their analyses of governance conflicts, participating students referred to lived experience more often than the implemented curricula. In contrast, teachers across schools showed unwillingness to teach about these conflicts. Correlated to this mismatch, participating students' understandings about these conflicts varied widely from what their teachers had taught using the official curriculum texts. Further, participating *B1* students understood—as they analyzed these conflicts drawing on lived experience—various direct and indirect dimensions of these conflicts differently from how participating *B2* students understood them. Also, girls across cities showed different understandings about the problem than their male peers across cities. It initially seemed that students and teachers in all schools similarly understood religious moral degeneration as the causes and religious moral regeneration as the solution to these conflicts. However, careful investigation shows that participating boys' and girls' (across cities) understandings of religious moral regeneration often varied. A detailed discussion of such similarities and gaps follows.

### **Governance Conflicts and Peacebuilding Citizenship Education**

In chapter 2, I argued that curriculum can (re)shape citizenship roles by democratically addressing—or uncritically ignoring—lived social conflicts and their potential non-violent and just-for-all solutions. Educational practices that exclude attention to lived social conflicts may contribute to (re)producing citizens' compliance by blocking citizenship for democracy (Davies, 2005; Vanner, Akseer, Kovinthan, 2017), and to maintaining the *status quo* by normalizing existing governance patterns. In contrast to such education that blocks peacebuilding, school-based participation in understanding contrasting viewpoints on social conflicts and on democratic options for solving them can contribute to building citizens' capacities—i.e. knowledge, skills and moral judgements—to affirm justice and peace (*ibid*; Bajaj, 2016; Bickmore, Kaderi, & Guerra-Sua, 2017). School may—or may not—provide opportunities for building such capacities. Regardless, young citizens' lived experience can be expected to help shape their understandings of social and political conflicts and how to respond to these conflicts.

Understanding governance conflicts means comprehensive knowledge about various direct and indirect dimensions of these conflicts and their solutions (see chapter 3 for details). In particular, citizens would ideally distinguish violence from conflict. Such distinctions have potential for building citizens' capacities and inclination for peacebuilding by helping them to address conflicting viewpoints, their causes and (de-)escalators, reduce harm, mend relationships, and solve conflicts by addressing its roots and by affirming justice (Bickmore, 2005; Bickmore, Kaderi & Guerra-Sua, 2017; Kaderi, 2014b). Further, such understandings about conflicts could build educational spaces to facilitate constructive conflict transformation and build just peace (Lederach, 2006) by democratically addressing governance conflicts in Bangladesh.

With 89.1% Muslims (CIA, 2018), Bangladesh could represent Islam, which manifests justice, peace, and non-violence as defined in the Qur'an and modelled by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) (Gandhi, 1927; Köylü, 2004). However, narratives about past and contemporary conflicts continue to divide people, and the divided people's violent response to conflicts dominates citizens' lived experience in Bangladeshi (Datta, 2005; Riaz & Raji, 2011). In such a political context, youths' repertoires of alternatives to violence as well as activism for affirming just peace could explain further opportunities and challenges for peacebuilding citizenship learning.

Curriculum goes beyond just government mandates, and includes how the content is taught (Aoki, 2012; Dewey, 1987; Egan, 2003b, 2003c). Such broad understandings help educators to employ pedagogy to democratize the lived curriculum (Dewey, 1902; Pinar, 1999), especially when government mandates prove inadequate or represent an active challenge to peacebuilding citizenship education. Hence, irrespective of how official mandates help to build—or block—peace, participating Bangladeshi educators could always help their students to understand peacebuilding citizenship in relation to conflicts that mattered to them.

This findings chapter is organized around two types of political conflicts of key concern to participating students. These are: (1) school and educational governance conflicts, including authority, discipline, money (e.g. private tutoring), and achievement issues involving teachers, students, students' families, and powerful elites; and (2) political polarization issues, including conflicts about elections, parliamentary government formation, and the actual governance. Within each of these conflicts, the analysis zeroes in on some key concepts in peacebuilding citizenship education: understandings of conflict, understandings of potential solutions, and links—or gaps—between lived experiences of conflict and the implemented curriculum. After

outlining how participating students expressed—or overlooked—such understandings around the two types of conflicts, I conclude by discussing the most promising opportunities and challenges embedded in students’ understandings and teachers’ implemented curriculum across types of conflict and across gender and cities.

### **School and Educational Governance Conflicts**

Image prompts used in this research included corporal punishment as the only school and educational governance issue. All participating *B1* boys and girls and all *B2* boys expressed concern about this problem. Additionally, all participating *B1* and *B2* boys and girls themselves raised concern, although not prompted, about how private tutoring and exam corruption affected their lives. For instance, *B2F* girls, despite being interested in the topics, did not participate with full energy in the workshop; and *B2F-1A* girls explained why: they were tired because they had to attend early morning private coaching, then school, and then after school private coaching every day. Privileged *B2* boys further added how admission corruption—in which some families bribe teachers to get their children admitted into particular schools—blocked quality education for many deserving students in *B2* city. Thus, such relevant conflict issues, that participating *B1* and *B2* boys and girls brought up on their own interest, were certainly some primary informers of their lived experience about education.

In direct contrast to the concerns raised by their students, none of the teacher participants expressed concern about any school governance issues. Their fear about educational governance was more political in nature than those of their students: all *B1* and *B2* teacher participants were worried about frequent government revisions of history content across curricula, whereas none of their students expressed concerns about history education. Further, most of these teachers vetoed the discussion of caning and thus other relevant issues with their students, while their students blamed educators and the education system for the problems they suffered. These teachers blamed their students for not being serious about education: “*Nowadays students do not care about learning; all they want is good marks*” (*T2, a Muslim male, from B1M*), while participating students turned the blame back on their teachers: “*Our teachers do not care about what we learn; all they want is money. They want us to join them for private tuition. They beat and give poor marks to those who do not*” (*S3, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1B*). Hence, there is a clear conflict between the students and their teachers about education, about which teacher participants across schools showed complete ignorance.

In short, many of these students' lived experience with governance and discipline conflicts in education revealed conflict with their teachers (regarding caning, private tutoring, exam corruption, and so forth). These students, especially those who came from underprivileged contexts, were interested to discuss education and school governance related tangible issues that shaped their day-to-day experiences in school and outside. Their teachers, on the contrary, showed concern about rather idealistic issues: what history curricula should and should not look like. Such mismatch of concern describes a missed opportunity for peacebuilding citizenship education in the four schools chosen in this thesis research.

### **Understandings of Conflict**

All participating *B1* boys and girls experienced some power and authority conflicts between their teachers and themselves. In particular, they described their teachers as interested in earning extra money through private tutoring, and in exercising or demonstrating their authority by disciplining them. Conflicting with such teacher interests, these students needed fair education. In this conflict, the non-compliant students were the victims: *"That somebody could not do the homework does not mean that a teacher has to beat him"* (S4, a grade 8 Hindu girl, from *B1F-1B*); and *"you are safe from all the beating if you go to the teacher for private tuition"* (S5, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from *B1M-1B*). In their personal stories of such victimhood, such physical/direct violence was common across *B1* boys' and girls' and *B2* boys' schools: students would get beaten for *"not performing assigned educational tasks well or not behaving well"* (S1, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from *B1F-1B*).

In relation to such conflicts, not all students experienced violence the same way. While *B2M* boys (both groups) said that they had never been caned in their current or previous schools, one *1B* boy mentioned how he was disciplined in *B2M*: *"there is only one teacher in our school who beats students. Last year, he grabbed my hair and pulled them hard"* (S4, a grade 9 Muslim boy, from *B2M-1B*). Compared to this long past experience, participating boys in the poorer city had very recently experienced more intense corporal punishment in school: *"Our teachers beat us with cane, ruler-scale, duster, boughs, whatever"* (S5, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from *B1M-1B*). Beyond *B1M* school, boys in this poorer city were overall more frequent victims of such direct violence than *B2* boys. *B1M-1B-S3mM8*'s brother, who went to XXX [a *B1* non-government primary school], had just been caned the day before *B1M-SFG-1* workshop: *"XXX [a male teacher] caned my little brother yesterday. From this caning, he has 20 bruises on his body and a high fever now"* (S3, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from *B1M-1B*). *B1F* girls (both groups) further

reported how *B1* boys were severely disciplined: “Some days ago, XXX [a male teacher] in XXX [another non-government *B1* boys’ school] caned a student, and by accident hit one of his eyes” (*S4*, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from *B1F-1A*); and “his injured eye turned permanently blind” (*S1*, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from *B1F-1A*). Thus, socioeconomic status seems to have shaped how much physical violence participating boys experienced.

Compared to the boys, girls participating in this research experienced considerably lower corporal punishment. Both groups of *B1* girls had experienced some corporal punishment prior to joining *B1F*: “XXX [a male teacher] in XXX [a non-government co-education school in *B1*] used to cane us whenever he liked” (*S1*, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from *B1F-1A*). None of them reported any such experience in *B1F*. In contrast with these girls, their *B2* female peers confirmed that they had zero experience of corporal punishment in any of the schools they attended in *B2*, including *B2F*. They described such school-based physical violence only based on what they had heard/read about other people. Hence, in terms of the intensity of direct violence in school, *B1F* girls’ experience could be comparable with only one *B2M* boy’s experience. Yet, the latter never experienced caning, whereas *B1F* girls (both groups) had some experience of being caned. Thus, among the participating students in this research, girls with higher socioeconomic status experienced no physical violence in school, whereas girls with lower economic status had suffered such violence more than the privileged boys and girls. In both cities, boys were victims of more intense school-based direct violence than girls, the poorer boys being the most brutally disciplined.

Participating *B1* and *B2* boys and girls variously understood rights issues, including some social-structural factors, involved in educational governance conflicts. For example, *B2M-1B* boys described how corrupt (or underpaid) teachers blocked fair access to education by not sincerely teaching in school: “they want our money; they teach us better in private coaching than in school” (*S3*, a grade 9 Hindu boy, from *B2M-1B*). However, these privileged boys expressed no worry about their own educational rights/achievement. Instead, they justified their compliance with this corrupt educational trend: “If you do not go to their private coaching, you always get bad marks” (*S4*, a grade 9 Muslim boy, from *B2M-1B*). Whereas their privileged female peers were silent about such issues, the poorer boys and girls understood corrupt teachers’ interests in the same way as these privileged boys. Further, like the *B2M-1B* boys, *B1F-1A* girls also described how they joined private coaching to get good marks: “Our teachers will not give us marks if we do not attend their private tuition” (All *B1F-1A* girls, grade 8 Hindus

and Muslims, together). In direct contrast to these students, participating *BIM* boys described private tutoring as violence by blocking their own fair access to education: *“The monthly fee for private tuition is minimum 700 Taka. I and a lot of my friends cannot afford such education”* (S1, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from *BIM-1B*). Therefore, poorer boys described themselves as social-structurally more severely affected by abusive educational governance than all of their male and female peers.

*BIM-1B* boys also expressed the deepest fears about equitable test scores—another social-structural (access) factor in relation to educational governance conflict—in board exams. All participating *BIM* boys reported economic hardship, and how they could not overcome the school level corruption. In addition, *BIM-1B* boys reported how corrupt teachers and wealthy and powerful elites jointly leaked out board exam questions. Those who could afford these question papers usually did better on the exams; *“those who study throughout the year often do badly in exams because of this corrupt practice”* (S1, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from *BIM-1B*). These boys named the then Education Minister as the main actor, and to have political interests, in such corrupt educational governance: *“All board exam questions get leaked, but XXX [Education Minister’s name] does not take any actions”* (S3, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from *BIM-1B*), because *“he is not interested in solving the problem... he wants to boast about the government’s success in educational development by showing that the pass rate has gone up”* (S1, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from *BIM-1B*). As victims, *BIM-1B* boys were thus particularly concerned about wealth and political power dominated justice and rights to education—the social structural dimension of educational governance conflict: *“currently there is no value of merit. Power and money have become everything”* (*ibid*). B2 boys and girls were far more privileged than *BIM* boys and did not describe this aspect of the conflict at all, whereas their less privileged female peers reported neither economic hardship nor worries about board exams.

Only a few student participants described how beliefs and biases—i.e., cultural factors—worked in relation to school and educational governance conflicts. In particular, only one group of *B1* girls described their teachers’ own schooling experience and traditional belief, about corporal punishment’s positive roles in raising kids, as responsible for school-based direct violence: *“in XXX [a B1 elementary school] Mr. XXX [a male teacher] said, “despite government banning, there is no way of educating children without caning them. We must beat them to make them good people””* (S1, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from *B1F-1B*). Other than this one example, cultural dimensions of school and educational governance remained implicit. For



example, participating *BIM* boys and their *BIF* and *B2M* peers did not explicitly mention any bias or belief factor linked with the social structural dimension described above. Their analyses of private tutoring business did imply how individual norms—a cultural dimension—were closely related to the social structural dimension of the conflict. However, participating students expressed concern only about fair access to learning and tests. Thus, cultural dimensions remained less vivid in all participating students' analyses of school and educational governance conflicts.

None of the participating male and female students in either context explicitly analyzed any cultural or social-structural factor as causing or escalating school and educational governance conflicts, in response to my questions in the focus group. Instead, all participating boys and girls across socio-economic contexts described perpetrators as bad individuals. They did so by describing how their religious morality had decayed in spite of living in a Muslim majority context: e.g., the perpetrators were greedy for money, unlawfully violent and authoritarian, and dishonest. Whatever social-structural and cultural factors these participants narrated were mentioned as symptoms of this overarching cause and escalator of the conflict—religious moral decadence. Thus, students used religious moral language to explain the other intersecting direct and indirect dimensions of educational governance conflicts.

The above understandings of my findings emerged later in my analysis process, so I did not report them back to the participating students and teachers in the second round of focus group workshops. Thus, participants did not have an opportunity to verify or respond to these understandings.

### **Repertoire of Potential (Citizen) Responses to Conflict**

Participating *BIF*, *BIM*, and *B2M* students mainly remained struck by their frustrations when asked during focus group discussions how violence could be reduced and justice could be affirmed in relation to school and educational governance conflicts. *B2M-1B* boys in particular, described solutions in passive verbs—e.g., “*bribing for admission has to be stopped*” (*S3, a grade 9 Hindu boy, from B2M-1B*)—without specifying who would solve the problems, how. Compared to these *B2* boys, participating *B1* boys and girls often described government as responsible to control citizens' violent (directly and indirectly) behaviours: “*The government has to ensure that exam questions are not leaked*” (*S2, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from BIM-1B*). In addition, only the two groups of *B1* girls mentioned their selves as actors, planning to do peaceful protests like human chains to raise public awareness against corrupt school and

educational governance. Beyond a few such mentions of specific actors and actions, participating male and female students often seemed to just wish that school and educational governance in their country got better.

### **Implemented Curriculum**

According to teacher and student participants' reports in their respective focus groups, none of the participating teachers taught about any school or educational governance issues. Nor were there many mentions of such issues in the official curricula. Only IME 9-10 textbook briefly mentioned exam corruption, yet not as a social conflict. Instead, it addressed young citizens' religious morality overall and reminded them why they should not commit fraud: *"Fraud means to deceive, deprive, hoodwink, cheat, play false, etc. It is a special type of lying. In the Islamic terminology, seeking self-interest by means of concealing the real phenomenon through deceit or disguise is termed as fraud"* (IME 9-10, p. 141). This excerpt explained fraudulence by giving examples mainly about tangible interest factors, e.g. in relation to *"financial transactions, trade and commerce,"* telling students to avoid giving *"less in weight, fake currency notes, concealing defects of products...etc."* (ibid). However, within these examples of social-structural interest-based conflicts, school-based situations appeared only as secondary examples: *"Adopting unfair means in examinations, causing damage to the rights of others...are prominent instances of fraud"* (ibid). BL, EL and BGS curricula also explicitly encouraged students to be good and honest: e.g., *"the Prophet (SAWS) said "By Him to Whom belongs my life, whoever takes bribe will appear in the Doomsday along with whatever he took." He (SAWS) announced Hell for those who take bribe and those who pay bribe"* (IME 8, p. 99). These lessons could indirectly relate, but did not explicitly teach about any stakeholders' tangible social interests and intangible cultural biases in relation to school and educational governance conflicts of concern to participating students.

When prompted in the focus group discussions about caning, participating teachers either remained silent or blamed students for not being serious about learning, but always declared that they did not use corporal punishment in school. In direct contrast to such teacher reports, *B1F*, *B1M*, and *B2M* student participants (as discussed above) turned the blame back on their teachers for not being serious about teaching in school, and also described how corporal punishment still existed in some of their schools. Further, there was no textbook lesson in relation to any sort of physical violence in school. Hence, this thesis study lacks data about implemented curriculum and teacher perspectives relating to any teacher-student conflicts.

Participating teachers across gender and socio-economic contexts expressed competition between Bangladesh Awami League (BAL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) about using official curriculum in favour of their political goals as the main educational governance conflict of their concern. They thoroughly narrated how each government abused power and revised liberation and election-related history texts—a social-structural dimension of the conflict. Also, they reported that the current revised curriculum had intensely essentialized the contributions of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in liberating Bangladesh and building the nation. Further, these teachers narrated some underlying cultural (inter-party bias) factors in their explanations of the effects and purposes of such curriculum revisions. Although it is possible that they were hesitant to express political disagreements with one another in the focus groups, they all seemed to agree that such revised texts had demonized *“the roles and sacrifices of ex-Presidents Ziaur Rahman and Hussain M. Ershad in developing the country”* (T1, a Muslim male, from B2F; also T3, a Muslim male, from B1F; T2, a Muslim male, from B2M; T2, a Muslim male, from B1M; & T4, a Muslim male, from B1M). They also seemed to agree that governing parties had revised history texts in this way *“in order to brainwash young citizens and gain their blind supports in politics”* (T3, a Muslim male from B1F). Therefore, participating teachers across contexts expressed understandings of this educational governance conflict that seemed to suggest a need for more effective regulation of governments’ role (multi-party and expert representation) in revising curriculum texts.

Whereas all teacher participants expressed understandings of conflicting interests in relation to abusive curriculum revisions, only one teacher said that he had explicitly taught about these factors: *“I am not scared; I teach the truth, and my students must know”* (T4, a Muslim male, from B2M). Others explained conflicting viewpoints in such curriculum revisions in the same way as B2M-T4mM—e.g., *“Every government preaches its own version of the history as the truth, in order to gain the students’ support in politics”* (T1, a Muslim male, from B2F)—but they never said that they taught about these viewpoints. Also, participating B1 and B2 city male and female students expressed zero interest in who liberated the country and who built the nation; they all cared about fair governance and just peace in Bangladesh. Thus, there was a wide gap between the concerns of participating students and teachers, and what the teachers cared about and said they actually taught, in relation to school and educational governance conflicts.

Further, B1F-T1mM, B1F-T2fM, B1F-T3mM, B1M-T2mM, B2F-T1mM, and B2F-T4fM were particularly worried about long-term consequences of another social-structural dimension

of educational governance conflict around history texts—how powerful elites’ control of education blocked implementation of authentic, critical history education: *“This is totally about power. When I taught during BNP rule, history was in their favour. During BAL rule now, and history is differently written solely to favour them. I am confused! What should I teach?”* (T3, a Muslim male, from B1F; T1, a Muslim male, from B1F agreed). These teachers were also worried about how such government-controlled history curricula perpetuated the cultural attitude of ‘othering’. Some of these teachers expressed dejection about having to teach stereotypes about political ‘others’ and normalize physical violence against ‘them’—the cultural dimension of this conflict: *“BAL curriculum describes BJI as Pakistani agents, and BNP and BJI as their joint enemies. Elections inspire the spirit of independence in BAL activists; then they fight and kill each other”* (T3, a Muslim male, from B1F). They were also worried about how direct violence—i.e. fighting and killing—in relation to governance conflicts was caused by hatred, and how the frequently revised history curricula perpetuated such biases by romanticizing certain political personnel while demonizing others: *“It is now normal—during BAL rule, we teach Sheikh Mujib as the hero and Zia and Ershad as devils; and During BNP rule we teach that Zia was the real hero for Bangladesh”* (T4, a Muslim male, from B2M). Therefore, some teachers across schools were worried about how citizens’ understandings about historical events contributed to the recurrent physical violence in Bangladesh’s politics.

Despite such understandings about various dimensions of governance conflicts, all other participating teachers except B2M-T4mM reported (during both TFGs) how they rather avoided teaching about these issues. They did so to avoid the risk involved in contradicting government-controlled history texts: *“I cannot stand up against the government. The most I can do is this: I teach my students to not believe any of these stories; there are truths and lies in both narratives”* (T4, a Muslim male, from B2F). Also, they did so because they did not have the capacity to solve this educational conflict: *“I do not see a solution. What can we do? Tell us. We want to learn if there is way”* (T3, a Muslim male, from B1F, typical teacher frustration). Hence, they told their students to critically enquire about historical events and learn from family members and neighbours who had experienced the events. Virtually all of these teachers said that they had told their students to learn history texts only to pass the exams, and not to believe. *“This means that we are not trying to build peace through education. Instead, we are teaching our students how to tell a lie,”* (*ibid*, others laughed and agreed). However, this also means that to some extent these teachers were facilitating critical inquiry-based history learning: *“I ask my students to speak with*

*and learn history from their family members and other common people: from those who experienced the war and those whose family members experienced it” (T2, a Muslim male, from B2M).* Hence, these teachers were doing some peacebuilding citizenship teaching in relation to educational governance conflict, but based on what they found safe to do.

In direct contrast with these teachers’ concern, none of the *B1* and *B2* boys and girls mentioned what they were taught about history. Nor were these students concerned about this issue.

In sum, all privileged city boys and all of their underprivileged male and female peers were concerned about direct and indirect violence embedded in school’s physical and structural environments. *B2F* girls were exceptions in this picture: they were aware of all these issues, but were not particularly worried. In fact, gender and socio-economic status did seem to determine participating students’ experiences and concerns about these conflicts. As reported by student participants in respective schools, boys experienced more physical violence than their female peers in each city. Participating students’ experience in the poorer city further suggested that boys were beaten more severely than the girls by their teachers. Further, denial of equitable access to education common across schools; but only the poorer boys and girls expressed feeling frustrated by this because they could not always afford private coaching. Similarly, the privileged boys and girls knew about exam corruption and the associated challenges to educational quality and outputs; but they expressed minimal concern about this issue. Therefore, students’ gender and socio-economic status wise lived experience shaped what boys and girls in each city wanted to learn about school and educational governance.

Teachers across schools and gender taught nothing to improve students’ experiences of violence in school. Instead, they taught about what concerned them in relation to political governance of education. These teachers implied having taught their students how government-controlled curriculum represented denial of citizens’ access to fair understandings of their past, which in turn reproduced and legitimized violence Bangladesh’s politics. Whereas these teachers meant to build their peacebuilding citizenship capacities and inclinations by teaching them about critical inquiry-based history learning from lived sources, none of the students seemed to care about this political conflict embedded in their curriculum.

### **Beyond school: political polarization in Bangladeshi governance**

Participating *B1* and *B2* boys and girls talked about a few political polarization issues: viz. abuse of power, controversy around Islamic political group BJI, and fights over democracy

and election. All *B1* student participants described themselves as victims, and expressed worries particularly about their directly and indirectly lived experiences with election conflicts and corrupt governance. In direct contrast with these underprivileged students, their urban male and female peers only briefly mentioned how severely the political and governance problems affected people in general. Despite being worried about such issues, the only group of richer students (*B2F-1A*) who analyzed some of these problems were concerned with political affiliates' immorality instead of any governance conflict. Further, privileged older boys (*B2M-1B*) described the reason why they rather chose to analyze something else: *"let's talk about conflicts about which we can do something"* (*S4, a grade 9 Muslim male, from B2M-1B*, others agreed). Thus, participating *B1* and *B2* boys and girls located themselves variously in political and governance conflict, and prioritized what they wanted to analyze.

In contrast with these students, their teacher participants only implicitly suggested that they too were worried about the above-mentioned political and governance issues. Among them, only the *B2F* female teachers and two *B1F* teachers (*T1 & T3, both Muslim males*) directly voiced concern about parliamentary election issues: *"There is no true democracy in this country; there has never been"* (*T3, T2 & T4, all Muslim females, from B2F, together, excited*). These teachers also wished to teach about these issues: *"If we remain scared of the government forever and stay away from teaching about these issues, our fate will never be better"* (*T4, a Muslim female, from B2F*). However, in practice, they were all like *B2F-T1mM*; scared about discussing political issues in school. They described teaching about political and governance conflicts as subversive to the state: *"the government banned any discussion of hartal [= strike and non-cooperation as a demonstration of disagreement and protest] in school, because it manifests government's failure"* (*T1, a Muslim male, from B2F; T2 and T3, Muslim females, from B2F* agreed). Hence, most *B1* and *B2* city teachers advised that I do not talk about political issues with their students: *"Do not talk about politics; our students are not ready for it yet; they are too young"* (*T1, Muslim male, from B1F*). Hence, despite having similar concern as students, none of the *B1* and *B2* city teachers actually taught anything about any such issues.

Further, when participating students expressed concern about political and governance conflicts, they always wanted to learn how justice and peace could be affirmed in Bangladesh, not which political party could—or could not—achieve it. Compared to these students, teacher participants across schools described conflicting BAL and BNP narratives about historical events as their primary concern. In particular, these teachers were frustrated about government revisions

of history texts, whereas none of their students expressed concern about history narratives. Thus, these teachers' and their selected students' teaching-learning priorities in relation to political and governance conflicts varied. Yet, it was obvious how all participating teachers and their students across gender and cities cared about the quality of liveable democracy and just peace, rather than the actual political rivalry around which party would win elections and run the government.

### Understandings of Conflict

During student focus group workshop 1, Bangladesh's politics was overshadowed by violent activism—e.g., hartal, bombing, and killing—in response to parliamentary election conflicts. Amidst such violence, participating boys and girls across cities uniformly understood political polarization conflict and its direct dimensions. They all said that in Bangladesh's politics the main conflict is between BAL chairperson Sheikh Hasina and BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia about their political legacies to governance. For example, *B1M-1B* boys said that Sheikh Hasina joined politics because Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (her father) *“and his entire family, except two daughters who were abroad, were brutally assassinated in 1975;”* and his unpaid contributions towards liberating Bangladesh entitled her to form this standpoint, *“I will not let anybody else than my family members rule this country”* (S3, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from *B1M-1B*). These boys also described how BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia disagreed with this view: *“Khaleda Zia thinks that Ziaur Rahman was the ‘true’ developer of Bangladesh. His brutal assassination in 1981 entitled his wife [Khaleda Zia] and his heirs to rule Bangladesh”* (S4, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from *B1M-1B*). Therefore, participating *B1* and *B2* boys and girls understood the main conflict in Bangladesh's politics as rooted in dynastic histories.

Despite understanding the underlying conflict, participating *B1* and *B2* boys and girls across schools were worried about its direct violence symptoms. In their view, *“during elections, these two ladies [BAL and BNP chiefs] demonstrate their disagreements through hartals. In hartals, their activists vandalize and burn public properties and kill the public (All B1M-1A boys, Muslims, shouted together excitedly). These students also uniformly understood BAL and BNP chiefs' interests in directing such harm: “they want power, but also to take revenge upon opposition”* (S3, a grade 9 Hindu male, from *B2M-1B*). In their view, perpetrators like BAL, BNP, and BJI leaders and their activists, police, and other government officials also had similar social-structural (power) and cultural (revenge, greed) interests as they enacted such direct violence: *“greed for power and money drive some people crazy; they get involved in such war [the then election violence]”* (S4, a grade 9 Muslim girl, from *B2F-1A*, also S3, a grade 8 Muslim

*girl, from B2F-1B*). Across schools, boys and girls also similarly listed the victims of such direct violence: political oppositions that want power, their affiliates and activists, and especially the BJI people who want “*Islamic Sharia law in Bangladesh*” (*S2, a grade 8 Hindu girl, from B1F-1A*). Noticeably, all of these boys and girls understood that more of the common people—those not directly demonstrating the same interests as political affiliates—were more innocent victims of such physical harm than political affiliates. Thus, boys and girls from both cities similarly understood the direct dimensions of escalated political polarization.

However, participating students’ experience of the conflict varied across genders and across the two cities. *B2* boys and girls described such direct violence as occurring almost every day in the city, as if they were reading newspaper stories. *B2* girls particularly described how they remained physically unharmed by such violence. In contrast to these students, all *B1* boys’ and girls’ group included students whose families or friends experienced direct violence related to political polarization: “*during the January 5 election, my father was a presiding officer... BAL terrorists blasted petrol bombs in all voting centers around my father’s*” (*S1, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B1F-1B*). Compared to the *B1* girls and the *B2* boys and girls moreover, some *B1* boys described how they had ended up amidst some fighting and managed to be safe somehow. In particular contrast with the *B2* students who generalized perpetrators, *B1* boys and girls named specific actors of such violence: “*people never elected the B1 MP and the B1 Mayor. They gained power bribing and beating people, and doing vote plundering*” (*S4, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B1F-1A*). *B1* boys, compared to *B1* girls and all *B2* students, also had family members or neighbours who had been arrested and beaten by BAL activists and the police because they looked like BJI activists. Whereas *B1F* girls agreed that BJI people were often target victims in recent political fights, none of the *B2* students expressed such distrust of the government party. Thus, context and lived experience seem to have helped participating students’ analyses of stakeholders and their viewpoints in direct political rivalries.

Participating *B1* and *B2* boys and girls also understood some social-structural and cultural dimensions of political polarization uniformly. Inclusion of BJI in politics became general knowledge at the time when SFG-1 was conducted; and students from both cities expressed similar ideas about the issue. All of them described denial of BJI’s political rights—a social-structural factor—as violence: “*Violence does not constitute mere killing; blocking people’s rights is also violence*” (*S1, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B2F-1B*). In the view of these students, BAL and BNP chiefs victimized the people with Islamic political identities by delivering the



narratives about their past in certain ways and normalizing a notion—hence the cultural dimension—that Islam related political parties cannot exist in Bangladesh “*except by coming under the umbrella of either BAL or BNP*” (S3, a grade 6 Muslim boy, from B2M-1A). Boys and girls from both cities seemed to agree that both Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina “*want this huge population of Bangladesh to be their allies. If not, they are enemies*” (All B1M-1B Muslim and Hindu boys together, excited). Hence, all participating students across gender and cities showed similar understandings about actors and their viewpoints in BJI inclusion related social-structural and cultural factors in relation to political rivalry in Bangladesh.

Not all of these students positioned themselves in relation to indirect harm in the same way. B1 city boys and girls expressed worry that their access to education was blocked due to hartals: “*Our school often remains closed for hartals*” (S3, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B1F-1B), which “*has ruined our education*” (S2, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B1F-1B). B2 boys and girls knew that political rivalries did affect education in this way: “*for the last the three months, we could not come to school*” (S2, S3 & S4, grade 9 Muslim girls, from B2F-1A); “*due to hartals, petrol bombing, and grenade attacks, everybody is scared*” (S4, a grade 9 Muslim boy, & S1, a grade 9 Hindu boy, from B2M-1B). However, these boys and girls did not identify themselves as victims in the same way as B1 students did. B2 students had to go to morning and evening shift private coaching centers to make up for the education they missed: “*we are now suffering due to BAL-BNP conflicts*” (S1, a grade 9 Muslim girl, from B2F-1A). In direct contrast with these privileged students, when B1 students said that their education was ‘ruined’, they rarely had opportunities to make up. Thus, B1 and B2 students’ lived experience of this social-structural dimension of political polarization varied based on their socioeconomic contexts.

Despite varied understandings about conflict, participating students across gender and cities uniformly narrated its causes using religious moral terms. For example, “*people in politics express their viewpoints immorally. They have no fear of Allah! They do whatever they wish, careless about who dies and who lives hungry*” (S1, a grade 9 Muslim girl, from B2F-1A). These students often overlooked causal relationships between direct and the many indirect aspects of the conflict. In their view, revenge and greed were the two sole factors behind all direct and indirect violence in politics: “*political leaders are too greedy; Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina want to compensate their familial loss by being in power at any cost*” (S1, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1B). They described this individualized—(psycho-)cultural—factor as corruption, defining corruption as a symptom of religious moral decadence: “*when people’s religious*

*morality decays, they become corrupt, and so they abuse power, deny people's rights, and allow lawlessness to reap personal benefits*" (S5, a grade 7 Muslim boy, from B2M-1A). Hence, all participating B1 and B2 boys and girls were hopeless to some extent about the corrupt present of Bangladesh compared to its glorious past: *"only Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the true patriot—others all do politics for money"* (S2, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1B); *"they never do politics for the development and democracy in the country"* (S4, a grade 6 Muslim boy, from B2M-1A). Therefore, corruption or religious moral decadence was the only factor they described as causes and escalators of all political polarization conflicts in Bangladesh.

### **Repertoire of Potential (Citizen) Responses to Conflict**

Participating B1 and B2 boys and girls, consistent with their understandings of causes, either explicitly voiced or implicitly suggested that fixing people's religious morality would solve all political polarization conflicts. Particularly, B2 younger boys (B2M-1A) explicitly described three levels of moral regeneration. Other groups of B2 and B1 boys and girls often mentioned how particular morally improved behaviours would solve conflicts, without labeling such behaviour change as religious moral improvement. At other times, they did call it religious moral regeneration: *"for better politics and governance, the political activists and common people all have to be morally good, following their own religions"* (S1, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B2F-1B). Either way, all participating B1 and B2 boys and girls described individuals' religious moral regeneration as the only way to mitigate politics and governance conflicts in Bangladesh.

All participating students said they wished that individuals in politics, governance and other social situations would be good human beings—compliant with standards of just peace for all. In their view and as represented in curriculum texts, there was a time in the history of Bangladesh, compared to its contemporary corrupt politics, when patriotic leaders had understood justice in that way: *"only Sheikh Mujibur Rahman wanted justice in this country"* (S2, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1B). Participating B1 and B2 boys and girls described how such leaders would help Bangladeshi citizens to understand just peace for all. For example, *"I want to be an honest and constructive leader like Sheikh Mujib"* (S1 & S3, grade 8 Muslim boys, from B1M-1A), because *"leaders like him can make Bangladesh better for all"* (S4 & S5, grade 8 Muslim boys, from B1M-1A excited, together). Whereas these students did not specify what Sheikh Mujib would do to make the Bangladesh of their time better, B2M-1A boys most directly related religious moral issues with such goodness. Defining citizenship in Quranic terms, these

boys called it the first level of jihad—to whole heartedly surrender to the standards of just peace as defined by God: *“jihad means to struggle against one’s own soul, for Allah’s cause at all times, to do what He allowed to do and not do what He prohibited”* (S3, a grade 6 Muslim boy, from B2M-1A). Thus, all participating students across gender and cities understood individual compliance to the rules of justice as the first step to building leadership for democratizing the society.

Next, participating students across gender and cities varyingly explained the importance of skills and inclinations for affirming social-structural justice and cultural fairness at all levels of politics and governance. B2M-1A boys described this citizenship in Quranic terms, calling it the second level of *jihad*: *“fighting anything that obstructs the justice and balance that Allah has defined for the world; Allah knows the best”* (S1 & S5, grade 7 Muslim boys, from B2M-1A). Compared to individual level struggle, these boys described fighting/*jihad* at this level as *“making continuous efforts to establish Allah’s justice and balance”* (S5, a grade 7 Muslim boy, from B2M-1A). Referring to Prophet Muhammad’s (pbuh) traditions, they also explained how such efforts included dialogic processes to reduce direct violence when opposing parties confront each other and to solve conflicts where injustice prevails. They made this point that such processes could help to reduce direct violence and democratically solve direct disagreements in relation to contemporary political conflicts as well. Other B1 and B2 boys and girls also explained the need for such inclination and capacities in Bangladeshi citizens and political affiliates; but not in Quranic terms. For example, *“Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia could sit together, hear each other’s’ viewpoints, and solve their conflicts about election and BJI without being violent”* (S3, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B1F-1A). Further, *“If all parties come to mutual understandings through dialogues, only then peace is possible in Bangladesh”* (S4, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1B). Therefore, all participating B1 and B2 city boys and girls understood that some peacemaking skills would help political chiefs, affiliates, and common people to constructively handle politics and governance related disagreements and disputes.

Beyond just peacemaking skills, participating students across gender and cities also described citizen participation in government decision making as crucial for peacebuilding in Bangladesh. Whereas B2 older boys and all B2F girls were *“sick and tired of all those blah blahs about politics”* (S4, a grade 9 Muslim boy, from B2M-1B), B1 boys and girls in particular described Sheikh Mujib as the model of such citizenship/leadership. They were aware of the risks involved in such citizenship: *“some days ago, XXX [name of an activist] was kidnapped.*

*His family said that some police and Rapid Action Battalion officers arrested him at 2:00am from home. But the administration denied” (S1, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1B).* Despite such risks, these boys’ and girls’ inclination to affirm justice was strong: *“Protesting and standing up against corruption requires certain skills and capacities for working against powerful elites...we want to build them” (All B1F-1A Hindu and Muslim, grade 8, girls).*

These boys and girls and one group of peers in the other city (B2M-1A) were hopeful that they could affirm social-structural justice and cultural fairness for all by protesting against structural inequalities and participating in government decision-making: *“We need to firmly build on the principle that government is there because we want them there to do us the services we need” (S1, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B1F-1A).* B1F-1A girls knew from experience how they could inform government decision making and encourage public collaboration in governance: *“we did a rally this year against hartal and all the political instabilities” (S4, a grade 8 Hindu girl, from B1F-1B).* None of their B1 and B2 peers described any such experience; but they all were confident about their capacity: *“We will get united against corruption. Then, one culprit like XXX [B1 MP] will not matter” (S2, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1B).* Students with such inclinations wanted to protest non-violently—e.g. *“by collecting and broadcasting evidence of corruption and terrorism” (S4, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1B)—*to make common people aware of their rights, and to help governments to affirm them.

Beside such protests, B1M-1B boys and B1F-1B girls defined another constructive way of participating in governance toward reforming politics and affirming social-structural justice and cultural fairness in Bangladesh’s overall governance. They planned to start a social movement for publicly open governance so that everybody could engage in dialogues with government representatives and hold them accountable for their actions: *“students like us can have regular meetings with XXX [B1 MP] and XXX [B1 Mayor] to discuss our concerns, what they could do about it, and what we could do about it” (S1, a grade 8 Hindu girl, from B1F-1B).* Such meetings would also follow up progress and decide on next steps: *“So, I am talking about the government being openly and directly accountable to us for what they do and do not do” (S3, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1B).* Both groups of these B1 students hoped that if they could initiate such citizenship participation, larger number of common people will join in the future; and *“this will help governments to understand people, and people to understand governments” (ibid).* Thus, these boys and girls explained how such citizenship participation would improve the efficiency of both governments and public toward peacebuilding: e.g., *“the common mass*

*will have the power to directly hold the government accountable...and vice-versa...a way to understand everybody's needs" (S2, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1B).*

Despite showing that they understood how citizens could participate in political processes and democratically address both direct and indirect dimensions of escalated governance conflicts, participating *B1* and *B2* boys and girls legitimized certain physical violence in response to conflict. They all legitimized forced peacekeeping by saying how violent activism was valid when enacted by those whom the government has authorized to be violent (e.g. police): *"violent political activists must be arrested and exemplarily punished. Then people will think a hundred times before bombing"* (S3, a grade 8 Muslim girl, from B2F-1B). Besides, participating *B1* boys and girls also described citizens' violent activism as a solution to many political issues. Glorifying Sheikh Mujib's call for war in 1971 as the appropriate leadership for freeing Bangladesh from the Pakistani oppressors, these students argued that Bangladesh needed to be liberated one more time from its internal oppressors: *"We fought the Pakistani oppressors in 1971. But we do not have the power to fight our own oppressors now. This is why we are doomed"* (S3, a grade 8 Muslim boy, from B1M-1B). *B2M-1A* boys described such citizen response, when dialogues fail and unjust people become physically violent, as the third level of *jihad*: *"Muslims have to do war; but war is the last option"* (All *B2M-1A* boys, grade 8 Muslims, together and excited). Thus, across gender and cities, most student participants' understandings about peacebuilding citizenship had potential for reproducing violence in response to certain conflicts.

### **Implemented Curriculum**

All participating *B1* and *B2* teachers said they strictly followed government-mandated textbooks: *"we teach everything from our textbooks"* (T4, a female Muslim teacher from B2F). This means, although they may have had similar lived experience as their students about political polarization, they did not teach beyond what was mandated in official textbooks. These texts did teach about some politics and governance issues around democracy, elections, and citizenship in historical and contemporary contexts. In particular, BGS 6-10 curriculum included lessons about *"election procedure, election area, and election behaviour rules"* (BGS 7, p. 39), and about *"election and democracy, including the parliamentary election processes in Bangladesh"* (BGS 9-10, p. 116). Further, BGS and BL curricula repeatedly taught about the historical roots of conflicts between the friends and enemies of democracy in Bangladesh. Such lessons taught about heroes and demons in past and contemporary governance and elections in the Pakistani and

independent Bangladesh. In this way, all participating teachers taught government-censored information about democracy, election, and governance conflicts in Bangladesh.

Textbooks I reviewed represented elections in ideal terms, as a democratic process. These texts described how the friends and foes of democracy were always in potentially destructive and violent confrontations with each other about governing Bangladesh—hence the direct dimension of the conflict. In these texts, the past Pakistani oppressors and their agents, “*General Ziaur Rahman [BNP’s founder chair]*”, “*General H. M. Ershad [chair of JP]*”, and their followers were amid the perpetrators (Harun-or-Rashid 2012, pp. 30–32). In the narrative about how BAL achieved democracy for Bangladesh once through war against Pakistan and again through struggles against Bangladeshi anti-democratic governments, BGS 9-10 textbook described how “*General Ziaur Rahman (1975–1981) and General H M Ershad (1982–1990) succeeded in holding the election and established the civilian rules*” (p. 30, translation and parentheses original). Thus, this textbook described how the BAL government, the true friend of Bangladesh, had been democratically “*running the state keeping the flow of the socio-economic and cultural development unhindered*” against the BNP, BJI, and other enemies of Bangladesh’s democracy (p. 35, translation original). BGS 6–10 texts described just peace for all as the only interest of prominent BAL leaders in politics, whereas the ‘enemies’ only sought for power, violated “*electoral code of conduct,*” and formed illegal governments (Harun-or-Rashid 2012, pp. 14–142). Beside narrating these cultural aspects in text, BGS curriculum required teachers to use these viewpoints as pedagogies and teach how these factors were challenges to fair and nonviolent elections in Bangladesh (BGS 7, BGS 10). It also required students to create reports on a recent election analyzing if their neighbours had followed ‘proper’ and ‘nonviolent’ election behaviours (BGS 7, p. 39). Thus, such textbooks taught particular viewpoints about governance and election conflicts in Bangladesh.

Only one teacher from *BIM—T3, an Aboriginal male*—mentioned that he had taught election lessons by arranging mock parliamentary elections in his class. He let his students have political parties and run for member of parliament (MP) positions, and thus taught about fair representation—a direct dimension of the conflict. Each MP candidate had opportunities to do election propaganda. Also, there were election commissions and various election officers to conduct the election. He did this to teach his students “*how the elections in our society could be fair and democratic, and how the government could be democratically formed*” (*BIM-T3mA*). Another *BIM* teacher (*T1, a Muslim male*) mentioned that he arranged classroom captain

elections in similar ways. No other teachers from B1M or beyond mentioned such lessons. Thus, although explicitly included in the curriculum, most of the participating teachers, as they reported, avoided lessons around politically charged issues.

According to curriculum texts, individuals who disobeyed the rules of democratic election were bad people, replicating the *“anti-liberation force of 1971 and the local and international groups conspiring against the independent Bangladesh”* (Harun-or-Rashid 2012, p. 29). BGS and BL texts described forcibly controlling such behaviour and uprooting such bad people as the solution to this problem. Drawing on historical events, they also described citizen participation in violent activism as the key to such solution. For example, General Zia’s and General Ershad’s *“anti-democratic exercise of power, snatching the right to enfranchise, anti-liberation war activities made the people violent. They protested against the military rules, and after a long struggle, democracy was established”* (Harun-or-Rashid, 2012, p. 30, translation original). In such glorified narratives of violent activism for democracy, students were often the most romanticized heroes (e.g. Harun-or-Rashid 2012, pp. 9-10, 14, 18-20, 31-36). BL proses and poems taught the same lesson about heroic students’ violent activism to liberate and ‘democratize’ Bangladesh. Hence, by teaching government mandated curricula, all participating BGS and BL teachers taught these narratives about Bangladesh’s politics and governance.

Participating teachers in all schools described their opinions, and similar to the textbook narratives, that people engaged in political polarization and abuse of power were bad and religious morally degenerated. Hence, they offered religious moral regeneration as the solution. I presume (but cannot verify) that these opinions may have affected how and what they taught. They taught the lack of taqwa—i.e. fear and remembrance of Allah—as the main reason why all governance conflicts existed and escalated: *“whenever people will have Taqwa, they will do justice to everybody”* (T1, a Muslim male, from B1F; T2, a Muslim female, and T3, a Muslim male, from B1F voiced agreement). According to these teachers, people responded to their conflicting interests in politics in violent ways because their religious morality had degenerated: *“From my whole teaching life’s experiences, I believe that the decadence of ethical and moral values is the only reason why we have all these political problems”* (T3, an Aboriginal male, from BIM, others voiced agreement). Therefore, all participating teachers across cities uniformly described individuals’ religious moral regeneration as the only solution to the Bangladeshi political and governance conflicts: *“If one is a Muslim by the Quran and the Hadiths, s/he will*

*never be corrupt*” or *“violent in the name of hartal and other political activities”* (T1, a Muslim male, from B2F, others voiced agreement).

Only B1M-T1mM taught violence as a legitimate response to some governance conflicts, reproducing the same narratives of past conflicts and their solution as represented in the BGS 6–10 texts. Others voiced agreements with IME teachers in their respective groups when they delegitimized violent activism based on the Quran. For example, *“according to the Qur’an, it is haram [strictly prohibited] to do unlawful violent activities, including killing, war, or even some revolts”* (T4, a Muslim male, from B2M, others agreed). These teachers described non-violent ambassadorship to the rules of justice as the way to reduce violence and build just peace in relation to political and governance conflicts in Bangladesh. According to most teacher participants across cities, Islam provided models of such citizen participation: e.g., *“Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) brought the society from war and violence, killing, injustice and undemocracy to justice and peace. We can do the same by following His (pbuh) models,”* such as *“dialogue and negotiation”* (T1, a Muslim female, from B2M). B2M-T4mM called such citizenship as the best *jihad*: *“jihad is totally misunderstood today. It means to first keep one’s own nafs [soul] away from unjust and prohibited things, and then to convince others to not become unjust and do forbidden things”* (T4, a Muslim male, from B2M). Hence, these teachers understood peacebuilding citizenship within a religious moral framework.

B2M-T4mM, B2F-T1mM, B1F-T1mM and B1M-T1mM linked religious moral regeneration with Bangladesh’s governance conflicts by sharing the narrative example of Caliph Umar, who did such *jihad* to keep his society just and peaceful. Umar was such a just ruler that he had no enemies *“and he could take a nap alone under a date-palm tree”* (T1, a Muslim male, from B1F). All these teachers taught that for Bangladesh to be a just and peaceful country requires affirmation of justice and governance as Allah defined in the Qur’an: *“if Islam is politically accommodated... there will be no injustices and oppressions... nobody will fight or bribe...for position and power. Then our leaders will be the most Islamic, knowledgeable, and just representatives of justice”* (ibid).

Therefore, most teacher participants in this thesis research understood peacebuilding citizenship in Islamic terms. They often called it *jihad* or religious moral regeneration, but referred to the same idea: submitting to the will of God and thus God’s system of just peace, personally adapting the system, and affirming the system at all social and political levels. Most participating students also described peacebuilding citizenship in similar ways. Further, student



and teacher participants and the implemented curriculum similarly described the causes and solutions to political and governance conflicts, although their concern about the conflicts varied.

In sum, despite varying concerns among student and teacher participants (across gender and cities) in relation to particular governance conflicts, all of these participants cared primarily about just peace in their society. Their lived experiences of escalated political polarization, especially during the time period in which the 1<sup>st</sup> round of the research fieldwork took place, did have clear impacts on how boys and girls and their teachers across cities expressed feeling and understandings about conflict. For instance, *B2* city was significantly more violent, with deadly bombing and political fights (see chapter 2). Boys and girls from this city seemed to have accepted such realities as dangerous, but normal. Especially, the *B2F* girls did not express much concern about what the conflict was and what its various direct and indirect dimensions were. In contrast, boys and girls from the less violent city *B1*, where political fights and killings were much lower, were deeply worried about their safety, and did not accept it as normal. However, beyond just the historical moment in which I collected data, all participating boys and girls and their teachers across cities understood the conflicting viewpoints and religious moral dimensions in such conflicts very similarly. Only the *B1* boys and girls, who were not privileged enough to cope with political violence, described victims' viewpoints in such conflicts based on direct and indirect lived experiences. Thus, lived experience of conflicts remained the most powerful informant of students' feelings and understandings about conflict.

Correlated with the context's Muslim majority character, all teacher and student participants across gender and cities described religious dimensions as the overarching causes and potential (de-)escalators of escalated political rivalry conflicts. Despite acknowledging how denial of rights and narratives of enmity escalated these conflicts, all participating teachers and ad students seemed to agree that bad Muslims do these things because they are bad Muslims. In particular, *B2M-1A* boys and *B2M-T4mM* described peacebuilding solutions and citizenship in relation to these conflicts in Islamic (*jihad*) terms. Their male and female peers across cities described similar solutions and citizenship without naming them *jihad*. Hence, the participants described religious morality as inseparable from Bangladesh's political conflicts.

Despite ample opportunities in the official curriculum (see chapter 4) to engage students in discussion and teach peacemaking skills and citizenship capacities, none of the teachers reported having implemented any cooperative, dialogue- and discussion-based, student-centered, active-learning pedagogies in their regular classroom lessons. They complained about not having

enough logistical and pedagogical resources for using such pedagogies. Thus, as they and their students reported, they used lecture methods to deliver the curriculum content. In relation to dialogue, cooperation, negotiation, and such peacemaking skills, only some boys' school teachers across cities mentioned extracurricular activities like picnic, sports, and cultural club activities. They mentioned that these activities put students at the center and allowed them to organize activities and accomplish them through cooperation and negotiation of conflicting viewpoints. None of the girls' school teachers mentioned such lessons. Thus, opportunities to learn peacemaking skills and developing citizenship capacities (agency) were gendered, even so limited for the privileged gender.

Finally, official curriculum provided ample opportunities for teachers to teach about political conflicts, elections, democracy, and just peace in Bangladesh. However, only one *BI* teacher (*T3, an Aboriginal male, from BIM*) explicitly taught about these issues. Others described their understandings about how the curriculum glorified one political party by demonizing others and implying that 'good' citizens of Bangladesh also should hate these enemies and support the 'true' patriotic group. Yet, none of the teachers across gender and cities mentioned any lessons around such issues, whereas boys and girls in the poorer city particularly wanted to develop leadership skills and peacebuilding capacities to affirm just peace when they become part of politics and governance in the future. Thus, implemented curriculum about political rivalries represented another mismatch between what they students wished to learn and what they were taught.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Officially mandated curricula analyzed in this thesis research included several opportunities for helping young citizens to develop and express understandings, inclinations, and capacities around all three dimensions of social conflict and peacebuilding citizenship. The most promising among these opportunities were issues discussion, glorification of heroic student actions for social and political reform in Bangladesh, analysis of lived experiences of conflict, and pedagogical spaces around dialogue and cooperation.

BGS and BL 6–10 curricula in particular included frequent opportunities for discussing political and governance issues such as democracy, elections, political parties, citizen actions, and so on. Such discussions constitute a key space for developing democratic understandings about conflicts, multiple viewpoints, and its causes and solutions (Bickmore, Kaderi, & Guerra-Sua, 2017). However, by including only particular viewpoints about conflicts, these curriculum

spaces also risk normalizing politically controlled narratives about conflict and citizen responses, as in the history text example above. In contrast, democratizing education by infusing multiple viewpoints could help to reduce cultural biases as well as to map alternative social structures for just peace—in relation to political and governance conflicts in Bangladesh, their causes and solutions. This possibility remained largely relegated to individual educators' decision, constrained by systemic factors such as student examinations, teacher professional development, and text resources. By mandating a few spaces for critical analysis of lived experiences of election conflicts, the curriculum did invite teachers to infuse such educational spaces. The primary goal of the implemented teaching-learning activities that teachers and students shared was to reduce physical violence—hence to address only the direct symptomatic dimensions—around election campaigns in Bangladesh. The literature review and findings suggest that curriculum inclusion of dialogic and cooperative pedagogical tasks could be useful to help to build young citizens' capacities to non-violently (democratically) confront opposing parties. This thesis research collected no observational data about how the teachers actually implemented such pedagogies, or how students responded. However, the official curriculum analyzed for this study did offer some explicit opportunities for (school-based) peacebuilding citizenship educators to connect curriculum with, and inform, young citizens' lived experience with various dimensions of political and governance conflicts in Bangladesh.

In particular, the content of official and implemented curriculum's (especially BGS and BL 6–10) representation of youths' participation in Bangladesh's past and contemporary governance conflicts was paradoxical for peacebuilding citizenship, and thus could be democratically addressed. The glorification of youths' activities in response to several past events of mis-recognition of diversities and mal-distribution of resources, toward democratizing Bangladesh's politics and governance, manifested the importance of youths' participation in political processes. Given that most Bangladeshi youths recently have remained disengaged from political activism (Riaz & Raji, 2011), such education could potentially develop young citizens' inclinations to actively participate in contemporary political processes (direct disputes). On the face of it, this represents a promising space for peacebuilding citizenship learning. However, such lessons glorified the youths' *violent* actions toward historical reform, which could potentially reproduce violence in the contemporary political and governance processes as well (Kaderi, 2014b). This challenge highlights the importance of teachers' infusion (into their implemented curriculum) of teaching non-violent problem-solving capacities. In addition to

skills for non-violently negotiating escalated disputes, this analysis also shows the importance of developing young citizens' capacities to democratically alter oppressive social structures to affirm just peace through fair recognition of diversities and redistribution of resources.

Some participating boys and girls from *B1* (the smaller city) expressed inclinations for engaging in solving governance conflicts. Such moral motivations, embedded in these students' lived experience, suggest that implemented curriculum could be used to help to build upon such students' motivations, to develop citizenship capacities around the social-structural and cultural dimensions of the conflicts. However, this potential opportunity for peacebuilding citizenship education remained insufficiently used, perhaps partly because these young citizens' lived experiences and implemented school lessons emphasized violent activities in response to escalated governance conflicts. As discussed above, nationalism, governance, election, and independence related conflicts and citizen response to these conflicts are difficult issues to discuss in Bangladeshi schools. However, at the same time, these issues in the official curriculum represent potential spaces for developing young citizens' democratic peacebuilding citizenship capacities. Whereas participating students were open to such learning, and the official curriculum also mandated such education, participating teachers expressed fear about teaching these issues. This fear may represent the scarcity of resources and pedagogical support for teachers, which could be partly addressed by infusing into the official curriculum and textbooks specific scaffolded strategies in which such issues could be democratically taught to develop peacebuilding citizenship capacities among the citizens.

Teacher and student participants across gender and cities similarly understood some viewpoints, causes and solutions in relation to Bangladesh's contemporary political and governance conflicts. This could present an opportunity to democratize education about various dimensions of these conflicts and peacebuilding citizenship. However, the teachers mainly taught about political rivalry based only on what was mandated in the curriculum text, without using the (officially mandated) pedagogical activities inviting expression of their students' and their own lived experiences. Hence, dominant narratives about religious dimensions of these conflicts, pervasive in the official and implemented curricula and citizens' lived experiences, overshadowed the potential peacebuilding citizenship learning spaces. Especially, this dominant narrative impeded explicit education around cultural and social-structural dimensions of past and contemporary governance conflicts and peacebuilding citizenship possibilities. The teachers and students' religious moral framework and merely described how some Muslim stakeholders were

imperfect. Similarly, implemented curriculum only describe simplistic solutions to these conflict, as largely bad Muslims needing to be good Muslims and stop creating injustice and un-peace.

Thesis research participants' recognition of cultural and social-structural factors implied that they understood individuals' religious moral regeneration to also have collective cultural and social-structural implications for citizenship and peacebuilding. Thus, participating students and teachers' religious moral understandings of governance conflicts consisted of blaming certain *actors*, holding them responsible for being good to mend every dimension of these conflicts, instead of deeply analyzing *factors* (dimensions) of causation and potential peacebuilding citizen response. A clear intersection between participants' understandings and curriculum lessons is the justification of such blame of past and contemporary 'enemies' of Bangladesh. As explained in chapter 2, peacebuilding education would attempt to overcome such conceptual blockage by encouraging citizens to develop nuanced understandings about the root structural and cultural *factors* behind conflicts and about various actors' roles in democratically resolving or transforming them. Understandings of these factors in terms of individual religious moral degeneration and regeneration, which seem to prevail as cultural knowledge supported by some curriculum narratives, offer no particular help to develop such democratic peacebuilding citizenship capacities among young citizens in Bangladesh.

For instance, participating boys (across socio-economic statuses), and the girls from the poorer city, showed frustration regarding direct and indirect violence in relation to school and educational governance conflicts. Such a sense of helplessness is correlated with the way these students emphasized the religious moral dimension in judging the *actors* in these conflicts. Their religious moral lens did not provide them with any nuanced critical analyses about what specific direct, cultural, and social-structural *factors* in relation to these conflicts needed to be solved, nor how so. Instead, it merely helped them to identify which bad *actors* in such conflicts needed to be good. Understanding specific cultural and social-structural *factors*, within and transcending the religious dimension umbrella, would help these students to outline what needed to be recognized, reconciled, and transformed in order to see their (religious) ideal—just peace—affirmed and functioning in the society.

There was also disjuncture between what the teachers taught about governance conflicts and the experiences narrated by the students (especially in *B1* city), which generated participating boys' and girls' their concern and understandings about governance conflicts. The curriculum about democracy and elections only partially matched with such student concern;

while neither the mandated nor the implemented curriculum taught about the patterns of corrupt governance that the students lived. This mismatch represents a missed opportunity for school-based peacebuilding citizenship learning. As the *BI* boys and girls reported, lack of relevant school-based education contributed to their hopelessness about options available to people like themselves and others for solving governance conflicts, other than just being good individuals. These students were hopeful that dialogue and cooperation at the level of political chiefs could reduce much direct violence and affirm social-structural justice and fair inclusion of diverse identity groups in Bangladesh's politics and governance. However, students were also frustrated about options for non-violently solving conflicts, including the effectiveness of dialogue, when they analyzed the conflicts from the viewpoints of victims: how would one respond to conflicts or violence as a victim of direct violence? Beyond teaching violent retaliation, the implemented and mandated curriculum offered no answer to such questions. This unaddressed lived concern, in addition to romanticized curriculum narratives and (media-influenced) experiences about violent retaliation, could frustrate young citizens and cause them to see violence as the only response to escalated conflicts (among political adversaries).

With limited curriculum opportunities to develop critical understandings of conflict and their democratic solutions, the participating students who talked about being active citizens and affirming just peace in Bangladesh's future governance described violence as a legitimate solution, when every other means failed. These students, as well as those who were doubtful about their own citizenship potential, described religious moral regeneration as the ultimate solution for all social and political conflicts. In other words, participating teachers' and students' expressed understandings, situated in the particular Muslim majority context of contemporary Bangladeshi cities, narrated an Islamic religious moral framework, in which some violence was viewed as liberating and thus necessary for affirming just peace. Lacking alternative frameworks in the curriculum, these assumptions embedded in their lived experience apparently remained the major source of participating young citizens' learning about conflict and their solutions. Based on the theories explained in chapter 2, citizens situated in a culture that normalizes and legitimizes violence would especially need explicit school-based education to learn how non-violent options could actually help to affirm just peace.

## Chapter 7

### Challenges and Opportunities for Peacebuilding Citizenship Education in Bangladesh: Discussion and Conclusion

This doctoral thesis research illuminates challenges and opportunities for peacebuilding citizenship education in Bangladesh. Even though all human communities are conflict zones, and to varying degrees all human societies affected by direct and indirect forms of violence (Galtung, 1996; Nixon, 2011; Ury, 2011), Bangladesh represents a particular kind of conflict context. Whereas bloodshed is a major concern in many countries, including the U.S. (Keneally, 2018; WHO, 2010), in Bangladesh, Muslim majority political groups are engaged in escalated conflicts with other Muslim majority political groups (Siddiqi, 2011). Contemporary Bangladesh is not a divided or post-war society, as these terms are typically used (e.g. Lopes Cardozo et al, 2015). However, there are intense rivalries among Bangladeshi political parties—revolving around conflicting visions of nationalism, patriotism, and governance—in which citizens have harmed (and killed) each other during elections and social reform movements (Ahsan & Banavar, 2011; Islam, 2011). More intensely than many countries, Bangladesh also suffers the social-structural violence of rich-poor gaps and poverty (IEP 2017b). The case of Bangladesh can be compared with many violence-affected societies globally, and most directly with other south Asian Muslim majority contexts that are affected by escalated political conflicts.

In the context of a scarcity of research (especially school-based) on Bangladesh conflict, peacebuilding and education, I reviewed international theory and research to outline the elements of social and political conflicts and their potential solutions, including the role of education. I theorized that citizens' lived experience of conflict has the potential to develop their understandings of those conflicts, which can (re-)shape—and be (re-)shaped by—their understandings of citizen actions in response to conflicts. Sustainable democratic peacebuilding activities require inclination and capacity to understand contrasting viewpoints and causes underlying conflicts and their escalation, and potential citizen actions toward democratic solutions of the conflicts that would reduce direct and indirect violence and affirm cultures of inclusion and social structures of justice (Bickmore, 2017; Galtung, 1996). Violent and undemocratic lived experiences of conflict—especially if not democratically addressed through education in school—may reproduce social conflicts by negatively influencing young citizens' inclinations, capacities, and sense of possibility. Conversely, peacebuilding citizenship education

would recognize lived experience and provide young citizens with alternative experiences—such as engaging in democratic discussions and practicing peacebuilding citizenship capacities in relation to all direct and indirect dimensions of locally relevant social conflicts—which may in turn prepare these citizens to apply such capacities to contribute to resolving and transforming their lived social and political conflicts.

Based on this conceptual framework, I studied how selected students in four Bangladeshi public lower-secondary schools understood particular types of social conflicts in their lives, their sense of what peacebuilding citizenship options were possible in response, and the curriculum actually available to these students. These schools were chosen from two contrasting cities within Bangladesh: one boys' school and one girls' school from an affluent and more violent city, and one boys' school and one girls' school from a poorer and less violent city. I studied the sometimes-contradictory roles of these schools in peacebuilding citizenship education by exploring how mandated and implemented curricula addressed—or not—these students' understandings and concerns about the social conflicts, governance, and citizenship around them. This chapter synthesizes the findings and their theoretical, methodological, and practical implications for Muslim majority and escalated political conflict-affected contexts like Bangladesh.

This study showed significant gaps between school-based learning opportunities and participating students' understandings about various kinds of social conflicts. As discussed in chapters 5 and 6, students who had personally lived experience of particular conflict (especially violence) issues tended to analyze conflicts and what could be done about them somewhat differently than those who did not report such direct experience. Contrary to the students' experience-based concerns and understandings, the implemented curriculum explicitly taught only the direct symptoms—such as perpetrators, harm, victims, and acts of resistance—of human rights and governance-related conflicts. As reported by participating students and their teachers, such implemented curriculum often either silenced or preached certain viewpoints, especially about governance-related conflicts. In the face of such silences and discrepancies between lived experiences and school-implemented curricula, the students' (often undemocratic) lived experiences tended to be the only models available to them about what citizens might learn and do about social conflicts. Participating teachers usually indicated that they were scared to teach about the causes of and potential responses to conflictual issues, especially those involving unjust governance. This fear blocked important possibilities for peacebuilding citizenship



education, because inquiry and discussion regarding conflictual issues is at the heart of building citizens' democratic capacities (Bickmore, Kaderi & Guerra-Sua, 2017). Further, Bangladesh's mandated and implemented curriculum glorified certain violent actions as just; which means ignoring potential active non-violent responses to political conflicts. In contrast, during focus group workshops, most participating students expressed interest in learning and practicing non-violent (democratic) conflict transformation capacities in order to reduce direct violence and affirm alternative social and political structures of just peace in their society.

Therefore, participating students were surrounded with factors that could block their peacebuilding citizenship capacities and inclinations. This challenge explains the potential embedded in the possibility of schools to face the difficult experiences citizens live out in the society. As explained in chapter 2, school could combat such blockage and prepare young citizens to (re-)enter politics and governance with capacities to reduce violence and affirm just peace.

Teacher and student participants and the mandated curriculum uniformly narrated the causes of and solutions to social conflicts through a religious moral framework. In this Muslim majority context, the participants (across gender and cities) articulated Scriptural (mostly Quranic) justice as constituting peacebuilding. This shared understanding presents an opportunity to critically analyze how Scriptures define just peace: however, participating teachers across schools missed this opportunity. In their dissemination of curricular messages that building peace required affirming Quranic laws and legal systems, teachers often ignored democratic citizen roles in addressing—even in Scriptural and Mohammadan (pbuh) ways—particular existing social conflicts. This disconnect presents a major challenge to peacebuilding citizenship learning in Bangladesh, and highlights the possibility for schools to connect with citizens' lived experiences.

The next sections of this chapter discuss the challenges and opportunities for peacebuilding citizenship education in Bangladesh in two parts: (1) the knowledge and skills that the students brought with them from their own and indirect (media and community members') lived experiences, and (2) the learning opportunities presented by the school-based learning environments, including mandated and implemented curricula. After discussing the study findings within each of these sections, I reflect on the strengths and limitations of the research design and methodology of the study. Next, I discuss some scholarly and practical (curricular

and pedagogical) implications emerging from this study. Before concluding, I make recommendations for future research.

### **Experiential Knowledge**

A major assumption underlying this research is that lived experience interacts with formal citizenship learning (in school) by informing citizens' understandings about social conflicts, and how they may be shaped (and reshaped) by citizenship roles. Hence, un-bridged gaps between lived experience and school curriculum are a major challenge for peacebuilding citizenship education. In particular, it matters how citizens understand both the direct (obvious) dimensions and the indirect (social-structural and cultural) dimensions of conflicts. Whereas the direct dimensions of conflicts may involve visible (violent and nonviolent) confrontation and physical damage, cultural and social structural dimensions go beyond (below) the visible symptoms to recognize the causes as well as the paths toward potential remedies to conflict escalation (Galtung, 1996). As suggested above, participating students in this study made clear that they needed more than their existing experiential knowledge of direct conflict symptoms: they wanted school curriculum to help them to understand social-structural and cultural factors and peacebuilding citizenship options.

### **Social conflict**

Students' direct experience with particular social conflicts (including their violent dimensions and symptoms) generated their expressed understandings of these conflicts and what they could do about them. Often, such experiences—especially in relation to conflicts in which the students located themselves far from the top of the power hierarchies around them—were associated with a sense of hopelessness regarding possibilities for democratically resolving those conflicts. For instance, some students (across gender and city contexts) narrated direct experience with destructive school and educational governance conflicts, framing authoritarian teachers and powerful social and political elites as perpetrators and themselves as victims. A B2 (the bigger city) grade 9 Hindu boy (S3) from SFG1B illustrated this utter hopelessness: “*we don't know if these problems would ever be solved.*” Such understandings describe the conflicts as intractable (as in the cultures of conflict described by Ross, 2001); and such experience of power differentials tended to block these students' sense of agency in relation to particular conflicts. In addition, some teachers' reported lessons seemed to contribute to students' hopelessness by blaming them for being disobedient, unwilling to learn, too interested in high test scores, and thus probably deserving of punishment. Instead of merely preaching good morals

to these students (locating problems in the character of the individual), teachers could use students' experiences of conflict as a resource for classroom-based education. These teachers and students could engage in dialogue about how to democratically mitigate the harmful approaches to their conflicting interests by improving educational governance. Such missed curriculum opportunities may reproduce and fuel conflicts and citizens' frustration, and thus block their peacebuilding citizenship capacity building.

Some kinds of direct experience reported by students, on the other hand, did seem to inform their sense of agency: they were able to identify actors and actions that they believed could help to create just peace. For instance, participating boys and girls in the smaller city, B1, often described their direct personal experience with gender and governance conflicts, and distinguished the conflicts themselves (meaning underlying problems) from their violent manifestations. They analyzed economic interests and other power/control issues animating and reinforcing escalation of these conflicts, as well as the physical, structural, and cultural harm (violence) committed by powerful people against less powerful people. Their evident comprehension of this distinction indicated that their lived experiences had helped them to understand that conflicts could be solved by addressing parties' underlying needs and viewpoints, not merely controlling symptoms of escalation (as in Lederach, 2006; Ury, 2000). In relation to such conflicts, participating *B1* (smaller city) boys and girls, in particular, described specific actors—often including themselves—and actions that could reduce violence, transform its causes, and thereby affirm just peace. From the evidence collected in this study about the implemented curriculum, it is evident that these understandings were not developed primarily in school. Thus, some lived experiences did apparently contribute to detailed understandings of conflict and harm. Such student knowledge represents a resource for willing teachers to use to facilitate engaging classroom-based learning activities addressing all direct and indirect dimensions of conflicts—i.e., to examine the roots of conflicting interests and multiple viewpoints, how such conflicts occur and escalate, how they could be de-escalated, and how justice and peace could be affirmed for all affected parties.

Based on the types of lived conflict experience they narrated, participating students (across gender and city contexts) did describe some conflicts as more difficult to solve than others. Often referring vividly to experience, both female and male students described conflicts involving individuals—e.g., domestic conflict including violence between husband and wife—as addressable through dialogue, the relationships as mendable (e.g. *B1F-All* & *B2M-1B-All*).

However, in describing the patriarchal structure and ideology of their society as the root of gender-based violence, they also acknowledged the difficulty of changing peoples' psycho-cultural dispositions, even with religious morals, in order to affirm gender equity. Similarly, tracing the roots of political conflicts in Bangladesh's history of liberation, participating students showed their doubt that governance could become better, at least until the existing rulers retired. Given their lived experiences of destructive politics, these students (especially *BIM-1A & 1B* boys) were also unsure about how their new generation might learn democratic leadership. To these students, repairing such large-scale conflicts with complex and deep social-structural and cultural roots seemed remarkably more difficult than rebuilding personal, individual level relationships. Nevertheless, a few *BI* boys and girls expressed motivation to engage as democratic citizens as key to affirming just peace in relation to these conflicts: in their view, government alone (without the counter-balance of critically informed and engaged citizens) would be insufficient to solve all conflicts. Such motivations constitute context-specific opportunities for education about the multiple dimensions of various kinds of conflict and peacebuilding citizenship.

Yet, as indicated above, participating teachers tended not to facilitate or teach citizenship capacities to solve either small- or large-scale social conflicts embedded in these students' lived experience. By missing this opportunity to teach interested citizens about conflict and peacebuilding citizenship, participating teachers contributed to reproducing the violence and injustice (implicit conflict education models) that were already pervasive in the lived social experience of these citizens.

As reported in chapters 5 and 6, student and teacher participants across gender and socio-economic contexts usually identified conflict actors and viewpoints using the language of direct disputes and in fairly simple terms—mainly limited to victims, perpetrators, and third-party intervenors or bystanders (non-intervenor witnesses). Their narratives of conflict experience generally described the evil or inadequacy of various perpetrators and non-intervenor, and the innocence of the victims (and sometimes witnesses). Such narratives seemed to impede especially the students' development of complex understandings about potential options to transform conflicts at the direct, cultural, and social-structural levels, beyond only via (self-)internalized religious aspects that correlate to these dimensions. Where religious moral regeneration seemed distant, these students expressed hope for the effectiveness of government enforced behaviour correction addressing only the direct symptoms of disputes. Citizens' conflict

behaviour is certainly the heart of peacebuilding citizenship education. Yet, merely narrating how bad people are and how correctly they need to behave—as typical Bangladeshi student and teacher participants did—does not explain what may cause citizens collectively to behave in particular ways, in response to existing escalated problems of injustice, nor what might constitute alternative responses. citizens would behave in response to existing injustices or conflicts of interest. Officially mandated curricula (as analyzed in this thesis research) and participating teachers' implemented curricula (as reported by the teachers and their students) \ frequently reminded the students to be religious and morally good. Presumably linked to this education, student participants rarely saw beyond naming and blaming conflict actors for their bad behaviours: e.g., “*People like XXXX [a then government representative in B1 city] have made our life a hell*” (all *B1F* girls jumped in excitedly). Such generic moral analysis cannot by itself contribute to co-creation of workable solutions to social conflict problems.

This thesis study did not generate direct evidence regarding how or where the students had developed the understandings they exhibited in focus group conversations. However, participating students' frequent reference to what they experienced, saw, and heard about particular conflicts represented direct perpetrators and victims more visibly than the underlying conflicts (causes and processes of escalation or de-escalation). Hence, all participating students (across gender and cities) described primarily the direct dimensions of the social conflicts that surrounded them. Only those students who had directly lived particular conflicts showed relatively deep understanding of some social-structural and cultural dimensions of these conflicts. Relatively underprivileged boys and girls—who had directly experienced gender-based violence, poverty, and environmental pollution—identified several cultural beliefs and social-structural factors that contributed to these problems. In contrast to these students, only one group of privileged boys (*B2M-1B*), who described their families as having practiced gender equity for generations, showed understanding of some indirect dimensions of gender conflicts. Participating students, across gender and city contexts, reported virtually no school-based education to help them to see the indirect or less obvious dimensions of social conflicts. Thus, these citizens' indirect experience/knowledge about conflicts (based on what happened to other people) tended to inform their understandings of just some direct dimensions of conflicts; whereas direct (personally lived) experience tended to help some students to understand indirect as well as direct dimensions. Connecting such lived experiences with the explicit curriculum, for instance through interactive learning activities that would acknowledge and supplement the religious

dimensions of understanding conflict, could provide all students with opportunities to deeply understand important dimensions of conflict and peacebuilding citizenship.

Across gender and cities, even when participating students and teachers described direct and indirect dimensions of conflict, they rarely clearly articulated how these aspects of conflict were interconnected. For example, they identified some social-structural and cultural factors in relation to the human rights and governance conflicts. However, they hardly distinguished conflicting viewpoints from the underlying religious cultural beliefs or from power-privilege dimensions causing and/or escalating these conflicts. As reported above, participants analyzed conflicts by mainly narrating religious moral factors, identifying deviation from religious ideals as the root of all the factors causing and escalating destructive conflicts such as violence against women, environmental pollution, poverty, corrupt governance, election violence, and so forth. Hence, in participants' view, individuals' lack of religious sincerity was the main problem. Even when some students showed understanding of indirect dimensions of, for instance, gender conflicts—denial of rights (social-structural) and patriarchal biases (cultural)—none of them directly described these dimensions as root causes of (direct) violence or conflict escalation. Nor did they always explain citizen activities to re-affirm women's equitable rights or eliminate biases against women as peacebuilding citizenship. Their frequent reference in focus groups to their lived experience of conflicts suggests that their society, too, tended to view conflicts in terms of their religious dimensions, and that the curriculum did not actively challenge the way such views dodged the understandings of other important dimensions of conflict and peacebuilding citizenship. I assume that excluding education about these crucial elements of conflict and peacebuilding citizenship means for schools to help to reproduce the same blame narratives of conflict as those pervasive in the students' lived experiences.

Whereas such dominant religious moral understandings about conflict and just peace might be reinforced by lived experience, evidence reported in chapters 4, 5, and 6 illustrates how the mandated and implemented curriculum also often supported such understandings. Theories reviewed in chapter 2 explain how blaming perpetrators for causing and escalating conflicts puts the responsibility of solving conflicts on these 'others.' Such understandings, whether or not within an Islamic religious moral framing, may not help to reduce violence, or to democratically transform conflicts by affirming just peace. Sustainable peacebuilding requires democratic citizenship, which includes both agency and capacities to act to achieve just peace in relation to all direct and indirect dimensions of conflict. Such peacebuilding citizenship goals

require schools to help Bangladeshi citizens to understand social conflicts, beyond just judging the actors in violence through any religious moral lenses.

### **Repertoires of potential responses to conflicts**

Within the narrative that religious moral decadence causes conflicts, and therefore that regeneration of religious morality would solve them, participating students (across gender and cities) did identify parents, teachers, and other authorities, including government, as responsible for changing people's minds: e.g., *“teachers and parents should teach us how to follow religions. If we follow our own religions properly, then there will be no violence against women”* (S3, a Hindu boy, from B2M focus group 1B). Students' identification of such actors, and their wishes to learn about being better citizens through being sincere Muslims (the dominant majority) or Hindus (a few), represent an educational opportunity. However, their notion that repairing individuals' religious morality would inevitably change social-political structure and culture, and thereby affirm justice at all direct and indirect levels of conflicts, also presents a challenge. Participants' lack of expressed understandings about *how* specific actors could affect individuals' religious sincerity, and how this change of heart (and consequent individual choices) could achieve actual just peace, implies a vagueness or hopelessness about the feasibility of social change. Further, these students (and teachers) avoided critical analysis of religious leaders' practices that presumably contributed to, and/or could help to solve, existing human rights and political conflicts and violence. Nor did they examine how their Scriptures and religious traditions treated diversely-positioned faith and identity groups in the society. Hence, participating students' narratives about religious factors informed the ways they analyzed relevant conflicts in terms of individual blame, instead of actually defining specific (collective) citizen actions that could contribute to building just peace. Based on the theories reviewed in chapter 2, peacebuilding citizenship education requires, instead of just preaching the value of a religion, helping such students to deeply understand how religious practices have contributed to shaping conflicts as well as how religion-related actors could conversely shape peacebuilding citizenship.

Across gender and city contexts, participating students' repertoire of responses to conflict relied heavily on direct peacekeeping force by authorities. They narrated government initiated physical force to combat civil disobedience of government rules and direct and indirect harm in relation to human rights and governance conflicts as an effective means of affirming justice for all. Although apparently to support just peace, such peacekeeping normalizes violence as legal

when initiated by authorized people. Such culture of violence can presumably serve as lived models of response to conflicts and can thus encourage violence among citizens in their daily lives. Peacebuilding citizenship education is faced with the challenge of unpacking—based on religious traditions—the needs for such peacekeeping violence, and the feasibility of their potential alternatives, in Bangladesh.

For example, the Qur'an describes intentional physical and social-structural harm as violence (e.g., 2:11, 42:42), and beliefs and attitudes that help to animate such violence as immoral and harmful (e.g., 16:90, 38:24); but it also considers violence to have positive consequences when legally and righteously applied, i.e. as retributive justice (*qisas*): "*And there is for you in legal retribution [saving of] life, O you [people] of understanding, that you may become righteous*" (2:179, Sahih international translation, parentheses original). Hence, Islam involuntarily accepts physical harm in the form of *qisas* in order to insist on the positive outcome of retribution in response to already-committed intentional harm—i.e., peacekeeping—(e.g., The Qur'an, 2:178). Yet, application of retributive justice is conditional upon that intentional harm has been committed in contexts where all conditions for non-violent, democratic, just, and peaceful living were fulfilled. For example, even though amputation is the legal punishment for proven theft in Islamic (e.g., The Qur'an, 5:39), Caliph Umar showed mercy when a theft happened because the state had failed to provide the thief with food (Kayadibi, 2010). Therefore, underlying physical damage in *qisas*, there is a great system of just peace as a goal and condition for retribution. Therefore, in Islam, *qisas* (peacekeeping)—or retributive justice—may not be valid without affirming such goals and fulfilling such conditions. Using students' lived-experience-based understandings about peacekeeping in school to teach about where Islam allows *qisas*, and when and by whom *qisas* could be used, to protect rights would help the young Bangladeshi citizens to understand the intersections among justice, power, law, compliance, punishment, citizen actions, status and access to resources, inter-identity relations, and peace as a whole—i.e., all direct and indirect dimensions of peacebuilding citizenship.

Participating students and teachers (across gender and city contexts) also narrated self-regulation of religious moral values as a way to affirm peace. Self-regulation may imply governmentality, i.e. the internalized acquiescence to governing norms within citizens themselves to constantly remind them to be 'good' (Foucault, 2011). Governmentality has a negative connotation and the potential to reproduce un-peace, since, as Foucault argues, it involves learner acquiescence to and reinforcement of existing un-democratic hierarchies. In



apparent contrast to Foucault's view, some of the Muslim students referred to autonomous compliance with God's rules and Muhammadan (pbuh) traditions as a way to enact Islamic democracy: "*We do not need the American democracy; Allah ensured the most perfect democracy in the Qur'an*" (S2, a Muslim boy, from B2M focus group 1A). Across gender and city contexts, participating Muslim students described 'good' Muslims as those who individually and collectively uphold God-defined and Muhammad-modelled (pbuh) just peace. Even the Hindu students narrated self-regulation of religious (Hindu) rules and norms as affirming peace. Thus, by locating existing government norms/systems as contradictory with God-defined just peace, all participating students (across gender, city, and religious contexts) directly rejected the notion that self-regulation would inevitably imply governmentality and reproduce injustice.

Student (as well as some teacher) narratives discussed above suggest that self-regulation of religious values and norms could challenge existing structures of social injustice and governance in Bangladesh. Whereas governmentality (Foucault, 2011) means self-regulated choices to comply with mortal governance with all its flaws, self-regulation in Islam (for the dominant majority in the focus groups) means premeditated compliance and continuous effort to reproduce flawless cultures of just peace that come from a commonly agreed overarching authority. In such compliance, God holds each citizen and government actors equally accountable for all (un-)democratic actions. As participating Muslim students and some teachers (across gender and city contexts) argued, in the un-democratic Muslim majority context of Bangladesh, compliance with and internalization of God-defined and Muhammad-modelled (pbuh) rules and norms of just peace can actively challenge governmentality as well as the pervasive culture of violence and un-peace in Bangladesh.

This thesis research does not generate robust evidence about citizens' understandings of religion. Nor is there evidence, in the research reviewed in chapter 2, about how powerful elites' understandings of religion might have shaped the Bangladeshi culture of violence and un-peace. However, Muslims often hurt Muslims in contemporary Bangladesh (see chapter 4). This context of injustice does suggest that these Muslim citizens seriously lack in-depth-understanding-based self-regulation of God-defined and Muhammad-modelled (pbuh) justice, democracy, and peace. Across gender and city contexts, participating students' (and teachers') avoidance of in-depth discussions of *how* self-regulation of Quranic and Muhammadan (pbuh) Islam could create citizenship for just peace further suggests Bangladeshi Muslims' insufficient understandings of Islam. It also represents a gap in the education system, as it does not seem to help young citizens

to see how religion does operate, and could operate, in shaping the conflicts and relevant citizen actions they experience. School-based education could potentially increase the possibility of peacebuilding citizenship in Bangladesh by substantially bridging this gap and explicitly teaching the Muslim citizens how citizenship (both inclination and capacities) is embedded in the Quranic and Muhammadan (pbuh) traditions of Islam.

As argued in chapter 2, peacebuilding citizenship means affirming in-common justice and peace through day-to-day citizen actions. By affirming Islam as a route to just peace for all, but not explicitly defining how citizens could alter the prevailing culture of violence and un-peace, participating Muslim students (across gender and city contexts) mainly talked about peacebuilding in idealized terms. For example, group 1A boys in the bigger city (B2) mentioned that joint collaboration between government and public, in implementing *zakat* (the Islamic system of mandatory distribution of wealth among the needy), would be crucial to solve poverty. They did not say what, other than self-regulation in the form of obedience to Islamic governance, such collaboration would look like: how would the government accomplish the extremely difficult task of transforming its present social-economic system to better reflect Islamic governance, and how would *zakat* work as a transformer of unjust social and political structures as well as individual and collective cultures?

Participating students (across gender and cities) described corruption as a symptom of religious moral decadence, and thus implied that ‘good’ Muslims would not be corrupt. However, this narrative inadequately explains who could perform what actions to actually affirm non-violence and just peace in a non-corrupt manner, in relation to the underlying conflicts. Such mention of the need for citizenship cooperation for peacebuilding does suggest that participating students had inclinations for building peace. At the same time, by not describing any particular actions or social institutional practices (defining such citizenship in democratic terms), these students’ narratives expressed in focus groups also suggest that they lacked skills and capacities for actual peacebuilding action, especially to address social-structural or tangible (economic) interest factors in conflict. Whereas participants clearly voiced their motivation and moral preference for action against injustice, such inclinations may not be sufficient to inform or empower that action in tangible ways. Citizens’ inclination for peacebuilding is an opportunity for Bangladeshi peacebuilding citizenship educators to use the existing curriculum to teach about the citizens’ lived experience of corruption and build (in school) citizenship capacities (rooted in Islam if necessary) to challenge and alter them with democracy and justice.

Focus group 1A (in larger city B2) boys' description of *jihad* captures these students' expressed understandings of citizenship in generic, Islamic terms. In the view of these privileged boys, *jihad* ideally begins with individual citizens' self-regulating choice to submit to the Qur'anic and Muhammadan (pbuh) traditions of justice, perfected through their actions for affirming such justice—i.e. through peacebuilding citizenship. Other boys and girls across cities articulated the same idea, without explicitly naming it *jihad*. They, too, described self-regulation based on Scriptural laws as crucial for peace and social reform. All boys and girls in the poorer city, and some of their privileged male peers, also described individual and collective citizen actions as crucial to socially and politically affirming (practicing) these laws.

As victims of direct and indirect violence, BIF girls in particular had peacefully protested against election violence. Although they expressed (in the focus group workshop) the view that their protest did not change any government or opposition party practices, and said they planned similar activities to respond to gender and resource conflicts and to corrupt governance. Other student participants, who did not mention lived experience of protesting, also said that they could mitigate such human rights and governance conflicts by peacefully protesting. Some marginalized boys and girls, especially, said they wanted to initiate dialogue for accountability between government and the public to improve Bangladesh's politics. Despite such expressions of hope, students across the focus group contexts were also unsure about how conflict resolution, transformation, and affirmation of justice would work in practice. Such understandings and motivations of students represent resources (opportunities) for education around justice, non-violence, conflict resolution and transformation, and participation in government decision making.

A challenge highlighted by the findings of this study was that participants' descriptions of *jihad* or citizenship for just peace quite often legitimized or even glorified some violent activities. The mandated and implemented curricula also taught that national heroic (among the citizens) activities could use violence to change the society and affirm just peace. Such legitimization of violence could potentially scare away many Bangladeshi citizens from engaging in (even non-violent) activities for social and political reform. Coupled with the lack of sufficient explicit in-depth education about the Qur'an and Prophet Mohammad's (pbuh) traditions, especially to educate young citizens about how to non-violently operationalize concepts like *jihad*, this represents an active challenge to the development peacebuilding citizenship. In particular, such education could reinforce the division of Muslims into the predominant,

polarized political identity groups, as represented in participating students' lived experience in Bangladesh, and encourage them to use violence. School-based peacebuilding citizenship education must help such citizens to learn to use democratic actions in response to their conflicting interests.

Participating students' narratives, and the mandated and implanted curriculum lessons, about violent activities in *jihad* (Islamic citizenship) for social reform pose a fundamental challenge to existing theories in peacebuilding and education—what roles could citizens play in relation to physical violence, and how might they develop capacities and commitment for such roles? As the boys and girls in the poorer city (B1) explicitly asked, for instance, what else could the East Pakistani citizens (Muslim majority) do, when the West Pakistani government (also Muslims) denied them justice and employed military to massacre them in response to their non-violent protests? Johan Galtung (1996) would say that this belief, glorifying and legitimizing (direct physical) violence, represents itself a cultural form of violence. These students and the curriculum did describe violence as the last option, for moments when there was no hope. Frantz Fanon (2004) would agree with these students that, in such situations, victims should engage in violent resistance to earn their freedom and protect their dignity as well as their rights. In addition, these students and the curricula implied that such violent action could lead to democracy, could minimize direct and indirect harm to victims and mitigate its causes. Findings of this research suggest that existing theories and research about non-violent citizen activities for peacebuilding social change do not adequately speak to the roots of victimized actors' understandings about the value (and consequences) of resisting violence with violence. (I will further discuss this issue in the 'implication' section below).

I agree with Fanon (2004) and my research participants from Bangladesh that violent resistance or retaliation in war is a way of protecting/regaining the just rights of the oppressed men, women, and children—i.e. the cause of Allah according to the Qur'an (e.g., 4:75). Yet, I also argue that the basic concept of violence in *jihad* needs to be understood with all its nuances. For such causes, Muslims are allowed to fight only "*those who fight*" them, but with caution: "*do not transgress limits; for Allah loveth not transgressors*" (2:190, Abdullah Yusuf Ali translation). Based on this verse, Muslims are not allowed to initiate war or fight those who are not active in war. At the same time, 'good' Muslims are also not supposed to passively accept victimhood when violent oppressions and war are waged against them. They are supposed to "*fight them [the oppressors] on until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail*

*justice and faith in Allah altogether and everywhere; but if thy cease, verily Allah doth see all that they do*” (The Qur’an, 8:39, Abdullah Yusuf Ali translation). Presumably, there will always be conflicts, even between citizens and governments in a Muslim majority context; but Islam does not define *jihad* (Islamic citizenship) in relation to such conflicts in terms of violent citizen actions. Muslims would unquestionably obey God and his Messenger (pbuh), and part of such compliance is obeying just governance (e.g., The Qur’an, 4:59). If there are conflicts, both citizens and government authorities would use the examples of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and solve conflicts non-violently: “*And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger*” (*ibid*). No Muslim is allowed to wage a war/fight against governments as long as they are not forbidden from obeying Allah (Sahih al-Bukhari, 2796; Sahih Muslim, 1848). In Bangladesh, where fighting (political) enemies is often seen as heroic citizen participation in governance, schools could help to mitigate this major challenge to peacebuilding citizenship by helping young citizens to develop such nuanced understandings about violence and *jihad*.

Clearly, participants’ lived experience helped to generate a particular kind of narrative not only about which social and political conflicts were of primary concern to them, but also about how these conflicts worked, including their religious moral dimensions, and about potential peacebuilding citizenship responses. They apparently understood that differences and disagreements remain inevitable realities of human communities, and they suggested religion as a main engine for resolving and transforming conflicts by reducing direct and indirect violence and affirm just peace. Their varied lived experiences with particular conflicts also informed their understandings of the specific actors and actions in such potential democratic peacebuilding solutions. Such findings of this research suggest that citizens’ lived experience of conflicts represent resources for particular kinds of conflict understandings, which school-based education could use to teach about democracy, justice, and peace in practice.

### **School-based Learning Environments**

A key assumption underlying this research, substantiated in the literature review (chapter 2), is that, along with lived experience, school can help to develop—or to impede—peacebuilding citizenship inclinations and capacities depending on how the curriculum deals with social conflicts and their solutions, including the roles of religion and democratic governance. Thus chapters 5 and 6 examine the official as well as implemented grade 6–10 Bangladesh and Global Studies (BGS), English (EL), Islam and Moral Education (IME), and Bangla (BL) curricula.

### **School Environments (Implicit Curriculum)**

The overall school and educational environments described by participating students and their teachers presented several challenges to developing students' peacebuilding citizenship inclinations and capacities. In particular (even though teachers had a role in the selection of student participants), the participating privileged boys and their poorer male and female peers described teachers' corrupt and authoritarian practices. By randomly using corporal punishment to discipline students, these teachers implied that physical violence was a legitimate way of handling even interpersonal conflicts. By normalizing violent retaliation, such cultural violence would block the development of citizens' capacities for non-violently solving escalated conflicts, repairing relationships, and affirming justice. In addition, by teaching differently in private coaching than in school, some teachers participated in limiting some (less privileged) students' access to quality education. Also, students said that some teachers often gave undue privilege to selected students—based on personal relationship, money, and/or power factors—during school-based and board exams. Underprivileged students called themselves victims of such corrupt denial of fair access to (higher) education and consequent job possibilities. This practice would contribute to normalizing denial of the rights of underprivileged citizens, and thus reproduce structural violence. Further, implemented and mandated curricula relied heavily on memorization, which may impede the development of critical and democratic problem-solving skills (Freire, 1970). Such educational governance has the potential to impede democracy, reproduce direct and indirect violence, and add to participating young citizens' sense of hopelessness about their roles in democratically solving conflicts.

Participants in boys' schools in both cities did demonstrate some opportunities to develop citizens' peacebuilding citizenship skills and inclinations. Activities such as class captain elections to represent students' voices (*only in BIM, the smaller city boys' school*), mock parliamentary elections were held (*only mentioned by T3, Aboriginal, from BIM*), extracurricular activities like picnics (*BIM*), sports (*both boys' schools*), and cultural programs (*only in B2M, the bigger city boys' school*) apparently embedded education for encountering and understanding differing viewpoints, affirming justice, and cooperation. Such learning opportunities, although gendered and rare, have potential to build hope and capacity among young citizens for non-violently solving conflicts (peacemaking) and affirming just peace (peacebuilding) in relation to issues of concern to them.

### **Mandated and Implemented (Classroom) Curricula**

Official grade 6–10 Bangladesh and Global Studies (BGS), Bangla (BL), English (EL), and Islam and Moral Education (IME) curricula included several peacebuilding citizenship learning opportunities (see chapters 5 and 6), including prompts for issues discussion and values education. For instance, IME 9–10 curriculum included lessons about respecting women, manifesting universal brotherhood across religions, preventing injustice, affirming justice, eradicating poverty through *zakat*, and keeping the environment clean (e.g. IME 9–10, pp. 122–129, 134, 138–140; 145–146; & 148–151). These lessons were mainly about how Islamic rules and values would mitigate some social conflicts. BGS grade 6–10 curricula included such explicit lessons especially around nationalism and governance-related historical and contemporary conflicts. Willing educators could use these government-controlled curriculum narratives as opportunities to invite and teach diverse viewpoints and democratic capacities in relation to citizens’ lived experiences of these conflicts. Participating teachers referred to such textbook chapters as examples of the peacebuilding citizenship lessons they had taught.

Bangladeshi official curriculum seemed to have the potential to encourage citizen participation in social and political change processes. In particular, narratives of heroic citizen actions in response to some past and contemporary conflicts, although they did glorify violence, could potentially encourage citizens’ participation in social and political reform (also Kaderi, 2014b). At the same time, explicit education about non-violent options for participating in influencing government decision making to solve conflicts could enhance peacebuilding citizenship learning by minimizing the reproduction of violent activism as a pervasive social experience. Student-centered active pedagogies—participatory, task-based, and dialogic—were also mandated in the official curriculum (e.g., Bangladesh, 2012b). These represent spaces for such education. Using such pedagogies to address lived experiences of conflicts could develop students’ peacebuilding capacities around understanding and constructively communicating multiple viewpoints and democratically solving problems (as in Bickmore & Parker, 2014). However, even the teachers who had volunteered to participate in this study based on their interest in citizenship and peace education, across gender and city contexts, generally ignored (or did not consider feasible) these pedagogical opportunities for developing non-violent citizen capacities.

Participating teachers did mention government control of the curriculum as impeding their presentation or school-based analysis of certain controversial issues, especially around politics and governance. Nevertheless, most of these teachers did teach about how students could

learn history from sources accessed in their outside lives, to enable criticality about government-controlled information. By attaching great importance to asking their students to critically think about the roles of heroes and demons in Bangladesh's history and contemporary politics, these teachers were enacting some elements of peacebuilding citizenship teaching. *T3 (Aboriginal)* from the boys' school in the smaller city (*BIM*) described how he already had been building on existing textbook and curriculum guidelines to teach about fair democratic parliamentary elections—critically analyzing his students' and his own lived experiences of the recent election, and conducting mock parliamentary elections in the classroom. Although teachers' fear of teaching such issues presumably had genuine roots, given government-imposed restrictions (as described for instance by *T1*, Muslim, in the *B2* girls' school), the official curriculum and textbooks did include some opportunities, and some teachers (although rarely) evidently did transcend restraints to teach about conflictual issues, helping to develop the students' democratic understandings about some lived conflicts.

Mandated and implemented curriculum lessons teaching religious (im)morality as an overarching factor in conflicts constituted a major challenge: these lessons almost always blamed perpetrators for their 'bad' behaviours, and ignored the particular links between religious moral decadence and other dimensions of conflict. For instance, all Muslim teachers and students said that Islam requires men to respect women. However, none of them analyzed possible (dis-)connections between their lived experience of gender-based conflicts and violence with the Quranic traditions that men are superior to women and are allowed to physically hurt women if 'necessary' (e.g., 4:34). Thus, they merely blamed individuals for their bad religious morality, and not examining religious intersections with direct and indirect dimensions of conflicts. Ignoring other factors that shaped gender and other human rights conflicts in Bangladesh in this way would impede the development of democratic conceptions (and skills) in relation to lived social conflicts, even though citizens might have the moral motivation to act against injustice.

The curriculum gave lip service to interreligious peace. However, there was no mandated or reported learning activity for developing active respect and full accommodation of cultural and faith diversities, beyond just (passively) tolerating them (as in Kaderi, 2014b). As summarized above, Islam and Moral Education (IME) grade 6–10 curricula and all participating Muslim teachers taught that following the Quranic and Muhammadan (pbuh) traditions meant affirming just peace. However, only in relation to poverty did some teachers teach in tangible terms that an Islamic tradition (*zakat*) could contribute to economic equity. They mentioned



*zakat* as fundamental to practicing Islam, but no other teacher and just one group of boys (*IA*) from the privileged city (*B2*) described how citizens could be encouraged to follow such Islamic laws. Thus, curriculum and the participating teachers and students often described affirmation of Islam in the context of Muslim majority Bangladesh as the key to peacebuilding. Yet, the lack of much concrete information or concepts about *how* Islam might mitigate the social conflicts they lived represents a real challenge to the development of willing citizens' peacebuilding citizenship capacities.

In sum, the analyzed Bangladeshi curricula taught conflict through narratives that blamed certain *actors*—in particular, the idea that 'bad' Muslims cause and escalate conflicts whereas 'good' Muslim could mitigate them—instead of helping the students to develop understandings or capacity to use specific *factors* (beliefs, structures, and actions) to escalate and de-escalate the lived social conflicts. In such a context, where citizens frequently referred to the Quran and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) to describe their understandings of conflicts, school-based opportunities to examine Islamic justice, democracy, citizenship, *jihad*, and peace are critically important. Otherwise, as in the case of these four Bangladeshi schools, uncritical understandings of religion(s) seem to permeate citizens' (mis-)understandings of social conflicts and their potential solutions.

### **Methodological Reflections**

In this thesis research, I have studied selected Bangladeshi students' understandings and the school-based learning opportunities provided to them in relation to various kinds of social conflicts that they selected as being of primary concern to them. Research sites were one boys' school and one girls' school from each of two Bangladeshi cities with different levels of affluence and violence. I recruited teachers based on their teaching areas and personal interest in peacebuilding and/or citizenship education. These teachers selected participants for two student focus groups in each school: I requested them to include students with a diverse range of social experience contexts. While participating teachers in this study represented only four compulsory subjects out of a bigger curriculum, these were core subjects that most explicitly included the study of past and contemporary social and political conflicts and citizen responses. While 'History' and 'Civics and Citizenship' curricula might center even more on such learning goals, those subjects were not compulsory or available to all. Therefore, although the total participating 36 students and 16 teachers from these four school would not represent all Bangladeshi citizens' voices, the human voices and the curriculum documents analyzed in this research may

reasonably suggest how typical citizens of similar age, who studied the same subjects and lived in similar contexts, might understand some social conflicts and potential citizen responses.

Selecting teacher participants by subject areas, and simultaneously by interest in peacebuilding and/or citizenship education, was challenging. Although I had distributed letters of recruitment, some teachers beyond my selection criteria expressed genuine interest in the research, and it was difficult to refuse their participation. Conversely, in *BI* (the smaller city) schools, some recruited teachers withdrew from this research after the preparatory meetings (see chapter 3), saying that they had personal/family issues to attend at the moment. Similarly, although I had requested the teachers in all schools to recruit students with diverse ethnic and religious identities and economic statuses, they tended to select young people they considered to be their ‘best’ students. However, the students teachers selected did not always show up in school on the focus group days, due especially to violent *hartal* strikes that impeded mobility across the cities—compelling the teachers to choose student participants from whoever came to school. Yet, the teachers still seemed to overlook diversity in quickly choosing students to participate in this research. Getting more Hindu voices, and students from more diverse economic groups and/or academic proficiencies, would have provided more diverse viewpoints about conflicts in each context.

Another limitation in this research design was that, with participating teachers and students, I conducted only focus group workshops of limited duration, not individual interviews or series of conversations. Whereas curriculum documents represented official challenges and opportunities for peacebuilding citizenship education, focus group workshops helped me to understand how the students experienced and understood some social and political conflicts and how the teacher-implemented curricula taught about these conflicts. Each focus group workshop did begin with initial orientation regarding democratic participation expectations such as maintaining equal airtime. Yet, every group included some dominant voices, and often participants showing deep concern about conflicts remained mostly silent. Although I tried to facilitate equal airtime among participants, individual interviews could have helped the less dominant voices to express their concern and understandings more fully. Allocating more total time (than 60–90 minutes) per focus group workshop, or more opportunity for follow-up sessions with the same participants, also could have helped the quieter students to speak.

Friendship among participating students helped them to start talking about conflicts right from the beginning of the workshop, without much icebreaking time. However, these friendship

groupings also limited the scope of the data, in that peers presumably influenced what each participant would say about conflicts. All student groups except *1A* in *B2M* (the larger city boys' school) in the first round included same-grade friends. In these same-grade groups, there was virtually no disagreement expressed. When one spoke, others often picked up the idea, and explicitly voiced or nodded implying agreement. Even the Hindu students in *B1F* and *B2M-1B* often expressed agreement with their Muslim friends about Islam related issues, such as how Islam ensures equitable rights of women, how Islamist terrorists are not real Muslims, and how inter-religious violence in some parts of Bangladesh reflect political plots. In contrast, *B2M-1A* (boys' school participants in the larger city) students were from two different grades. Although the older boys often dominated discussions, facilitation of fair airtime created space for the younger boys to express disagreement with the older boys, even about sensitive religious issues, for example about the acceptability of violence in *jihad*. Creating more diverse groups and encouraging such disagreements in all groups could have enriched the data by providing more diverse perspectives about conflicts and their possible solutions.

The visual prompts used in the student focus groups—clear images of real-life conflicts collected from newspapers and other electronic media and presented without any written descriptors—worked well to instantly engage students in conflict analysis. Students did have some difficulties in talking about conflicts where they did not immediately interpret or recognize the images, but these difficulties proved solvable through verbal prompts. Once students recognized the representation of conflicts they had experienced, and/or had seen or heard about others experiencing, they were able to categorize and analyze conflicts represented by the various images. Students' categorization of conflict examples also helped me to cluster conflicts into the two themes I used to organize the data analysis chapters (5 and 6).

The protocol used for guiding participants' focus group discussions of conflicts seemed very effective. These protocols were initially developed in a multi-year international research project directed by my supervisor, Kathy Bickmore, for which I was a research assistant and on which I modeled this thesis research. Focus group protocols were implemented and refined with upper elementary and lower secondary students and teachers in Ontario, Canada and in Guanajuato, Mexico. I adapted these protocols to the Bangladeshi social, political, and educational context. In particular, teacher focus group protocols in the first round invited teachers to share examples of their peacebuilding citizenship lessons, and to help me to improve the student focus group workshop. In this round, the focus group process with students invited

them to act like newspaper reporters in analyzing selected conflicts—reporting on what each conflict was about, what violence was involved, what stakeholders were involved and affected, what caused and escalated the problems, and what actions (by whom) could de-escalate them—was especially useful. Most students excitedly participated in this analytical task. In the follow-up round about twenty-one months later, I shared with the same teachers and some new students in each school some findings from the first round of student focus group workshop. The follow-up focus group process with teachers also invited them to reflect on pedagogical options available to them to address their students’ concerns and bridge any curriculum gaps. The follow-up process with the students invited participating students to verify previous students’ concerns and understandings with their own concerns and understandings of social conflicts. These prompts were structured enough to help me make sense of the data, yet at the same time open-ended enough to not overly influence what participants would say about particular aspects of conflict and citizenship.

In sum, this research was well-designed and contributes the Bangladesh case to a larger international comparative research project, although inevitably it had some limitations. Some significant challenges were rooted in the escalated conflict of the political moment (election campaign season) when the first-round data were collected (see chapter 4). However, these analytical challenges were mitigated by the opportunity to conduct follow-up focus groups among teachers and students in all four schools, helping to distinguish enduring issues from the issues of the moment. Comparing focus group discussions about real life social conflicts, held with girls and with boys in contrasting urban contexts, helped me to understand how various students experienced various conflicts, and what various teachers taught (and often also how they taught). Comparing participants’ narrative analyses of conflicts with their descriptions of relevant school-based education in the four Bangladeshi contexts helped me to understand how the curriculum matched or mismatched with participating young people’s lived experiences of social and political conflicts and of citizen action in response to these conflicts. The inclusion of multiple focus groups (and follow-up sessions) with students and with teachers, in girls’ and boys’ schools in two cities, contributed to a reliable and substantial understanding of how participating young people and teachers locally understood and felt about social and political conflicts and their potential democratic solutions, emphasizing the peacebuilding citizenship possibilities and challenges embedded in existing school-based learning opportunities.

### **Implications**

The findings of this study have several implications for the international comparative knowledge base and theory related to peacebuilding, citizenship and education—for teachers and schools as well as board or national-level educational policy makers. I discuss these in two sections below: scholarly implications and practical-professional implication.

### **Scholarly Implications**

Religious dimensions were prominent (across gender and city contexts) in teacher and student participants' expressed understandings about conflict causes and solutions. This thesis thereby contributes to the research literature cited in chapter 2, which is insufficient to explain these factors, or how educators might handle them, especially in the under-studied context of Bangladesh, or even more broadly in southern Asia and other Muslim majority contexts. Existing theories describe the intersections among various dimensions of conflict: cultural identity and belief issues, tangible socioeconomic interest and social-structural issues (e.g., justice, poverty, and power differentials), and direct confrontation and physical harm (see Galtung, 1996; Ross, 2001, 2007). Some theory and research also has identified lived experience of religion as a potential source of learning extremist views that would fuel terrorism, and has argued that such difficult issues can be discussed in school without contradicting human rights (e.g., Davies, 2014). Despite overlaps, none of this work sufficiently explains the links between religious factors and lived experiences of social conflicts expressed by these Bangladeshi participants. Narratives of religious moral decadence emphasize individual choice (over social institutions or structures) in faith, belief and action. Yet, Bangladeshi participants in this research described religious regeneration as a collective cultural and structural dimension as well. For example, they described eradicating unfair distribution of wealth by practicing *zakat*, affirming gender equity by following religious precepts to respect and fully accommodate women in the society, engaging in activism against injustice to affirm God-defined justice, and so forth as defining the practice of Muslim identity—as (tangible) actions of submission to God's will. Theorizing religion either as a contributor to destructive conflict, or as embedded in the above direct and indirect dimensions of conflicts, may partially address these participants' understandings of conflict and peacebuilding citizenship. Yet, the religiously-imbued conflict narratives of participants in this thesis research imply the need to understand religion itself as a particular dimension of conflict and peacebuilding citizenship.

Narratives that define war and 'terrorist' physical violence as *jihad* have severely distorted Islam (Ahmad, 2006; Koçlu, 2004). Such misunderstandings of Islam have contributed

to much of contemporary mistrust of Muslims around the world (Waghid & Davids, 2014). Whereas *jihad* can include physical confrontation, the Quranic and Prophetic (pbuh) traditions do not necessarily celebrate direct violence (Waghid, 2014). Participating students and teachers across gender and city contexts in this research, irrespective of how they used the terms *jihad* and citizenship, affirmed an understanding that *jihad* does include war, but not terrorist violent acts (see Chapter 6). Rather, these participants defined various stages of *jihad* by including cooperation, non-violence, relationship building, and individual as well as collective activism to affirm just peace—defined by God and modelled by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)—as fundamental to being and becoming a sincere Muslim. Offering a relatively complete and complex understanding of *jihad* as Islamic citizenship, these thesis findings contribute a new way of understanding citizenship for peacebuilding in Muslim (majority) contexts.

Many participants described violent activism against violence/harm in positive terms, as unavoidable and/or useful in one stage of *jihad*, or Islamic citizenship. Based on Galtung's (1990) theory, such understandings (legitimizing perpetration of direct violence) would represent cultural violence. Some girls in both cities did recognize such legitimization of violence as harmful. However, participants across gender and city contexts also affirmed a belief that violent activism represents individuals' urges for freedom (as in Fanon, 2004). In describing their understandings of *jihad* (Islamic citizenship), they described violent activism as an unpleasant but unavoidable way to facilitate democracy when victims resist direct harm done to them. Participants frequently referred to the 1971 liberation war, and argued that Bengalis' violent activism led to (or made possible) democracy, after their non-violent activism to resist Pakistani indirect and direct violence had failed. Galtung's theory of cultural violence ignores such viewpoints of the victims, whereas Fanon's theory of decolonization offers a psychological explanation of how individuals may legitimize violent activism against colonizers. When prompted to discuss the theory of cultural violence, participating teachers and students (across gender and city contexts) disagreed with Galtung and argued that such violent activism did indeed contribute to, rather than impede, peace-building citizenship. As one teacher explained: "*I believe that seeking ways out of oppression and deprivation is essentially seeking peace*" (T1, a Muslim male, from B1 boys school). Hence, such understandings of violence as an (last resort) option for peacebuilding citizenship (from a victim's point of view) remains a conceptual challenge that requires further study.

As discussed above, Islam (the Qur'an and the Hadiths) does not pretend that there will be no physical or indirect violence in human community. Rather, the Qur'an gives a code for reducing intentional harm with involuntary violence. I believe that violence would not be a major concern as now in Bangladesh and similar Muslim majority contexts if all citizens understood the nature and conditions of violent government and citizen actions in response to violence. Instead, in-depth understandings about *qisas*, war, and *jihad* could help to democratize Muslim majority contexts. Otherwise, where citizens do not have the resources to combat violence, they would be easy victims of oppression, and thus would passively allow violence. For example, the Rohingya Muslims in the present days are being massacred and expelled out of the Rakhine State in Myanmar, and these Muslims have apparently no way to resist this ethnic cleansing. However, such sophisticate theory of violence involves the crucial risk of ignorantly legitimizing all kinds of violent response, including violent citizen actions that are considered illegal acts in Islam (e.g., Sahih Muslim, Hadiths 1854 & 1855), to conflict. Participating students and teachers (across gender and city contexts) in Bangladesh represented similar risks by not showing such nuanced understandings of violence as they narrated *jihad*. Such lack of knowledge may reflect a contemporary picture of the bigger society, especially because participants in the focus groups across schools frequently referred to lived social experiences to analyze conflicts.

As discussed in the 'repertoires of potential responses' section above, in Islam certain violent activities do constitute citizenship for affirming just peace by reducing oppression and violence. Yet, the lack of in-depth understanding of how violence works in governance and in *jihad* is a conceptual block that impedes peacebuilding citizenship capacities by helping to reproduce violence without achieving the goal of just peace. Therefore, there is a crucial need for future research to build theories about peacebuilding citizenship education and Islamic concepts of *qisas* and *jihad* in Muslim majority contexts. In contexts like Bangladesh, schools could help to produce peacebuilding citizens by helping them to develop the Qur'an- and Hadith-based in-depth understandings about these issues.

Along similar lines, T2 (*Muslim male*) from B1 (smaller city) boys' school, and both groups of B1 boys, argued that activist participants in a recent non-violent movement in Bangladesh—the 2013 *Shahbag* protests—had enacted violence, by demanding and then celebrating a death sentence on 1971 war criminals. While these participants expressed concern about the cultural violence embedded in this protest movement, such protests also make visible structural violence in Bangladesh. Participants in thesis focus groups were fully aware that

strikes, *hartals*, and other (ostensibly nonviolent) non-cooperation resistance movements usually block ordinary people's access to resources like transportation, jobs, business, and education. People who live on their daily earnings usually live hungry during such protests, and closing down offices and marketplaces also harms the country's economy. Historically, non-cooperation protests meant refusing to work for the 'enemies,' denying them food and water and thus killing them slowly (e.g., Rahman, 1971). Hence, 'non-violent' movements for large-scale social change may not be completely non-violent; they could enact violence (harm) in multiple ways. Conflict, peace, and citizenship-related research cited in chapter 2 inadequately explains such understandings and consequences of some protest actions. However, these contested histories also represent pedagogical opportunities for peacebuilding citizenship educators and students to critically think about alternative (non-)violent actions in relation to escalated political conflicts, the beliefs about governance and about 'enemies' that sustain them, and their positive and negative consequences.

Islam, as (im-)perfect as its practice may be in the social and political context of Bangladesh (see Chapter 4), represents a dominant part of lived experience for nearly all citizens of the country. The research findings presented above, located in this particular Muslim-majority context, suggest that lived (cultural and structural, as well as personal) experiences of religion are indispensable for understanding citizens' expressed understandings of conflict and peacebuilding. Schools may—or may not—explicitly teach about religious factors linked with conflicts; even when they do not, citizens' lived experiences with religion do contribute to how they understand the conflicts, their causes, escalators, solutions, and citizenship. Research cited in chapter 2 inadequately addressed citizens' religious contexts as sources of education for peace, conflict, and/or citizenship. This thesis research has demonstrated that peacebuilding citizenship education will lack a crucial ingredient if citizens' religious beliefs and contexts are not addressed in relation to the conflicts that concern them. This seems especially true of contexts such as those studied in Bangladesh, in which majority citizens were particularly unwilling to accept forms of justice other than Quranic Scriptural and Muhammadan (pbuh) justice as just peace.

Finally, this research contributes to an emerging body of work combining theory and research on 'citizenship' and 'peacebuilding' into a much broader field of scholarship and practice – 'peacebuilding citizenship education.' Scholars have tended to study 'citizenship' and 'peace(building)' as two distant fields, without examining how the elements of each essentially



build on the other (e.g., Curle, Freire & Galtung, 1974). Democratic citizenship refers to active political engagement for justice-oriented changes in society (Frazer, 2008; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Similarly, peacebuilding also requires active social and political engagement for affirming democracy and social justice (Bickmore, 2005; Davies, 2005; Galtung, 1983). Thus, these two fields contribute to a combined body of educational research, as in this thesis study, that aims to engage citizens in democratically transforming and solving socio-political problems, and thereby in building sustainable just peace, in varied conflictual and violent contexts. This thesis study's context-based evidence of citizens' understandings and learning opportunities about conflicts, embedded in regular daily experience in and around ordinary public-school education available to a broad population, helped to add substantive local dimension to theories of democratic peacebuilding in international educational research

### **Practical-professional Implications**

Some student participants in this research described non-violent solutions as useful in relation to small-scale human rights conflicts, such as interpersonal and 'friends and family' issues. Girls, in particular, especially in smaller city B1, mentioned dialogue and negotiation, instead of violence, as particularly useful to reduce physical damage, address conflicting viewpoints, and mend relationships in relation to such conflicts. Research reviewed in chapter 2 concurs that such peacemaking skills are a useful element of resolving and transforming conflicts to create peace. As mentioned above, by often ignoring (not implementing) officially-mandated active-learning pedagogies, participating teachers in all four schools offered very limited help for their students to develop such dialogic and democratic problem-solving, constructive communication, and negotiation skills. Since the official curriculum mandates already included discussion of past and contemporary social and political conflicts, using these pedagogies would help young citizens to build inclinations and capacities for non-violent conflict resolution (i.e. peacemaking) and conflict transformation (i.e. peacebuilding or affirming just peace).

At the same time, the rare implementation of such pedagogies that could help to develop peacemaking skills, suggests teachers' possible scarcity of resources to support such teaching. In particular, participating teachers across gender and city contexts often explicitly mentioned that they did not have enough training and resources to equip them with skills needed to implement dialogic and problem-solving activities that allow would students to actively analyze conflicts and democratically negotiate interests. For example, *"we know that we are supposed to go beyond just lecturing. However, what can we do? The pedagogical options mentioned in the*

*curriculum do not match the trainings and resources we have*” (T1, a male teacher from B1 boys’ school). Therefore, a recommendation for curriculum policy makers, teacher educators, and relevant government actors is that teachers need professional development training and curriculum-linked resources to help them (1) to themselves develop more multidimensional understandings of how conflict works, and (2) to understand how to carry out specific pedagogical practices that could help to mitigate conflict and build just peace addressing various dimensions of conflict. For example, efficient, inclusive and equitable classroom implementation of dialogue and negotiation activities, informed by multiple-perspective inquiry about particular conflict examples, can help young citizens to learn listen to conflicting viewpoints and to non-violently negotiate the conflicting understandings and interests (Bickmore, 2005, 2011).

In relation to large-scale conflicts—e.g., political polarization, election violence (direct), and corrupt governance issues—all underprivileged (B1 city) boys and girls and their privileged (B2 city) male peers expressed hopelessness about their capacities to make a difference in these conflicts that affected them. By recommending virtually nothing beyond individual religious moral regeneration as solutions to election and governance conflicts, the privileged (B2 city) girls reflected a perspective similar to their peers. Research literature cited in chapter 2 did not outline particular avenues for citizen action to democratically resolve and transform such conflicts—which specific actors could take what specific actions? Non-violent ways to mitigate these large-scale political conflicts remained a puzzle for the participating Bangladeshi students and their teachers, as for peacebuilding citizenship education scholarship globally. Similarly, participating teachers’ apparent hopelessness about their capacity to mitigate contemporary political conflicts—despite especially *B1* boys’ and girls’ wishes to learn how to be ‘good’ political leaders in the future—was a particularly unanswered challenge. Nevertheless, this thesis demonstrates some possibilities for teaching conflict resolution and transformation skills in relation to small-scale social and interpersonal issues as a start for school-based peacebuilding citizenship education. Such education constitutes indirect peace(building citizenship) education to increase the possibility of a culture of peace in future politics and governance in a politically risky context (Bar-Tal, Rosen & Nets-Zehngut, 2010).

Student and teacher participants and the implemented curriculum folded the structural and cultural (as well as direct) dimensions of social conflicts into a religious moral frame. For example, curriculum documents and participating students described corruption as a cause of many social conflicts, and also as a symptom of religious moral decadence. By describing

citizens' compliance with Islam as an alternative response to social and political conflicts, most participants conceptualized religious practices and ideologies as embodying economy, politics, and other social factors. However, mere framing of the religious moral dimensions of conflicts does not by itself help to build any citizenship capacities to address the cultural biases and social-structural injustices that underlie conflicts. Rather, doing so means blaming 'others,' implying narrators' own innocence, and assuming that 'bad' people have both agency and responsibility to change. Such blame narratives submerge the role of collective citizen activities and governance to democratically affirm just peace. In response to this challenge, curriculum opportunities to develop citizens' critical understandings of the anatomy of conflicts and their options for peacebuilding, including the role of religion in both, could increase the possibilities of democratic conflict resolution and transformation in the society.

Revising the entire curriculum, to make educational spaces around various dimensions of social and political conflict and peacebuilding citizenship explicit, would require substantial time and resources. On one hand, it might require revisions of existing curriculum, or introduction of a new compulsory curriculum, or both: such change would reinforce already existing resource scarcity. On the other hand, such revisions may not have sustainable impacts because when government changes, official curriculum also changes. As a feasible alternative, educators (countrywide) could be professionally supported and trained to use the already existing spaces in the curriculum—e.g., conflict issues, principles, and relevant skills that appear across the curricula analyzed in this thesis study—to teach and facilitate diverse students' engagement in relation to all dimensions of conflict and peacebuilding citizenship. Such efforts have potential to generate sustainable educational change, because if willing educators are professionally ready, they will likely continue to use any space in current and future curriculum to engage in democratic education about conflict and peacebuilding citizenship. Such practical-professional initiatives may help to reduce the overemphasis on blaming conflict *actors* and increase the possibilities of understanding multiple direct and indirect, including religious, *factors* in conflict and peacebuilding.

This research shows how lived experience can (re-)shape—and be (re-)shaped by—citizens' understandings of conflict and their solutions. Those participants who had experienced destructive conflicts most directly did tend to understand their dimensions differently than those who did not. As described in chapter 4, Bangladesh represents one particular case of a Muslim majority context, in which curriculum narratives and the teacher and student participants'

narratives described just peace simultaneously in religious and political terms. In the prevailing worldview of participants in this thesis study, violent retaliation had a place in social reform toward such just peace. Lived experience narratives about such protest activities were embedded in these citizens' cultural knowledge about conflict, citizenship, and peace (see chapter 5). Thus, participating students' and teachers' understandings of social conflicts and their solutions, given the limited curriculum opportunities, represented their hope for an ideal (religious) world more than understanding of particular indirect dimensions of social conflicts or of particular citizen action options to transform those conflicts. To these participants, democratizing Bangladesh for sustainable peace would mean ensuring enactment of Quranic norms in the social, economic, and political structures of the country. These dimensions of citizens' understandings about conflict and their solutions demonstrate the need for schools to critically address such cultural knowledge in formal education.

Toward using such lived experience or cultural knowledge about conflict to efficiently implement peacebuilding citizenship education, mere professional development trainings may not be sufficient. Educators presumably need thorough supports that can stay with them permanently. Hence, professional development materials could be developed to practically show Bangladeshi teachers how they could use their students' lived experiences to democratize school and classroom-based education about social and political conflict. These documents would provide models of curriculum infusion, which willing educators could follow and improve upon, to invent multiple pedagogical options to further infuse students' experiential knowledge in the existing learning spaces in the curriculum. Such education would prepare the students to go back to the society with in-depth knowledge and critical understandings about socially pervasive conflicts, and with democratic capacities to transform these conflicts and build just peace.

Another practical-professional implication of this thesis research, especially given the minimal existing published research on these matters in Bangladeshi education, as outlined in chapter 2, is the need to make continuing research-based support available to peacebuilding citizenship education theorists and practitioners in Bangladesh. On-going research-based conceptual understandings of Bangladeshi teachers' implemented conflict curriculum, in comparison with relevant global theories and research, would inform effective guidelines about how to best educate young citizens about creating conditions for just peace by reducing direct and indirect violence and affirming cultural inclusion and social-structural justice. Hence, it is recommended that the government of Bangladesh develop an educational research institute for

continuing inquiry about global and local practice, theories, and research on peacebuilding citizenship-related education and their practical implications for Bangladesh. Peacebuilding citizenship education is a continuous process, and research-based government support is critically important to help such education to develop and continue to happen among young citizens, to equip them to build just peace.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Findings discussed in chapters 5 and 6, and summarized in this concluding chapter, suggest that curriculum opportunities to develop citizens' critical understandings about their lived conflicts and citizenship could help to build their capacities and inclinations for just peace in Bangladesh's future governance. Nevertheless, this thesis research raises some core questions that need to be answered through future research. In particular, further research is needed to understand (1) how schooling experiences could help young citizens to learn tangible citizenship concepts and skills in relation to transforming existing small-scale as well as large-scale social and political conflicts; (2) how students' lived experience and cultural knowledge about conflicts, including the role of religion therein, could be infused in the curriculum (including pedagogical practices) to improve such learning; and (3) how much this thesis research has helped participating teachers to rethink their curriculum practices, and how much future help is still required.

As discussed above, this research highlights small-scale social and interpersonal conflict-based opportunities to teach peacebuilding citizenship skills and capacities. However, all student participants (across gender and cities) and some of their participating teachers showed inclinations about doing something to mitigate Bangladesh's governance related conflicts. One group of boys and girls in each underprivileged school has expressed high hopes about dialogic and shared accountability (between government representatives and common citizens) based governance to affirm just peace at the large-scale sociopolitical level; but they were hopeless about their capacities to do so. Whereas such activism seems feasible in Bangladesh—especially because participating young citizens cared about the quality of democracy and peace they lived, and not about who formed the government (see Chapter 6)—all student participants (across schools) shared this common hopelessness by saying that they did not know how to reach the powerful elites and how to talk about conflicts and citizenship options. A well-designed research project could infuse such capacities in the curriculum, and conduct sample workshops with teachers and students. After sufficient skill education, powerful elites could be invited (as part of

the curriculum or through another research project) in schools to initiate dialogues with young citizens (or their selected representatives) about their lived concern and experiences of conflict and their (democratic peacebuilding) solutions. Such research would help define ways in which young citizens could develop skills necessary to democratically solve both small- and large-scale conflicts, as well as use some of their peacebuilding capacities to solve the political issues that bother them.

A key recommendation derived from this thesis study is that schools could help to build young citizens' peacebuilding citizenship inclinations and capacities by linking and infusing their lived concerns and understandings of conflict into the implemented curriculum. However, this research did not uncover how such infusion could be designed and implemented. Further research could help teachers to develop feasible ways of including lived experiences, in the context of the spaces of possibility within existing official curriculum. Curriculum mandates and texts analyzed in this research highlight several concrete opportunities to facilitate students' study of conflicts and peacebuilding (see chapters 4, 5, and 6). Educators need theory- and research-based resources to help them use existing opportunities, to go beyond mandates and teach with and through students' lived experience. For example, explicitly addressing the roles of religious morality, Islamic notions of justice, violence, and citizen response to escalated conflicts in social reform in young citizens' cultural knowledge about conflict, seems sensitive and thus would be challenging for teachers. Thus, research-based infusion of resources and strategies rooted in a Muslim majority context that is marked by substantial political bloodshed may help to enhance the possibilities for peacebuilding citizenship education.

This thesis research engaged selected teachers in the discussion of educational spaces (including pedagogical options) in relation to context-specific conflicts and their solutions. Since participating teachers (in all four schools) were clearly interested in teaching about conflicts and peacebuilding citizenship, these discussions might have informed their educational practices. A follow-up study could shed light on the impact and usefulness of focus group dialogue processes, such as those used in this research, on/for teachers. Such research would help to outline how future studies, including co-creating (with teachers) curriculum infusion resources, could help to improve peacebuilding citizenship education in Bangladeshi schools.

### **Conclusion**

The Bangladeshi curriculum analyzed in this doctoral thesis research (as officially mandated, and to a limited degree as the participating teachers and students described its

implementation) did include some spaces for developing young citizens' inclinations to act against injustice. Narratives about various past and contemporary governance and identity conflicts represented particular curriculum practices that seemed capable of motivating students to engage in social and political change activities. Curriculum narratives about human rights problems also represented a clear message to young citizens that their participation in mitigating these problems and democratizing Bangladesh is crucial. Further, the overall religious moral framing of conflicts throughout relevant curriculum embodied inclinations for individually and collectively acting against injustice as a key to being (good) Muslims. However, mere moral persuasion and willingness to act may not be sufficient to help citizens to reduce violence and non-violently affirm just peace.

Adolescent students' knowledge and concerns, in all four gender and city contexts analyzed in this research, present numerous opportunities for Bangladeshi educators to go beyond official narratives and to facilitate informed discussions about multiple viewpoints, causes, actors, and solutions in relation to specific types of social conflicts. Many official learning goals and pedagogical guidelines also provide opportunities for interested educators to help young citizens to build capacities for resolving conflicts, rebuilding relationships, and affirming just peace, at least on a small scale. Individual teachers' infusion of interactive pedagogies, skill instruction, and multiple viewpoints in their classroom curricula also could be expected to help build students' capacities for non-violently influencing decision making and affirming justice, even in relation to some large-scale (e.g. governance and human rights) conflicts. Teachers' and my own analyses pointed to some challenges represented by government narratives about past and contemporary governance and identity conflicts. However, some participating teachers also demonstrated how these challenges could be manageable, and showed that mandated curriculum lessons around past and recent social and political conflicts (e.g. election polarization and gender-oppressive practices such as dowry) did open spaces for teaching about conflicts relevant to students' expressing and analyzing their own lived experiences. In Bangladesh, such education seems critically important, particularly because traditions and rhetoric of violent activism have long thwarted a culture of nonviolent cooperation and just peace in the country's post-liberation social and political context.

Lived experience constituted a particularly powerful source of young citizen participants' knowledge and concern about conflicts, especially when the implemented curricula inadequately addressed those conflicts. Those students who had some direct lived experiences of conflicts

tended to show more in-depth, complex comprehension about the conflicts and their causes than those who did not (pedagogy presumably could at times facilitate their sharing such knowledge with peers in school). Nevertheless, some options for handling conflicts, including the value of religious moral regeneration and violent activism, were cultural(ly pervasive general) knowledge to all participating students regardless of their experience about conflicts. Such understandings presumably influence the context of Bangladeshi citizens' frequent disengagement—or violent engagement in—the politics of affirming human rights and democratic governance. The implemented curriculum represented by focus group participants seemed particularly indifferent to such student knowledge and understandings in relation to locally relevant social and political conflicts. This thesis study of curriculum in selected subject areas, and the narratives of students and teachers in focus group workshops in four Bangladeshi schools, suggested that teaching about affirming justice and peace in relation to large-scale political conflicts in this context could be more difficult than teaching in relation to interpersonal and small-scale social conflicts.

This study began to show how lived citizenship experience interacts with formal schooling, and how such interactions may be pedagogically addressed in contexts where violence is a concern. Un-bridged gaps between lived experience and school curriculum present a major challenge for peacebuilding citizenship education, perhaps in all conflict contexts. In Muslim majority contexts like Bangladesh, bridging such disjunctures could contribute to building peacebuilding citizenship inclinations and capacities, in part by helping young citizens to deeply and properly understand Islam from the Qur'an and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Thus, existing international theories and concepts about solving social conflicts and affirming justice require improved understanding of majorities' (and minorities') understandings of religious factors embedded in those conflicts. The finding of this thesis study—that participating Muslims citizens in the Bangladeshi schools do understand justice, peace, and citizenship in Islamic terms—especially emphasizes this need. Such a religiously-informed education could help these young citizens to develop in-depth understandings of how *jihad* (Islamic citizenship) could effectively operate, especially in relation to political conflicts that involve direct violence and in which citizens see themselves as victims. Otherwise, as in the case of some citizens in this research, young Muslim citizens' understandings of Islamic citizenship (*jihad*) may lack specific concepts and strategies to inform participation in actually mitigating existing escalated conflicts. When unaddressed in school, such partial cultural understanding about Islam/religion and conflicts could easily be sectarian and blame oriented, and thus capable of reproducing violence



in its varied forms instead of contributing to sustainable democratic peace. If carefully addressed, lived-experience-based understandings could serve as resources for school-based education for developing in-depth understandings about various elements of conflict and religion, which may be expected to increase the possibility of peacebuilding citizenship in Bangladesh.

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## Appendices

## Appendix A: Guidelines for Focus Group #1 with Teachers

Participants will be requested to *bring to this session* teaching materials, textbooks (excerpts/ sections), and related documents, such as lesson plans or descriptions of extra-curricular activities that they have used/led recently, or plan to use this year—to show and tell how they teach for and about citizenship, and/or social conflict problems, and/or violence.

1. Invite each participant: (a) to introduce themselves, and briefly show and tell the group about the (classroom or extra-curricular) pedagogical material they have brought, and why and how they use it, and (b) with group input (if desired), to write a short caption (with markers provided) on one page, briefly labeling or summarizing each *teaching example* (material or strategy) they have brought to share. (Place these sheets in the middle of the circle, where all can see them.)
2. Invite the group to work together to sort the *teaching example* sheets into categories that the group creates and chooses (such as particular themes, goals, or types of learning activities). Participants move teaching example sheets around into clusters, such that they remain visible to the whole group, and are welcome to create additional teaching examples, and/or additional categories, throughout the session.
3. Invite the group to reflect upon the collective set of *teaching examples* they have created:
  - What kinds of teaching priorities and themes do you notice here? What similarities and differences do you notice — among the various teaching examples, and among various teachers' approaches?
  - What do you notice is missing from this set of teaching examples? (Optional prompts: Does your set include both regular classroom lessons and extra-curricular activities? Interpersonal relations issues or skills? Social and community issues or information? Politics and government procedures or issues? Human rights, diversity or equity issues? International organizations or issues? Opportunities to discuss perspectives that disagree, or examples of dissent or disagreement in the community and/or the country?)
  - What do you most like about each aspect of your teaching? What concerns or needs do you have, for additional teaching resources or for improvements you would like to see? Why?
4. Invite each participant to share their one or two main concerns or goals (things you want to do, or to learn), in the areas of educating for democratic citizenship and/or for building peace.
5. Explain to participating teachers that the student focus groups are intended to discuss the social conflict problems the students are concerned about, and what they believe citizens like themselves or people they know can do about these problems (I will analyze to derive a sense of how these students understand some conflicts, and their lived experiences and beliefs about what ordinary people/citizens can do about the real challenges their communities face). The students will be shown some images of conflicts (I will not show any graphic direct depictions of violence or death). They will be asked to describe how the conflict represented in each image looks like in their community. Then, they will choose 2–3 conflict issues (using the images) and discuss as news reporters: What is the problem here? Who is directly involved? Who else is affected? What are the apparent causes of this problem? Who is doing anything to make the problem worse? Who is doing anything to make the situation better, or to solve the problem? What policies might reduce or prevent problems like this in the future?

6. Ask the teacher participants to use their expertise and knowledge about their students and local community to help improve an initial set of focus group discussion images. (a) Show the group (and place where all can see them) my image collection as potential prompts for the focus group discussions with students from this school. (b) Invite each teacher to reflect on the pros and cons of each image for use with students from their school: Which ones do you see as most relevant and important, and why? Which ones would you eliminate, and why? Please express agreement and disagreement with colleagues, and try to reach consensus on a set of 'best' image prompts.
7. After eliminating any images the group has reached consensus to delete, invite the group to reflect on the images: Are there any social conflict concerns you believe are especially relevant to your students these days, that are left out here? What do you see as the key criteria for images/ issues the students should be invited to talk about (for instance: particular issues such as violence in the community or human rights? examples of government [including court, police, military] or citizen action?)?
8. Invite each participant to close by mentioning how today's discussion has left them thinking about their own concerns and/or hopes for future development of peace-building citizenship education here.

## Appendix B: Guidelines for Focus Group #1 with Students

Research team will *bring* to this session sample images about social conflict, violence, and/or citizenship activities (especially in this local community or city, in relation to large-scale or local issues), talking piece, poster paper (prepared for item 4), and markers.

1. Introductions: Thank you for participating in this workshop. This is a **talking piece**: When it is passed to each of you around the circle, that person has the floor and everybody else listens. If you don't want to speak when the talking piece comes to you, you can pass it along to the next person. When the talking piece comes around to you, **please introduce yourself** (you can use your own first name or you can make up a nickname for today), **and mention one activity in your community that you enjoy**.

2. Overviewing several kinds of social conflicts: The point of this workshop is to discuss some social conflict issues that you are concerned about, and what you believe citizens like yourselves (or people you know), can do about these problems. To get discussion started, **here are some images** (*spread out pictures where all can see them, point to each one in turn*). **What is this picture about? What does this problem look like in your lives, or in your community?** *IF time allows (optional extension): Please work together to quickly sort these images into rough categories, to show the different kinds of issues they represent. (For example, you could decide to sort the conflicts by size [personal to large scale], by how serious you think they are, by what citizens can do about it, or in any other way).*

3. Choosing conflicts the group considers important to discuss: Now, please work together to **choose 3 of these conflict issues (each represented by a picture), that you consider to be relevant to your own lives or your community, to discuss today** (you can put them in priority order if you wish; we might only have time for 2).

4. Analyzing conflict issues: OK, let's see what you have to say about the issue represented by the first picture. Your task is to work together to create a short **news announcement**, trying to answer as many of possible of the questions on the posters. *Please do not name actual people; just talk about actions and roles in general terms.* You could each make notes for a minute or two, and then discuss your answers with the group. We will serve as recorders for you. *(Later repeat with another issue/image —10 min per conflict example)*

- **What is the problem here? What does this problem look like in your lives, or in your community?**
- **Who is directly involved? Who is affected by the situation?**
- What are some possible **causes** of this problem? What seems to **make the problem worse?**
- **What actions by authorities or government** might **reduce or prevent** problems like this in the future? What do you think the authorities are doing about this problem now?
- **What could people (like you or your families) do** to reduce or prevent such problems in the future? Who do you think is doing what about this problem now?

5. Learning experiences at school (*circulate talking piece 1-2 times*): (A) Which of the social conflict issues mentioned today **have you had a chance to learn about in this school?** In what

**other ways** have you learned **in school** about citizenship or making peace? (Encourage participants to mention extra-curricular activities and classroom lessons, and similarities and differences among their experiences.) (B) **How do you feel** about those school experiences?

6. Closing, hopes and suggestion sharing (*circulate talking piece once more*): Each, when the talking piece comes to you, please share a suggestion: what **would you like to do or learn in school**, about democratic citizenship and/or making peace? (*Thank you!*)

### Appendix C: Sample Image Prompts



Biraj, A. (2012, November 22). Sujon, 4, works in a brickfield in Gabtoli, Dhaka. *Worst Form of Child Labour in Asia*. Retrieved from <http://www.rediff.com/money/slide-show/slide-show-1-worst-forms-of-child-labour-in-asia/20121122.htm#6>



Dahiya, V. (2013, December 16). Women need to realise that tolerating domestic violence wouldn't 'save' their family! *YKA: Youth Ki Awaaz*. Retrieved from <https://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2013/12/women-need-realise-tolerating-domestic-violence-wouldnt-save-family/>



BDChronicle. (2013, November 27). An interview with Mr. Hartal. *The Bangladesh Chronicle*. Retrieved from <http://bangladeshchronicle.net/2013/11/an-interview-with-mr-hartal/>



River Pollution is a Burning Issue in Bangladesh (2012, May 21). *Our Crisis*. Retrieved from <http://blsdo.blogspot.ca/2012/05/river-pollution-is-burning-issue.html>



Poverty. (2013, November 27). Boy drinks dog milk for 6 years. *Dhaka Tribune*. Retrieved from <http://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2013/11/27/poverty-boy-drinks-dog-milk-for-6yrs/>

Other image prompts, all of which were not used in all schools, included issues of:

- Air pollution
- Anti-Islam bias (Islamophobia)
- Bullying
- Caning in school
- Child soldiers
- Controversy between political parties about democracy
- Corruption
- Eve teasing (sexual harassment)
- Homelessness
- Police violence
- Unemployment
- War tank and soldiers in Iraq
- Water pollution

**Appendix D:**  
**Guidelines for Focus Group #2 (Follow-up) with Teachers**

1. Invite each teacher participant to put into their own words their interpretations of these results:
  - a) What social conflicts do these students seem to be most concerned about?
  - b) How do they seem to understand these problems' causes, key actors, and the factors making them better or worse?
  - c) What do they seem to believe ordinary citizens can do about such problems?
2. Invite the group to compare and contrast these results with their impressions of their own (larger population of) current students.
  - a) How do these students' understandings of conflicts and their solutions seem to represent—or not—your other students in school (current & past)
3. Invite the group to brainstorm and make a list of knowledge and skills they believe their (grade 6-9) students need to learn, in order to:
  - a) improve their opportunities and capacities to understand social conflicts and their causes, and
  - b) participate constructively in peace-building and democratic citizenship
4. Invite the group to organize the above list into categories (such as subject matter themes and pedagogical/ learning activity practices), and to name these categories.
5. Invite each participant to reflect: How does your current teaching (classroom lessons and/or extra-curricular activities) address, prioritize, and/or ignore the learning goals you (as a group) have just listed (# 3 & #4)? How do your teaching strategies connect with (or ignore) the students' prior experiences and understandings?
6. Invite the group to work toward consensus on which teaching/learning goals they believe are most important to add to (or transform in) their teaching, in the near future.
7. Invite the group: (a) to brainstorm teaching ideas (materials, texts, pedagogical strategies, etc.) to address these priorities, (b) to brainstorm what they need (organizational, pedagogical resources, work steps, etc.), in order to achieve together the priorities just identified, and then (c) to suggest strategies for achieving those actions (for instance, to each volunteer for a task, and to formulate requests they might make to others for specific support).
8. To close, invite each participant to mention one pedagogical innovation they will try to implement (before the next focus group session?).



**Appendix E:**  
**Guidelines for Focus Group #2 (Follow-up) with Students**

1. The research team will *bring* and present a brief thematic summary derived from analysis (concept mapping) of data from student focus group interview #1, for interpretive discussion by student participants. Invite each participant to reflect:
  - a) How well does this summary reflect your main concerns and understandings?
  
2. Invite the group to help improve this summary:
  - a) What do you recommend adding, deleting, or changing, and why?
  
3. The research team will *bring* and present a brief thematic summary of selected data derived from analysis of teacher focus group sessions #2, #3 (teachers' goals and ideas for teaching strategies or materials they intended to develop or have developed), for interpretive discussion by student participants. Invite the group to comment and discuss:
  - a) How well do these teaching ideas meet your own main concerns and wishes for improvement in democratic citizenship and peace-building education?
  - b) What changes or additions do you recommend and why?
  
4. Invite each participant to say about any lessons or activities they have participated in recently, relevant to democratic citizenship and peace-building education:
  - a) What happened, and how did you feel about it?
  
5. Invite each participant to close by sharing (as in focus group #1):
  - a) What would you like to do or learn in school, that you see as related to democratic citizenship and/or to making peace?

**Appendix: F**  
**Recruitment letter for school headmasters**  
 (On OISE/University of Toronto Letterhead. Also, translated in Bengali)

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

My name is ...; I am a PhD Candidate in Curriculum Studies and Teacher Development at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (Canada). For a new qualitative research project called “Peace-building Citizenship Learning in Comparative Contexts Affected by Violence: School Connections with Life Experience,” my thesis supervisor Professor ... and I are interested in identifying 7-10 secondary (grades 6-9) public schools — 3-4 in Bangladesh, 2-3 in Canada and 2-3 in Mexico — located in neighborhoods experiencing some violence, that have been implementing lessons and/or extra-curricular initiatives to develop peaceful relationships, such as peace/ conflict resolution education, human rights education, and/or democratic citizenship education.

We would appreciate an appointment to meet with you briefly, to tell you a little bit about the study and discuss whether you might like your school to participate. The purpose of this study is not to evaluate teachers or students: It is to understand students’ understandings of social conflict problems that concern them, including what they believe ordinary people can do about such problems (citizenship), and to help participating teachers (informed by what we learn from the students) to improve their own teaching materials and practices, to build upon the students’ understandings and experiences. At the end of the process, we would like to offer a complimentary professional development workshop to your school staff, to report what we learn from this study and to disseminate the teaching resources that participants develop.

The study is designed to be responsive to the needs and timetables of each participating school. In general terms, what we need are:

- **Two 120 minute** focus group meetings with *3-5 teachers* at each school who are implementing, and interested in implementing, classroom and/or extra-curricular learning activities relevant to peace-building and/or citizenship education. Release time coverage for these teachers is available from the research project budget. The purpose of the two sessions early in the project is to learn about the teachers’ activities and needs, and to get their feedback on the prompts to be used with students.
- **One 70-80 minute** focus group meeting with *8-10 student volunteers* at each school (whose parents/guardians consent to their participation). The purpose is to learn about these students’ lived experiences of citizenship: their understandings of the social conflicts that surround them, and what they believe they (and people they know) can do about them.

We would like to emphasize that there is no obligation to participate in this project. All research participants have the right to withdraw at any time without any explanations or negative consequences.

Thank you very much for considering this request. Please let us know what would be a convenient time for one of us to come to your school to meet with you. You may email us at ... or. You may also call us at ... or ....

Yours sincerely,

...

## Appendix G:

### Informed consent letter (and form) for school headmasters

(Printed on OISE/University of Toronto Letterhead. Also, Bengali translation was provided)

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

My name is ...; I am a PhD Candidate in Curriculum Studies and Teacher Development at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (Canada). For a new qualitative research project called “Peace-building Citizenship Learning in Comparative Contexts Affected by Violence: School Connections with Life Experience,” my thesis supervisor Professor ... and I are interested in identifying 7-10 secondary (grades 6-9) public schools — 3-4 in Bangladesh, 2-3 in Canada and 2-3 in Mexico — located in neighborhoods experiencing some violence, that have been implementing lessons and/or extra-curricular initiatives to develop peaceful relationships, such as peace/ conflict resolution education, human rights education, and/or democratic citizenship education.

We appreciate your interest in having your school participate! This letter and the form below are to formally request and confirm your consent on behalf of your school, — [school name]. The purpose of this study is not to evaluate teachers or students: It is to understand students’ understandings of social conflict problems that concern them, including what they believe ordinary people can do about such problems (citizenship), and to help participating teachers (informed by what we learn from the students) to improve their own teaching materials and practices, to build upon the students’ understandings and experiences. At the end of the process, we would like to offer a complimentary professional development workshop to your school staff, to report what we learn from this study and to disseminate the teaching resources that participants develop.

The study is designed to be responsive to the needs and timetables of each participating school. In general terms, what we need are:

- **Two 120 minute** focus group meetings with *3-5 teachers* at each school who are implementing, and interested in implementing, classroom and/or extra-curricular learning activities relevant to peace-building and/or citizenship education. Release time coverage for these teachers is not available from the research project budget. The purpose of the two sessions early in the project is to learn about the teachers’ activities and needs, and to get their feedback on the prompts to be used with students.
- One 70-80 minute focus group meeting with *8-10 student volunteers* at each school (whose parents/guardians consent to their participation). The purpose is to learn about these students’ lived experiences of citizenship: their understandings of the social conflicts that surround them, and what they believe they (and people they know) can do about them.

Ahmed Salehin Kaderi will participate in the focus group meetings and in data analysis and resource compilation work in relation to your school. He and I will carefully protect participants’ confidentiality: a) we will replace all research participants’ names and the school name with pseudonyms, and delete or mask any details that would make them identifiable, to assure anonymity in all research documents and in future publications; b) we will assign to all electronic transcriptions a password lock, and keep it in a private locked location; and c) we will destroy all original audio recordings within one year (after ensuring correctness and anonymity in transcripts), and coded transcripts five years after the end of the study. d) At focus group

sessions, researcher(s) will ask participants to not use the names of people outside the focus group, and to not repeat stories disclosed in the focus group: we cannot guarantee that all participants will fully maintain this confidentiality.

There is a moderate risk that some teachers or students could feel a little uncomfortable or even upset by focus group discussions of sensitive social conflict issues, or (in the case of teachers) sharing materials and experiences from their teaching in the focus group interview sessions. Note that we will ask general questions, not personal questions, and that all participants always have the right to decide which questions they will answer and which documents they will share. Informed consent documents for students and parents/guardians include information on how to access relevant professional support services, in case any participant feels at risk at any point, and clarify that researchers would report any suspected risk of harm to those support personnel. All interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed. Once transcribed, teachers and students will have opportunities to make corrections and give feedback on their own interview(s).

We would like to emphasize that there is no obligation to participate in this project. All research participants have the right to withdraw at any time without any explanations or negative consequences. If some participant does decide to withdraw, we will ask him/her whether they authorize us to retain the data that we have already collected from them.

Thank you very much for considering this request. Your school's participation in this study would make a very valuable contribution to knowledge and teaching in peace-building and citizenship education. Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns. You may email us at ... or. You may also call us at ... or ... You may also contact the University of Toronto Office of Research Ethics at [ethics.review@utoronto.ca](mailto:ethics.review@utoronto.ca) if you have any questions or concerns about participants' rights or experiences in this research project. Please see below for the consent form that we hope you will choose to sign. We have prepared two copies: one is for you to keep.

Yours sincerely,

...

**CONSENT FORM FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**  
**Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto**

Date: January 04, 2015

I acknowledge that the topic, the process, and the rights to which all research participants are entitled in the research project, "Peace-building Citizenship Learning in Comparative Contexts

Affected by Violence: School Connections with Life Experience,” have been explained to me. I understand that participation is voluntary and that any participant can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Therefore, I authorize ... and ... to conduct this research project in \_\_\_\_\_ [name of school].

\_\_\_\_\_

Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix H: Recruitment Letter for Teachers

(Printed on OISE/University of Toronto Letterhead. Also, Bengali translation was provided)

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

My name is ...; I am a PhD Candidate in Curriculum Studies and Teacher Development at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (Canada). For a new qualitative research project called “Peace-building Citizenship Learning in Comparative Contexts Affected by Violence: School Connections with Life Experience,” my thesis supervisor Professor ... and I are interested in identifying 7-10 secondary (grades 6-9) public schools — 3-4 in Bangladesh, 2-3 in Canada and 2-3 in Mexico — located in neighborhoods experiencing some violence, that have been implementing lessons and/or extra-curricular initiatives to develop peaceful relationships, such as peace/ conflict resolution education, human rights education, and/or democratic citizenship education.

Your headmaster has authorized us to conduct this research, if enough teachers (including, we hope, yourself) agree to participate. We would appreciate an appointment to meet with you briefly, to tell you a little bit about the study and discuss whether you might like your school to participate. The purpose of this study is not to evaluate teachers or students: It is to understand students’ understandings of social conflict problems that concern them, including what they believe ordinary people can do about such problems (citizenship), and to help participating teachers (informed by what we learn from the students) to improve their own teaching materials and practices, to build upon the students’ understandings and experiences. At the end of the process, we would like to offer a complimentary professional development workshop to your school staff, to report what we learn from this study and to disseminate the teaching resources that participants develop.

The study is designed to be responsive to the needs and timetables of each participating school. In general terms, what we need are:

- **Two 120 minute** focus group meetings with *3-5 teachers* at each school who are implementing, and interested in implementing, classroom and/or extra-curricular learning activities relevant to peace-building and/or citizenship education. Release time coverage for these teachers is available from the research project budget. The purpose of the two sessions early in the project is to learn about the teachers’ activities and needs, and to get their feedback on the prompts to be used with students.
- **One 70-80 minute** focus group meeting with *8-10 student volunteers* at each school (whose parents/guardians consent to their participation). The purpose is to learn about these students’ lived experiences of citizenship: their understandings of the social conflicts that surround them, and what they believe they (and people they know) can do about them.

We would like to emphasize that there is no obligation to participate in this project. All research participants have the right to withdraw at any time without any explanations or negative consequences.

Thank you very much for considering this request. Please let us know what would be a convenient time for one of us to come to your school to meet with you. You may email us at ... or. You may also call us at ... or ....

Yours sincerely,

...



**Appendix I:**  
**Informed consent letter (and form) for teachers**

(Printed on OISE/University of Toronto Letterhead. Also, Bengali translation was provided)

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

My name is ...; I am a PhD Candidate in Curriculum Studies and Teacher Development at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (Canada). For a new qualitative research project called “Peace-building Citizenship Learning in Comparative Contexts Affected by Violence: School Connections with Life Experience,” my thesis supervisor Professor ... and I are interested in identifying 7-10 secondary (grades 6-9) public schools — 3-4 in Bangladesh, 2-3 in Canada and 2-3 in Mexico — located in neighborhoods experiencing some violence, that have been implementing lessons and/or extra-curricular initiatives to develop peaceful relationships, such as peace/ conflict resolution education, human rights education, and/or democratic citizenship education.

Your principal has authorized us to conduct this research in ——— [school name]. We appreciate your interest in participating! This letter and the form below are to formally request and confirm your consent to participate. The purpose of this study is not to evaluate teachers or students: It is to understand students’ understandings of social conflict problems that concern them, including what they believe ordinary people can do about such problems (citizenship), and to help participating teachers (informed by what we learn from the students) to improve their own teaching materials and practices, to build upon the students’ understandings and experiences. The research focus group meetings offer some complimentary professional development time (funded by the project), for you to share and discuss these materials and strategies with a few colleagues, and we will also develop resource materials to share with you.

The study is designed to be responsive to the needs and timetables of each participating school. In this letter, we are asking you to consent to participate in two 120-minute focus group meetings with approximately 2-4 teacher colleagues at this school, who are implementing, and interested in implementing, classroom and/or extra-curricular learning activities relevant to peace-building and/or citizenship education. This research project cannot fund teacher release time for these sessions. The purpose of the two sessions early in the project is to learn about your (and other participating teachers’) activities and needs, and to get your feedback on the prompts to be used with students. The purpose of a third session approximately 8-12 months later is, based on initial results from the student focus group interview, to facilitate your collaborative development of teaching strategies and materials to improve the peace-building citizenship education they offer at your school.

As we discussed, we are also requesting one 70-80-minute focus group meeting with 8-10 *student volunteers* at this school (whose parents/guardians consent to their participation). If you participate, we will ask you to make recommendations and help with recruitment of students (they may or may not be in your own classes). The purpose is to learn about these students’ lived experiences of citizenship: their understandings of the social conflicts that surround them, and what they believe they (and people they know) can do about them. If feasible, we would appreciate a follow-up session with some of the students, approximately 8-12 months later, to invite their feedback on the initial results (student conceptions and teaching/learning activities).

Ahmed Salehin Kaderi will participate in the focus group meetings and in data analysis and resource compilation work in relation to your school. We will carefully protect participants' confidentiality: a) we will replace all research participants' names and the school name with pseudonyms, and delete or mask any details that would make them identifiable, to assure anonymity in all research documents and in future publications; b) we will assign to all electronic transcriptions a password lock, and keep it in a private locked location; and c) we will destroy all original audio recordings within one year (after ensuring correctness and anonymity in transcripts), and coded transcripts five years after the end of the study. d) At focus group sessions, we will ask participants to not use the names of people outside the focus group, and to not repeat stories disclosed in the focus group: we cannot guarantee that all participants will fully maintain this confidentiality.

There is a moderate risk that some teachers or students could feel a little uncomfortable or even upset by focus group discussions of sensitive social conflict issues, or (in the case of teachers) sharing materials and experiences from their teaching in the focus group interview sessions. Note that we will ask general questions, not personal questions, and that all participants always have the right to decide which questions they will answer and which documents they will share. All interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed. Once transcribed, teachers and students will have opportunities to make corrections and give feedback on their own interview(s).

We would like to emphasize that there is no obligation to participate in this project. All research participants have the right to withdraw at any time without any explanations or negative consequences. If some participant does decide to withdraw, we will ask him/her whether they authorize me to retain the data that we have already collected from them. Informed consent documents for students and parents/guardians include information on how to access relevant professional support services, in case any participant feels at risk at any point, and clarify that researchers would report any suspected risk of harm to those support personnel.

Thank you very much for considering this request. Your participation in this study would make a very valuable contribution to knowledge and teaching in peace-building and citizenship education. Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns. You may email us at ... or. You may also call us at ... or .... You may also contact the University of Toronto Office of Research Ethics at [ethics.review@utoronto.ca](mailto:ethics.review@utoronto.ca) if you have any questions or concerns about participants' rights or experiences in this research project. Please see below for the consent form that we hope you will choose to sign. We have prepared two copies: one is for you to keep.

Yours sincerely,

...

**CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS**

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto

Date:

I acknowledge that the topic, the process, and the rights to which all research participants are entitled in the research project, “Peace-building Citizenship Learning in Comparative Contexts Affected by Violence: School Connections with Life Experience,” have been explained to me. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Therefore, I consent to participate in this research project:

School Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

I also consent to have the focus group meetings audio-recorded:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix J:**  
**Informed consent letter (and form) for students & their parents/ guardians**  
(Printed on OISE/University of Toronto Letterhead. Also, Bengali translation was provided)

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

My name is ...; I am a PhD Candidate in Curriculum Studies and Teacher Development at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (Canada). For a new qualitative research project called “Peace-building Citizenship Learning in Comparative Contexts Affected by Violence: School Connections with Life Experience,” my thesis supervisor Professor ... and I are interested in identifying 7-10 secondary (grades 6-9) public schools — 3-4 in Bangladesh, 2-3 in Canada and 2-3 in Mexico — located in neighborhoods experiencing some violence, that have been implementing lessons and/or extra-curricular initiatives to develop peaceful relationships, such as peace/ conflict resolution education, human rights education, and/or democratic citizenship education.

Your principal has authorized us to conduct this research in your school, \_\_\_\_\_ [school name]. We appreciate your interest in participating (or having your son participate)! This letter and the form below are to request and confirm your (student’s) consent to participate, and your (parent/ guardian’s) consent for your son to participate.

In this letter, I am asking you to consent (for yourself or your son) to participate in one 70-80-minute focus group meeting with about 3 or 4 other students at this school (there will be another group of students as well). The purpose of this study is not to evaluate teachers or students: It is to learn about your (students’) own understandings of social conflict problems that concern you, and what you believe ordinary people can do about such problems. It is also to help teachers to improve their teaching in peace-building and democratic citizenship education. Ahmed Salehin Kaderi will work on the research in your school. He will carefully protect confidentiality, by never using students’ (or schools or teachers’) real names or identifying details in our materials, and by keeping all research documents locked up in a safe place. For the same reason, at focus group sessions, we will ask participants to not use the names of people outside the focus group, and to not repeat stories disclosed in the focus group: we cannot guarantee that all participants will fully maintain this confidentiality.

In case you (the student) might feel a little uncomfortable or even upset by focus group discussion of sensitive social conflict issues, remember that Ahmed Salehin Kaderi will not ask personal questions, and students always have the choice whether to answer any question. All interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

There is no obligation to participate in this project. Every student has the right to withdraw at any time without any explanations or negative consequences.

Thank you very much for considering this request. Your participation in this study would make a very valuable contribution to help improve education. Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns. Our emails are:.... You may also call us at ... or ....., You may also contact the University of Toronto Office of Research Ethics at [ethics.review@utoronto.ca](mailto:ethics.review@utoronto.ca) if you have any questions or concerns about participants’ rights or experiences in this research project.

Please see below for the consent form that we hope you will both choose to sign. I have prepared two copies: one is for you to keep.

Yours sincerely,

...

CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS OR GUARDIANS  
**Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto**

Date:

I acknowledge that the topic, the process, and the rights to which I am (or my son is) entitled in the research project, “Peace-building Citizenship Learning in Comparative Contexts Affected by Violence: School Connections with Life Experience,” have been explained to me. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time with no negative consequences.

I (THE STUDENT) consent to participate in this research project:

Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Student signature: \_\_\_\_\_

I (THE STUDENT’S PARENT OR GUARDIAN) consent to have my son participate in this research project:

Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/guardian signature: \_\_\_\_\_

I also consent to have the focus group discussion audio-recorded:

Student signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/guardian signature: \_\_\_\_\_