QUEER THEORY AND PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES: SOME CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

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A number of recent studies articulate the need for the Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) field to continue to include issues and people on the margins of society in the plurality of peacebuilding.¹ Johan Galtung (2009) points out how the “transdisciplinary” nature of PACS in terms of theory building and practice² deconstructs direct, cultural and structural (invisible violence in systems and institutions) violence to empower people to build a positive peace (social justice) for all citizens.³ Those critical of the Western model of “liberal peacebuilding” state that the model often leaves people out of the peace process altogether and point toward prompt reconsideration in light of this exclusion practice.⁴ For example, people with disabilities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer people (LGBTQ); youth; women; and the elderly are often excluded from the peace processes and practices that confront continuous acts of violence and hate crimes directed against these social groups.⁵ The intersection of gender, race, sexuality and class in the socialization process, and its engagement with dominant oppressive patriarchal power, ensures that certain values relegate particular groups (such as those listed above) to the social periphery. Concomitantly, this marginalization process shapes people’s daily life experiences and provides little room for social emancipation.⁶ The effects of this marginalization process by dominant patriarchal power often means, in practical terms, unbalanced power structures with little or no representation of marginal voices, and for those marginalized, feelings of low self-worth and the development of unhelpful coping...
mechanisms. Clearly, as much as positive peace is a promising ideology, it remains a forgotten or distant concept for certain groups excluded from peace processes.

This chapter provides some rationale and direction towards a more inclusive peacebuilding process. It explores the potential of queer theory in adding to diversity in theory building, research, pedagogy, and praxis in the PACS field, and vice versa. Although queer theory largely focuses on deconstructing sexuality and gender categories in a social hierarchy, such as analyzing the effects of normative gender roles on the lives of people with same-sex sexual and/or gender non-conforming desires, there are tenets to queer theory that advance Galtung’s assertion to deconstruct violence and build a positive peace for all citizens. As Robert Mizzi points out, in a comparative view there is similarity between peace movements and gay and lesbian liberation movements, which may be enough to form a “same-sex marriage” between the two theoretical frameworks. We hope to perform such a marriage through this chapter, and conceptualize implications for all activists and educators, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. We begin this chapter with an explanation of queer theory and PACS as distinct theoretical frameworks. We then highlight new insights that may be useful when reconceptualizing both theoretical frameworks in relation to one another. The question that drives this comparative analysis is: What are the tenets of queer theory and PACS that may be useful towards advancing notions of positive peace (social justice)? In a time of dynamic and radical changes around queer issues in social organizing, and the pervasive nature of conflict and violence, this chapter offers critical perspectives towards the reconceptualization of necessary peacebuilding processes.
QUEER THEORY

The term “queer theory” appeared in queer lexicon by way of de Lauretis’s work on deconstructing gay and lesbian identities. As de Lauretis states, queer theory “conveys a double emphasis – on the conceptual and speculative work involved in discourse production and on the necessary critical work of deconstructing our own discourses and their constructed silence.” Deconstructing discourse is a key theme in this work, as queer activisms (rooted in feminism) highlight the prevalence of heterosexism, which uses values, understandings, and practices that favour cross-sex relationships, and heteropatriarchy that purports heterosexual masculinity as superior and dominant to expressions of femininity (e.g., effeminate males). Queer theory challenges dominant social hierarchies and values and disrupts altogether the social construction of male/female and hetero/homo as fixed and stable categories. The acronym “LGBTQ,” for example, creates identity-categorizations that limit fluid, non-binary conceptualizations of sex, sexuality, and gender.

The use of the term ‘queer’ represents a significant political shift. Historically, it is a term that was used to name and shame queerness, people who engage in same-sex sexual practices and/or do not subscribe to strict, traditional male/female gender roles. Over the past few decades, “queer” has been reclaimed by activists and scholars to pushback against the violent use of language, re-shift the balance of power, and position the term as a preferable and useful term to challenge heterosexism and heteropatriarchy. Although the term remains controversial both internal and external to queer communities due to its troubling historical use, the term is growing worldwide as a symbol of reclamation and inclusion. Queer theory comprises several key intellectual engagements
to understand human relationships, gender diversity and power. Generally speaking, these engagements are based on the following intersecting concepts: sexual regulation, performativity, and heteronormativity.

**Sexual Regulation**

Michel Foucault’s work highlights the hegemonic practice of institutionalized systems using identity-categories (for example, a “homosexual” identity) to shame, regulate, and eradicate same-sex sexual behavior.¹² Science, medicine, and religion are institutions that Foucault names that cause women and men to “confess” their shameful same-sex sexual practices when they stray from the pro-creationist, gendered expectations to engage only in cross-sex sexual practices. Women and men who engage in same-sex sexual practices must be willing to accept punishment and adhere to a regime that will “correct” the “deviant” behaviour. Foucault’s work indicates that sexuality is a political marker, whereby institutions work to regulate sexuality according to what is considered “acceptable” social norms. Through this work on sexual regulation emerges the potential for discourse to resist dominant understandings and restrictions of sex, sexuality, and gender. An example of this sexual regulation process is the use of electroshock therapy in psychiatric hospitals as a means to “punish” and “correct” homosexual desires among gay men.¹³

**Performativity**

The notion of “performativity” stems from a position of resistance to queer oppression, which is widely considered a second intellectual engagement that is a part of queer theory. Judith Butler critiques the social construction of gender, whereby men and women adhere to rigid social roles and rules of masculinity and femininity in order to
gain acceptance into society. These roles and rules cause difficulty for people who do not subscribe to such normative definitions of gender to gain agency and autonomy. Butler states that gender then becomes “performative,” which means that people “perform” their gender according to these social rules and roles. Through performativity, attention is drawn to how gender becomes a concept that is socially constructed, which makes gender fluid and not fixed. An example that Butler puts forth to “trouble” gender is situated within a gay and lesbian social context. Butler highlights how parody and fantasy disrupt normative constructions of gender through drag performances. Drag performances destabilize the notion of what constitutes a “female” identity in order to expose a set of social relations (that is, normative expectations of masculine and feminine behaviours). Through the use of parody, drag performances reveal aspects of a normatively gendered experience, rather than a whole female identity, that are portrayed and made intelligible for heterosexual understanding. Significantly, drag becomes a parody of the masculine and feminine mechanisms and practices that construct and bind gender. When subjects disturb such binding practices around (gender) identity, they then open up radical possibilities that break from the constraints of social regulation. As Butler states, “gender proves to be performative, that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed.” Butler comes to argue that there can be no gender identity since it is always “doing” and remains in flux.

Heteronormativity
A third intellectual engagement that is considered a part of queer theory is Michael Warner’s work on heteronormativity. Warner states that “a whole field of social relations becomes intelligible as heterosexuality, and this privatized sexual culture bestows on its sexual practices a sense of rightness and normalcy. This sense of rightness—embedded in things and not just in sex—is referred to as heteronormativity.” In other words, heterosexuality becomes embedded into everyday understandings and psyches as the “norm” in which to base operations, with little space to explore differences in sex, sexuality and gender. For example, a discussion on different forms of family violence that excludes the possibility of violence towards and within families with same-sex partners would be a heteronormative predisposition. In this instance, teaching practices, support systems, curricula, policies, mandates, and communications are all structured along heteronormative lines, which make it difficult for people to learn about how to address violence within/towards same-sex parent families and to think creatively about other non-normative constructions of “family.”

These three elements of sexual regulation, performativity, and heteronormativity are considered hallmarks of queer theory. Analyzing social problems from each of these perspectives may produce new lines of thinking into the origins of these problems as well as some of the possible solutions. For example, the recent intensification of globalization has now prompted queer theory to adopt a transnational perspective, where there is acknowledgement that sexuality and gender are constructed differently everywhere and has become influenced by global “gay rights” movements that employ Western-oriented “LGBTQ” language. Also, at the front of recent queer scholarship is an analysis of
organizations that operate on rigid principles of heteropatriarchy, such as the Canadian military,\textsuperscript{26} and a reconceptualization of ways to make them more queer-friendly.

**PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES**

Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) is the fusion of conflict analysis and resolution, social justice, conflict transformation, human rights, restorative justice, reconciliation, and peace studies in assisting us in understanding the deep roots of social conflict. It also provides some direction into the appropriate innovative processes that can be utilized to creatively intervene and transform human relationships and social structures while deconstructing patriarchy and militarization. The following sections outline some of the key components and future direction of PACS including some selected recent debates in the field.

*Alternative or Appropriate Dispute Resolution and Peace Studies*

Historically, traditional mechanisms of negative peace (the absence of war) such as diplomacy, elite negotiations, and international law by powerful states and international organizations were used to manage conflict at the global level.\textsuperscript{27} At the same time these processes were in place a broad plethora of grassroots social movements emerged in the 1960s in Europe and North America to protest the balance of terror of nuclear weapons and Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD), violence against women, the denial of African-American civil rights in the U.S., student protest movements against the Vietnam War and inequality in France, the U.S. and Northern Ireland. These mainly nonviolent movements sought to transform society from a culture of violence to a culture of peace. As a result of local people’s distrust of the state, alternative and/or appropriate dispute
resolution processes were developed and employed to emancipate local communities.

Subsequently, Alternative or Appropriate Dispute Resolution (ADR) processes of mediation, negotiation and arbitration began to emerge in university law schools as the credentialing and professionalization of practitioners in the field became more tied to court annexed mediation.  

Peace Studies programs also appeared on undergraduate and graduate campuses as scholars and students struggled to understand the important social issues of their time – and how to address them.

Conflict Analysis and Resolution

Conflict Analysis and Resolution (CAR) undergraduate and graduate programs analyze the emergence and escalation of deep-rooted, destructive conflicts, and how they can be resolved.  

John Burton and Edward Azar distinguish between values, interests and needs by arguing that denial of people’s basic human needs (security, identity, self-esteem, and freedom etc.) would escalate conflict and only the satisfaction of those needs would resolve or prevent social conflicts.  

They argue that human needs were universal across cultures, which can be found at interpersonal (between individuals), intergroup (between groups) and global (between nations) levels. They contended that a problem-solving process could assist people in need to analyze the roots of conflict in comparison to the actualization of meeting human needs as a means to devise sustainable solutions and end protracted conflict.

“Interactive problem-solving” largely takes place at the intergroup level as middle-level professionals such as doctors, teachers, lawyers and so forth come together to discuss the underlying causes of protracted ethnic conflicts in a process facilitated by a knowledgeable third party.  

The idea is that over time problem-solving or dialogue
group participants can build trust and a common understanding of the dynamics of their conflicts as well as culturally relevant solutions to resolve them, and transmit new knowledge to decision-makers, and to the grassroots.\textsuperscript{32}

\textit{Conflict Transformation}

Conflict Transformation advocates believe that relationships have to be built and rebuilt and that structures need to be changed over time to ensure peace processes are sustainable and involve the whole society in its transformation to a just, peaceful, and inclusive society.\textsuperscript{33} Building a culture of peace necessitates co-creating a long-term holistic system that includes all internal and external stakeholders to forge a sustainable infrastructure for peace.\textsuperscript{34} Such a peacebuilding process implies coordinating resources, training, structure, process, and evaluation of the transformative process into an “integrated framework.”\textsuperscript{35}

Reconciliation and forgiveness processes where truth, justice, mercy, and peace intersect to build relationships are necessary to build a sustainable peace.\textsuperscript{36} Reconciliation processes such as the national Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in El Salvador and South Africa and local peacemaking processes provide critical contexts and spaces for protagonists and survivors of conflict and violence to come together and for the former to seek forgiveness from the latter so that together they can heal from the trauma of past violence. “Chosen traumas” and “chosen glories” are often used by unscrupulous leaders in the process of “the transgenerational transmission” of trauma or glory so that the seeds are sown for the next escalation of violence.\textsuperscript{37}

\textit{Peace and Conflict Studies}

Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) teachers, students, and scholars focus on critical issues and innovative and creative intervention processes to build positive peace (social
justice) and to address direct, cultural and structural violence. For example, peace activists in local cultural contexts empower women within patriarchal societies to change behaviours and promote a social justice frame around global human rights laws. Global human rights laws protect the rights of the individual within a diverse and complex world. Real peace cannot be forged for nations or ethnic groups emerging from violent wars unless there is social justice that addresses group trauma, poverty, environmental issues, oppressive structures, and people’s needs among others.

Peace educators seek to build a pluralistic and diverse civil society among adults and children, across cultures, classes, and genders. For example, the Waldorf and Montessori peace education methods integrate children’s abilities and interests with nature and peacebuilding activities. “Constructive storytelling” processes and approaches also play a role in educating children cross culturally, and in empowering adults transitioning out of violent ethnic conflicts to deal with traumatic past events. Storytelling is a low-tech process and it is the way that children learn about the world from adults. As Jessica Senehi articulates, anyone can tell a story and the human voice is inextinguishable as the process of constructive (compared to destructive) storytelling is both nonviolent and inclusive. Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. lived lives that demonstrated the power of principled (compared to pragmatic) nonviolence in confronting social injustice where the practitioner in a state of pure inner peace, works lovingly with the protagonist to find the truth (social justice) together.

Peacebuilding involves a multitrack, multimodal, multidimensional, and primarily external intervention process that is conceptually and practically steeped in Western liberal practices that include human rights, democracy, the rule of law, liberal
development, and a free-market economy. However, peacebuilding also includes bringing young people, disabled people, elderly citizens, LGBTQ citizens, and women into the decision-making process as well as including indigenous peoples and their traditional processes of restorative justice and peacemaking within peacebuilding efforts to co-create new systems and structures within a pluralistic and tolerant civil society.

QUEERING PEACE/PEACING QUEER

When we reflect on these theoretical frameworks, we observe two similarities that may be of use to scholars and researchers. First, both frameworks rely on metanarratives, which are neither hierarchical nor in competition with each other. The presence of these metanarratives indicates how both frameworks evolved over time to critique different social institutions and arrangements, and as a means to end marginalizing and violent processes; thereby, promoting equity and justice. These metanarratives work in tandem with each other, reshaping and reforming perceptions of identity, power, and knowledge according to social context.

Second, the encouragement of voice as a means for human emancipation is at the core for both frameworks. Both frameworks re-conceptualize social hierarchies to highlight specific groups that suffer negative consequences when they do not fit in with the status quo. As a means to achieve an inclusive society, both frameworks call for human dialogue, such as sharing experiences, deconstructing and dismantling dominant systems of power, and promoting cultural values that do not fit normative categories of what is (not) “acceptable” in society. It is through this emphasis on voice, and the challenging and restructuring of power relations, that justice and peace can be achieved.
Pointedly, we live in an interdependent global village where inclusivity of all perspectives grounds us in a synergistic, flexible, and pragmatic way. “Everyday peacemakers” work at all levels to build connections and transform relations weaving together stories of peacemaking as “hybridity and hybridization” of local and outside peacebuilding approaches, which allows for creating realistic methods that incorporate a plethora of voices into the creation of a just peace.\(^47\) Creating critical spaces for people to come together and describe their experiences and identities is an essential component of a pluralistic democracy, and in maintaining and forging human rights and a positive peace with “transcultural constructive storytelling” at the heart of peacemaking and peace education since it empowers people to “discover and share knowledge.”\(^48\)

We see tremendous potential for both theoretical frameworks when pinned together. First, queer theory stands to benefit from a strengthened inclusion of ally perspectives that are a part of PACS. Allies can navigate through dominant systems that structure hetero/homo binaries and help create change from within such systems. Although queer theory is useful at deconstructing social systems that relegate queerness to the periphery, an inclusion of ally perspectives would indicate how such systems affect us all, are violent in their construction, and that the heteropatriarchial nature of these systems can be challenged from the participation of allies that work in conjunction with LGBTQ people. Embedded in this ally work, and related queer activistisms, can be PACS’s focus on reconciliation and forgiveness processes where there is consideration of such notions as justice and peace. For example, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission formed on the basis of exploring the persecution of LGBTQ people might be useful in working through this peace process.
Of significance here is the idea that the construction of gender identities holds masculine notions of competition and hierarchy as more sacred values by society than feminine values of caring and compassion. The use of violence to achieve order within the state and to maintain the state’s projection of power reinforces the masculine values in a dominant (hetero)patriarchy, and a realpolitik self-help anarchic security system. Consequently, “sex typed” individuals are influenced by gender when they filter information and carry their “gender schemata” into different conflict contexts. Anita Taylor and Judi Beinstein Miller call for a radical reconceptualization that “allows for more than two genders” (for example, androgyny and sexual orientation). John Stephens warns, for example, that the ADR mediation process fails to change the structural roots of male domination residing in ownership of property and a “power over” social order that promotes an “ethics of rights” rather than an “ethics of care.” Instead he articulates that feminist and gender issues can be more appropriately dealt with by peace studies because it addresses direct, cultural and structural violence that includes anti-LGBTQ violence and victimization, and hate crimes. Thus, men and women, LGBTQ and heterosexuals, and children and adults have to create “new partnerships” to work together to create egalitarian relationships and a just society.

Second, PACS stands to benefit from queer theory by promoting inclusion on the basis of more than simply listing “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” within calls for anti-violence activism. Queer theory can be helpful in deconstructing heteronormative understandings of peace and non-violence, determining what kinds of “performative” discourses exist in PACS, and conceptualizing how violence acts as a form of (homo)sexual regulation. Peace may be understood then as being a fluid concept, where
peace includes diverse identities and ideas that are constantly being re-formed to adjust to changing societies, rather than a fixed state of non-violence determined by a larger authority figure. For example, exploring notions of gender-based violence through a queer theory lens may highlight how gender and sexuality are fluid and interconnected and that violence occurs in macro and micro levels to screen out sexuality and gender difference. Women and men may both experience harsh consequences if they do not subscribe to fixed gender role expectations.

What remains in the future for research that utilizes both frameworks? One direction may be located in the very nature of queer activism, which throughout history and around the globe remains a nonviolent movement. The world to date has not witnessed bloodshed committed by LGBTQ people as a means to demand equal rights and fair treatment. On the contrary, there have been significant acts of violence towards LGBTQ people as a perceived means to suppress and eradicate sexuality and gender difference. Research into why queer activism remains nonviolent, and at times, in solidarity with other marginalized groups (even with those who struggle with accepting queerness), might be of use to both queer theory and PACS. Also of use may be research into how PACS may become more queer-inclusive, especially when researching matters relating to identity-difference and identity-expression. Given that peace education has been marked as a heteronormative pedagogy, researching efforts to trouble such heteronormativity can help steer things around so that attempts to end violence are inclusive and relevant to all lives. Both research approaches may shed further light on the mechanics of violence in order to build peaceful and peace-filled societies.

CONCLUSION
The recent challenge to civil and human rights by President Vladimir Putin evidenced by the arrest and detention of Pussy Riot feminist punk rock band members, the violence directed against the LGBTQ community in Russia that led to international protest against the Sochi Winter Olympic Games, and the controversial anti-homosexuality law (“Kill the Gays” bill) in Uganda are illustrative of recent global examples of direct and indirect violence directed against LGBTQ people. Until the components of patriarchy in the “private policy individual sphere” and the “public policy-collective battering sphere” are removed the battering of women, nations, and LGBTQ people globally will continue unabated.57

In sum, this chapter reviewed and espoused the main tenets of queer theory and PACS as a theoretical framework. This analysis indicates how despite the different orientations, there are similar perspectives, such as the deconstruction of social norms and a re-shift in power relations in light of marginalized peoples’ experiences. Queer theory reminds us of fixed binaries that create and sustain social hierarchies, such as hetero/homo, white/black, male/female, and adult/child, which has given little room to explore differences in human lives outside of this binary. PACS’s focus on constructive storytelling, reconciliation and positive peace demonstrates the importance of coming to shared understanding and achieving some degree of forgiveness, especially for LGBTQ people who have suffered tremendous loss of life, family, status and resource as a result of transphobic and homophobic violence. Queer reactions to this violence continue to consist of peaceful protests, expressions of love, and nonviolent actions worldwide. PACS researchers and scholars can indeed find a place and presence in this peacebuilding process.
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